

Explication of alice walkers "a woman is not a potted plant" essay sample

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Walker writes this poem using a potted plant as metaphor describing a woman's role in the 20th century. The speaker in Walker's poem describes the great depression of women during this point in time, by unfolding the difference between a potted plant and a woman. The 20th century was a time in which women were expected to do as her man said, not as he did. After World Wars I and II the expected roles of men and woman began to change; women began to wake up.

Women started noticing their rights and positions, with their new economic power. Is a woman a potted plant? No, she is a human being just as a man. In "a woman is not a potted plant" the speaker claims women's worth. She uses the metaphor of a potted plant to say that her sex, her race, her country or her man does not bind a woman. Walker writes, "A woman is not / a potted plant / her leaves trimmed / to the contours of her sex" (ll. 6-10). The speaker is saying that like a potted plant, a woman is confined by her sex, due to the fact that a woman can't change her god given sexual organs, just as a plant can't change its way of life. However, a woman is not confined mentally, emotionally, socially or spiritually. She is no different than man in that sense.

The speaker means that a woman is rebelling against her race in the traditional social structure through words like "espaliere / against the fences / of her race" (ll. 14-16). Walker writes "against the fences / of her race / her country / her man" (ll. 15-19). What the speaker is expressing is the

limitations that have been set and expected for women to live up to, not only by men and the country but also by her own sex and her chief female influence, "her mother" (l. 18). In the phrase "her trained blossom / turning / this way / & that / to follow / the sun," we think of a flower sitting in a windowsill, sun shining bright; wherever the sun travels, the plant will follow with no self-control, no will power and no intelligence (ll. 20-25). Is a woman nothing more than an object? A woman has emotions, a need of change, freedom, spirituality, and a brain. A plant is confined to a circular ceramic dish, no emotions, only needs soil and water to survive, must stay where it is placed and has no brain.

At the end, Walker writes that a woman is not, "nor even honeysuckle / or bee" (ll. 39-40). What the speaker is saying is that a woman can be sweet as a honeysuckle or as unpleasant as a bee. When we have been upset, hurt, or even disappointed we may react in a defensive manner like a bee. When we are in good spirits, joyful, or enthusiastic we may be acting sweet like a honeysuckle. There is no difference between men or women; we are both emotional beings and our actions may depend on what is happening around us.

Women are more than just potted plants. A woman should be able to go out in the society and work on a job and not be judged by her sex or race. A woman should be able to earn the same amount of pay as a man and not be treated as an alien. What makes women so different than men when we eat the same foods, drink the same water, cry the same tears and bleed the same blood? In order for the traditional role between man, country and

mother versus woman to evolve, a change in society must occur. Walker says " a woman / is wilderness / unbounded," and this line of poetry shows a woman's freedom of self, independence, individuality and equality to man, mother, country and sex (ll. 29-31).