

# Awakening of abused woman in "the color purple"

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



English 102 24 April 2007 Awakening of an Abused Woman “ The Color Purple” is set in the rural south and told through a series of letters written by the protagonist, Celie, chronicling her journey from pain and humiliation to triumph and rebirth. Throughout most of her life she has been treated as a servant. Her only worth as a woman is for cooking, cleaning, taking care of the family and fulfilling men’s desires. She has never been taught how to love or be loved and throughout most of the novel Celie is abused and very unhappy but she thinks that this is the way women are supposed to live.

It is not until she lets women into her life, which lead Celie to her epiphany, that she realizes that she deserves more out of her life and that she is worthy of respect. Through sharing relationships with them, Celie sees how women should be treated from another perspective than what she has been taught by her family. Celie’s life is one of struggle and despair. The first line of the story is what her step father told her when she was only fourteen years old, after raping and impregnating her. This statement is so profound that it explains why she is so scared of men her whole life and emotionless to the things that are done to her.

The line states, “ You better not never tell nobody but God. It’d kill your mammy. ” (Walker, 1). It is then that she starts writing to God. She can not tell anybody what has happened to her, not even her sister, Nettie, whom she is closest to at the time. Nettie wouldn’t even understand, she thinks, because she is younger than Celie and Celie doesn’t even understand what is going on. Celie feels the only way to go through life is to remain silent and persevere. Her only outlet is through her letters to God. Celie’s stepfather,

Fonso, then marries Celie off to a widower who needs a mother for his children and someone to do the housework.

The widower, Mr. \_\_\_\_, originally came for Nettie's hand in marriage but Fonzo refused. Fonso gives Celie to Mr. \_\_\_\_ instead, telling him " She ain't fresh... She spoiled. Twice. ", then he goes on to say, " She ugly. But she ain't no stranger to hard work. " (Walker, 8). This is where Celie's self worth is really shown to her. She feels that all she is good for is the hard work she accomplishes inside the home. The way the people closest to her talk about her in combination with all the bad things that has happened to Celie makes her feel worthless. She has very little self-worth and self-esteem.

She is a product of excessive physical and mental abuse. The oppressive brutality of her life continues when she marries Mr. \_\_\_\_, who beats her and subjects her to a life of domestic servitude. Nettie later decides to run away from Fonso's house because of the constant abuse towards her and decides to move in with Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Nettie sees that life is not that much better at Celie's house and after Mr. \_\_\_\_ tries to rape her she decides that she must leave there, also. Consequently, Fonso tells Celie that he will make sure her and Nettie never speak again.

For many years after Nettie left she writes Celie letters, but Fonzo hides them before Nettie gets them. Fonso tries to break the only bond Celie had that brought her any happiness. It is not until Celie lets women into her life, once again, that her thinking starts to change. The first woman she becomes close to is her daughter-in-law, Sofia. Sofia is very strong and fierce, the total opposite of Celie, and she was not to be ruled over by her husband or

anyone else. Sofia fights back when her husband, Harpo (Mr. 's Son), tries to rule her with an iron fist.

Sofia refuses to be oppressed despite the prejudiced society of the 1930s south in which they all live. Sofia instills in Celie a newfound strength. " Celie is so immersed in oppression, she accepts the point of view of Mr. : she advises Harpo to beat Sofia. Thus, she agrees with her oppressor in the idea that a woman should only obey, work and be silent. After this moment of deep humiliation, Celie has the first serious conversation in the book. Sofia comes to see her, furious, and Celie has to explain her attitude. She discovers she is jealous of Sofia's capacity to fight.

This conversation is a new beginning for Celie. Both women find a moment of community, they do something together. The pronoun [pic]us[pic] is finally used: [pic]I laugh. She laugh. Then us both laugh so hard us flop down on the step[pic]. "(Averbach). The woman who has the most profound effect on Celie is Shug Avery, Mr. \_\_\_'s mistress whom he has three children with. The reader would probably think that Celie would be deeply hateful of her husband's mistress. However, she is excited to meet her because Celie feels as though she is everything that Celie could never be.

Her first words to Celie though were " You sure is ugly..." (Walker, 46), which is probably the most dramatically reinforced proof that Celie has ever had of her own ugliness. Celie even notices that Shug calls Mr. \_\_\_ by his real name, Albert, which demonstrates to Celie that Shug is more than just a mere servant to Mr. \_\_\_ and that Mr. respects Shug unlike Celie. Mr. \_\_\_ goes out of his way to make Shug happy and shows her such respect. Celie

doesn't understand why Shug is worthy of respect but she is not. This reiterates to Celie that Mr. \_\_\_\_ feels like he is superior to her but not to Shug.

Shug stays with Celie and Albert for a while when she is sick and Celie takes care of her until she gets better. This is when Celie and Shug bond as woman and friends. Celie is so magnetized to Shug's independence and freedom that she loves spending this time with her. Shug is the only person, other than Nettie, who has ever treated Celie like a human being and enjoys her company. They share a romantic relationship later on, as well. The significance of Celie and Shug's sexual relationship is that Celie learns how to be proud of her body and that she learns how to use it to enjoy sexual intercourse.

Celie has never truly enjoyed intimacy with any other person. She did it simply because she felt she had to in order to make them happy. Celie becomes Shug's only true friend. Shug is a blues singer and everyone enjoys her while she is on stage or sleeping with them but when she was ill none of her so called "friends" visited her. Celie was the only one who took care of her and spent time with her when she couldn't be the life of the party as she usually was. Shug, like Celie never had much affection in her life and never knew how to love or be loved.

Shug wrote Celie a song to show her appreciation for Celie and sang it to Celie at one of her concerts. This made Celie feel so good because nobody had ever showed their appreciation for anything that she had ever done. Later on in the novel Shug finds the letters that Nettie had been writing Celie for years. Once Celie finds out that Mr. \_\_\_\_ hid all of Nettie's letters from her

she feels anger and betrayal towards Mr. \_\_\_\_ because she never felt that he would do something so hurtful to her. She was still fearful of him at this point, so she takes all the letters out of the envelopes and leaves the envelopes, hoping that he wouldn't find out that she had found Nettie's letters. As she starts reading the letters she has an epiphany when she realizes that Mr. \_\_\_\_ tried to rape Nettie and that it was the real reason she left. She read of how Nettie was in Africa and how different it was compared to the small farm Celie has lived at most of her life. She finds out that her sister has been taking care of her two children that she had with Fonso and that Fonso was not her real father. Now she feels she has something to live for and that she does not have to be trapped by Mr. \_\_\_\_'s abuse anymore. She has a whole new family, that she thought before were dead. She wants to kill Mr. \_\_\_\_ for hiding all this from her but Shug tells her not to because if she did she would never be able to see her family. Celie eventually leaves town with Shug and Shug's husband, Grady, to live in Tennessee. As time goes by Celie's step father passes away and Celie finds out that her real father left her his house and a dry good business. She has found a new independence by running this store. She's excited because now that she has a house Nettie will have a place to return to.

Celie's relationship with Shug suffers many ups and downs. Shug had moved in with Celie in her new home but left to pursue a younger man. Celie still prevails because of her newfound independence as a business woman. Shug eventually returns and lives with Celie. As Celie's confidence is built she starts to understand and forgive Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. The strength of these women

combined with their care for one another offer opportunities for all of them to continue growing, despite the racist and sexist world they live in.

During the course of the book, they cry together, laugh together, affirm life together, and share one another's joys. They respect one another. They live in a world that Celie could never have imagined when she was fourteen. Due to her experiences with Shug, Sofia, and Nettie, Celie is able to triumph over the sexual and racial oppression that smothered many of her female ancestors. Works Cited Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. New York: Harcourt, Inc. , 2003. Literature Resource Center. Averbach, Margara. 1998. Gale Group. 23 April 2007 Pifer, Lynn. Find Articles. Winter 1998. 19 April 2007 .