

## Black Feminism in Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise"

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### Abstract

*Maya Angelou is a writer and poet who cares and wants to raise the degree of black women. It is portrayed in her works and in her poems entitled "Still I Rise". In these two poems, Maya Angelou explains about the idea of black feminism and invites black women to rise and be confident. In this, the writer analyse what "Still I Rise" talk about, and how "Still I Rise" portray the idea of black feminism. "Still I Rise", there is clash among black women versus white people (both male and female) and black men. Black women suffer because of bad treatment of white people who consider them slaves, and because black men derogate them. Because of that, black women would do anything to rise from white people and black men's oppression. "Still I Rise" depicts black women rise struggling against slavery and racism.*

**Keywords:** Black feminism, oppression, slavery

*And Still I Rise* is author Maya Angelou's third volume of poetry, published by Random house in 1978. It was published during one of the most productive periods in Angelou's career; she had written three autobiographies and published two other volumes of poetry up to that point. Angelou considered herself a poet and a playwright, but was best known for her seven autobiographies, especially her first, *I know why the caged birds sings*, although her poetry has also been successful. She began, early in her writing career, alternating the publication of an autobiography and a volume of poetry. Although her poetry collections have been best-sellers, they have not received serious critical attention.

**Black feminism** is a philosophy that centers on the idea that "Black women are inherently valuable, that [Black women's] liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because our need as human persons for autonomy." *Still I Rise* poem is all about self esteem, self respect and confidence. In this whole poem Angelou talks about how she overcomes everything through her confidence and self esteem. She didn't give up till end she rise whatever happens. Her skin tone or anything will not make her down. This poem is also about the marginalization and also the oppression they faced. It's also an anti-black racism.

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

In this stanza, Maya Angelou declares that nothing and no one could pull her down from her success. She didn't care about the history books, because she knows that its filled with lies ie, twisted lies and you may trod her in the dirt but she will rise from the dust. No one can suppress or oppress her in any form. She will rise from everything. She doesn't care what the world thinks of her, she lives in her own way to achieve her dreams.

Does my sassiness upset you? Why are you beset with gloom? 'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

In the second stanza, she asks them a question that, whether being lively and bold upsets you? Whether being strong upsets you? and also she notices the society and the people living there were beset with gloom when she succeed by that she says that nothing can stop her from these people. And the last symbolizes her success ('Cause I walk like I've got oil wells pumping in my living room).

Just like moons and like suns, With the certainty of tides, Just like hopes springing high, Still I'll rise.

In this stanza, she compares herself to the moons and suns because they are affected by the tides likewise she is also affected by the oppressing people. But she won't give up, she succeeds. Like hopes that spring high she also spring high, and she will rise above all the negatives and from the oppressing people.

Did you want to see me broken? Bowed head and lowered eyes? Shoulders falling down like teardrops, Weakened by my soulful cries?

In this stanza, the poet directly questions them that whether they want to see her broken? Bowed head and lowered eyes? teardrops? She even knows that her success is received with bitterness by the racist people in her society. So she asks these questions directly to them for being oppressing her all these days. But she didn't give up and succeeded.

Does my haughtiness offend you? Don't you take it awful hard 'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines Diggin' in my own backyard.

In this stanza, she again questions the racist people in her society that does her haughtiness offend them? In a sarcastic way she asks them, she says that she got gold mines and also she succeeded.

You may shoot me with your words, You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

In this stanza, the speaker continues to question the racist people in her society that whether her sexiness upset them? She knows the answer for all these questions but still she wants them to know how incriminating they are. By this we know that whatever happens or whatever failure comes or whatever people offend her she will rise from all this.

Out of the huts of history's shame I rise Up from a past that's rooted in pain I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide, Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

In this stanza she says that their history may be pain, they may be oppressed heavily, it may be painful while remembering the past but that won't let her down. That will motivate her to succeed in life. Their history may be full of shame, their past may be rooted with pain but still she will rise.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear I rise Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear I rise Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave, I am the dream and the hope of the slave. I rise I rise I rise.

In the final stanza, the poet uses I raise for three times this indicates that through pain and suffering she will rise, by the nights of fear and terror she will rise. Finally she concludes that she is hope and dream of the slave. I rise, I rise, I rise.

### Outcome:

The title of the poem talks about the suppressed poet by the racist people of the society. Still I rise, Refers to whatever happens to her she will rise from all the above. She didn't give up by facing all the pains, sufferings, horrors and tears given by them but instead she motivates herself and she succeed by all the sufferings. The racist people dominated her, they didn't allow her to grow but above all this negative things she succeeded and the racist people couldn't see her succeed and a girl with pride. This poem fully shows how she overcomes everything alone by her self confidence. She achieved everything through her self confidence by facing all pains in the past.

### References

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