

# Women's Obstacles in Maya Angelou's Caged Bird

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## Abstract:

The Maya character in *Caged Bird* addresses the author's stated themes by overcoming many obstacles, establishing some sense of self as a mother, and repeatedly emphasising the importance of literacy and education. This paper focus on women's overcoming of obstacles in Maya Angelou's *Caged Bird*. She also serves the traditional black autobiographical themes of bondage, her dependence on others; flight, as she breaks out on her own with the junkyard group; and freedom, by taking control of her life. Black people were not treated equally or even fairly in much of the country. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and her other autobiographies, Angelou does discover herself and her capabilities and effectively conveys her personality and opinions.

**Key words:** women strength, custom, racism, social, challenge.

Angelou's handling of woman in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* of her mother and grandmothers and of Mrs. Flowers is yet more constructive than her dealing of African-American men. It is conventional that children of her age urbanized stronger bonds with their mother than their father, it is not astonishing to discover Angelou emphasising the significance of mothers and grandmothers. Such prominence on mothers is, as Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos, says:

typical in women's autobiography due to the innate and archetypal aspects of the women's psyche, celebrated and codified long ago as the Eleusinian Mysteries (Stephanie).

These typical views may be included in women's autobiographies, but it does not appear to be completed deliberately by Angelou. She does wilfully, however, is to build an attempt to oppose unattractive woman types explained in the previous literature. In this work grandmother matriarchs are as quiet, post-forty, fat and inertly working in the kitchen. Angelou's story is a tragic-comic saga of rising up Black and female in America she appears aim upon invalidating the specificity of the cultural forces that form Black female bias, "she creates an allegory of the feminine condition which cuts across historical, social and racial lines" (Lionnet, 150).

But Angelou's paternal grandmother, Mrs. Henderson, is a sign of power, not a weak, submissive character. She is not quiet; she is an ethical centre and the voice of power in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Her grandmother is an Earth Mother, superior, kind, fostering, and shielding. Angelou calls her "Momma" and in novel she would be the "Madonna" figure, stands for love and home. Her love for Angelou is unrestricted and affectionate. But paternal love is totally opposite, there love is more restricted and is typically given and taken and one should be respectful and beautiful. In Angelou's expanded family an impression of affection and love succeed that is not confer as a result of agreement or something got. The powerful maternal intuition encircles all. Ernece B. Kelley calls

"*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* a novel rather than an autobiography for good motive: it reads like a novel. It has characters, plot, suspense, and denouement, although the form is episodic". Kelley believes, "On balance, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is a gentle indictment of white American womanhood" (Kelley).

Maya's childhood problems are fixed not only to her family troubles. She discusses with the similar strong racial bias experienced by black people in the South region. Jim Crow Laws split black and white people under a social and legal organization identified as separation. Black people are not treating equally or even moderately. In the Southern part of America racial discrimination is mainly strong. In this southern part slavery has its roots and lynchings are dedicated all too frequently. Stamps, Arkanas, are hard towns for African-American people to live. It is awfully separated black people lived in the town that is greatly poorer than the region where white people lived.

Momma Henderson is a practical person. She never failed to do her responsibility nor do not monitor her place as a poorer class civilian, she identifies the power white structure would rapidly discover a way to

articulate its irritation. Momma's strong leadership quality still being strained to maintain her place and sends a miscellaneous points to the younger generation that needs a good deal of maturity and rift for understand. Momma contrast with the matriarchs establish in early American literature, In as much as there are few or no chances in the occupations, many women moved to Christian religion to escape from the imprisonment of their definite works. Thus, Momma, a leader, became a significant figure in her church. Furthermore, Momma is an industrialist, a female infrequency in the 1930s. Her industry sharpness helped her family live the misery and maintain off support; she conserved her autonomy.

Through this unconquerable woman, Maya is introduced to the religious side of Black people life. Depicted as an individual whose world is well-organized by labour, responsibility, place and faith, Grandmother Henderson symbolizes the spiritual custom start in secret meetings through slavery and additional urbanized in the churches that once spotted the rural area and small American town. Black women in general and of Grandmother Henderson in exacting can be credited to the Black church from slavery to liberation.

Angelou describes huge pride in her maternal grandmother, Mrs. Baxter, who did not take a back seat to anybody. As formerly mention she is very light-skinned and perhaps could have easily agreed as white. She chooses to stay a part of a black community. She and her family spoke Standard English and supply significant connection with the local white. She is a political activist who exercises significant thump in her neighbourhood in St. Louis, thus giving the slouch to the fable that African Americans could not contribute efficiently in the political field. Power blacks delivered votes and harvested the rewards. The Baxters understand the power of unity.

Similarly, Angelou's mother, Vivian Baxter Johnson, appears as tremendously very important celebrity. She is role model of Angelou. Angelou takes in her personal philosophy and regularly quotes her maxims of life. Mrs. Johnson's attractiveness and enthusiasm when she was young "made her powerful and her power made her unflinchingly honest" (174); and "To describe (her) would be to write about a hurricane in its perfect power, or the climbing, falling colours of a rainbow" (49). Vivian is an urban woman and sees no require in her world to be conventional to the obedient country folk tradition. She can "sing and swing" at will. Comforted by the fictional reality of her mother's death, Angelou, recalling the child's touching reply, writes:

I could cry anytime I wanted to by picturing my mother (I didn't know what she looked like) lying in her coffin. Her hair, which was black, was spread out on a tiny little pillow and her body was covered by a sheet. The face was brown, like a big O, and since I couldn't fill in the features I printed MOTHER across the O, and tears would fall down my cheeks like warm milk (50-51).

Vivian also finds it's not convenient to take care of her two children or find it too irreconcilable with her life style. She finds an excuse - a depressed Maya - to send Maya and Bailey back to Stamps. This cavalier discarding of her children seems to Stephanie Demetrakopoulos "as a failure to come to terms with the matriarchate (her mother), and this treatment, finds, is a disturbing weakness of the book. Angelou's mother is seen as "shockingly callous" and insensitive by sending the little girl back to Stamps after being raped". Maya is upset by actions and full of gratuitous guilt. The mother's manner here and at other times does not defend the constructive action she got from Angelou and this action, Demetrakopoulos says,

puzzling and unsettling. Vivian is just as guilty as Bailey, Sr., of betraying their children. But Mother Vivian is idolised by both Johnson children and neither would dream of questioning her less-than perfect mothering. She is all that is glamorous and movie-life desirable to them. In Angelou's next book, *Gather Together in My Name*, she does question her mother's sense of responsibility. She wonders whether her mother "... who had left (her) with others until she was thirteen. . . (would) feel more responsibility for (her) child Guy than she had felt for her own (Stephanie).

Thus there existed a consciousness of a flawed relationship with mother as well as father. Even if not frankly accepted, this would have a dire effect upon her sense of significance. Angelou always seems to ask for her mother's knowledge and guidance, however, and gives her vital position in her life. She does not seem to live upon any denial or not have of love. Years later Vivian would move in with Maya, who would never renounce family accountability without regret. She, like Momma Henderson, fully understood and accepted motherhood and its assistant Madonna facet.

In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and her other autobiographies, Angelou discovers herself and her capacity and successfully communicate her traits and view. Her actual reason in *Caged Bird*, however, as well as in her other books, is to illumine and explain her race's situation by objection against white delusion and legitimatising the limits sometimes necessary for continued existence. While explain some questionable activities, she does not arbitrator the right or wrong of them. She wants to obliterate those stereotyped images of

African-Americans that exist when she wrote *Caged Bird*. Angelou rightly begrudge this thinking that dehumanised her people, and which continued to be experienced regardless of civil rights development. Instead of writing a confrontational reply or sermonizing to remonstrance, Angelou chose the traditional form of autobiography to exaggerate the circumstances, presenting easily understood counterexamples. The reader can connect and conclude that the stereotype image is fake and disparaging. Forces beyond manage order actions indomitable to be anti-social. Given equal opportunities, Angelou believes that like reactions would be demonstrated by blacks and whites.

*Caged Bird* ends with Angelou facing the adult world full of “Mother Wit” and determination. She accepts excitedly the challenge of nourishing herself and her son. Her focus is that of a mature, responsible young woman. She will do better than her predecessors and augment the blanket of motherhood. She has gained potency from her adversities, and improved the status as a mother gives her added assurance for the future. The Maya character in *Caged Bird* addresses the author’s stated themes by overcoming many obstacles, establishing some sense of self as a mother, and frequently emphasising the significance of literacy and edification. She also serves the conventional black autobiographical themes of bondage, her dependence on others; flight, as she breaks out on her own with the junkyard group; and freedom, by taking control of her life. Thus Angelou includes all required elements in *Caged Bird* and uses it as the base for her future books.

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