

**OPPRESSIONS EXPERIENCED BY BLACK WOMEN IN  
MAYA ANGELOU'S SELECTED POEMS**

**THESIS**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE FACULTY OF  
HUMANITES UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA  
MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG  
2022**

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MAYA ANGELOU'S SELECTED POEMS**

**THESIS**

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**2022**

## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled “**Oppressions Experienced by Black Women in Maya Angelou’s Selected Poems**” is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, 27 December 2022

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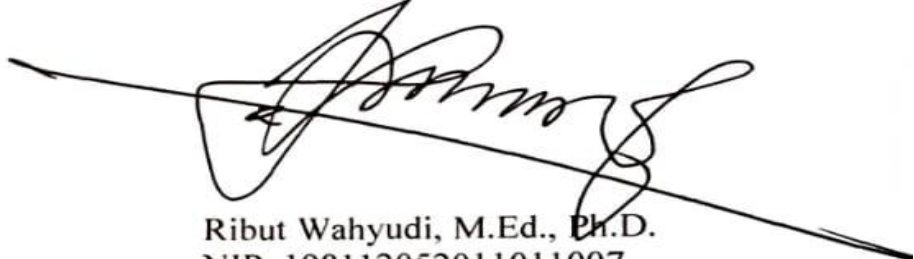
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## **MOTTO**

“Make every effort to change things you do not like. If you cannot make a change, change the way you have been thinking. You might find a new solution.”

**Maya Angelou**

## **DEDICATION**

I proudly dedicate this thesis to,

1. Two of the most valuable people in my life, Saiful Bahar S.Ag, M.Pd. and Ida Sriwahyuni S.Pd. My mom and dad have been through a lot of struggles and pain. But I promise not to let it all go to waste. I want to do my best for every trust given. I will grow, to be the best that I can be. This achievement is my special offering to my wingless angel.
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4. My beloved partner since 2021 and still counting, Mayoga Satria Adi Wiguna, S.M. He is my real 24/7 for me. I dedicate this thesis to the most special person in my life. When the world closed its doors on me, he opened his arms for me. When people close their ears to me, he opens their hearts to me. May we always be the perfect partner to live the next adventure of life.
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The author wrote this thesis to fulfill one of the requirements for earning a Bachelor of Literature (S.S.) from Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang's Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities. "Oppressions Experienced by Black Women in Maya Angelou's Selected Poems" is the title of this thesis.

The writer had limited knowledge, experience, and relevant books when writing this thesis, so he or she had to overcome many obstacles. The writer, on the other hand, was able to finish writing this thesis as well as possible due to the encouragement of the professors, friends, and family. As a result, the author wishes to express my gratitude to my father, Saiful Bahar S.Pd., M.Pd. and my mother, Ida Sriwahyuni S.Pd. my adored parents, who have taught, supported, prayed for, and guided the author up to this point with their love, moral, material, and spiritual support. Then, for my advisor Dr. Siti Masitoh, M.Hum. who has spent a lot of time guiding, directing, and advising me throughout the process of writing this thesis; for my college advisor Muhammad Edy Thoyib, M.A., who has provided criticism and demands since the start of the semester; for my best partner Mayoga Satria A.W., S.M., and for all of my favorite friends who are there for me during my most trying times.

The author is aware of the imperfections and limitations in this thesis. Therefore, I very openly accept input, criticism, and suggestions from other readers. The author hopes that this is useful for all parties and for other writers in particular. May Allah swt reward you for the services that have been given to the author.

Malang, 27 December 2022

Ika Cahya Hartiningsih

## ABSTRACT

**Hartiningsih, Ika Cahya** (2022) *Oppressions Experienced by Black Women in Maya Angelou's Selected Poems*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor Dr. Siti Masitoh, M.Hum.

Key word: Black feminism, oppressions, resistances

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White people who see themselves as the upper class are the main source of all forms of oppression, particularly in the United States. After experiencing excessive oppression, black women also took various forms of resistance. Their struggle is centered on the right to freedom and equality of treatment and a desire for change. This study aims to find out how the forms of oppression and resistance of black women are described in seven poems by Maya Angelou, namely "Harlem Hopscotch", "America", "Men", "Ain't That Bad", "My Guilt", "Life Doesn't Frighten' Me" and "Weekend Glory". These seven poems are taken from Maya Angelou's 1994 book collection, *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou*. This research method uses literary criticism with a black feminist theory approach. As this research shows, poetry depicts oppression and resistance in various ways, namely mostly visual and auditory imagery and figurative language which includes emotional symbolism, metaphor, and personification. This was done by the poet to convey the equal rights of black women to live freely, to attract the sympathy of readers, and to describe the various forms of oppression and resistance they faced.

## ABSTRAK

**Hartiningsih, Ika Cahya** (2022) *Penindasan yang Dialami oleh Wanita Kulit Hitam dalam Puisi Pilihan Maya Angelou*. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing Dr. Siti Masitoh, M.Hum.

Kata kunci: Feminisme Kulit Hitam, penindasan, perlawanan

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Orang kulit putih yang menganggap diri mereka kelas atas adalah sumber utama segala bentuk penindasan, khususnya di Amerika Serikat. Setelah mengalami penindasan yang berlebihan, perempuan kulit hitam pun melakukan berbagai bentuk perlawanan. Perjuangan mereka berpusat pada hak atas kebebasan dan persamaan perlakuan serta keinginan untuk berubah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana bentuk penindasan dan perlawanan perempuan kulit hitam yang digambarkan dalam tujuh puisi karya Maya Angelou, yaitu "Harlem Hopscotch", "Amerika", "Men", "My Guilt", "Ain't That Bad", "Life Doesn't Frighten' Me" dan "Weekend Glory". Ketujuh puisi ini diambil dari koleksi buku Maya Angelou tahun 1994, *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou*. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan kritik sastra dengan pendekatan teori feminisme kulit hitam. Seperti yang ditunjukkan oleh penelitian ini, puisi menggambarkan penindasan dan perlawanan dalam berbagai cara, yaitu sebagian besar citra visual dan auditori serta bahasa kiasan yang mencakup simbolisme emosional, metafora, dan personifikasi. Hal itu dilakukan penyair untuk menyampaikan persamaan hak perempuan kulit hitam untuk hidup bebas, menarik simpati pembaca, dan menggambarkan berbagai bentuk penindasan dan perlawanan yang mereka hadapi.

## مستخلص البحث

قسم البحث الجامعي. اضطهاد النساء السود في شعر مايا أنجيلو. (2022). إيكاجاحيا، هارتينينجسيه  
مشريفة. الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة الإسلامية الحكومية مولانا مالك إبراهيم مالانج  
الدكتورة سبتي ماسيتوه الماجستير

النسوية، السود، اضطهاد، مقاومة: الكلمات المفتاحية

كل أشكال الاضطهاد، خاصة في أميركي، من الأشخاص البيض الذين يعتبرون أنفسهم طبقة عليا. لقد اعتقدوا أن أفراد الطبقة العليا لديهم الحق في اضطهاد النساء الأسود كما أعضاء في الطبقة الدنيا. تظهر النساء السود في أشكال المقاومة بعد تعرضهن للقمع المفرطة. أصبح جهادهم مركزاً على الرغبة في التغيير والحق في الحرية والمساواة في المعاملة. الشعر هو إحدى عمل أدبي الذي يعطي أن يستخدم ليعارض محاربة. الغرض من هذا البحث لمعرفة كيف تصف القصائد السبع لمايا أنجيلو الاضطهاد والمقاومة. سبعة من شعر مايا أنجيلو موضوع هذا التحليل البحثي. مجموعة قصائد مايا أنجيلو الكاملة (1994)، مجموعة من الكتب. ومن بين الشعر: هرليم هوفستوت (*Harlem Hopscotch*)، أميركا (*America*)، الرجل (*Men*)، لايزال يرتفع (*My Guilt*)، أليس هذا شينا (*Ain't That Bad*)، قفص الطيور (*Life Doesn't Frighten Me*)، المساواة (*Weekend Glory*). يستخدم النقد الأدبي في هذا منهج البحث. باستخدام منهج نظرية النسوية الأسود، يتم ذلك عن طريق تحديد البيانات، وتصنيف البيانات وفقاً لأهداف البحث، وتحليل اللغة التصويرية، والأنواع القمعية، وردود النساء السود على الشعر السبع. يصور الشعر الاضطهاد والمقاومة بطرق متنوعة، كما توضح هذا البحث: (1) الاستخدام السائد للصور المرئية واللمسية والسمعية (2) اللغة التصويرية للرمزية العاطفية والاستعارة والتجسيد. يفعل الشاعر هذا للتعبير عن الحق المتساوي للمرأة السوداء في العيش بحرية، وجذب تعاطف القراء، ووصف أشكال القهر والمقاومة التي تواجهها النساء السود.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This present chapter explains the background of the study, research questions, significances of the study, scope and limitations, and definition of key terms.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

Judging from the history of the world, especially America, arbitrary treatment of women with various forms of colonialism and oppression carried out by individuals and the social environment has always been considered normal and natural for women to experience. This also applies to African-American women, who are under pressure not only from white men but also by black men. They are not considered fully human, so the treatment they receive is even worse than that received by white women (Nurul Laili N., 2017). This issue in the wider community has existed for some time ago and has not been resolved in this modern era.

It has been known widely that racism still exist in any part of the world especially in country where the number of citizens consist of different backgrounds. According to Kleg as cited in Racism, Crime and Justice (Bowling, 2002) racism is the belief that certain groups are innately, biologically, socially, morally superior to other groups, based on what is attributed to be their racial composition. While Robert Blauner in (Neubeck, 1997) stated that racism is the principle of social dominance where groups are seen as inferior or different in

biological characteristics and then allegedly exploited, controlled, and oppressed socially and physically by superordinate groups. In other words, racism can be defined as an act of discriminating or oppressing other race based on their believe that one race is more superior than the others. Thus, it is very dangerous when the existence of racism always happens in the society. The effect is that there will be no peaceful and happy society whenever the racism exists in this world. However, throughout history, the racism has always been received by the black race especially African-American who had lived as the citizen of America.

Another common type of racism is an oppression. Oppression here refers to any activity that can cause pain in both physical and mental. As a form of racism, oppression causes pain and leaves deep wounds for black women. According to (Collins, 2000) oppression is not only understood in the mind, but is felt in the body in various ways. Race, class, and gender represent the three axes of oppression that African-American women routinely identify as being most important to them. Meanwhile, (Dinnerstein, 1990) in his book states that, “the first Europeans who explored Africa and encountered blacks the difference of colour, made a profound impression and, in the long run, skin colour defined the relationship between blacks and whites”. The whites here that has been mentioned in Dinnerstein is the Europeans whose race has white skin colour. Black was always categorized as lowered class and had suffered of being oppression since long time ago. They are often humiliated or degraded in society and it related to the slavery which also had happened since a long time ago. This fact of the

existence of racism then also led to the oppression which not only experienced by the black man but also the black women.

Based on the previous paragraphs, it can be concluded that any type of oppressions which are experienced by black woman can also be categorized as part of racism especially when it occurs to the black women. Black women have been subjected to much manipulation, oppression, and deception by the dual forces of racism. In other words, inequality and dishonesty are the pressures that most of black women have experienced to this day. Those facts then can be categorized as part of racism since those acts of inequality and dishonesty are only experienced by Black Women.

Oppression, discrimination, physical and non-physical violence, marginalization, sexual harassment, and gender injustice experienced by women, encourage the emergence of the term feminism. Feminism itself fights for two things that women in general do not have, namely equality with men and autonomy to determine what is good for themselves. This fact then makes the women to be subordinated and their position in society is lower than that of men (Sugihastuti, 2002). Thus, the problems faced by white women are different from those faced by African-American women. Black women face much more complicated problems because they come from different background, different skin colour and different race. This fact is also in line with (Collins, 2000) stated that “the lives of AfricanAmerican women have been affected by racism, sexism, classism, and colorization”. In other words, black women may face problems not

just because 4 they are women, but also because they are black. Thus, they are considered as the lowest caste humans compared to the white woman and gained more pressure in the society where they live. In addition, the treatment that they receive is even worse than the white women.

Black women live harder lives every day than white women as they have to face various oppressions of sexism and racism. According to (Zammani, 2003) states that “being a woman and an African-American places African-American women at the confluence of two forms of oppression”. Which means that racism and double oppressive sexism are born for African-American women when their subordinate status is taken over and upheld by white women (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). This statement is also in line with (Collins, 2000) that “living as AfricanAmerican women have been influenced by racism, sexism, classism, and coloration”. Thus, racism that has been experienced by the black women is a type of discrimination called sexism. Sexism is a type of discrimination related to sex while classism is discrimination based on social class.

Subordinate women especially black women often experience other forms of exploitation because of their inferiority position in social society. (Ritzer, 2014) also explains that in social practice, the dominating party uses differences among people to justify oppressive practices by translating differences into models of inferiority or superiority. The people are also socialized to relate to differences and not as a source of cultural diversity, interests, and wealth but to be evaluated evaluatively as "better" or "worse." Maya Angelou in her poems entitled “Still I 5

Rise” and “Caged Birds” describe the way black women face various forms of oppression and forms of resistance to structural oppression. Maya Angelou's poems reflect her position as an African-American women in society. It is interesting to study Maya Angelou's poems because they have several differences from its predecessors. As (Fahmi, 2019) stated that “Maya Angelou's work has influenced a large number of people in the field of literature and had helped her gain many awards as an active feminist”. It is highly recommended to read the entire works of her poems to further understand the existence of woman's oppression. Meanwhile, using the theory of black feminism to address various issues about African-American women is also considered to be the right choice because the theory has an understanding of structural oppression in inferiority groups, especially women and states how they form of resistance structural oppressions.

Most poor women and the working class, work is neither personally satisfying nor liberating it is largely exploitative and inhumane (Hooks, 1984). Black women have been exploited in the labour market and assigned to do hard and menial jobs in the domestic sphere. The phenomenon of poor social conditions makes black women feel worried and depressed because they seem unable to get out of the problem. Black women are under pressure because they are only known as humans who are at the lowest social stratification. Black women's employment status is frequently referred to as that of "mules" due to the fact that "as inhuman objects, mules are living machines and can be treated as part of the scene." (Collins, 2000).

Based on perception which is argued by (Wellek, 1967) that literature is not just a social reflection but represents an idea about the world or an idea about a sociological reality that transcends time. Literature is not only a way to express the author's experience, but also influences the reader. Through language and writing, the author presents experiences in a social environment and contains conflicts. Literature is categorized into several sections, such as novels, poetry, drama, and poetry (Jones, 2012). The results of human imagination shown through meaningful association phrases and composed of various elements are poured into a poem. The elements of poetry consist of word forms, rhyme patterns, rhythms, ideas, or issues that contain meaning in the poet's life and life to be conveyed to readers, listeners, with certain techniques and aspects. The language used in poetry is also different from other literary works, such as novels, prose, or drama scripts. According to (Shumaker, 1965) poetry comes from poet's ideas or thoughts that flow as a medium to express certain perceptions, feelings, and thoughts.

This part elaborates the previous study that are used in this research as the reference in writing this research. There are several previous studies that had been conducted by the previous researchers regarding the poems' analysis in woman oppression or racism. Those previous studies used different method and focused on different topics and poems that are analysed using different theories. Here are some previous studies that are relevant to be used as the references in writing this research. The first previous study concerning on discussing the representation of resistance to racism in the Green Book film which was conducted by (Miranda

Mariani Wijaya, 2019). In this study, Miranda and her partner take several scenes that reflect the struggle against racism experienced by a character of color named Don Shirley who is a pianist by profession, with a white coworker, named Tony Valellonga. Applying a qualitative descriptive method by using the unit of analysis in the form of text and images that appear as a form of resistance to racism in their study. The researchers use the semiotics theory by Charles Sanders Peirce as his analytical knife and divides the analysis into three forms of Icons, Indexes and Symbols, using the semiosis process. The results of this study indicate that resistance to racism is divided into three forms, namely individual, institutional and personal resistance to racism. Then, this film shows that the struggle against racism is real by strengthening self-identity and working hard against self-emotions, social and cultural hierarchies.

Using the theory of black feminism and new criticism, specifically in the application of imagery and figurative language, Fahmi (2019) conducted another study that focuses on the racial issues black women face. The qualitative descriptive method is used by the researcher. The study's findings indicate that black women face distinct challenges in each of Maya Angelou's three poems. Maya Angelou writes about how black women deal with hatred, discrimination, and injustice. In the poem "Still I Rise," he was able to accept the difficulties he faced because of his gender and skin color, and he had a strong personality and self-assurance. The poem "Phenomenal Woman" by Maya Angelou then describes how the character in the poem's character does not own the issue of society's beauty standards for black women. In the final poem, "Weekend Glory," Maya

Angelou demonstrates how black women face the views of white people who always underestimate them and how she can accept the problems that exist by living her life with gratitude. She also demonstrates the strength of Maya Angelou. This study benefited from Fahmi's research on the subject and its primary focus, particularly in the section of the discussion that employs the same theory, black feminism.

The next study, titled "Black Women's Oppression and Resistance in Kathryn Stockett's "The Help" Novel:" conducted by Rafael in 2021, also examined the oppression and resistance of black women. Approach based on gender in the novel "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett, the researcher focuses on the oppression and resistance of black women against the pressure they face. The researcher chose Black Feminist Thought by Patricia Hill Collins as the research theory for this study. The explanation the specialist utilizes this hypothesis is on the grounds that the hypothesis of dark women's liberation fits the center that will be talked about in this review. The novel that Rafael used as the subject of his research was published in 2009 and provided straightforward examples of racial discrimination against maids by housewives from the 1960s in the city of Jackson, Mississippi's capital individuals who are black. Black feminist thought is a concept that rewrites feminist theory to include black women in the minority rather than the majority. Rafael investigates the oppression that inspires black women to resist racial discrimination. The status or position of black women, who were labeled by society in the United States in the 1960s, and their negative views are the root causes of the oppression. In the process of analyzing the data,



researchers employed qualitative methods. The narratives, actions, or sentences that are used to collect the data all make reference to attempts to oppress black women and the novel "The Help." As a consequence of this, there are twenty data taken from novels that exhibit hints of resistance and oppression. After that, a total of nine data pointed to oppression in the form of dominance and control, and eleven data pointed to resistance in the form of awareness and character defense. Rafael's research on the subject and the study's focus helped this study a lot, especially in the part of the discussion that used the same theory, black feminism.

Literary works is one of the written media that can be a place to express ideas, thoughts, imagination, and even literary works can be a reflection of a certain history, culture, and society in an era. This study, titled "Criticizing Feminism Portrayed in Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing Through Minority Feminist Criticism," aims to criticize and examine the way poetry reflects and describes the history of discrimination against women, particularly black women (Susilowati, 2019). African American literary feminism arose as a result of this article's criticism of discrimination against black women. In this study, the poet's opposition to the phenomenon of discrimination against black women in the form of feminism is reflected in the poem "I Know Why The Caged Bird Sing" by Maya Angelou. In line with the issue of feminism which is the theme of the poem, this study criticizes this phenomenon from the perspective of Minority Feminist Criticism, which is a literary criticism that analyzes the issue of feminism that occurs because of discrimination against women who are minorities in a certain society. The researcher hopes that this study is able to

provide knowledge about the history of the emergence of the era of feminism in literature, the types of feminism itself, and how feminist criticism is applied in literary analysis.

Then, (Paturahmah, 2019) looks at how Maya Angelou's poetry depicts the struggles of black women. The researcher chose the poem, "Equality" by Maya Angelou for this study. The researcher employs feminist literary criticism, gynocriticism and Maya Angelou's biography as intrinsic elements of poetry in order to determine how the struggle of black women is embodied in the poem. This study focuses on the ways in which Maya Angelou's poetry depicts the struggles of black women and the kinds of struggles she writes about. According to the findings of this study, Maya Angelou represents the struggle of black women through its inherent aspects. She exemplifies the conflict that exists between white people and black women. Black women were harshly treated by white people. Because black women are thought of as slaves or members of the lowest caste of society. Black women have fought racism, as these poems demonstrate. Additionally, the researcher gains a number of advantages from Paturahmah's research, including a deeper comprehension of black women, a topic that is frequently used in poetry analysis.

"Analysis of Maya Angelou's Feminist Thoughts as Reflected in the Poems Still I Rise, Phenomenal Woman, and Equality," is the title of the fifth study. This research was carried out by Tiara Amalia in 2019 with the intention of illuminating black feminist ideas in three poems by Maya Angelou through the

use of figurative language and imagery. By identifying figurative language or imagery in the three poems and analyzing how black feminist thoughts were reflected in the three poems by Maya Angelou through figurative language and imagery, the researcher decided to use a descriptive method to analyze the data. The author applies Perrine's (1969) theory to the analysis of Maya Angelou's poetry's figurative language and imagery by focusing on the analysis of figurative language, imagery types, and black feminism. In addition, Collins (2000)'s theory of black feminism was added to aid in the analysis of Maya Angelou's poems' figurative language and imagery of black feminist thought. In all three of Angelou's poems, the researchers demonstrated that the poet employs figurative language and imagery, such as similes, hyperbole, metaphors, personification, irony, symbols, visual imagery, auditory imagery, and kinesthetic imagery, to convey and describe black women who are independent, strong, confident, bold, and outspoken.

Tiara Febrianti (2019) carried out the subsequent research, which was titled "The Struggle of the African-American Female Character in Margot Lee Shatterly's Novel *Hidden Figures*." This study focuses on Katherine, the main character in Margot Lee Shetterly's *Hidden Figures*, and the struggles of African-American women who are subjected to discrimination. The whole story, intrinsic elements like characters and characterizations, conflict, setting, and plot are all part of the research process. Extrinsic factors like multicultural feminism, liberal feminism, and racism are also a part of this study. The descriptive analysis technique is used by the researcher in this qualitative method. Additionally, this

study makes use of methods from literature reviews to establish that feminism and racism actually result in discrimination. The main character, Katherine, is subjected to racism when it comes to employment opportunities and education for African Americans. The main character eventually becomes motivated to fight discrimination as a result of these experiences, demonstrating that she is capable of becoming the first black woman to work for NASA.

"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing, Still I Rise, Phenomenal Woman, When I Think about My Self, and the last is Alone" is one of five poems analyzed in the qualitative descriptive study "Analysis Of Imagery In Five Selected Poems By Maya Angelou" by Arbi (2018). The researcher determines the kind of imagery that is used in those five chosen poems by Maya Angelou by employing a qualitative and structural approach. The researcher then discovered, based on the analysis's findings, that Maya Angelou used four different kinds of imagery in her poem "I Know Why the Cage Bird Sings, Still I Rise, Phenomenal Woman, When I Think of Myself and the Last Is Alone." These were visual imagery, auditory imagery, tactile imagery, gustatory imagery, and kinesthetic imagery. However, auditory imagery was used the most frequently.

Saskia Febiola Siregar's research in 2020 looked at linguistic stylistics, or the way women and men are shown in a text using a feminist approach, or the feminist stylist. The study, titled "A Feminist Stylistics Analysis in Rupi Kaur's The Sun and Her Flowers," not only focuses on stylistic analysis, which takes into account the structure of language and how it affects society, but also on women's

roles as actors and how ideas or events affect society shown in the text. The study employs a qualitative approach. The novel's gender-specific words, phrases, or sentences, as well as discourses, become research data. The data was analyzed using Mills' feminist style theory. There are a number of male or female tendencies related to the text in this study. It often appears in italics at the bottom of poetry collections to emphasize the poem's subject matter. According to the findings of this study, Rupi Kaur appears to want readers to comprehend her poetry as much as she writes about it. Also, this study found that gender-specific terms are mostly used to talk about women.

Last but not least, in (Isti'anah, 2017) study, titled "Stylistic Analysis of Maya Angelou's Equality," examines the stylistic analysis of Maya Angelou's poem "Equality." Because it is one of Angelou's most well-known poems, the poem was chosen. By observing the language used in the text, stylistic analysis aims to comprehend the meaning of literary and non-literary texts. The Maya Angelou Equivalence was analyzed using stylistic analysis. The phonological, graphological, grammatical, and semantic levels of language all need to be observed in order to accomplish the goals of stylistic analysis. The phonological findings of this study include the use of assonance, consonants, and alliteration to convey Angelou's dream of black people's freedom and the repetition of rhymes over multiple stanzas. The use of prominent punctuation marks in stanzas 3, 6, and 9 further emphasizes equality as a prerequisite for the freedom he anticipates at the graphological level. Meanwhile, Angelou makes use of the pronouns "I" and "you" as the predominant words in the poem on a grammatical level in order

to convey the class differences that poets in the country face. The poem's use of metaphors conveys the same meaning as black Americans' struggles with racism as well as their freedom, voice, and effort. The researcher draws the conclusion that the study of literary works requires an understanding of stylistics in order to gain a comprehensive appreciation.

In conclusion, those previous studies will all be used as the reference in this study after considering the gap and the similarities found within. The subject of this study, Maya Angelou, is the same as in previous studies; the number of poems selected, their titles, and the research's primary focus, on the other hand, were areas where there was a gap and differences. Those gaps are meant to avoid any plagiarism so that this research will provide an original research result in the future.

As previously explained, the researcher is interested to conduct research entitled "Black Women's Oppression Reflected in Maya Angelou's Selected Poems". This research will only focus on the type of oppressions and the way black women faced oppressions problems in seven selected poems by Maya Angelou, entitled, "*Harlem Hopscotch*", "*America*", "*Men*", "*Ain't that Bad*", "*My Guilt*", "*Life Doesn't Frighten' Me*", and "*Weekend Glory*". The researcher hopes that preliminary academic information and prevalent theory regarding oppressions, which are currently regarded as trivial. However, many readers are unaware that fighting for these freedoms takes a significant amount of time and that black women are subjected to such oppression for centuries. In addition, the

researcher believes that this research is very important and crucial because public awareness will begin to have a positive view and equal treatment of black people, not only women also men is still lacking, especially in Indonesia.

### **B. The Problems of The Study**

- a. What are kinds of oppression experienced by black women in Maya Angelou's selected poems?
- b. How do black women solve oppressions problems in Maya Angelou's selected poems?

### **C. Significances of Study**

The author hopes that this research can be useful both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it is expected that the result of this study can support the building theory from the previous studies and to give other proves of the existence of poems written by Maya Angelou which mostly talk about the woman's oppression. In terms of practical significance, it is expected that this thesis will provide full insight towards oppressions in which still exist in this modern era and we should not repeat the tragedy that happened to the poet in the future era by learning the finding of this research

### **D. Scope and Limitation**

This study aims to analyze the various forms of oppression faced by black women in Maya Angelou's poetry, including "Harlem Hopscotch", "America", "Men", "Ain't that Bad", "My Guilt" and black women's resistance on the poems "Life Doesn't Frighten' Me", and "Weekend Glory". The scope of this research is to analyse the figurative language and message contained in the seven poems above, then also examines the forms of oppression and resistance against black women. The limitation of this research is the use of several lyrics and stanzas related to forms of depiction of oppression of black women and their resistance. In this case, The theory used is a black feminism approach to examine the forms of oppression and resistance of black women assisted by figurative language theory to examine the literal meaning and message contained in the poem.

#### **E. Definition of Key Terms**

- a. **Black Feminism** : Black feminism highlights the problems black women face, understands their position in relation to racism, sexism, and classism, as well as other social and political identities. "Black feminism is a political and social movement which focuses on the liberation of black women by ending the interlocking system of racism, sexism, and classism on the economic, political and ideological levels" (Collins, 2000).
- b. **Economic Oppression** : Oppression based on the social and economic circumstances of black women. The position of black women in the family unit determined their occupation. Hooks sarcastically states that for poor and working-class women "work is neither personally satisfying nor liberating, it is largely exploitative and inhumane". (Hooks, 1984).



- c. Resistance : The struggle to establish one's identity and define one's reality is an act of resistance for many exploited and oppressed individuals because the process of dominance, whether imperialist colonization, racism, or sexist oppression, has stripped us of our identity, degrading our language and cultural appearance (Hooks, 1984).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The subsequent part shows a few references which are connected with the exploration issues to help the perusers in grasping this review. This chapter is started with a feminism and literature, feminism, black feminism, black women's oppressions which are consisted of the economic oppression of black women and a matrix of domination, the resistances of black women which are consisted of women's consciousness and standpoint, three types of imagery, they are visual imagery, auditory imagery, gustatory imagery, and hyperbole that make up the figurative language are simile, metaphor, and symbolism.

#### **A. Feminist Literary Criticism**

According to (Jackson, 2010) state that sexuality and domestic work became a major theoretical concern in the 1970s. There were also many works produced at that time aimed at making women more visible and rediscovered, for example women's history and women's literature. Literature contains the writings of works created by the authors, and the existence of readers or connoisseurs of literary works. This literary work raises the story of the role of marginalized women. Feminism is an understanding that voices the struggle of women from discrimination. It is the same in feminist literary works which raise the values of women's resistance from discrimination. Literature is also associated with the work of middle-class women who are considered not much related to economic affairs (Anwar, 2015).

Feminism and literature have a symbiotic relationship because they both have a function in life. Both use the same foundation, namely to make human experience the object of their analysis. The theory generated from feminist ideas can be used as a theoretical basis in literary criticism. According to Ritzer (2014), feminism theory is a generalization of various systems of ideas about human experience and social life that were developed from a woman-centered perspective. The study of literary criticism based on feminist thought is known as feminist literary criticism. Women's resistance to oppression is depicted in the literary works that were studied as a form of justice-seeking struggle. Feminist literary criticism is viewed as revolutionary criticism within the framework of the development of literary criticism because it seeks to subvert the patriarchal traditional voices' dominant discourse. Feminist literary criticism focuses primarily on examining gender relations and the situation in which men rule over women (Wiyatmi, 2012).

## **B. Feminism**

Basically, feminism was born because of the view of inequality in aspects of life between women and men. Feminism is a form of effort made by women in dealing with the patriarchal system. In the patriarchal system there is meaning in social life based on gender. Thus feminists reject the view that inequality between men and women is natural and inevitable. They insist that these inequalities must be questioned (Jackson, 2010). The essence of feminism is that it requires access to education, economics, and politics. In social life, a society dominated by men considers women to be more often used as a complement. This refers to the

problem of the absence of gender equality, thus giving rise to discrimination against women. In terms of gender equality, it can be interpreted that there are similarities in the conditions of men and women in obtaining their rights as social beings or humans (Nuryati, 2015).

The reason for the formation of the idea of feminism is the effort to liberate women from oppression and exploitation. These efforts resulted in several developments of feminist thought that gave birth to three waves. Through these waves triggered the emergence of various streams of feminism, resulting in new knowledge about the struggle for women's rights. The explosive growth of new women's literature that depicted all previously unimaginable aspects of women's experiences and lives was the hallmark of this international women's movement. Women's studies literature is the product of an international and interdisciplinary group of writers from both within and outside the university. It is written for academics and the general public (Ritzer, 2014).

Historically, the feminist movement has been divided into 3 waves. Starting in 1792, the first wave of the feminist movement occurred until 1960. This movement began with an article entitled *Vindication Right of Woman* by Wollstonecraft which was triggered by the birth of the French revolution. Through her work, she provides an overview of the struggles of women's lives in terms of love and economy. Women who have the right to education, love in the family and work that is not degrading. Even though middle class women at that time would choose to get married and just stay at home. Whereas women can be

independent from an economic point of view by using the education aspect, without having to follow an established husband. Women are demeaned by the behavior habits of their male partners who seem to really adore female sensuality (Gamble, 2010).

The first wave of feminism gave rise to individual works from feminists who had different views on the level of their feminism. The discussion that is often raised is about empowering middle class single women. Until then, the momentum of these events raised public attention to the full participation of women in social and political life in politics as a whole. And in this case, absolutely no achievement is produced (Gamble, 2010). Dissatisfaction with the results of the first wave of feminism, gave rise to the next wave.

The second wave of feminism was born in 1960 up to 1980. The views and movements of the feminists in the second wave were considered to have cohesiveness. Collectively, the feminist movement spoke about women's freedom. This wave arises because of women's dissatisfaction with various forms of oppression. Although in the first wave emancipation has been achieved in social and political life. Theoretical differences and political prohibitions have always existed among feminists, thus sparking a rift in this movement. The idea of a second wave of feminism which simplifies the experience of the same women, is then considered obsolete and redefined by post-colonial feminists (Margaretha, 2016).

Gamble, as quoted by (Oktaviani, 2017) explains that postfeminism replaces dualism with diversity, replaces consensus with difference of opinion, and creates a a dynamic area of intellectual debate that ultimately leads to the forms of socio-political movements in the contemporary world. Post-feminism is a feminist movement that rejects the ideas of previous feminists. The activism that occurs is considered to be against women's social identity. Previously, women had a graceful appearance with dresses and earrings. Meanwhile, post-feminism shows women who dress like men in trousers and coats. This is seen as a form of gender discrimination against women's existence. Black feminism is another name for the third wave of feminism. Even though white women and black women do not live in different countries, problems arising from differences in skin color between the two groups led to the development of black feminism. Black women's struggle was no more difficult than that of white women's because they were always regarded as the lowest class in white society. Black women face racism and sexism in the same way that white women face racism and sexism." The lives of African-American women have been influenced by racism, sexism, classism, and coloration," says Collins (2015) in his book.

### **C. Black Feminism**

If postcolonialism emphasizes the effects and impacts of colonialism on culture and society, black feminism is more focused on the colonial experience specifically experienced by women, specifically black women. According to (Barker, 2000), Black Feminism emphasizes the distinction between experiences of black women and white women, cultural representations, and also their

interests. Racism and colonialism have outlined the structures of power relations between black and white women. Furthermore, (Barker, 2000) states that gender intersects with race, ethnicity, and nationality which in the end provides a different experience of what it is like to be a woman. This is because they are not considered fully human, or also referred to as mules. In essence, black women are treated differently from white women, considering they are not humanized due to their racial differences. As a dehumanized object, mules, according to Collins (2000), are living machines that can be treated as part of the scenery. Women who are fully human are harder to exploit.

#### **D. Black Women's Oppression**

African-American women's oppression has encompassed three interdependent dimensions, they are economic, political, and ideology dimensions (Collins, 2000). The exploitation of Black women's labor essential to U.S. capitalism. Because this larger system of oppression works to suppress the ideas of Black women intellectuals and to protect elite white male interests and worldviews. Survival for most African-American women has been such an all-consuming activity that most have had few opportunities to do intellectual work. The drudgery of enslaved African-American women's work and the grinding poverty of "free" wage labor in the rural South tellingly illustrate the high costs Black women have paid for survival (Collins, 2000). The millions of impoverished African-American women ghettoized in Philadelphia, Birmingham, Oakland, Detroit, and other U.S. inner cities demonstrate the continuation of these earlier forms of Black women's economic exploitation (Brewer 1993; Omolade

1994). While matrix of domination refers to the overall organization of power in a society (Collins, 2000). There are two features to any matrix. First, any specific matrix has a particular arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression. Just what and how these systems come together is historically and socially specific. Second, intersecting systems of oppression are specifically organized through four interrelated domains of power: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. As the particular form assumed by intersecting oppressions in one social location, any matrix of domination can be seen as an historically specific organization of power in which social groups are embedded and which they aim to influence. All contexts of domination incorporate some combination of intersecting oppressions, and considerable variability exists from one matrix of domination to the next as to how oppression and activism will be organized (Collins, 2000).

### **1. Economic Oppression of Black Women**

Oppression, as defined by Collins (2000), is any unfair circumstance in which one group denies another group access to community resources in a systematic and prolonged manner. In the United States, some of the main forms of oppression include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, nation, age, and ethnicity. However, all of the later relationships that women of African descent had in black American families and communities, with employers, and among themselves were influenced by the convergence of racial, class, and gender characteristics that suppressed slavery in the United States. The majority of African American women no longer have the opportunity to engage in traditional intellectual work because



survival has become such a time-consuming activity. The low wages paid to "free" wage workers in the rural South and the meager labor of African-American women serve as clear examples of the high costs black women had to bear in order to survive (Collins, 2000). These early forms of economic exploitation of black women are continued by the millions of poor African-American women in inner US cities like Philadelphia, Birmingham, Oakland, and Detroit (Brewer, 1993 in Collins). According to Berry, 1994 in Collins, African-American families have historically been economically exploited and politically excluded from the political economy of the United States. This does not imply that all or most African Americans have been poor. However, the relationships that lie at the heart of injustice remain despite the diversity among black Americans' historical and contemporary contours of intersecting racial and class oppression. Black Americans as a whole have been impacted by this unfair context, which has provided a framework for comprehending the work experiences of black women in kinship networks and the workforce (Mullings, 1997).

## **2. Matrix of Domination**

Matrix of domination is a sociological concept that draws attention to the issue of oppression based on race, class, and gender. According to Collins (2000), this theory makes use of additional categories like age, religion, or sexual identity. Dominance will be experienced by someone with different characteristics. Age, gender, and race are all examples of differences in these characteristics. The matrix of domination conceptualizes the fact that, regardless of whether we are oppressed, we are all categorized into a number of privileged statuses and that

privilege is the cause of oppression (Collins, 2000). When we recognize and are familiar with someone who perpetrates slavery and takes advantage of it, slavery causes us to think more critically. For instance, in the case of slavery, the master obviously reaps the economic benefits of forced labor. As a result, it is essential for them to continue operating the slavery system in order to reap the benefits of it. This volume has examined race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation as forms of oppression that work together in different ways to produce the unique matrix of US dominance so far, using the experiences of African-American women as a lens (Collins, 2000).

#### **E. The Resistance of Black Women**

Black women rose up against oppression because they had been subjected to too much of it. According to Collins (2000), oppression and resistance are still intricately linked in such a way that the form of one influences that of the other, and this relationship is far more complicated than a straightforward model of perpetual oppressors and victims. Refusing by doing something "not expected" would not have happened without black women's long-standing rejection of mothers, matriarchs, and other controlling images. Taken together, the distinctively collective black female consciousness becomes this individual act of resistance (Collins, 2000). Then, on the individual level, her actions illustrate the connections among lived experiences with oppression, developing one's own standpoint concerning those experiences, and the acts of resistance that can follow. A similar relationship characterizes African-American women's group knowledge. Black women's collective historical experiences with oppression may

stimulate a self-defined Black women's standpoint that in turn can foster Black women's activism (Collins, 2000).

### **1. Women's Consciousness**

Women's consciousness is a sphere of freedom that encourages a person to take the path of personal freedom, even if initially in his own mind so that he understands that everyday life is subject to change can become empowered (Collins, 2000). It is in it that black female intellectuals can construct ideas and experiences that fill everyday life with new meaning. This new meaning offered by African-American women is a potentially powerful tool to combat the controlling image of black womanhood. People are more likely to alter their living conditions when they are aware of change (Collins, 2000). Black women were motivated by this resistance to have the same rights and opportunities as white women, especially to be seen as "women" without being judged on their skin color. This has been discussed and researched by US Black Women experts, some of whom have lived it for a long time. According to (Collins, 2000), the outcomes of these ideas assisted black women in many instances in overcoming oppression that transcended the boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Not because they feel victimized, but rather because they feel strong and saved, many black women consciously want to change the way their stories are told. Their actions and thoughts demonstrate that it is crucial not only for representing them in society but also for their point of view and self-definition.

### **2. Standpoint**

Standpoint is a theory arguing that group location in hierarchical power

relations produces common challenges for individuals in those groups (Collins, 2000). Moreover, shared experiences can foster similar angles of vision leading to group knowledge or standpoint deemed essential for informed political action. The significance of this Black Women's Standpoint as a reference that will be utilized by agents of change in order to guarantee Black Women's future. They absolutely want to be perceived as having legal US citizenship and being in a better position to participate more actively in the nation in which they currently reside. In this regard, (Collins, 2000) concurs that this strategy places an emphasis on the significance of black women's ideas and actions in applying this perspective to the challenges facing society, politics, and the economy today.

#### **F. Figurative Language**

The figurative language contained in a poem can help us find the message the poet wants to convey. According to Perrine (1978), figurative language is language that uses figures of speech and language that cannot be interpreted literally to attract the reader's interest and convey our thoughts and imagination more effectively. Poetry uses figurative language to captivate readers, although sometimes a different interpretation is required when interpreting figurative language. According to Perrine (1978), figurative language is more effective than direct statements for getting one's point across because it evokes imaginative fun, adds additional imagery to verses, adds emotional intensity to informative statements, and conveys a lot in a short amount of time (Perrine, 1978). To find the deeper meaning of these poems, this study uses various figurative language, including:

### **1. Simile**

The use of multiple words or phrases, such as "like," "as," "of," "similar to," and "apparently," to make a comparison is known as a simile (Perrine, 1978). "My adoration resembles a red rose, a red rose," for instance, is the illustration in Robert Consume's sonnet. It is related to comparing love to red roses with the use of the word "like."

### **2. Metaphor**

The use of words or groups of words with no real meaning to create a painting based on similarities or comparisons is called metaphor. As indicated by (Perrine, 1978) representations are immediate examinations made between basically disparate things. Therefore, it is possible to draw the conclusion that a metaphor is comparing two fundamentally distinct things that share a comparable object. For instance, "She's all states, and all princes, I, Nothing else is" in *The Sun Rising* by John Donne. Only princes play us; In contrast to this, "All wealth alchemy, imitation of honor." It suggests that his beloved is the ruler of each nation and resembles every other nation on the planet. Their love is so strong that they are the entire world, and everything else is a lie.

### **3. Imagery**

The utilization of symbolism to make a specific picture of a few things and a few conditions is frequently finished by writers.

"Representation through the language of the senses experience" is how Perrine describes an image. When people read poetry about feelings, this works well to remind them to feel what the author felt. The use of imagery can be seen in the 1995 poem "A Dog Was Crying to-Night in Wicklow" by Seamus Heaney, where the idea of dead people drifting out of other people's minds is illustrated by the image of "burnt wood disappearing into smoke." Various pictures include:

a) Visual Imagery

An image that can be seen with the eye, like an object's color or shape, is called visual imagery. Meeting at Night by Robert Browning serves as an illustration. The joy and experience of having love are the subject of this poem. However, neither the author of this poem nor the word "love" appear anywhere in the poem. Browning chooses to contrast the happiness of love with a stunning ocean view. He declared, "And the big and low yellow crescent moon", "And the little waves began to jump", "In the fiery curls of his sleep...", "the gray sea and the long, black land." "The gray of the ocean," "the yellow of the crescent moon," and "the waves that have a little splash" the passage from Browning's poem above can make the reader feel what the author's eyes have seen.

#### b) Auditory Imagery

A correlated image with the audible, like sound, is called auditory imagination. For instance, the sounds of the wind blowing leaves, waves, howling, crying, and birds are all examples of sounds that fall into this category. For instance, the keys' clanking, the plates' clanging, and the rooster's morning crow.

#### c) Gustatory Imagery

An image associated with the sense of taste is known as gustatory imagery. It characterizes something that can cause the peruser to envision the taste. For instance, "Carrie's favorite thing about going to the beach for summer vacation is the salty sweetness of the saltwater taffy." The taste of the beach water is referred to as "sweet and salty salty water."

#### d) Tactile Imagery

Our sense of touch is piqued by tactile imagery. It describes sensations like temperature, movement, texture, and other physical sensations. "A gust of cold air blew over her, causing her body to shiver," for instance. She was cozy and warm when she pulled the fuzzy blanket up to her chin. The "fuzzy" blanket's textures give the impression of different temperatures.

#### 4. Symbolism

The definition of symbolic figure of speech is a style of language that compares one thing with another symbol, in the form of symbols, figures, animals or objects. Symbolic figure of speech aims to convey ideas, criticisms or opinions against someone. In Robert Burns's love poem, "Melody," for instance, represents his lover's beauty and grace while "The red rose" represents love, then "House of make-believe" symbolizes religion in Robert Frost's "Directive". These kinds of symbolism are particular to various classes of writing. The sorts of symbolism include:

##### a) Religious Symbolism

It has been maybe the most reliably "satisfactory" type of imagery all through abstract history, as regularly been endorsed by strict specialists have held influence over society for quite a bit of human life. For example, in "The Little Girl Lost" by William Blake. The garden of Eden is mentioned in the first stanza, "In future, I prophesy, that the earth from sleep, (Grave the sentence deep)." "The first place that God created is the Garden of Eden. The good book shows how the spot was created from nothing to something. The nursery of Eden is referenced in the main refrain. As the main line depicts, the Garden of Eden is the future location that God provided for all of humanity. We probably already know this. Since animals are alive and understand the



mysteries of God's power, the actual area resembles a prediction for people (Lukas Demon Octovianto Lamanepa, 2021).

#### b) Romantic Symbolism

Maybe second just to strict imagery, heartfelt imagery has invaded wide areas of world writing. From Shakespeare's plays to Edna St. Vincent Millay's pioneering refrains, verse has been a particularly rich medium for moving imagery. For example, in Percy Bysshe Shelley's *To the Moon*, the moon itself symbolizes loneliness and unrequited love. The moon represents dejection and pathetic love. As a matter of fact, the writer depicts it as "meandering companionless." How miserable. Notice the tone of a portion of different words underneath, similar to "exhaustion" and "dismal." They adjust well to the imagery conjured by a forlorn moon.

#### c) Emotional Symbolism

Many creators and artists utilize actual imagery to portray powerful feelings. It is seen regularly in present day writing, films and verse. Physical objects are used by authors and artists to represent the emotional states of the world or characters in their stories. It could very well be found in hues like blue, which is associated with difficulties, or yellow, which frequently represents happiness.

## **5. Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is a figurative language that expresses something excessively even seems unreasonable. The use of exaggerated words is useful to attract the attention of readers in a work. For example, in the poem, "Old Times on the Mississippi" by Mark Twain, I was quaking from head to foot, and could have hung my hat on my eyes, they stuck out so far. Obviously, it was an exaggeration to say the narrator's eyes stuck out that far, but Twain wanted to emphasize the speaker's fear and shock.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this sub-chapter, the researcher elaborates the research method which include research design, data, data sources, data collection, and data analysis.

#### **A. Research Design**

The researcher chooses literary criticism because this study discusses black women oppression which is described in literary works. Here, the researcher analyzes the kinds of oppression and resistances which had faced by black women using literary criticism theory with a feminism theory, specifically black feminism theory. The theory of Black Feminism itself was introduced by Patricia Hill Collins in 2000 and figurative language theory by Laurence Perrine in 1978. The oppression of black women and their ways to face the oppression problems in Maya Angelou's selected poems, entitled, "*Harlem Hopscotch*", "*America*", "*Men*", "*My Guilt*", "*Ain't that Bad*", "*Life Doesn't Frighten' Me*", and "*Weekend Glory*" are the primary focus of this study and it makes the researcher choose those theories.

#### **B. Data Source**

The words and sentences themselves serve as the source of the data in Maya Angelou's selected poems, "*Harlem Hopscotch*", "*America*", "*Men*", "*My Guilt*", "*Ain't that Bad*", "*Life Doesn't Frighten' Me*", and "*Weekend Glory*". Then, the data source is taken from a collected poems book, entitled, "*The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou*" by Maya Angelou which is

consisted of 273 pages and published on September, 13 in 1994 by Random House Inc. The researcher takes seven poems which describe how black women experienced oppression problems and how they faced it.

### **C. Data Collection**

The data collection process involves several steps. First steps are reading, studying and understanding the stylistics and cultural values contained in poetry. Then, the researcher will record data in the form of words, sentences, expressions (text) in poetry. After that, the next step is to analyze the data based on messages about black women's oppression and resistance in poetry, summarize the results of analyzing the messages contained in the poems, compile research reports, report research results. Finally, the researcher will conduct general poetry readings.

### **D. Data Analysis**

In the meantime, the analysis itself is carried out in this order identifying the data, classifying the data in accordance with the goals of the research, analyzing the figurative languages on Maya Angelou's selected poems, "*Harlem Hopscotch*", "*America*", "*Men*", "*My Guilt*", "*Ain't that Bad*", "*Life Doesn't Frighten Me*", and "*Weekend Glory*". Then, the researcher analyzes the kinds of oppression on those poems and later followed by analyzing the way black women faced oppression problems on the poems. Last, the researcher then concludes the analysis based on research objectives.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This segment depicts the discoveries connected with the exploration point. The specialist presents point by point lines from seven poems by Maya Angelou's *The Complete Collected Poems in 1994: Harlem Hopscotch, America, Men, My Guilt, Ain't That Bad, Life Doesn't Frighten' Me, and Weekend Glory* which plainly depict the mistreatment of ladies experienced and the types of abuse. Black women's oppressions and their resistances alludes to the research questions, theories, and research methods utilized.

**A. The Oppression Experienced by Black Women in the Poem Harlem Hopscotch**

**1. Figurative Language and Imagery**

The choices made for figurative language and imagery in this poem are summarized in the table that follows.

4.1 Type of Figurative Language Table

No.	The Poem	Figurative Language	Imagery
1	One foot down, then <u>hop</u> ! It's hot	-	Tactile
2.	Good things for the ones that's got	Sarcasm	Visual
3.	Another jump, now to the left	-	Visual
4.	Everybody for <u>hisself</u>	-	Visual
5.	In the air, now both feet down	-	Tactile

6.	Since you <u>black</u> , don't stick around	Emotional Symbolism	Visual
7.	<u>Food</u> is gone, <u>the rent</u> is due	Metaphor	Visual
8.	<u>Curse</u> and <u>cry</u> and then jump two	Alliteration	Auditory
9.	All the people out of work	-	Visual
10.	Hold for three, then <u>twist</u> and <u>jerk</u>	Onomatopoeia	Tactile
11.	Cross the line, they count you out	Hyperbole	Visual
12.	That's what hopping's all about	-	Visual
13.	Both feet flat, <u>the game</u> is done	Metaphor	Tactile
14.	They think I lost. I think I won	Irony	Visual

This poem predominantly uses metaphor to express the economic oppression experienced by black people through the Hopscotch game in Harlem. Harlem is known as one of the urban cities in America which is mostly inhabited by black people. The presence of African Americans in public areas tends to be suspicious even when they're not actually doing anything bad. Through the dominant use of visual imagery in this poem, the poet tries to show that black people, especially black women, are not socially accepted by their environment. As a result, they are most likely to experience economic oppression in the form of poverty because they are only allowed to do manual work. This situation of helplessness then forced black people to flee from the plantation area and then fled to New York even though they were not used to modern life there. Even when they have socialized with their new chosen environment, the new situation is not very welcome and not much different from their old place. They remain

depressed because economic life and different places do not provide them with different opportunities at all.

## **2. The Depiction of Black Women's Economic Oppression**

In the poem "Harlem Hopscotch", black people including black women have to face economic problems in society. They are always bullied because of their different skin color. This focus on black women who also experience economic oppression supports the assertion (Collins, 2000) that "All the consequential connections that women of African descent have within their families and undercover American networks, with businesses, and among themselves are influenced by a set of qualities race, class, and orientations that held back conquest in the U.S. Most African American women no longer had the opportunity to participate in traditional scientific work because survival had become a tedious activity. Low wages paid to "free" wage workers in the rural South and the workforce of African-American women provides a clear example of the significant costs to be borne by people of color".

In this poem, the speaker finds that the problem faced by black people, including black women, is economic oppression in the form of continuous poverty, but they will not stop and continue to survive. While the poem, "Harlem Hopscotch" explores the effects of economic oppression in the form of poverty, it also describes the restrictions imposed by oppressive societies on black people. The poem implies that for people in such an oppressive system, choice and freedom are largely illusory, as

all one's choices exist in a very limited reality. The problems faced by black women in this poem are shown through diction and some figurative language used by speakers.

Harlem Hopscotch by Maya Angelou is a four-stanza poem separated into three stanzas, or sets of four lines, and one final rhyming couplet. Some readers may see this and feel as if the poet is trying to hint at the hopscotch format. However, in every line change after the depiction of the hopscotch game, the poet writes about the situation of economic oppression experienced from an early age by black people including black women.

The poem "Harlem Hopscotch" tells the story of growing up poor and black people in America. As Oxford defines Harlem as a borough of New York City, found only north of 96th Road in NE Manhattan which had a very large dark population and during the 1920s and 1930s, so this stanza is clearly planned for every black people.

*One foot down, then hop! It's hot.*

*Good things for the ones that's got.*

*Another jump, now to the left.*

*Everybody for hisself.*

(Stanza 1)

In this situation, the game in its truest sense is a set of rules that deal with oppression and need. Black people, including women, have been in poverty since they were children. In addition, they have to learn much more



than white children to know how to navigate a violent society. The speaker provides a series of heading reflections as seen from the Hopscotch. According to Oxford, hopscotch is a game for children which is played on a box set placed on the ground. Each child throws a stone into the container then, at that point, jumps (bouncing on one foot) and bounces across the empty square to pick up the stone again. Using the hopscotch as an extended metaphor in this poem, the poet connects the skills necessary to play the game with the skills required to explore the world as a black man, woman, or child. The poet also emphasizes several other rules, which apply to the wider world. Wealthy people can get what they want in life, and everyone should focus on their own success, "Everyone for himself".

In the second stanza, the poet gives more directions to his listeners while inserting other suggestions about the world. The game of life requires players to work hard and always be aware that rent will be due and food will run out.

*In the air, now both feet down.*

*Since you black, don't stick around.*

*Food is gone, the rent is due,*

*Curse and cry and then jump two.*

(Stanza 2)

This stanza explicitly addresses the results of economic oppression that exacerbate poverty. The need in the African-American population, including the Harlem area, stems from a tradition of conquest that forced

dark-skinned Americans into neighborhoods like Harlem. After that, white people denied them fair rent, jobs, and were happy with the everyday environment. It is against this foundation that the speakers convey the principles of the game. Black people including women are uncertain and keep moving, "Since you black, don't stick around". They never stop working and struggle just to make ends meet. They need to move on and their main aid is to utter censure and cry. It's a hard way to live, but life is like a game to be played. All the resulting connections that women of African descent have within their families and the dark web of America, with businesses, and among themselves are influenced by the bundle of qualities of race, class, and orientation that held back conquest in the US. Most African American women no longer have the opportunity to participate in traditional scientific work because survival has become a tedious activity. The speaker characterizes elements of American cultural class by suggesting that there is a difference between the rich and the poor, or the rich and other people. Yet, the poem isn't just about conquering destitution, it likewise explicitly addresses how the outcomes of monetary persecution can worsen neediness. Neediness in African American populations, including the Harlem area, originates from the tradition of subjugation that constrained dark Americans into neighborhoods like Harlem. Afterward, white individuals denied them fair lease, occupations, and happy with everyday environments.

The third stanza clarifies how torturous and dangerous the truth of oppression and poverty is.

*All the people out of work,  
Hold for three, then twist and jerk.  
Cross the line, they count you out.  
 That's what hopping's all about.*

(Stanza 3)

For example, the speaker's instructions to hold for three, then twist and stomp their feet is an illustration for the speaker to convey the unbearable feeling of weakness from the black people's fight. Principles sprinkled across the lines advising recipients to keep on jumping, that is to say, through difficult and unreasonable changes, conveying a sense of how difficult and inconceivable it is for people of color to follow the guidelines directed by an oppressive society. This line, "Cross the line, they count you out" also makes sense that assuming they go too far, and neglect to adhere to these guidelines, they will be removed.

The last stanza ends the poem with two lines. When both feet land flat on the end of the board, some may say, "I lose." But, the speaker has his own opinion. They are determined that they "won".

*Both feet flat, the game is done.  
They think I lost. I think I won.*

(Stanza 4)

Since black people play by the rules and do whatever it takes to get to the end of the board, this infers about the freedom that comes from their

own thinking. Listeners can determine whether they have succeeded in living within the harsh guidelines of an oppressive society. Despite the fact that it's not manageable in the end, that doesn't really guarantee their safety or durability. On the other hand, this poem also makes it clear that for people of color in America, passing through this general public involves tremendous effort and suffering.

## B. The Oppression Experienced by Black Women in the Poem America

### 1. Figurative Language and Imagery

The choices made for figurative language and imagery in this poem are summarized in the table that follows.

#### 4.2 Type of Figurative Language Table

No.	The Poem	Figurative Language	Imagery
1.	<u>The gold</u> of her promise has never been mined	Metaphor	Visual
2.	<u>Her borders</u> of justice not clearly defined	Metaphor	Visual
3.	<u>Her crops</u> of abundance the fruit and the grain	Metaphor	Visual
4.	Have not fed the hungry nor eased that <u>deep pain</u>	Hyperbole	Visual
5.	Her proud declarations	Personification	Auditory

	<u>are leaves on the wind</u>		
6.	Her southern exposure <u>black death</u> did befriend	Metaphor	Visual
7.	Discover this country <u>dead centuries cry</u>	Personification	Auditory
8.	Erect <u>noble tablets</u> where none can decry	Metaphor	Visual
9.	"She <u>kills her bright</u> <u>future</u> and <u>rapes for a sou</u>	Hyperbole	Visual
10.	Then entraps her children with <u>legends</u> <u>untrue</u> "	Metaphor	Auditory
11.	I beg you	-	Visual
12.	Discover this country.	-	Visual

figure of speech in the poem is metaphor which describes how black women experience oppression just because their skin color and race are different from the American population in general. The poet wants to show that America as a country known as a country that can realize dreams through hard work actually chooses to remain silent when black women demand the promised equal rights and get the opportunity to improve their lives like Americans in general. Then, visual imagery also aims to invite the reader to see how the oppression conditions faced by black women never end. The limits of justice that belong only to those in power

do not apply to black people who continue to experience oppression. Black women who lack food surplus even though America is known as a supplier of food resources in large quantities. A country that does not admit its own faults is oppressing the lower classes. Because they have different characteristics, black women continue to experience matrix dominance. However, the resistance of black women which is depicted through visual imagery at the end of the poem, inspires them to continue to get equal rights that can protect them regardless of class, race, and gender and provide freedom for black women who have been oppressed for a long time.

## **2. The Depiction of Black Women's Matrix of Domination**

The famous poet and writer Maya Angelou wrote a poem called "America". The poem offers words of truth from our country America. The poem begins with America promising an equal life because all humans are created equal. But it has never been conveyed, when racial and gender oppression, especially against women, still exists.

As black women who live in America, of course, they really crave equality which is likened to gold. However, as a result of the existence of a continuous and organized matrix of domination through injustice and inequality in the distribution of food staples, it is difficult for black women to obtain their rights. According to (Collins, 2000) domination matrix refers to the overall organization of power in society. As a special form assumed by cutting off oppression at a single social location, any domination matrix can

be seen as the historically specific organization of power in which social groups are embedded and which they seek to influence. All domination contexts incorporate some combination of intersecting oppression, and considerable variability exists from one domination matrix to the next in how oppression and activism will be organized.

As members of oppressed and powerless groups, black women are more likely to have a critical understanding of conditions of oppression who live outside these structures. African-American speakers can understand their condition of being oppressed by different skin colors and genders. However, black women here can only voice their unfortunate condition and equality remains a promise. The poet writes about the condition when black women experience hunger due to food surpluses that are not distributed evenly, thus trapping the minds of young children by saying that America will grant all their dreams, even though black women do not get that opportunity. In this poem, the speaker uses diction and figurative language to show the speaker as a black woman describing the condition of black women who experience matrix of domination in America.

In the first line, the phrase "her promise" refers to America's promise to its citizens to get a fair life because all humans are created equal. Black women also expect promises that can guarantee a decent life.

*The gold of her promise has never been mined*

(Stanza 1)

The phrase "The gold" here is a metaphor of equality for black

women because there is nothing else to get for black women other than that. Even though America has promised equality for black women in this country, this has not materialized, “has never been mined”. Because oppression related to race, class, and gender still happens to black women who live there. As (Collins, 2000) has argued, the domination matrix conceptualizes the fact that regardless of whether we are oppressed, we are all categorized into some privileged status and that privilege is the cause of oppression.

On the second line, black women who live life in America yearn for justice. However, once again the expected justice did not meet their expectations.

*Her borders of justice are not clearly defined*

(Stanza 2)

According to black women, if the situation is different every time they discuss justice in terms of punishment to replace the mistakes made. However, the boundaries of justice are not always suitable for all the problems they face. For example, according to BBC on This Day attaches a case experienced by Rosa Parks, a black woman who was arrested by the police in Montgomery, Alabama, United States of America for refusing to give a seat to a white bus passenger. When in court, he explained that at that time he was very tired after work, he was having pain in his shoulders, back and neck so he did not want to share chairs. Finally, apart from being arrested, Rosa Parks was fined around US\$ 70 or around Rp. 1 million by the Alabama Court Judge. This suggests that it is not that the black race commits more crimes, but



that they are punished more severely for the crimes they commit. While money is power, and it is often proven in court. Those with lots of money could afford expensive lawyers, but not as black women as the lower class. This line of the poem also deals with the fact that justice does not favor everyone, but the few who have a lot of money.

In the third and fourth lines, America is explained as a country that produces a large food surplus so that it is considered very capable of supporting its people's food needs. However, it turns out that the food is not evenly distributed throughout the population.

*Her crops of abundance the fruit and the grain*

*Have not fed the hungry nor eased that deep pain*

(Stanza 3 and 4)

This line does not only discuss actual food, but also discusses the fact that America, as a country rich in natural resources in the field of food, has not been able to distribute surplus food evenly. Whereas the United States has been the world's largest provider of food aid since 1950 and has maintained that position for more than 50 years. Millions of tons of surplus food, such as wheat from the United States are distributed to places in need (Yasmine, 2015). However, in this poem the poet said that the large food surplus could not alleviate the hunger or injuries experienced by black women. The existence of inequality in obtaining a food surplus provides additional evidence that the right to equal treatment has not been applied fairly and cases of oppression are still considered commonplace in America. These abundant

natural resources have not been equally distributed to all people, especially black women. Black women are not only hungry, but also suffering from the scars of oppression that linger in their hearts. With so many sources of food there, it is impossible to make the lives of black women fulfilled and peaceful.

The fifth line explains how America has never admitted their mistake in viewing and treating people who are different in terms of gender, race, and skintone characteristics. The people who have hurt and destroyed such as natives, and African American women.

*Her proud declarations are left on the wind,*

(Stanza 5)

Instead of providing minimal assistance to those who are poor to support their lives, other communities actually participate in oppressing black women. In addition, the proud declaration refers to America known as the American Dream to cover up their mistakes. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the American dream as "the ideal that every citizen of the United States should have an equal opportunity to achieve success and prosperity through hard work, determination, and initiative." But in reality, "Dreams cannot exist without racist injustice, because material prosperity in the US is inevitably linked to the exploitation of African Americans" (Coates 40/198, Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*). Because according to (Collins, 2000) regardless of whether we are oppressed, we are all categorized into a number of special statuses and that privilege is the cause of oppression. Because according to (Collins, 2000) regardless of whether we are oppressed,

we are all categorized into a number of special statuses and that privilege is the cause of oppression.

The sixth and seventh lines speak of the centuries-old tragedy of slavery in the south.

*Her southern exposure black death did befriend*

*Discover this country dead centuries cry*

*Erect noble tablets where none can decry*

(Stanza 6 -8)

Many died physically because of slavery, but many more were made to die physically and their whole being had to be suppressed so that it seemed as if these conditions continued to follow and haunt black women until now like a friend. For several centuries the result of the experience of slavery in the past has made black women experience oppression to this day. Because of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation as forms of oppression that work together in different ways to produce the unique matrix of US dominance so far, using the experiences of African-American women as a lens (Collins, 2000). History which is likened to a noble tablet must be upheld. The point is, we must not forget history because from there what we have to learn is what is not explained in the mainstream history texts. This is supported by the opinion (Stewart, 2019) which states that slavery in American literature is also important to study because there have been changes and distortions of information about slavery in non-literary media, especially text media in the world of education. In addition, taking into account how this country was

founded with blood and a long process of slavery. Here, (Downs, 1956) shows that Harriet Beecher Stowe who was born in a slavery environment heard and saw terrible stories about the experiences of slaves, such as the dispersion of family members, the cruelty of plantation supervisors, the atmosphere of slave auctions, and the horror when slaves were chased. on their run.

The ninth and tenth lines explain how black women's mothers who are shown with the subject "she" give up their future due to a prolonged past of slavery and are forced to introduce beliefs that are completely untrue to their children, namely regarding the American Dream.

*She kills her bright future and rapes for a sou.*

*Then entraps her children with legends untrue.*

(Stanza 9-10)

The past of slavery that has had an effect on the lives of black women is currently holding them back from achieving equality. Meanwhile they have to raise their children by convincing the American Dream. Millions of people have come to America in search of a better life for themselves. America is said to be a country where dreams come true through hard work, but hard work doesn't always pay off. Those who can rule are guided by what class you were born from. America traps its children with the legend that everyone can have the American Dream. That everyone can have wealth or everyone can have food and clothing, but in reality black women cannot get it.

The eleventh and last line explains about the black woman who wants America to change its views on the black race.

*I beg you.*

*Discover this country.*

(Stanza 11-12)

The poet closes his poem by begging to discover the function of this state. A state that should protect all of its people regardless of class, race and gender also gives freedom to black women who are oppressed.

### C. The Oppression Experienced by Black Women in the Poem Men

Black women experience matrix of domination in this poem entitled "Men".

#### 1. Figurative Language and Imagery

The choices made for figurative language and imagery in this poem are summarized in the table that follows :

#### 4.3 Type of Figurative Language Table

No.	The Poem	Figurative Language	Imagery
1	When I was young, I used to Watch behind <u>the curtains</u> As men walked up and down The street.	Metaphor	Visual
2.	<u>Wino men</u> , old men.	Emotional Symbolism	Visual
3.	Young men <u>sharp as mustard</u> .	Simile	Visual
4.	See them.	-	Visual
5.	Men are <u>always Going somewhere</u> .	Metaphor	Visual
6.	They knew I was there.	-	Visual

7.	Fifteen Years old_and starving for them.	-	Visual
8.	Under <u>my window</u> , they would pause, Their shoulders high <u>like the Breasts of a young girl</u> , Jacket tails slapping over Those behinds, Men.	Emotional Symbolism and Simile	Visual
9.	One day they hold you in the Palms of their hands, gentle, <u>as if you</u> Were the last raw egg in the world.	Simile	Tactile
10.	Then They tighten up. Just a little	-	Tactile
11.	The First squeeze is nice.	-	Tactile
12.	A quick hug.	Hyperbole	Tactile
13.	Soft into your defenselessness.	Personification	Tactile
14.	A little More. <u>The hurt begins</u> .	Personification	Visual
15.	<u>Wrench out a Smile</u> that <u>slides</u> around the fear.	Personification	Visual
16.	<u>When the Air disappears, Your mind pops, exploding fiercely</u> , briefly, <u>Like the head of a kitchen match</u> . Shattered	Personification and Simile	Visual
17.	It is your <u>juice</u> That runs down their legs.	Metaphor	Visual
18.	Staining <u>their shoes</u> .	Emotional Symbolism	Visual
19.	When <u>the earth rights itself again</u> , And <u>taste tries to return</u>	Metaphor and Hyperbole	Visual

	<u>to the tongue, Your body has slammed shut.</u>		
20.	Forever. <u>No keys</u> exist.	Metaphor	Visual
21.	Then <u>the window draws full upon Your mind</u>	Personification	Visual
22.	There, just beyond <u>The sway of curtains</u> , men walk.	Personification	Visual
23.	Knowing something. Going someplace	-	Visual
24.	But this time, you will simply Stand and watch. Maybe.	-	Visual

There is a dominant use of metaphor figure of speech in this poem. The poet aims to convey the hidden meaning of the bad morals that the drunken men have in the poem. She, who has just entered puberty, is expressed through the sentence, "Fifteen years old and starving for them", must give up her virginity forcibly and inflict deep wounds on the child. Then, the poet also dominantly uses visual imagery to describe the oppression in the form of rape against black children. This certainly invites the reader to be able to drift along and understand what the poet wants to convey. However, at the end of the poem, she still convinces herself that she can live her life better which is visualized in the sentence, "But this time, you will simply stand and watch. Maybe." The researcher is able to show the following conclusions regarding Black Women's resistance and oppression, which are depicted in the poem Men.

## **2. The Depiction of Black Women's Matrix of Domination**

This poem tells about the experience of a 15 year old girl who seems curious about what adult men are doing freely out there. She also seems to admire the freedom that men portray by watching their every free movement. However, the little girl's curiosity causes her to be bullied in a form of matrix of domination through abuse by grown men.

Maya Angelou's poem "Men" has three stanzas. This poem is a great example of female powerlessness and skillfully brings us into the mindset of a woman who has unquestionably been a victim of a male-dominated society. The poem conveys with great comfort the complicated complications of our vulnerable need for men as well as the stark differences in character. The subject and its handling emphasize the height of the poet's maturity and his extraordinary ability to depict the thoughts of his body as well as the workings of his mind. She has tried to express the heartless, bitter and cruel nature of men through a hidden contract that depicts the subtlety, innocence and forbearance of women.

This poem tells about the experience of a 15-year-old girl who seems curious about what adult men are doing freely out there. She also seems to admire the freedom that men portray by watching their every free movement. However, the little girl's curiosity caused her to be bullied in the form of a domination matrix through harassment by grown men.

Maya Angelou's poem "Men" has three stanzas. This poem is a



great example of female powerlessness and skillfully brings us into the mindset of a woman who has undoubtedly been a victim of a male-dominated society. The poem conveys with great comfort the complicated complications of our vulnerable need for men as well as the stark differences of character. The subject matter and its handling emphasize the height of the poet's maturity and his uncanny ability to portray the thoughts of his body as well as the workings of his mind. She has tried to express the heartless, bitter and cruel nature of men through a hidden contract that depicts the subtlety, innocence and forbearance of women. Maya Angelou's "Men" is a poem that displays the fragility and innocence of women. The fragility of women is presented through their virginity in the poem.

A little girl who had lost her defenses, causing she to experience bullying through sexual harassment. Apart from being black, being a woman also causes she to experience harassment so that men perceive her as a helpless creature who does not have the power and privileges that men do. The oppression experienced by the little girl is a form of matrix of domination. As stated by (Collins, 2000), matrix of domination is a sociological concept that draws attention to the issue of oppression based on race, class, and gender. The matrix of domination conceptualizes the fact that, regardless of whether we are oppressed, we are all categorized into a number of privileged statuses and that privilege is the cause of oppression

The oppression experienced by black women in poetry occurs because of differences in sexual identity and age where a 15-year-old girl and

a Winomen are commonly known as alcoholics.

*When I was young, I used to  
 Watch behind the curtains  
 As men walked up and down  
 The street. Wino men, old men.  
 Young men sharp as mustard.  
 See them. Men are always  
going somewhere.  
 They knew I was there. Fifteen  
 Years old and starving for them.  
 Under my window, they would pause,  
 Their shoulders are high like the  
 Breasts of a young girl,  
 Jacket tails slapping over  
 those behind  
 Men.  
 One day they hold you in the  
 Palms of their hands, gentle, as if you  
 Were the last raw egg in the world. Then  
 They tighten up. Just a little. the  
 First squeeze is nice. A quick hug.  
 Soft into your defenselessness. A little  
 more. The hurt begins. Wrench out a*

*Smile that slides around the fear. when the  
 water disappears,  
 Your mind pops, exploding fiercely, briefly,  
 Like the head of a kitchen match. Shattered.  
 It is your juice  
 That runs down their legs. Staining their shoes.  
 When the earth rights itself again,  
 And the taste tries to return to the tongue,  
 Your body has slammed shut. forever.  
No keys exist.*

(Stanza 1)

The poet uses the word "curtain" to describe the little girl's safe defense from the outside. He seemed curious as to what the grown man was doing freely out there. She also seems to admire the freedom that men have depicted in the line, "Men are always going somewhere" by noticing their every move that is free. However, the little girl's curiosity caused her to be abused by grown men. He is likened to a fragile egg. Eggs have a brittle texture that is easily destroyed and cannot be repaired. The fragile egg image reveals the little girl's fragility.

The poet describes him in this stanza as starting to lose the self-defense that he had maintained since the beginning starting from line 10 up to 18. For the first time, he had a bad sexual experience. This is shown when she perceives men's semen as juice. Later, he also shared his feelings about his

experience by saying when the rights of the earth itself will return. From this we can see how men use their power and women's naivety only to fulfill men's desires. However, still she couldn't do anything but stay silent and obey the man. Later, she also seems to wish she could be with the guys at first but they just leave her after satisfying their lust. He is depicted as a black match head. This suggests that apart from being black, she is considered a creature with very fragile virginity and is considered small by men. The men consider the little girl not too dangerous for the men so the men are free to do anything to the girl, including taking her virginity since childhood. Then, in the line, "No keys exist" likens she who can do nothing but obey. Because she is considered passive so she can't fight adult male harassment against her. She experienced a form of oppression through sexual harassment against herself because she was considered a passive being, while men who had full power over women were men. This is consistent with the statement (Collins, 2000) that by using the experience of African-American women as a lens, we have examined race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation as forms of oppression that work together in different ways to produce a distinctive domination matrix in which he stays.

The second stanza tells of the little girl being left alone after being abused by the grown man.

*Then the window draws full upon  
your mind. There, just beyond*

*The sway of curtains, men walk.*

*Knowing something.*

*going someplace.*

*But this time, you will simply*

*Stand and watch.*

(Stanza 2)

*“Maybe”*

(Stanza 3)

She again tries to rebuild his defense which is symbolized by a curtain. When he had not experienced the previous pain, he returned to his familiar environment. As she had done before, she got up to watch. She then thought of returning to the great outdoors one day.

Then, the "Curtain" that represents his comfort zone she will definitely leave later. However, she wasn't ready for the worst possibility of being sexually assaulted once again. The oppression through deprivation of her virginity caused her to be shackled by the bad experience of losing her virginity to men and made her unprepared to get out of her safety zone. Being oppressed for having a different skin color is hard enough for a black woman, let alone being oppressed for being a woman from birth and then having her virginity stolen is another level of pain. It is then closed with a final stanza with the closing sentence "Maybe" which shows that actually the little girl was not sure that she would get freedom and got out of her position at that time.

### D. The Oppression Experienced by Black Women in the Poem My Guilt

Black women experience matrix of domination in the poem Still I Rise.

#### 1. Figurative Language and Imagery

The choices made for figurative language and imagery in this poem are summarized in the table that follows:

4.4 Type of Figurative Language Table

No.	The Poem	Figurative Language	Imagery
1	My guilt is " <u>slavery's chains</u> ," too long	Metaphor	Visual
2	<u>the clang of iron</u> falls down the years	Metaphor	Visual
3	This brother's sold, this sister's gone,	-	Visual
4	is <u>bitter wax, lining my ears</u> .	Metaphor	Tactile
5	My guilt made music with the tears.	-	Visual
6	<u>My crime</u> is "heroes, dead and gone,"	Metaphor	Visual
7	dead <u>Vesey, Turner, Gabriel</u> ,	Metaphor	Visual

8	dead <u>Malcolm, Marcus,</u> <u>Martin King.</u>	Metaphor	Visual
9	They fought too hard, they loved too well.	-	Visual
10	My crime is I'm alive to tell.	-	Visual
11	My sin is " <u>hanging from a</u> <u>tree,</u> "	Personification	Visual
12	I do not scream, it makes me proud.	-	Auditory
13	<u>I take to dying like a man.</u>	Simile	Visual
14	I do it to impress the crowd.	-	Visual
15	My sin lies in <u>not screaming</u> <u>loud.</u>	Metaphor	Auditory

This poem is predominantly used metaphors to express the oppression of black women in the form of domination matrices. The word "My Guilt" refers to the condition in which a black woman considers herself a "guilty entity" for a long chain of slavery. Sadness about the memory of slavery as the highest form of oppression that left them without the right to live because their masters had bought their lives. Then through visual imagery, the poet invites readers to see the conditions that black women experienced during the era of slavery, starting from the iron chains as a metaphor for prolonged slavery to the heroes who had struggled a lot and ended up dying without

getting justice. The era of slavery can be said as a form of oppression in the form of a domination matrix because the oppression that occurred not only saw black skin, but gender differences also pushed this factor of slavery.

## **2. The Depiction of Black Women's Matrix of Domination**

Sadness about slavery memory in the poem "My Guilt" is clearly visible. Slavery itself is the highest form of oppression where they do not have the right to life because their lives have been bought by their masters and only their masters can do anything about their lives. When someone is considered a slave, he is no longer considered a human but as a property that can be traded. However, because slaves are now considered as property, there is no human law that can protect them except the generosity of its master. The existence of unpleasant truth about slavery described in "My Guilt" can be found in the line "This is Brother's Sold, This Sister's Go". In other words, poetry writers clearly describe the era of slavery as a type of oppression in the form of a matrix of domination because the oppression that occurs not just to see their skin black, but gender differences also encourage this slavery factor. On the other hand, the writer also described the injustice of humanity which was iressed for decades.

The term slavery has no difference with the servant who does all the work requested by their master. In that era, the existence of black Africa was in a complex situation because there was no clear legal action to protect their rights and even thought when black slaves were introduced in Virginia. That fact is somehow -really sad and Maya Angelou describes the memory by



writing a poem entitled “My Guilt” which clearly describes the oppression that occurred during the slavery era. This poem illustrates the era of slavery as a form of oppression of the Matrix of Domination which is not only experienced by black men, but black women also experience the oppression and are even more complex. Matrix of Domination Refers to the overall organization of power in a Society. Dominance will be experienced by someone with different characteristics like age, religion, or sexual identity. So, it concept truzies the fact that, regardless of whether we are operating, we are all categorized into a number of privileged status and that privilege is the cause of oppression (Collins, 2000).

*My Guilt* by Maya Angelou consist of three stanzas in which each stanza consists of five lines. The poem mostly talks about the condition of a slavery that happens during her age. The word “guilt” refers to the condition in which the writer considered herself as an “guilty entity” for the long chain of slavery.

The first stanza explains more about the conditions of slavery.

*My guilt is "slavery's chains," too long*

*the clang of iron falls down the years.*

*This brother's sold, this sister's gone,*

*is bitter wax, lining my ears.*

*My guilt made music with the tears.*

(Stanza 1)

This stanza discusses the events of slavery which is started by using the metaphor, "slavery's chain". So, when black people come to slavery, there must always be oppression experienced by black people, not only men but also women, which is explained in the third line. According to Alphonso Pinkney in Resky, 2015 stated that in American history, slaves were actually traded as property. Slaves could be sold, traded, or given away as gifts and families of slaves were often dissolved for economic reasons even in history slaves could be in exchange for payment instead of money, to pay debts, or when someone won a gamble. They can provide slaves. Slave women faced different problems because their master always suggested or always had intercourse with other slaves which ended with the aim of reproduction to give birth to more and more slaves and provide more profit to the slave owner. Slavery became an important property for increasing the income of landlords because the more they had the more one's crops and wealth (Franklin & Moss, 1988). The matrix of domination conceptualizes the fact that, regardless of whether we are oppressed, we are all categorized into a number of privileged statuses and that privilege is the cause of oppression. All contexts of domination incorporate some combination of intersecting oppression, and considerable variability exists from one matrix of domination to the next as to how oppression and activism will be organized (Collins, 2000).

The poet clearly described his sadness and all black men and women used appropriate phrases so that readers of his poetry could

understand the meaning and sadness of being subjected to oppression in the form of a matrix of domination through the slavery system at that time. Through this metaphor, the speaker also describes the injustice of humanity that has lasted for decades. Then another metaphor that the writer uses is the expression "music with tears" which symbolizes the sadness experienced by black people at that time.

In the second stanza it is stated that the heroes died and left mentioning the Danes Vesey, Gabriel and Nat Turner who once represented slave rebels who fought for their rights and tried to abolish slavery in their time.

My crime is "heroes, dead and gone,"  
 dead Vesey, Turner, Gabriel,  
 dead Malcolm, Marcus, Martin King.  
 They fought too hard, they loved too well.  
 My crime is I'm alive to tell.

(Stanza 2)

In 1822 Vesey was a former slave who won the lottery and used the money to free himself. In his religious mission he prepared to recruit other black slave faiths to become mutineers who killed their masters and spent four years selecting those who dared to fight. The end of his planned mission resulted in 35 slaves being executed and 34 others being deported. Later, Gabriel became a pioneer of a slave rebellion in the 1800s working on plantations around Richmond, Virginia. He states that he has a heavenly

mission, which is to kill a slave owner and his family in the vicinity of the plantation. He then chose slaves to follow his mission plan. Gabriel and his troops kill all white people. In this mission, Gabriel did not hesitate to recruit landless white people who in fact failed his mission. Meanwhile, after that in 1831, Nat Turner was also known as one of the rebel slaves who escaped and revisited his religious beliefs. He is also known as "a mystic and often buries himself in prayer" (Resky, 2015). (Pinkney, 1988) explains that he had the courage to lead a mission based on his vision. According to his mysticism, Turner did not recruit as many rebels as the previous rebellions. But it became the biggest slave rebellion because it needed soldiers to stop them. Turner and his troops killed 60 whites but they lost because the soldiers and other whites had surrounded them. This became the cause of Angelou's sadness and feelings of guilt. All of them died to fight for their rights and were never tried as human beings either in religion or law.

In the last stanza beginning with the line "my sin is hanging on a tree" which is linked to a gallows in the form of a tree or a street lamp where to hang people sentenced to death without trial rather than judicial execution. Then, the poet tells that she has struggled to survive injustice, hardship, defeat, and trying to deal with difficult situations. She cites past fights and civil rights heroes to express feelings of self-restraint. Then, she also compares the general struggle that the previous heroes had to fight against injustice with the death sentence imposed on them without any trial. She

didn't protest against her pride, but felt guilty for not asserting herself as in the last line “My sin lies in not screaming loud”.

## E. The Resistance of Black Women in the Poem Ain't That Bad

### 1. Figurative Language and Imagery

The choices made for figurative language and imagery in this poem are summarized in the table that follows:

4.5 Type of Figurative Language Table

Line	Poem	Figurative Language	Imagery
1	Dancin' the funky chicken	Metaphor	Visual
2	Eatin' ribs and tips	Metaphor	Visual
3	Diggin' all the latest sounds	Metaphor	Auditory
4	And drinkin' gin in sips.	Metaphor	Visual
5	Puttin' down that <u>do-rag</u>	Emotional Symbolism	Visual
6	Tightenin' up my 'fro	Metaphor	Visual
7	Wrappin' up in Blackness	Hyperbole	Visual
8	Don't I <u>shine and glow</u> ?	Metaphor	Visual
9	Hearin' Stevie Wonder	Metaphor	Auditory
10	Cookin' beans and rice	Metaphor	Visual
11	Goin' to the opera	Metaphor	Visual
12	Checkin' out Leontyne Price.	Metaphor	Visual
13	Get down, Jesse Jackson	Metaphor	Visual
14	Dance on, Alvin Ailey	Metaphor	Visual
15	Talk, Miss Barbara Jordan	Metaphor	Visual

16	Groove, Miss Pearlie Bailey.	Metaphor	Visual
17	Now ain't they bad?	Metaphor	Visual
18	An' ain't they Black?	Metaphor	Visual
19	An' ain't they bad?	Metaphor	Visual
20	An' ain't they fine?	Metaphor	Visual
21	Black like the hour of the night	Simile	Visual
22	<u>When your love turns and wriggles close to yourside</u>	Personification	Visual
23	<u>Black as the earth</u> which has given birth	Simile	Visual
24	To nations, and when all else is gone will abide.	Metaphor	Visual
25	<u>Bad as the storm</u> that leaps raging from the heavens	Simile	Visual
26	Bringing <u>the welcome rain</u>	Emotional Symbolism	Visual
27	<u>Bad as the sun burning orange</u> hot at midday	Simile	Tactile
28	Lifting the waters again.	Metaphor	Visual
29	Arthur Ashe on the tennis court	Metaphor	Visual
30	Mohammed AH in the ring	Metaphor	Visual
31	Andre Watts and Andrew Young	Metaphor	Visual
32	Black men doing their thing	Metaphor	Visual
33	Dressing in purples and pinks and greens	Metaphor	Visual
34	Exotic as rum and Cokes	Simile	Visual
35	Living our lives with flash and style	Metaphor	Visual
36	Ain't we colorful folks?	Metaphor	Visual
37	Now ain't we bad?	Metaphor	Visual
38	An' ain't we Black?	Metaphor	Visual
39	An' ain't we bad?	Metaphor	Visual
40	An' ain't we fine?	Metaphor	Visual

This poem predominantly uses metaphorical figures of speech to compare the living conditions of black women who are being oppressed with the lives of several famous names who are also black, such as Stevie Wonder, Leontyne Price, Barbara Jordan, and Pearl Bailey. Different poets aim to make white minds think that even though having a skintone doesn't mean black people, especially black women, have to experience it. For white people it is commonplace for black women because they are poor. However, white people should feel very ashamed to be shown what they do and acknowledge the success of black people especially black women. Then, here the poet also uses a lot of visual imagery in his poetry to show the reader that black women are motivated to live like their masters. Black women realized that even though they were being bullied, they had to live and enjoy their lives as happily as their masters held a thanksgiving ceremony.

## **2. The Depiction of Black Women's Standpoint**

The poem, "Ain't That Bad?" represents and emphasizes "Black is Beautiful". According to Urban Dictionary, "ain't that bad is a phrase used to describe something that's terrible but not that terrible. It is often used to downplay a thing or situation. In this poem, Maya Angelou also links famous and successful black singers, writers, and boxers.

Black in the poem, is symbolized as a new source of life. The intentional merging of the words black and night is also a resistance measure for exposing black myths. When referring to African Americans, night has a

negative meaning by white people. However, the "black night" in this poem has a positive meaning about an extraordinary black power. Black is also respected as the mother of all nations, "Black is like the earth that gives birth / For the nation, and when everything is gone it will still be there" (Angelou, 1994). In terms of interpreting their lives as positive black women, they use standpoints as a reference to secure their future. Because they really want to be perceived as having legal US citizenship and to be in a better position to participate more actively in the country in which they currently live. According to (Collins, 2000) black women's collective historical experiences with oppression may stimulate a self-defined Black women's standpoint that in turn can foster Black women's activism.

This poem consists of ten stanzas and forty-six lines. The poet shows the culture of people of color, as when he talks about how he tightens himself, and how he describes how he dances to the music. In this poem, the poet stated that he was proud to be black. She says that being black is fine, it makes her shine. Even though they were treated as the last human beings in society, like the night that marked the end of the day.

In the first stanza, black women try to live a quiet life that ranges from dancing funky chicken to drinking gin. Then, it is continued in the second stanza which discusses pride in the characteristics of black women who use do-rags.

*Dancin' the funky chicken*

*Eatin' ribs and tips*



*Diggin' all the latest sounds*

*And drinkin' gin in sips.*

(Stanza 1)

*Puttin' down that do-rag*

*Tightenin' up my 'fro*

*Wrappin' up in Blackness*

*Don't I shine and glow?*

(Stanza 2)

As explained by Shannon Thunderbird of the Giluts'aaw Tribe, in a funky chicken dance, dancers imitate the ritual display of a rooster, fluffing feathers, pacing back and forth, using head pecking movements, and tapping on the ground, while moving forward and turning. Funky chicken dancing was popular for thousands of years before Euro-American settlement as people and smaller prairie chickens lived together in the prairie communities of the Southern Great Plains. Then there is the Blackfoot and Plains Cree ceremonial dance, the funky chicken to celebrate the relationship between the natives and the prairie grouse. Black women also live a normal life like ordinary Americans by eating ribs as the main menu to celebrate something. Also, in the midst of their busy lives they can dig into the latest music to enjoy the moment and drink alcohol to celebrate good things. In this stanza it refers to the celebrations that are usually carried out by Americans at Thanksgiving which ultimately inspires black women to live happily like upper-class people when celebrating Thanksgiving. They should be excited,

but don't forget to enjoy life. By reflecting on the high-class activities carried out during the celebration, it can evoke joy and gratitude for black women even though they are still under the influence of the elite class. In the second stanza, do-rag as a characteristic of black people is also included. According to the Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster, the term derives from do as in hairdo: a do-rag is often worn to protect a processed hairstyle. The do-rag has been prevalent throughout many eras and is not a recent Black fashion in America. For centuries, men and women of African descent from around the world have used various fabrics and scarves to cover their hair. By wearing a do-rag which is commonly used by black people, including black women, to wrap their hair and tighten their clothes, this makes them proud. Black women recognize that the standpoints they create can propel them to change their living conditions. Because black women's collective historical experiences with oppression may stimulate a self-defined Black women's standpoint that in turn can foster Black women's activism (Collins, 2000). Black women also shine like everyone else and they nurture the thought of remaining confident that they can change their destiny for the better.

In the third to fifth stanzas the poet mentions black figures who have been successful and well-known throughout the world, ranging from singers, writers and boxers, to once again questioning other people that it's not bad to have black skin.

*Hearin' Stevie Wonder*

*Cookin' beans and rice*

*Goin' to the opera*

*Checkin' out Leontyne Price.*

(Stanza 3)

*Get down, Jesse Jackson*

*Dance on, Alvin Ailey*

*Talk, Miss Barbara Jordan*

*Groove, Miss Pearlle Bailey.*

(Stanza 4)

*Now ain't they bad?*

*An' ain't they Black?*

*An' ain't they Black?*

*An' ain't they bad?*

*An' ain't they bad?*

*An' ain't they Black?*

*An' ain't they fine?*

(Stanza 5)

By introducing Stevie Wonder as a famous African-American male singer, it aims to create a visual image for readers of the poetry written by Maya Angelou. Stevie Wonder is famous for the beauty of his songs and voice so he became a famous singer in America. Later, the poet also mentioned Leontyne Price as a famous African-American female soprano singer who finally gained international recognition for her talent in singing classical songs. From the description of a figure who comes from African

America, the poet wants to give a hard blow to a society that is thick with privileges so that they do not hesitate to oppress black women who are considered unequal, in fact they can prove they can be successful even though they are black. Then, the poet goes on to include the name of Jesse Jackson who is a politician who achieved widespread fame as a spokesman for civil rights issues. As for Alvin Ailey, who is a famous choreographer with his resemblance to African Americans. In addition, Barbara Jordan became a political supporter of black women who were able to win elections so they could represent black African-American women in the White House as well as being a representative at the Democratic National Convention. Bailey as an important political figure like black women will be remembered as black women activists as successful women with the various awards she has received. The poet again introduces well-known and influential African-American figures in this poem. This aims to break the thinking of white people that even though they have different skin colors, it does not mean that black people, especially black women, are always looked down upon so that they are vulnerable to oppression. In the fifth stanza, the poet again questioned society with the existence of these successful people, whether black people are bad. This question also slaps a society that is attached to its power. It should feel very ashamed of this oppression and acknowledge the success of black people, especially black women.

In the next stanza, namely the sixth and seventh stanzas, it explains the public's view of black women.

*Black like the hour of the night*

*When your love turns and wriggles close to your side*

*Black as the earth which has given birth*

*To nations, and when all else is gone will abide.*

(Stanza 6)

*Bad as the storm that leaps raging from the heavens*

*Bringing the welcome rain*

*Bad as the sun burning orange hot at midday*

*Lifting the waters again.*

(Stanza 7)

Given that black women are proud of their identity and are well-known examples of black men, the word black here does not make them weak. Even though they are treated as humans who receive treatment at the last point because black skin is like black curfew. The combination of the word black and winning the night is also a step against the black myth. When referring to African Americans, night has a negative connotation for white people. However, the "black night" in this poem has a positive meaning about an extraordinary black power. Black is also honored as the mother of all nations. This "black earth that gave birth to the nation" indirectly refers to the First Lady, which is the honorary title of Nomzamo Winnie Mandela. According to M.G. Buthelezi at N.W.

Mandela Part of My Soul 19, 1985, Nomzamo Mandela is more than just a black man... In a very deep sense, she qualifies for the title 'Mother

of the Black People'. Then, in the seventh stanza it opens with the word hurricane which likens the bad view of society towards black women. According to Oxford, a storm is very bad weather with high winds and rain, and frequent occurrence of thunder and lightning.

The storm symbolizes the ugliness that black women experience like lightning coming from the waves. Halilintar is present as an illustration of the fate of black women who are so bad. the agony of life that black women experience is described as a very hot day. In the dark history of American society adjacent to the history of settlement and rule by white people against black people, especially black women who live there.

In the eighth stanza, the poet again introduces other famous figures, such as Arthur, a tennis athlete, to the famous pianist, Andre Watts and Andrew Young. It is then followed by the ninth stanza, where black women are proud of their beauty by wearing bright patterned clothes. Then in the last stanza, the poet again questioned whether black women weren't too bad.

*Arthur Ashe on the tennis court*

*Mohammed AH in the ring*

*Andre Watts and Andrew Young*

*Black men doing their thing.*

(Stanza 8)

*Dressing in purples and pinks and greens*

*Exotic as rum and Cokes*

*Living our lives with flash and style*

*Ain't we colorful folks?*

(Stanza 9)

*Now ain't we bad?*

*An' ain't we Black?*

*An' ain't we Black?*

*An' ain't we bad?*

*An' ain't we bad?*

*An' ain't we Black?*

*An' ain't we fine?*

(Stanza 10)

The poet again alluded to famous black figures in America. First, Arthur Ashe who is a tennis athlete who comes from black people in America and has an important influence on the development of tennis in America. The reason is, Arthur Ashe is a world professional tennis player who has many outstanding performances and many awards, such as three Grand Slam singles titles and the first black American to be selected as a player in the American Davis Cup. Second, Mohammed Ali, who is a world-class boxer and world boxing legend who comes from the black race in America. Third, Andre Watts and Andrew Young, they are the greatest pianists in America and are also professors at the Jacobs School of Music of Indiana University. By including the names of famous figures above, this stanza aims to explain that African Americans are no less successful than white people in America. This well-known figure became a symbol for other black people, especially

black women, that success belongs to all humans and is not only tied to white people. Some of the successful characters in this verse are considered symbols of success for black or African Americans, especially black women. African Americans, especially black women, have colorful lives and struggles that are described through the words spoken by a black woman, Maya Angelou, as the author of the poem. Black women also have a colorful life with their beauty wearing brightly colored clothes, their skin tones are exotic like rum and coke, and also following the latest trends. They claim that they are as beautiful as that. In the last stanza, the poet again questions by showing all the success and beauty of black people, are they still that bad? Even if their skin is black, they will be fine.

#### **F. The Resistance of Black Women in the Poem 'Life Doesn't Frighten' Me**

Black women experience economic oppression in this poem entitled Equality.

##### **1. Figurative Language and Imagery**

The choices made for figurative language and imagery in this poem are summarized in the table that follows:

4.6 Type of Figurative Language Table

<b>No.</b>	<b>The Poem</b>	<b>Figurative Language</b>	<b>Imagery</b>
1	<u>Shadows</u> on the wall	Metaphor	Visual
2	<u>Noises</u> down the hall	Metaphor	Auditory
3	Life doesn't frighten me at all	-	Visual
4	<u>Bad dogs</u> barking loud	Metaphor	Auditory



5	<u>Big ghosts</u> in a cloud	Metaphor	Visual
6	Life doesn't frighten me at all.	-	Visual
7	Mean <u>old Mother Goose</u>	Metaphor	Visual
8	<u>Lions</u> on the loose	Metaphor	Visual
9	They don't frighten me at all	-	Visual
10	<u>Dragons</u> breathing flame	Metaphor	Visual
11	On my counterpane	Hyperbole	Visual
12	That doesn't frighten me at all.	-	Visual
13	I go boo	-	Visual
14	Make them shoo	-	Visual
15	I make fun	-	Visual
16	Way they run	-	Visual
17	I won't cry	-	Visual
18	So they fly	Hyperbole	Visual
19	I just smile	-	Visual
20	They go wild	-	Visual
21	Life doesn't frighten me at all.	Metaphor	Visual
22	Tough <u>guys in a fight</u>		Visual
23	All <u>alone</u> at <u>night</u>	Metaphor	Visual
24	Life doesn't frighten me at all.	-	Visual
25	<u>Panthers</u> in the park	Metaphor	Visual
26	<u>Strangers in the dark</u>	Metaphor and Emotional Eymbolism	Visual
27	No, they don't frighten me	-	Visual

	at all.		
28	That new classroom where	-	Visual
29	Boys all pull my hair	-	Visual
30	(Kissy little girls	-	Visual
31	With their hair in curls)	-	Visual
32	They don't frighten me at all.	-	Visual
33	Don't show me <u>frogs and snakes</u>	Metaphor	Visual
34	And listen for my scream,	-	Auditory
35	If I'm afraid at all	-	Visual
36	It's only in <u>my dreams.</u>	Metaphor	Visual
37	I've got a <u>magic charm</u>	Metaphor	Visual
38	That I keep up my sleeve,	-	Visual
39	I can walk the ocean floor	Hyperbole	Visual
40	And never have to breathe.	Hyperbole	Visual
41	Life doesn't frighten me at all	-	Visual
42	Not at all	-	Visual
43	Not at all.	-	Visual
44	Life doesn't frighten me at all.	-	Visual

This poem uses mostly figurative language as a metaphor for the things that young children fear the most, such as shadows, whispers from the hallway, naughty dogs, great ghosts, and others listed in this poem. The small child who is the speaker in this poem shows that he has the courage to face

everything that is most feared by small children in general. Then, visual imagery is also often used in this poem to describe a little girl who is telling a story for herself where she dares to face the world by imagining a calming fantasy about being invincible. That courage that seemed poignant and amazing helped her learn to stand up for herself and face her fears bravely.

## **2. The Depiction of Black Women's Consciousness**

Life doesn't frighten me at all Maya Angelou's bold and defiant poetry celebrates the courage in each of us, young and old. From the terrifying thought of a panther in the garden to the unsettling sight of a new classroom, scary images can be summoned and dispelled by the power of belief in ourselves. Angelou's strong words match the bold vision of artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, whose childlike style expresses the strong emotions and fantastical imaginations of childhood. Together, Angelou's words and Basquiat's paintings create a place where every child, in fact, can experience courage for themselves. In this brilliant introduction to poetry and contemporary art, short biographies of Angelou and Basquiat accompany texts and works of art, focusing on the strengths they drew from their lives and brought to their work.

The poem takes the reader into the mind of a child who he thinks has found a way to overcome fear in his life. He repeats the refrain "Life doesn't scare me at all" several times in this line. It alerts the reader and also reminds her of what she is trying not to feel. By taking the path of personal freedom even though it only comes from within his own mind, indirectly, the

poet uses women's consciousness as a form of resistance in this matter. Women's consciousness is a sphere of freedom that encourages a person to take the path of personal freedom, even if initially in his own mind so that she understands that everyday life is subject to change can become empowered (Collins, 2000). The poet takes the reader through many normal things that might frighten a small child and reject everyone.

“Life Doesn't Frighten Me” is the poem by Maya Angelou which consists of 8 stanzas and each stanza consists of different lines. The first, the second and the fourth stanza consist of 6 lines, the third stanza consists of 9 lines, the fifth stanza consists of 5 lines while the sixth, seventh and last stanza consists of only 4 lines.

This poem mainly talks about the racism that oppression brings. In that context, the oppression here touches black men and black women. But in every last line, this little girl fought her fears by telling herself that life doesn't scare her.

*Shadows on the wall*

*Noises down the hall*

*Life doesn't frighten me at all*

*Bad dogs barking loud*

*Big ghosts in a cloud*

*Life doesn't frighten me at all.*

(Stanza 1)

*Mean old Mother Goose*

*Lions on the loose*

*They don't frighten me at all*

*Dragons breathing flame*

*On my counterpane*

*That doesn't frighten me at all.*

(Stanza 2)

In first stanza according to Eid et.al (2020), in the poem "Life Doesn't Scare Me", the speaker wants to say that the oppression that frightens him is just a dream. Despite all the obstacles the author is experiencing, she tries to say in her poetry that African Americans must come out of their fears. The second stanzas above also clearly depicted that the oppression which happened to the writer was real. In those two stanzas, the writer used the bad metaphors such as "bad dogs", "big ghosts", "mean old mother goose", "lions on the loose" and "dragons breathing flame" to symbolize the negative emotions such as oppression, crime, pain, and prejudice which she was about to experience. Yet, this little girl decided to always be brave no matter what conditions she would encounter by saying "life doesn't frighten me at all" which all written in all stanzas. This positive message was written to always encourage her to be ready to face those oppression and to always move on with the life that she must face all alone. Her consciousness made her realize to live without fear of anything. Because the awareness of women as a space for freedom can encourage a person to take the path of personal freedom, even

though initially it is in his own mind so that he understands that everyday life can turn out to be powerless. The outcomes of these ideas assisted black women in many instances in overcoming oppression that transcended the boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation (Collins, 2000).

Another stanza which clearly describes the experience of getting oppressed by her peers in school is in the fifth and sixth stanza which she wrote on her poem;

*That new classroom where*

*Boys all pull my hair*

*(Kissy little girls*

*With their hair in curls)*

*They don't frighten me at all.*

(Stanza 5)

*Don't show me frogs and snakes*

*And listen for my scream,*

*If I'm afraid at all*

*It's only in my dreams.*

(Stanza 6)

The two verses vividly describe this little girl's experience at school. According to Eid et.al (2020), these verses show the oppression she received from boys during her schooling just because she was not an ideal girl and was considered ugly in their view. However, the kind of oppression he is subjected to no longer frightens him which is evident in the line “Life doesn't

scare me at all” which is amplified in all the verses at the end of each verse. According to (Collins, 2000), people are more likely to alter their living conditions when they are aware of change. Her consciousness is used as her resistance because she has the same rights and opportunities as white women, especially to be seen as a "woman" regardless of her skin color. This little girl also refers to oppression, crime, pain, prejudice, and all the negative emotions she has to face. As in the third stanza (line seven) when he writes "I just smile, they go wild" which implies that smiling is the starting point for him to face all his fears. Fearing Angelou like an enemy, she always reminds herself that she can fight and defeat anything that stops in her path, fight, resistance, and protest are steps to overcome fear (Eid at.al 2020). In other words, this poem does not really describe racism in the form of oppression that the author experiences, but also how he encourages and motivates himself not to be afraid to face these negative emotions.

The seventh and eighth stanzas tell a little girl that they often have to reach deep within themselves to find courage.

*I've got a magic charm  
That I keep up my sleeve,  
I can walk the ocean floor  
And never have to breathe.*

(Stanza 7)

*Life doesn't frighten me at all*

*Not at all*

*Not at all.*

*Life doesn't frighten me at all.*

(Stanza 8)

When she says she got a "magic charm" that allows her to walk on the "bottom of the sea" without taking a breath, this visual imagery suggests that she is telling a story for herself to dare to face the world by imagining a comforting fantasy of being invincible but also that she is developing deep belief in one's own strengths and competence. Her courage seemed both poignant and awe-inspiring. She may often be frightened, but she has also learned to stand up for herself and face her fears bravely. It takes courage to face a scary world although children in general often face this challenge with panic.

## **G. The Resistance of Black Women in the Poem Weekend Glory**

### **1. Figurative Language and Imagery**

The choices made for figurative language and imagery in this poem are summarized in the table that follows:

4.7 Type of Figurative Language Table

<b>No.</b>	<b>The Poem</b>	<b>Figurative Language</b>	<b>Imagery</b>
1	Some <u>dichty folks</u>	Metaphor	Visual



2	don't know the facts,	-	Visual
3	posin' and preenin'	-	Visual
4	and puttin' on acts,	-	Visual
5	stretchin' their necks	-	Visual
6	and strainin' their backs.	-	Visual
7	They move into <u>condos</u>	Metaphor	Visual
8	up over the ranks,	-	Visual
9	<u>pawn their souls</u>	Hyperbole	Visual
10	to the local banks.	-	Visual
11	Buyin' <u>big cars</u>	Metaphor	Visual
12	they can't afford,	-	Visual
13	ridin' around town	-	Visual
14	actin' bored.	-	Visual
15	If they want to learn how to live life right,	-	Visual
16	they ought to study me on <u>Saturday night.</u>	Metaphor	Visual
17	My job at the plant	-	Visual
18	ain't <u>the biggest bet,</u>	Metaphor	Visual
19	but I pay my bills	-	Visual
20	and stay out of debt.	-	Visual
21	I get my hair done	-	Visual

22	for my own self's sake,	-	Visual
23	so I don't have to pick	-	Visual
24	and I don't have to rake.	-	Visual
25	Take the church money out	-	Visual
26	and <u>head cross town</u>	Personification	Visual
27	to my friend girl's house	-	Visual
28	where we plan our round.	-	Visual
29	We meet our men and go to a joint	-	Visual
30	where the music is blues	-	Auditory
31	and to the point.	-	Visual
32	<u>Folks write about me.</u>	Hyperbole	Visual
33	They just can't see	-	Visual
34	how I work all week	-	Visual
35	at the factory.	-	Visual
36	Then get spruced up	-	Visual
37	and laugh and dance	-	Auditory and Visual
38	and turn away from worry	-	Visual
39	with a sassy glance.	-	Visual
40	They accuse me of livin'	-	Visual
41	from day to day,	-	Visual
42	but who are they kiddin'?	-	Visual

43	So are they.	-	Visual
44	My life ain't <u>heaven</u>	Metaphor	Visual
45	but it sure ain't <u>hell</u> .	Metaphor	Visual
46	I'm not <u>on top</u>	Metaphor	Visual
47	but I call it <u>swell</u>	Metaphor	Visual
48	if I'm able to work	-	Visual
49	and get paid right	-	
50	and have the luck to be <u>Black</u>	Emotional Symbolism	Visual
51	on a <u>Saturday night</u> .	Metaphor	Visual

This poem predominantly uses a metaphor to equate white people with upper-class people who are synonymous with their conspicuous use of luxury goods as dicty folks to show how high their power is. Then, the use of visual imagery is also most often used to show how the black woman as the character in this poem is grateful for her life by spending her time and salary wisely. She described her experience working as a factory worker and receiving very low wages for her work. However, on every Saturday or weekend, she decides to work part-time jobs to earn extra pay. Even though her life is difficult, she has a different view on how she will live her life without always feeling oppressed while still being grateful for her life.

## 2. The Depiction of Black Women's Standpoint

The poem "Weekend Glory" displays the ability of African-American women to be grateful for their lives, no matter what conditions they face. Through this poem, the speaker tries to show his perspective on the white people's lifestyle which is considered artificial and ungrateful.

Weekend Glory Poetry by Maya Angelou consists of 51 lines which are then divided into 8 stanzas. Each stanza of poetry does not have the same number of lines. This poem was published in the 80s, when black women in this era used to spend their weekends working as singers in cafes or concerts and earning better salaries than working as weekday labourers. One example is a concert with a black female singer. It happened in 1985 at Ellis Park Stadium where Brenda was the black singer and The Big Dudes was the star. So, the word "Glory" is a pride for a black woman that no matter how hard her life is, no matter how small her salary, she can still enjoy life even though she is not rich and has a lot of money. At least he knows how to live his life.

The poem mostly talks about the lifestyle of white people compared to the author's life as a black woman. She described her experience working as a factory worker and receiving very low wages for her work. However, on every Saturday or weekend, she decides to work part-time jobs to earn extra pay. However, this black woman has a different outlook on living her life without having to always feel oppressed while still being grateful for her life

like that besides being exploited at work and experiencing economic oppression. The form of black women's resistance in this poem is a standpoint. Applying a standpoint to the challenges faced by black women against the society, politics and economy they face can encourage them to make changes to secure their future. Because black women's collective historical experiences with oppression may stimulate a self-defined Black women's standpoint that in turn can foster Black women's activism (Collins, 2000).

The first and second stanzas show the speaker's self-esteem and power, who has a better life than people who oppress and discriminate against them through visual imagery.

*Some dichty folks*  
*don't know the facts,*  
*posin' and preenin'*  
*and puttin' on acts,*  
*stretchin' their necks*  
*and strainin' their backs.*

(Stanza 1)

*They move into condos*  
*up over the ranks,*  
*pawn their souls*

*to the local banks.*

*Buyin' big cars*

*they can't afford,*

*ridin' around town*

*actin' bored.*

(Stanza 2)

The visual imagery here is used by the speaker to make the reader illustrate a group of women with whom he cannot compare as African-American women. In the first line, the word “dichty” refers to people from white society being stupid and just talking nonsense about black women. Dichty comes from the word 'dicty'. This is a slang expression meaning high-class (Webster's New World College Dictionary. Copyright 2014 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company). However, the word 'dicty' undergoes a slight change because it is used in black vernacular English, thus becoming 'dichty'. The context in this poem is about black skin, so the word is slightly changed because the speaker is a black woman. While the second stanza describes those who buy luxury goods to increase their level in society, the market is actually not for them. As shown in “They move into condos, get promoted, mortgage their lives to the local bank” (line 7-10) which explains they will do anything to fulfill their desire to own something luxurious. Then, it's followed by the line, "Bought a big car, they can't afford it, drive around town, bored." (lines 11-14). The life of white

people on (lines 7-10) is different from the life of black people on (lines 11-14). This is an artificial life because white people want to show others including black people about the luxury of their life. They will do anything to be what they want people to represent as the upper class in society. They live consumptively, so they have to work hard even on weekends to pay off debts.

After describing the lifestyle of white people, in the third stanza the speaker gives the idea that his life is better. It is then continued with the fourth stanza which tells about the work of a black woman as a laborer and how she can survive on her meager salary. The fifth stanza also explains what black women do by spending their salaries.

*If they want to learn how to live life right,  
they ought to study me on Saturday night.*

(Stanza 3)

*My job at the plant  
ain't the biggest bet,  
but I pay my bills  
and stay out of debt.  
I get my hair done  
for my own self's sake,  
so I don't have to pick*

*and I don't have to rake.*

(Stanza 4)

*Take the church money out*

*and head cross town*

*to my friend girl's house*

*where we plan our round.*

*We meet our men and go to a joint*

*where the music is blues*

*and to the point.*

(Stanza 5)

Black women's lives are better because she lives her life with gratitude. The black woman shows that even though she only has an ordinary job as a laborer she can support herself. With her salary, the black woman can meet her needs, pay her bills on time to stay out of debt, and save some of her money for charity. The poet tries to give his readers an understanding of how black women live their lives by being grateful for what black women have even though they are not rich. However, she is still able to set aside some of her money to give to others and donate to the church. The speaker pointed out that even though he only has an ordinary job as a laborer he can support himself, meet his needs, enjoy his simple life, and save some money for donations.



The sixth to eighth stanzas are related to each other, namely explaining that she still faces the prejudice of white people who always look down on her. However, she is still proud of her job, her salary is not too big, and her simple life because black women feel that at least she doesn't live side by side with debt. Even though she has to sacrifice her time to work every day to survive. In her opinion, while other people were spending their money on pleasure, black women had the weekend to make money and have fun.

*Folks write about me.*

*They just can't see*

*how I work all week*

*at the factory.*

*Then get spruced up*

*and laugh and dance*

*and turn away from worry*

*with a sassy glance.*

(Stanza 6)

*They accuse me of livin'*

*from day to day,*

*but who are they kiddin'?*

So are they.

(Stanza 7)

*My life ain't heaven*

*but it sure ain't hell.*

*I'm not on top*

*but I call it swell*

*if I'm able to work*

*and get paid right*

*and have the luck to be Black*

*on a Saturday night.*

(Stanza 8)

White people have no idea how black women toil in factories every day without getting a day off. They work day after day to earn money for their life. It is then continued in the seventh stanza explaining that white people always think that black women live in ignorance. Up to the last stanza, the black woman shows that she has a strong personality and is able to overcome the problems she faces as an African American woman. The black woman here uses a metaphor to display her black power by comparing her life to not being in heaven or hell. She said that she doesn't have a perfect life, but her life is good and according to what she wants. According to him, she did not live to satisfy others which was the real way of life.

Apart from that, he can still enjoy his life, do whatever makes him happy, and get a job that supports his life because life is worth living. According to Urban Dictionary, the word "swell" means an old-fashioned word that basically means fantastic, generally used by old people or hipsters to try to sound cool. That is, the speaker can live very well from the problems he faces. He experienced the challenges he had to face due to his different physical appearance and gender. She revealed that it was difficult and challenging to live as an African American woman in a white society. They must fight to survive. The speaker believed that her life situation not only heightened her sensitivity to the rights and demands of power but also pushed her and many poor women to take bold action. She wants to show that even though she is just a black woman, she can find her happiness in her own way, so as not to make the speaker a weak woman. She displayed her pride and strength as an African American woman. Black women can live their lives by having different activities to spend the weekend compared to the normal days they usually spend working. It can be interpreted that the weekend is a break from the long and monotonous daily routine. In "Weekend Glory", speakers try to explain what "glory" really is over the weekend, and more generally in a fast-moving world that revolves around money, earned, and spent in many ways. The 50-51 line, "and as luck would have it being black, on a Saturday night" describes black women spending a different weekend than white people. Where other people spend their money on pleasure, Black women have weekends to make extra money and have

fun. In this case the black woman has implemented a standpoint in their life to get a simple life but still feel comfortable according to what they want even though they have to work every day. The significance of this black women's standpoint as a reference that will be utilized by agents of change in order to guarantee black women's future. The black woman's life experience with oppression can develop her standpoint regarding that experience, then the resistance actions that can follow it. According to (Collins, 2000) Black women's collective historical experiences with oppression may stimulate a self-defined Black women's standpoint that in turn can foster Black women's activism.

These seven poems share the viewpoint that black women are subjected to economic oppression, making it difficult for them to have the chance to improve their lives or fate. This is due to the fact that all of the subsequent relationships that women of African descent have in black American families and communities, with employers, and with one another are shaped by the convergence of racial, class, and gender characteristics that oppressed black women during slavery in the United States. In addition, the matrix of dominance, in which all black women are categorized into a number of privileged statuses regardless of whether they are oppressed, is another form of privilege-based oppression. In addition, the speakers put up a fight by living their lives with awareness and perspectives. They are saved, not because they feel victimized but rather because they feel strong and have the awareness to change the sound of what they are going through. Their

actions and thoughts demonstrate that it is crucial not only for representing them in society but also for their point of view and self-definition. Black women raise this awareness as a first step toward bringing about change by inspiring individuals to alter their living conditions. In the meantime, encouraging them to fight from the perspective of oppressed black women is possible. The perspective here is as a kind of perspective utilized by change specialists for individuals of color to guarantee their future. Because they want to be perceived as having legal US citizenship and being in a better position to participate more actively in the nation in which they currently reside.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter presents the research findings based on the analysis and discussion in the preceding chapter. In this chapter, the researcher then provides a number of parties with suggestions for additional research.

#### **A. Conclusion**

The oppression of black women in seven of Maya Angelou's chosen poems is the focus of this study. It discovers that each poem addresses a distinct oppression issue faced by black women and the strategies they use to overcome it. Seven of Maya Angelou's poems, including *"Harlem Hopscotch," "America," "Men," "My Guilt," "Ain't That Bad," "Life Doesn't Frighten' Me,"* and *"Weekend Glory,"* feature the speaker as an African-American woman. According to the analysis of the seven poems, Black women lived in a dominance matrix and were economically oppressed. Additionally, they possess a diverse range of awareness and perspectives that they can use to overcome the oppression they face as black women.

First, in the poem *"Harlem Hopscotch,"* the poet talks about oppression and how a black woman can survive in white society. She demonstrates in this poem that black women are subjected to economic oppression. In particular, Black women are not socially accepted in Harlem. Because they are only allowed to do manual labor, they are more likely to face economic hardship in the form of poverty. This is due to their lower socioeconomic status. As a result, they frequently experience misery and are confined to poverty. Black women, on the

other hand, are fully aware of their ability to improve their situation, not because they feel victimized but rather because they are strong and need to be saved. The crew of change that inspires them to alter their living conditions is their awareness.

Second, the America's poem may represent the author's depiction of black women's oppression as a dominance matrix. Because their race and skin color differ from those of the rest of America, Black women are subjected to oppression. The poet wishes to demonstrate that the United States of America, which is known for being a nation that is capable of bringing everyone's dreams to life through hardwork, did not speak up when black women had the opportunity to improve the lives of black women and Americans as a whole and demanded their promise of equalrights. This is something the poet wishes to demonstrate. Black women useviewpoints to challenge the dominance matrix. Black women's shared experiences and perspectives give them the courage to fight for equality and the strength to be confident in their own opinions.

Thirdly, the poem "Men" uses the oppression of a fifteen-year-old child as a dominance matrix. Examining race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation as distinct forms of oppression that combine to form a single dominance matrix in which she resides is made possible by her experience of harassment as a form of oppression. The oppression of black women is exacerbated by differences in sexual identity and age, such as a 15-year-old black girl and a Wino man who is frequently referred to as an alcoholic. Despite the fact that men are regarded as having complete power over women, she is unable to resist adulterous men

abusing her because she is regarded as passive. However, she fought back in this instance by instilling awareness of the significance of surviving, despite the fact that she had been subjected to oppression since she was a young child.

The fourth section of the poem "*My Guilt*" is about the speaker's memories of the era of slavery. As the highest form of oppression, slavery resulted in black women not having the right to live because their lives had been bought by their masters and only the masters could do anything about their lives. Slavery as a form of oppression in the form of a domination matrix. Because the oppression that occurred not only saw their black skin, but gender differences also pushed this bondage factor. Especially the complex oppression due to slavery experienced by black women. So, it conceptualizes the fact that, regardless of whether we are operating, we are all categorized into a number of privileged status and that privilege is the cause of oppression. Awareness of the significance of surviving, despite the fact that she had been subjected to oppression since she was a young child. Slavery as a form of oppression in the form of a domination matrix. Because the oppression that occurred not only saw their black skin, but gender differences also pushed this bondage factor. Especially the complex oppression due to slavery experienced by black women. So, it conceptualizes the fact that, regardless of whether we are operating, we are all categorized into a number of privileged status and that privilege is the cause of oppression.

Fifth, the resistance of black women is the subject of the poem "*Ain't That Bad*" about the speaker who is a black woman showing their lives as positive black women. Because they use perspective as a reference to secure their future. The poet stated that



he was proud to be black. She says that being black is fine, it makes her shine. Even though they are treated as the last human being in society, like the night that marks the end of the day.

Sixth, in her poem "Life Doesn't Frighten' Me" a little girl who is black who dared to conquer her fear of life by spitting out all the things that are scary for little kids. She found a way to overcome the fear in her life. She has the awareness to fight all her fears by taking the path of personal freedom even if it only comes from within her own mind. Here, the poet indirectly uses women's awareness as a form of resistance against a black girl in this poem.

Seventh, the poem "*Weekend Glory*" about the ability of African-American women to be grateful for their lives, no matter what conditions they face. It is an honor for a black woman that no matter how difficult her life is, no matter how small her salary, she can still enjoy life even though she is not rich and has a lot of money. At least he knows how to live his life. The form of black women's resistance in this poem is a point of view. Because here she applies her point of view to face challenges to society, politics and the economy so that it can encourage her to make changes to secure her future.

The speakers demonstrate, through these seven poems, that as black women, they are capable of resisting a variety of oppressions. Black women concur that speakers have the ability to succeed in society, can express their opinions, and will be accepted by society. Because they are African-American women, they are proud of who they are. Every poem that the speakers used to show that they are not weak women despite being oppressed. In addition, the speakers asserted that, as African Americans, oppressors are a new source of

strength for black women who wish to fight injustice and lead normal lives like everyone else.

## **B. Suggestion**

The researchers hope to provide students, activists, writers, and other researchers with advice based on the research's discussions and findings. Students, activists, writers, and journalists ought to follow in Maya Angelou's footsteps when it comes to speaking up. Because there is still racial, gender, and skin color discrimination in this country and elsewhere. Many readers are unaware of the centuries of oppression endured by black women, who fought for their freedom. Black people will begin to be seen positively and treated in the same way as women and men, especially in Indonesia, as a result of public awareness. It is suggested that this study be used as a reference for future researchers, particularly those interested in investigating the same problem. Maya Angelou's poetry can also be analyzed from opposing perspectives using feminism theory by other researchers, particularly black feminists, who are interested in the role and movement of black women. It is hoped that additional research will be carried out in order to enhance.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE



**Ika Cahya Hartiningsih** was born in Probolinggo on September 19, 2000. During her study at the Islamic Senior High School, she actively participated in Samroh as a backing vocal and also got several achievements in this martial art. She started her higher education in 2018 at the Department of English Literature, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and finished in 2022. During her study at the University, she actively participated in Festival Budaya Event as an Event Divison. In her semester break, she participated as an English Tutor in Lingua for a month.

## APPENDIX

The poems studied in this study are presented in this section. The following are  
Maya Angelou's poems:

### **Harlem Hopscotch**

One foot down, then hop! It's hot.  
Good things for the ones that's got.  
Another jump, now to the left.  
Everybody for hisself.

In the air, now both feet down.  
Since you black, don't stick around.  
Food is gone, the rent is due,  
Curse and cry and then jump two.

All the people out of work,  
Hold for three, then twist and jerk.  
Cross the line, they count you out.  
That's what hopping's all about.

Both feet flat, the game is done.



They think I lost. I think I won.

### **America**

The gold of her promise  
has never been mined

Her borders of justice  
not clearly defined

Her crops of abundance  
the fruit and the grain

Have not fed the hungry  
nor eased that deep pain

Her proud declarations  
are leaves on the wind

Her southern exposure  
black death did befriend

Discover this country

dead centuries cry

Erect noble tablets

where none can decry

"She kills her bright future

and rapes for a sou

Then entraps her children

with legends untrue"

I beg you

Discover this country.

## **Men**

When I was young, I used to

Watch behind the curtains

As men walked up and down

The street. Wino men, old men.

Young men sharp as mustard.

See them. Men are always  
Going somewhere.  
They knew I was there. Fifteen  
Years old and starving for them.  
Under my window, they would pause,  
Their shoulders high like the  
Breasts of a young girl,  
Jacket tails slapping over  
Those behinds,  
Men.  
One day they hold you in the  
Palms of their hands, gentle, as if you  
Were the last raw egg in the world. Then  
They tighten up. Just a little. The  
First squeeze is nice. A quick hug.  
Soft into your defenselessness. A little  
More. The hurt begins. Wrench out a  
Smile that slides around the fear. When the  
Air disappears,  
Your mind pops, exploding fiercely, briefly,  
Like the head of a kitchen match. Shattered.  
It is your juice  
That runs down their legs. Staining their shoes.

When the earth rights itself again,

And taste tries to return to the tongue,  
Your body has slammed shut. Forever.  
No keys exist.

Then the window draws full upon  
Your mind. There, just beyond  
The sway of curtains, men walk.  
Knowing something.  
Going someplace.  
But this time, you will simply  
Stand and watch.

Maybe.

### **Still I Rise**

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.

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.

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

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

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.

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.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

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.

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.

### **Ain't That Bad**

Dancin' the funky chicken

Eatin' ribs and tips

Diggin' all the latest sounds

And drinkin' gin in sips.

Puttin' down that do-rag

Tightenin' up my 'fro

Wrappin' up in Blackness

Don't I shine and glow?

Hearin' Stevie Wonder

Cookin' beans and rice

Goin' to the opera

Checkin' out Leontyne Price.

Get down, Jesse Jackson

Dance on, Alvin Ailey

Talk, Miss Barbara Jordan

Groove, Miss Pearlle Bailey.

Now ain't they bad?

An' ain't they Black?

An' ain't they Black?

An' ain't they bad?

An' ain't they bad?

An' ain't they Black?

An' ain't they fine?

Black like the hour of the night

When your love turns and wriggles close to your side

Black as the earth which has given birth

To nations, and when all else is gone will abide.

Bad as the storm that leaps raging from the heavens

Bringing the welcome rain

Bad as the sun burning orange hot at midday

Lifting the waters again.

Arthur Ashe on the tennis court

Mohammed AH in the ring

Andre Watts and Andrew

Young Black men doing their thing.



Dressing in purples and pinks and greens

Exotic as rum and Cokes

Living our lives with flash and style

Ain't we colorful folks?

Now ain't we bad?

An' ain't we Black?

An' ain't we Black?

An' ain't we bad?

An' ain't we bad?

An' ain't we Black?

An' ain't we fine?

### **Equality**

You declare you see me dimly  
through a glass which will not shine,  
though I stand before you boldly,  
trim in rank and marking time.

You do own to hear me faintly  
as a whisper out of range,

while my drums beat out the message  
and the rhythms never change.

Equality, and I will be free.

Equality, and I will be free.

You announce my ways are wanton,  
that I fly from man to man,  
but if I'm just a shadow to you,  
could you ever understand?

We have lived a painful history,  
we know the shameful past,  
but I keep on marching forward,  
and you keep on coming last.

Equality, and I will be free.

Equality, and I will be free.

Take the blinders from your vision,  
take the padding from your ears,  
and confess you've heard me crying,  
and admit you've seen my tears.

Hear the tempo so compelling,  
hear the blood throb in my veins.  
Yes, my drums are beating nightly,  
and the rhythms never change.

Equality, and I will be free.  
Equality, and I will be free.

### **Caged Bird**

A free bird leaps  
on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream  
till the current ends  
and dips his wing  
in the orange sun rays  
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks  
down his narrow cage  
can seldom see through  
his bars of rage

his wings are clipped and  
his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze  
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees  
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn  
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.