

Resilience and Resistance power in Gloria Naylor novel The Mama Day

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Abstract

Afro-American women endure a difficult condition due to geographical dispersion and gender and race prejudice. The ideology of the racial division has acquired a significant level of dominance images for Black women to avoid being stereotyped and to develop an own and self-sufficient identity. From the revolutionary era to today, Black women have been subjected to a great as a result of modern slavery. Due of the negative associations that white people culture has attached to them. Afro-American women have been fighting with the never battle to establish themselves. They have their own personalities in the rich American culture. 'Identity,' for these women, is creating a situation that enables them to reach their full potential.

Gloria Naylor (1950) is a powerful Afro-American voice from the present day. Her works are influenced by female writers such as Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison. Like Hurston's and Naylor's imaginative worlds are all about black community. Her female characters have a good time. Several of her works receive particular attention. She chooses female heroines from a variety of backgrounds for her works. Classes, locations, and generations are all factors to considered. Because she is an integral part of her fictitious universe, it appears more credible. Among the things she writes The perseverance and indomitable spirit displayed by Black people are highlighted in this study.

KEYWORDS :Identity, geographical displacement, resilience, affluent, assertion

Introduction

Mama Day (1988) is now the most fascinating and powerful storey in the series. It revolves around Mama Day, a formidable matriarch of Willow Springs, a little island off the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia. The island is solely owned by the black individuals who lives

there, and they have their own set of rules and regulations that are not written down. The islanders have their own customs, which are distinct from those followed by Whites on the mainland. Naylor creates a fictitious island to connect the African-American population to their history and cultural heritage, which is important in rescuing the African roots of female tradition in the face of persecution.

Sapphira, a slave lady who was acquired by a Norwegian called Bascombe Wade in 1819, is the protagonist of the narrative. She is the village of Willow Springs' founding mother she gave Wade seven sons, got him to bequeath all of his belongings to his slaves, and then murdered him by stabbing him in the kidney with a dagger. Sapphira's brave efforts are the only reason Willow Springs has been free of slavery since 1823.

"She could walk through some kind of thunderstorm without being hugged; grab a bolt of lightning in the palm of her hand; use the heat of lightning to start the firewood going under her medicine pot.... she turned the moon into salve, the stars into a comforters cloth, and fully recovered the wounds of every creature walking up on two or down on four," according to Sapphira (Naylor 3). Montgomery claims that "Naylor conflates antecedent sources in rewriting the storey of Sapphira, lending a new twist to an old saga encompassing master-slave liaisons, even as she genders the topic female, complex and conscience in the face of hegemonic authority," and that "Naylor conflates antecedent sources in rewriting the storey of Sapphira, lending an unique wrinkle to an old saga involving (Montgomery 47).

Sapphira's actions support claims that African women were not docile in the face of slave-holding nobility, but instead smartly and firmly asserted themselves in their actions. The fact that she gave her seven kids the surname Day instead of Wade might be interpreted as a kind of defiance and assertion of feminine identity. As a result, black women always have made a statement in both the household and social spheres, defying the greater society's repressive structure. Although the dominant patriarchy exists on this fictitious island, the female society of Willow Springs' opposition to Western imperialism's authority and control compensates for the deficiency and provides a space for female Black cognition to define itself. In an interview with Kay Bonetti in 1988, Naylor revealed the truth about Sapphira's mental fortitude in refusing to be a slave: "Boscomb Wade acquired her knowing she was half-prime — in other words, she didn't want to

be a slave." Essentially, it boils down to your reluctance to be an animal, and as a result, you were damaged goods" (Naylor 60).

Mama Day, the main protagonist, gets all of Sapphira's abilities. She's just five feet tall and can be split in half with one large hand. She is a revered community matriarch on the islands and works as a midwife, nurse, counselor, healer, and conjurer. She is a courageous lady who can use magic or the items in her medicine pot to mend wounds and harness lightning. Mama had to deal with a lot of ups and downs when she was younger. After her youngest sister, Peace, perished in a well by accident, her mother shut herself off from the world and died, leaving all of the family's responsibilities to tiny Mama. She shares her expertise of magic, plants, and traditions for the benefit of the islanders as a knowledgeable old woman of Willow Springs. She creates an atmosphere that is beneficial for her well-wishers and bad for her opponents with the assistance of her unrivalled intelligence and strength. As Gary Storhoff points out, the island's residents have entire confidence in Mama Day: "'Mama Day say no, everybody say no' to corporate real estate developers (modern colonialists) who would seize Willow Springs from its indigenous people" (Storhoff 168).

Mama Day expresses her identity in the household arena as well as a community leader. Despite the fact, she is not a real parent, she fulfils all of her responsibilities as a grandmother to her granddaughter. Cocoa in *Mama Day* is a strong and self-assured lady who is capable of dealing with the world on her own terms. When Mr. Samson Wilbright, the principal of her grandniece Coca's school, tries to discipline her, she becomes enraged took full advantage of her: "I told him we weren't going to build a public bathroom for him to use."— yelled at him. He doesn't touch anything we haven't handled since she's in diapers" (Naylor 68). As an example, She is a strong matriarch who will not allow anyone to tease Cocoa. Cocoa grows older to be a strong and forceful individual conscious of her own gender identity as a result of Mama Day and Abigail's wonderful upbringing. "They were the great mother together," Cocoa acknowledges (Naylor 58).

Abigail is a softie, but Mama Day is a harsh disciplinarian. They taught her social skills and survival practices that enabled her confront the world with confidence, despite the racial and gender prejudice she encountered in New York. Mama Day is a strong-willed woman who will go to any length for her grandchild. Cocoa is only brought back to life because to Mama Day's unwavering trust in the nature of love and magic, as well as her willpower. Mama Day is a living

example of authentic femininity, believing that in the perfect partnership, a woman should be given enough room and freedom to be what she's about she wants to be. She also educates Cocoa of a woman's value and potential in preserving and saving her marriage."Because we have a better chance than they have." In particular day, a nice woman is worth two decent men. Give it your whole attention. So we don't miss half as much of what we have to give up" (Naylor 240). Mama Day, as a creator, uses her experience as a midwife to save the lives of islanders. Her frequent connection with nature has given her a great understanding of plants. Dr. Brian Smithfield, too, admires Mama Day and believes in her ability as a root doctor. She also helped many ladies deliver their babies safely, even in life-threatening situations, as a midwife, by conducting surgery with her 'given hands.' Her abilities are derived not just from herbal medicines and conjure spells, but also from the deepest recesses of the soul and maybe from a more primordial source of strength. Miranda's awareness that "the mind is everything" is at the centre of everything she does and everyone she comes into contact with. Miranda's experience as a midwife and healer is based on scientific evidence. She combines established medical procedures with non-traditional folklore and herbal medicines that are part of her culture's collective memory.(Khaleghi 136)

Naylor has therefore developed a feminine environment that shields female islanders from patriarchal repressive influences, thanks to a powerful female matriarch. Rather than reducing woman to a simply biological purpose, Naylor gives her a larger role to perform by including her in the development of cultural values. The author demystifies and dismantles the humiliating perceptions associated with Afro-American conjure women by portraying Mama Day, a petite woman, as a successful community leader with extensive expertise in medical, social, and political domains. Mama Day, as a kind mother, uses her magical and supernatural abilities to cure and improve the lives of others.

Despite the fact that Willow Springs is a self-contained island populated entirely by black people, it is nonetheless affected by the legacy of slavery. Naylor depicts the complexities of a black woman's existence as she endures prejudice and sexism at the hands of both the White and Black communities. Some of them are so oppressed that they want vengeance against the entire male community. Grace Samantha Day, parent of Ophelia, died shortly after the birth of her daughter, consumed by her husband's wrath for abandoning her. Her grandmother, Ophelia, broke her husband's heart when she lost her sanity following the loss of her youngest daughter, Serenity.

My grandmother's name was given to my first and only child Ophelia. I did it as a kind of retaliation. I prayed to God, "Let this be another one who can crush a man's heart." Isn't that enough for women to go through? He went out to seek vistas when eight months pregnant with his child. I was hoping he'd come upon them in hell. I would have given her a different name unless I had known what I knew all along. Sapphira. My grandma only broke a heart gently. One was ripped open by my great-great grandma. 151 (Naylor)

This disdain for patriarchal systems stems from Afro-American women's long-term hardships as a result of racial and gender inequality in rich society. This tyrannical system wreaks havoc on the lives of Afro-Americans who, in their pursuit of the American Dream, abandon their families, forgetting all of their responsibilities to their wives and children. Under these perilous circumstances, some black mothers develop a tremendous hate for the whole straight community and attempt to use their infants as weapons of vengeance.

Cocoa, Grace Samantha Day's daughter, is a self-assured, aggressive, and powerfully strong young lady. She has grown into a self-sufficient lady who has made a great life about herself in New York. Her grandaunt and grandmother have instilled in her a set of principles and ethics that she follows. Cocoa forces George to call her only 'Cocoa' when he calls her by her pet name Ophelia. "Not to be unpleasant, Mr. Andrews," she says, "but I really would want to talk about my qualifications for working here." She doesn't react to George's question regarding the mystery of her pet name and her birth country.

Cocoa utilizes her spouse at her whim and pleasure after her marriage to George. She forces him to make alterations based on their particular preferences. When he tries to control their relationship by refusing to let her make even the tiniest modification in their home to suit her preferences, she responds aggressively and affirms her individuality as a strong woman by declaring, "But it was a fraction of an inch, George." That was the source of my tears. There have been six chambers in that home, and if I was scared of every minor change, how could I be fearful of the largest change of everyone – me?" 146) (Naylor) She vehemently objects to George's behavior as an aware and aggressive woman.

Cocoa has complete control over her marriage to George, a native New Yorker who grew up in a White-run orphanage. One of the causes for Cocoa's overwhelming strength is that her

pride in her background and Black folk tradition, which enhances her feeling of self-importance in their relationship. George, on the other hand, is unaware of his history as a Black man. He doesn't even know his surname, so he feels completely weak in front of Cocoa. The true source of African strength. The closeness of Americans to their ancestors, folk customs, and cultural history is a source of pride for them. Failing in the face of dominant culture as well as their own, they find themselves uprooted and alone in the African-American community.

Cocoa has the personality of a strong woman who convinces her spouse that she's the reason for their relationship's success. She claims sole responsibility for their marriage's survival, claiming, "My tolerance has been the rescue of our marriage" (Naylor 165), to which George acknowledges, "I believe you're correct" (Naylor 165). She does not allow anyone, including her own grandmother Mama Day, to meddle with her during her vacation to Willow Springs. She expresses her independence by choosing her own decisions, and she gets irritated when others try to persuade her to have a child.

Abigail, Cocoa's grandma, is not as strong as Mama Day, but her spirit shines throughout Cocoa's sickness. Her unwillingness to cry demonstrates her resolve to be a calming presence in the midst of this catastrophe. She thinks that if women wish to establish their own identity, they must have the fortitude and bravery to confront every adversity in life as an incarnation of genuine womanhood. She strives to instill excellent traits in Cocoa as a loving and powerful mother so that she may establish her female identity in terms of widespread racial and gender prejudice on the mainland.

She has tremendous mental and emotional strength, which has helped her cope with the death of her firstborn daughter, Peace. Abigail had little regard for the ladies in her own family who acted cowardly and lacked the bravery and mental fortitude to accept life as it came to them. The dignity of an Afro-American woman, according to her, rests in her indomitable spirit, which refuses to yield to an oppressive regime and empowers her to fight back and establish her own identity, resulting in a stronger human being. By showing these powerful black women from many generations, Naylor aspires to establish an alternate world in which women are free to achieve their diverse potential in numerous disciplines.

Naylor succeeds in giving an alternative to Christianity with the figure of Mama Day, a non-Christian yet deeply spiritual woman. In contrast to Christian belief in male dominance, particularly the Father, the author devolves all power to Day women, who use it solely for the sake of the black community. The islanders celebrate Candle Walk on the 22nd of December every year, contradicting the Racialist approach to Christianity, to honour their pioneering mother Sapphira, who made it possible for them to live a life of self-respect and independence beyond the rule of white hegemony.

Conclusion

Thus, Naylor strives to remove the derogatory image of African American women as conjurers in *Mama Day*, who is respected and adored by the people of her region for her altruistic works as a healer, mentor, counsellor, and spiritualist. Naylor confronts and even fights the cultural construct that believes African American women to be inhumane and places them at the bottom of the social order with her strong female characters. By highlighting characters like Sapphire, Mama Day, and Cocoa, Naylor succeeds in demonstrating the truth that African American women possess leadership qualities and the courage to overcome any problems in their life. They make a significant presence not just at home as a mother and wife, but also in the social and political arenas. They have a strong sense of resiliency that allows them to confront and overcome the oppression of the hegemonic system. Their deep connection to their ancestors, lineages, and cultural history aids them in understanding their capacity to change the current racial and gender discriminatory system. This concealed potential is the true basis of Afro-American women's amazing success in declaring and retaining their feminine identity in an impersonal and ever-threatening environment.

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