

## Resistance against Women's Objectification in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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### ABSTRACT

In the early twentieth century, African-American women in the southern United States faced double oppression as a result of patriarchy and racism. They strove to reclaim their independence, all the more so when they were bound by their marriage. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) is Zora Neale Hurston's magnum opus, which chronicles the objectification of a young African-American woman called Janie Crawford during her marriage. Through the lens of Black Feminism, this research aims to identify the many forms of female objectification present in the novel and to ascertain the responses taken by the main character in response to the objectification. This research makes use of Martha Nussbaum's (1995) and Rae Langton's (2007) objectification ideas. Additionally, this study employs Kumea Shorter-Gooden's resistance strategies to evaluate the main character's strategies for resisting objectification. This study found that Janie Crawford was subjected to nine distinct forms of objectification by both her first and second husbands, Logan and Jody. Additionally, this research illustrates how Janie Crawford's opposition to objectification is fueled by the concept of self-definition. In general, the findings indicate that the novel is centered on the problem of women's objectification and is a timely representation of African American women's lives in the early twentieth century.

**Keywords:** *African-American women, objectification, resistance, self-definition.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the early twentieth century in the United States of America, the role of men and women was sharply defined. Especially in marriage, women ought to work limited only in the domestic sphere. Meanwhile, men have no limitation to work in public. As a result, it was perceived as common that women were treated as property or objects by men. This phenomenon is portrayed in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, first published in 1937. In the novel, Janie Crawford, a young African-American woman, experiences the

objectification by her first two husbands, Logan and Jody.

Women's objectification is driven by the existence of the patriarchal system — which commonly most of the men at that time closely held this belief. They believed men were superior to women in all aspects. As stated by Lois Tyson, “patriarchy treats women, whatever their role, like objects: like objects, women exist, according to patriarchal system, to be used without consideration of their own perspectives, feelings, or opinions” (2006, p. 91).

This study examines Janie Crawford's experience of objectification as an African-American woman living in a patriarchal culture. Due to the fact that African-American women confront double jeopardy as a result of their color and gender, they have developed into the sole group that understands the concept of survival. As a result, individuals have little recourse but to rely on themselves. Self-reliance is simply referred to as self-definition, which signifies that African American women may define themselves independently of others. Self-definition is a special phrase used to characterize the traits of an African-American woman; it is also the basis of their ability to demonstrate resistance. African-American Women are able to realize their position and function in the community through self-definition. Janie Crawford rationalises the concept of black feminism by refusing objectification and identifying herself. Even though Janie Crawford faces numerous forms of oppression from her husband, she is adamant that she has the right to freedom since she is conscious of her identity as an African-American woman. However, her refusal to submit has become another focal point of this research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the researcher's exploration, several previous researchers examine Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The researcher found some earlier researches on women's objectification and the same novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston. The researcher browses through the internet and found five papers from another university in Indonesia and a journal from Purdue University.

The first paper is *Their Eyes Were Watching God: A Black American Woman's Struggle for Her Personal Ambitions*, written by Prita Trisnaeswari (2005). This previous researcher discovered Janie's personal ambitions and motivation, the way Janie struggled for her ambitions, and the messages Zora Neale Hurston wanted to deliver about the ambitions of African-American women. In underlying the study, she used the theory of characterization, plot, and theory of message to understand the messages that the author wants to convey to the readers. This previous research used the same object material as

the researcher now uses but a different theoretical approach and topic.

The second paper was conducted by Cindy Belinda Ramadhanty (2018), who concentrated on *Women Objectification in Austen and Grahamesmith's Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: The Graphic Novel*. Her paper discussed objectification toward women, especially Elizabeth Bennet, Lydia Bennet, and Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice Zombies: The Graphic Novel* by Jane Austen (2010). This study aims to recognize the objectification experienced by the women depicted in this graphic novel and how readers respond to it. To analysis the study, she used the objectification theory by Nussbaum (1995) with the additional features from Langton (2007). The previous researcher used the qualitative and cognitive approach, emphasizing the letters in speech bubbles, facial expressions from the characters, and the domination between background and foreground. Even though the topic and theoretical approach used by the previous and researcher are the same, the object material and the focus of analysis are different.

The third paper was written by Yuyun Octaviani Budiarti (2014) entitled *The Resistance of the Objectification against Women in The Sinden by Halimah Munawir*. The paper shows that objectification toward women is bravely resisted by the *sinden* in an open way. The previous research showed that the women have the power to refuse the objectification they experienced from those male counterparts, or in other words, those women are not choosing to be passive in response to the objectification. The previous researcher used standpoint theory, cultural-radical feminist theory, and resistance theory in the underlying study. The method that the previous researcher used was narrative semiotics analysis by AJ Greimas. This research paper analyzed the same topic — objectification's resistance, but totally different object material and theory.

The fourth paper, which uses the same theoretical approach as the researcher, was conducted by Natanael Nonon Erta Putri Intan Permatasari (2015) entitled *Objectification of Women as Seen through Anastasia Steele in Fifty Shades of Grey* novel. The research found the descriptions of a female character, Ana, in the novel

and the objectification in her relationship. In line with the topic, the previous researcher used the objectification theory of Nussbaum and the theory of character and characterization. To support the analysis, she applied the feminist approach. Both previous research and present research are using the same topic with different focus and work.

The fifth research was derived from the academic journal by Patrick S. Bernard in Purdue University entitled *The Cognitive Construction of the Self in Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* (2007). The research explored the representation and conception of the self as an epistemological and ideological product in the main character, Janie Crawford. Bernard analyzed this case through cognitive paradigms such as knowing, seeing, thinking, and speaking; for instance, the character's capacities can produce knowledge and perception, identity and consciousness, memory and narrative, and language and speech. This academic journal uses the same object material as the researcher uses but different in topic and approach.

The sixth study was Parmis Tasharofi's *Domestic Violence in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God: A Feminist Reading*, which was published in the International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature in 2014. This study explored the issues of domestic violence as a result of sexist oppressions. The study found that Janie experiences verbal and psychical violence from her husbands. However, Janie's decision to live with Joe signifies her triumph over patriarchal oppressions.

As a result of the six pieces of research discussed previously, it is demonstrated that the subject of objectification and resistance in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* has never been examined previously. While earlier study has examined the protagonist's ambition and cognitive construction in the same novel as the current researcher, as well as objectification in other novels, the current researcher examines objectification in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. As a result, it is unique in comparison to past study.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is conducted within the Black Feminism framework. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) believes that being an African-American woman—who is placed at the lowest position in society does not solely mean they are the worst in reality. Patricia believes these African-American women can define themselves, which is called self-definition. This self-definition is internalized by Janie Crawford.

This research also uses the objectification theory proposed by Nussbaum (1995) and Langton (2007). Nussbaum (1995) divided objectification into seven types: instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership, denial of subjectivity. Langton (2007) claims that she wants to add the relevant aspects of an "object" idea that might be absent from Nussbaum's proposal. She adds three more types to Martha Nussbaum's proposal: reduction to the body, appearance, and silencing (2007, p. 246).

As the main character resists objectification, this study also employs the theory of resistance strategies proposed by Kumea Shorter-Gooden (2004). The classification of strategies explained by Shorter-Gooden aimed to minimizing or reducing the problems that could possibly harm many aspects of the oppressed women, especially the social and psychological aspects. The strategies are divided into three sources: ongoing internal coping strategies, ongoing external coping strategies, and specific coping strategies.

## METHODS

The novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* provided the key data for this study. The primary source of information is the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Secondary data is gathered from sources other than the novel, such as books, journals, articles, essays, and other internet resources that provide critical information about the subject, theories, and other facets. All data is gathered using the library research approach, which entails an intensive reading process.

To examine the data, this study employs Martha Nussbaum and Rae Langton's (2007) theory of objectification, Patricia Hill Collins' theory of

Black Feminism, and resistance strategies proposed by Kumea Shorter-Gooden.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Types of Objectification Experienced by Janie Crawford

This study finds that Janie Crawford experiences nine types of objectification from Logan and Jody based on theory of objectification by Nussbaum (1995) and additional types of objectification from Langton (2007). Even though Janie Crawford has a tough time during the marital oppression, she internalizes the value of self-definition as her background to resist objectification. She undergoes nine types of objectifications, for instance instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, violability, fungibility, ownership, denial of subjectivity, reduction to the body, reduction to appearance, and silencing.

#### *Instrumentality*

Jody Starks gives Janie a new expensive dress because she is a Mayor's wife and must look good in front of town folks. As a Mayor's wife, Jody asks Janie to be well-dressed so that everyone who would come to the store will have their eyes on her. Therefore, she must look beautiful and noble for everyone to see.

Jody told her to dress up and stand in the store all that evening. Everybody was coming sort of fixed up, and he didn't mean for nobody else's wife to rank with her. She must look on herself as the bell-cow, the other women were the gang. So she put on one of her bought dresses and went up the new-cut road all dressed in wine-colored red. Her silken ruffles rustled and muttered about her. The other women had on percale and calico with here and there a headrag among the older ones. (Hurston, 2000, p. 48).

Jody demands Janie to dress up like a big lady is simply trying to differentiate Janie from the rest of the women and treat Janie as a tool to gain honor from society. In other words, this is to show that a wife of a Mayor cannot be the same as the others. Using Janie as an object to show off indicates that

Jody values her as a sensible thing to achieve pride which obviously considered that Janie receives instrumentality from her husband.

#### *Denial of Autonomy*

Denial of autonomy indicates a person who is lacking in self-control and determination (Nussbaum, p. 257). For Jody, as a Mayor, he often sees another person who is different from him as the one who is not important or weak. Eatonville society convinces her to move as he commands, but Janie is also treated in the same way.

So she put on one of her bought dresses and went up the new-cut road all dressed in wine-colored red. Her silken ruffles rustled and muttered about her. The other women had on percale and calico with here and there a head rag among the older ones. (Hurston, 2000, pp. 48-49)

Jody thinks that Janie is a person who cannot choose things for herself. He clearly feels she cannot even govern her choice. Thus, Jody decides everything for her. One of them is when Janie is about to choose the dress which she receives from her friends. Meanwhile, Jody gives and asks Janie a new magenta dress to wear on a speech night. Even though she does not like the dress, she eventually wears the magenta dress because Joe said she must. It shows that Joe thinks she cannot choose what she would wear. It simply indicates that Joe underestimates Janie's self-government. At first, she would prefer the bought dresses her friends have prepared for her. However, as a wife, Janie assumes that what her husband thinks is definitely the best decision, even though she does not like the magenta dress in the first place.

Jody controls over her choices because he thinks that Janie will never be able to stand for herself and need somebody's guidance. This evidence can be classified as the act of denial of autonomy from the man toward a woman since Jody forces Janie to wear the magenta dress. In feminism, both women and men have the equal right to choose what is best for them in every aspect. However, it is not happening in their marriage. Jody prevents Janie from choosing what she is going to wear, showing how Jody does not consider Janie's self-determination.

### ***Inertness***

It happens when some people are gathering at the store and talking to each other. Looking at this view, Janie feels excited to join them in conversation. She even puts up some stories to tell them and make them laugh.

Janie loved the conversation and sometimes she thought up good stories on the mule, but Joe had forbidden her to indulge. He didn't want her talking after such trashy people. "You'se Mrs. Mayor Starks, Janie. I god, Ah can't see what uh woman uh yo' stability would tuh be treasurin' all sat gum-grease from folks dat don't even own de house dey sleep in. 'Tain't no earthly use. They's jus' some puny humans playin' de toes uh Time." (Hurston, 2000, p. 63)

Janie wants to be like the other women in town who can sit together with the men and talk about many different stories as normal human being. However, Jody would never give her permission to do such a thing. He would rather see Janie in the store and do her job as he always tells her, which eventually deprives Janie of communal interaction. It shows how Jody treats Janie as a person that is passive since her activity is forbidden. At this time, she cannot fight since all controls are in Joe's hands. He succeeds at making Janie feels she has no strength. Every time Janie has the need to do something with the people, Joe would hustle her off inside the store to sell something. Look like he took pleasure in doing it. On the other side, Janie feels stuck in her condition since,

... She had to come to hate the inside of that store anyway...The store itself kept her with sick headache (Hurston, 2000, p. 64).

### ***Violability***

The next day, after their fighting over such trivial things as the bill, Janie finds herself got slapped by Jody.

She found out that one day Jody slapped her face in the kitchen. It happened over one of those dinners that chasten all women sometimes. They plan, and they fix, and they do, and then some kitchen-dwelling fiend slips a scorchy, soggy, tasteless mess into their pots

and pans. Janie was a good cook, and Joe had looked forward to his dinner as a refuge from other things. So when the bread didn't rise, and the fish wasn't quite done at the bone, and the rice was scorched, he slapped Janie until she had a ringing sound in her ears and told her about her brains before he stalked on back to the store. (Hurston, 2000, p. 84).

The passage above considered as the physical abuse experienced by Janie. This happens when the couple's relationship is getting worse. After the fight over the bill, their marriage feels different as Jody and Janie rarely talk to each other. Janie has been hurt many times, and Jody does not want to admit that he has been too hard on her. It is explained that "the bed was no longer a daisy-field for her and Joe to play in. It was a place where she went and laid down when she was asleep and tired" (Hurston, 2000, p. 84).

One day, when Jody finds out that the food is not well-prepared, he gets angry and eventually slaps Janie in the face. According to Jordan (2002), in general, most victims of domestic violence are women, especially in heterosexual relationships, which are clearly seen in Janie's case.

### ***Ownership***

The act of ownership is the way Janie has to behave toward Jody. She must understand her position as a mayor's wife. As a woman who is owned, Janie needs to fully understand how submissive a woman she is, and she has to be respectful to Jody. It is mentioned many times how he tells Janie she must be happy to be a mayor's wife. The words "mayor's wife" indicates that Janie is owned by Jody. After finishing all his duty as a mayor, Joe talks to Janie in their room. He says, "When it was all over that night in bed Jody asked Janie, "Well, honey, how yuh lak bein' Mrs. Mayor?" (Hurston, 2000, p. 54).

Jody proudly asks Janie how she feels being "Mrs. Mayor". He does not necessarily ask her; meanwhile, he convinces the word "mayor" as the main point of his question. It seems like he is very proud of being someone who has power and influence—that Janie should be grateful for that position. Using the word "Mrs. Mayor" means he refers Janie as something possessed by a mayor, by someone whose position is obviously higher than she

has. Moreover, in the context of feminism, a patriarchal man would always feel proud of his position and show that he owns anything, including a woman.

### ***Denial of Subjectivity***

In Janie's case, her feeling is being ignored by Jody after he refuses Tony—a man who welcomes Jody to deliver his speech when he introduces Janie to have few words of encouragement. Jody refuses by saying, "Thank you fuh yo' compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home." (Hurstons, 2000, p. 51).

Janie made her face laugh after a short pause, but it wasn't too easy. . . . But anyway, she went down the road behind him that night feeling cold. He strode along invested with his new dignity, thought, and planned out loud, unconscious of her thoughts. (Hurstons, 2000, p. 51)

From the way he casually continues his speech and got no words about how he has said about the speech-making Janie cannot make, he obviously does not care about her feeling whether he hurts her or not. According to the Hurstons's narration, all he thinks about is just his dignity and goals without considering Janie's condition after he says such a statement of her incapability in delivering the speech.

### ***Reduction to Body***

Before Jody finally points at Janie about her age which refers to her body, Jody has done it before. He mentions multiple times that Janie needs to be aware of what she is doing since she is no young girl anymore. Similarly, Joe is getting older, too, as Janie observes that his prosperously looking belly turns into something that hangs from his loins (Hurstons, 2000, p. 91). However, Jody seems to hide it from the folks. Hurstons narrates that the more people there, *the more ridicule he poured over her body to point attention away from his own*. (Hurstons, 2000, p. 92).

You ain't no young girl to be getting' all insulted 'bout yo' looks. You ain't no young courtin' gal. You'se uh ole woman, nearly forty. . . . Tain't no use in getting' all mad, Janie,

'cause Ah mention you ain't no young gal no mo'. Nobody in heah ain't lookin' for no wife outa yuh. Old as you is. (Hurstons, 2000, p. 93-94).

Generally, an old woman has a weak and unfit body. It shows that Janie is not young anymore, and it makes no man wants to be her husband frankly indicates how Jody identifies Janie from the way she looks. For Jody, a nearly forty-year-old woman must be looking unattractive since her body is getting weaker and not beautiful anymore. Jody often mentions how Janie looks so old by a point at her body so everyone could notice. As a result, Jody objectifies her by addressing her body is no longer worthy of being called beautiful, that she is identified by her age and body.

### ***Reduction to Appearance***

This happens when Jody catches a man named Walter standing behind Janie and touching and smells her hair.

He hair was NOT going to show in the store . . . . That night he ordered Janie to tie up her hair around the store. That was all. She was there in the store for him to look at, not those others. (Hurstons, 2000, p. 64-65)

It is all his jealousy toward the man who touches her hair. It makes Jody asks Janie to cover it because there is no single person who can admire her but him. However, it is not the case. In the context of objectification, asking someone to reduce or add something to change their appearance without their will is considered objectification, the act of reducing to appearance.

Another time Jody identifies Janie from her appearance is when he demands her to change the dress. He wants Janie to look noble, so that he prepares a red magenta dress for Janie. His idea of a mayor's wife is the one who looks different from the rest of the women in town. Thus, without hearing Janie's opinions toward the dress, he casually demands her to wear such a dress.

Jody told her to dress up and stand in the store all that evening. . . . So she put on one of her bought dresses and went up the new-cut road all dressed in wine-colored red. (Hurstons, 2000, p. 48)



### ***Silencing***

Janie is invited to speak after delivering a speech in front of the entire community, but Jody blocks her from speaking by stating that she has never done so before. He couldn't care less about her opinions on the town's growth. Additionally, he asserts that he is not marrying her for these reasons.

Jody stops Janie from giving a speech by saying "Thank you fuh yo' compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home." (Hurston, 2000, p. 51).

In the perspective of a patriarchal individual who puts men's position over women, a man with power was born with a natural good speaking skill. Meanwhile, it is not happening for a woman. This thought is held by Jody as a man with patriarchal belief. According to John Stuart Mill, "even if all women are worse than all men at something, this still does not justify forbidding women from trying to do that thing (as cited in Tong, 2009, p. 19). If Jody considers Janie a human being, he should give her a chance to speak even though she has not done that before. It frankly shows how he treats her as an object by preventing Janie from speaking simply because an object does not speak.

### **The Resistance Strategies Employed by Janie Crawford to Cope with Objectification**

The researcher finds some evidence showing how she resists objectification through internal and specific coping strategies. There are three types of internal coping or resistance strategy found in the novel: resting on faith, standing on shoulders, and valuing oneself.

#### ***Resting on Faith***

Janie Crawford represents the resistance against the oppression or patriarchy given by her husband by resting on her faith in God. At the beginning of the novel, she admires God's creation, such as the bees and the pear tree. At that moment, she believes that when God could create such magnificent creatures before her eyes, He can also make things change. The change itself is one of many things she believes God could do toward her condition where she has to face

male domination or objectification. Janie finally could release her true self in front of the townspeople, commenting about the conversation between the men. They say something about killing a woman, and she analyzes what she is going to say to respond to their talking as she joins the conversation.

Sometimes God gits familiar wid us womenfolks too and talks His inside business. He told me how surprised He was 'bout y'all turning out so smart after Him makin' yuh different; and how surprised y'all is goin' tuh be if you ever find out you don't know half as much 'bout us as you think you do. It's so easy to make yo'self out God Almighty when you ain't got nothin' tuh strain against but women and chickens." (Hurston, 2000, p. 88-89)

The excerpt above establishes that Janie is not being subservient by directing her thoughts toward the men's talk about how easy they could murder a lady if they wanted to. She detects masculine dominance and explains how women are connected to God; how God is always on her side. Her observation of guys elevating themselves or declaring themselves wiser than women has enraged her. She feels that God is also displeased that males are obsessed by their belief in women and their denigration of women's strength. The fight she mounts displays her great confidence in God, who will always assist her in surviving in the patriarchal ocean.

#### ***Standing on Shoulders***

Standing on shoulders means the Black women gain independence and strength from their mothers and grandmothers who have fought the patriarchy and oppression. One critical lesson Janie learns from her mother and Nanny is the need for survival. Seeing their difficulties inspires Janie to pursue the independence for which she has yearned for a long time. Janie's life can be improved by marrying Logan Killicks, and she will avoid the same fate as her mother and Nanny. On the other hand, she feels pressured by Logan's treatment of her as though she is helpless and dependent on him.

Logan often says, "You ain't got no particular place. It's wherever Ah need yuh. Git uh move on yuh, and dat quick" (Hurston, 2000, p. 37). This side

of Logan hurts her as a woman to remember what she has learnt from her mother. Janie casually replies with wholly strong resistance, “Mah mamma didn’t tell me Ah wuz born in no hurry. So whut business Ah got rushin’ now? (Hurston, 2000, p. 37). She responds to Logan, who claims that she has no particular place unless he wants her to be in a certain place. By mentioning her “mamma”, who did not tell her that she was born in no hurry, she stands up for herself because she has the strength of how her mama survived before.

According to Kumea (2004), “These women were keenly aware of standing on the shoulders of their forebears. . . and this awareness became a tool that these participants used to deal with oppression. . .” (p. 416). Her bond with her mother and Nanny is the catalyst for her eventual decision to resist. Furthermore, African-American women use the act of resistance of standing on the shoulders of other black women, particularly moms and grandparents.

### *Valuing Oneself*

According to Kumea, the emphasis of this resistance approach is on self-love, self-respect, and self-esteem (2004, p. 417). This indicates that an individual is more than a “stereotype” or an image of another person. The point at which Jody protests her for failing to seek the bill in the manner in which Jody instructed her previously is the beginning of their conflict. Jody believes that women should be instructed to do things because they are incapable of thinking about anything at all. Additionally, he asserts that males are the ones who should take care of them.

Janie definitely owns the idea and beliefs that women cannot be defined by anything, especially by men. Instead, women define themselves, which is the form of resistance she uses to represent her and the other Black women. She replies, “Ah knows uh few things, and women folks sometimes thinks too!” (Hurston, 2000, p. 84) when Jody says, “Dat’s cause you need tellin’. . .” This demonstrates that Janie successfully considers herself and other women as more than a label or stereotype, thinking that their worth is more than what others believe. Jody categorizes women as “chillun and chickens” depending on their abilities; for example, youngsters must be instructed to perform something since they

lack knowledge and require supervision. Additionally, chickens are the only animal that cannot comprehend.

Understanding that women are being objectified and misunderstood, the fact is actually the men do not know that women are way more than that; she replies by stating that women are sometimes thinking. She values women the way women should be respected. Surprisingly, Jody responds and keeps saying that “they (women) just think they’s thinkin’”. When Ah see one thing Ah understands ten. You see ten things and don’t understand one” (Hurston, 2000, p. 84), which finally hurts her feelings. Even if Jody does not respond positively, she has resisted and spoken what is on her mind, regardless of how much she tries to fight, and he will never understand.

### **The Specific Coping Strategies**

The two types of specific coping strategies found in the novel are avoiding, standing up and fighting back.

#### *Avoiding*

After repeated objectification by Jody, ranging from prohibiting her from engaging in town activities to preventing her from making her speech to doing things depending on Jody’s decisions, Janie reaches a point when she chooses quiet as the only way to ignore the oppression. On the other hand, Jody requires Janie to remain in the business for as long as he desires. This is a recurring occurrence, and Janie has rarely spoken since then. Hurston narrates, “she went through many silent rebellions over things like that. Such a waste of life and time” (Hurston, 2000, p. 64). This resistance Janie takes is the avoidance toward Jody’s male domination, which eventually neglects the value of a woman in her.

The decision to be silent indirectly helps her a little bit to rest from the everyday prejudice that Jody throws to Janie. Kumea explains the participant’s response, “leaving a situation is, of course, the ultimate use of avoidance” (Kumea, 2004, p. 419). Simply, the avoidance helps Janie to keep safe both her feelings and thoughts since Hurston explains that to be involved in such conversation is “a waste of life and time”.



### ***Stand Up and Fighting Back***

Janie frequently expresses opposition since she yearns for independence, which requires her to be courageous enough to fight back. After being publicly humiliated by Jody for her inability to properly cut the chewing tobacco. Regrettably, she was subjected to a man's jest for it. When Jody discovers what has occurred, he taunts Janie by giving her grabbed eyes and declaring that regardless of how long she remains at the shop, she would never be able to cut a little object such as a plug of tobacco, which Jody regards as a piece of cake. Janie had no idea she will feel as though someone has just stripped her bare in front of everyone.

Upset about what Jody has just said, Janie replies firmly, "Stop mixin' up mah doings wid mah looks, Jody. When you git through tellin' me how tuh cut uh plug uh tobacco, then you kin tell me whether mah behind is on straight or not" (Hurston, 2000, p. 93). She becomes enraged by his treatment of her in public. Additionally, as Jody begins to link her actions with her appearance, she discovers that they are diametrically opposed. She cannot bear being blamed for such a small matter, and so she hurls some insults at Jody, which surprises him even more. Janie has won this time because she resists by fighting back.

### **The Self-Definition as the Cause of Janie Crawford's Resistance**

Patricia Hill Collins (2000), in her book entitled *Black Feminist Thought*, explains that Black Women's relationship with one another, self-valuation and respect, self-reliance and independence, and self, change, and personal empowerment are the values that naturally owned by the African-American women, specifically to fight for their rights and to resist the male-domination. Thus, these values of self-definition are found as the background that drives Janie Crawford's resistance toward objectification.

### ***Black Women's Relationship with One Another***

Janie is having a fight with Logan over the place where they should be. The time she finds out that Logan controls her by saying, "You ain't got no particular place. It's whatever Ah need yuh. Git uh

move on yuh, and dat quick" (Hurston, 2000, p. 37), she refuses by saying "Mah mamma didn't tell me Ah wuz born in no hurry. So whut business Ah got rushin' now?" (Hurston, 2000, p. 37). She bravely reacts in this way to show Logan that he cannot decide without considering her will. She understands that Logan wants to dominate her in terms of roles.

According to Joseph and Collins, the relationship between mother and daughter is very special. It can be categorized as one fundamental relationship among Black women. The mothers have empowered their daughters to keep strong and to be able to survive (as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 102). Through Nanny, Janie learns what her mother has done and struggled from being objectified when she was pregnant with Janie.

All the sufferings from being an African-American woman whose decisions are in the hands of the men have taught Janie to stand up and decide her own choices. It is also explained by D. White that the U.S Black women put so much effort into building up the individual and collective voices, which involves African-American women's relationship with one another, friendship, and family interactions (as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 102). Thus, it shows how great the relationship between the African-American women portrayed by Janie, her mother, and Nanny. With the help of her mother, she could manage to withstand the highly patriarchal treatment of Logan.

### ***Self-Valuation and Respect***

Responding to Jody's objectification which frankly considers Janie as the same as chicken and children, Janie has a way to resist it since she owns the respect and value toward herself as a woman and also other women out there by saying, "Ah knows uh few things, and women folks thinks sometimes too!" (Hurston, 2000, p. 84). She convinces the words "thinks too" as the equality she deserves. As stated by Simonsen, Sara Brooks notes, "I may not has as much as you, I may not have the education you got, but still, if I conduct myself as a decent person, I'm just as good as anybody" (as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 115).

For Janie, no matters how educated and smart a man could be, he should never underestimate and belittle a woman; both should be equally respected. In this case, she could fight back the oppression from

Jody because she has that self-valuation and respect for herself as a woman.

### ***Self-Reliance and Independent***

Jody Starks is having a conversation with Mrs. Tony and is about to help her and her children, who have not given anything to eat from her husband, but he ends up insulting her by not giving her anything to eat. The men start to talk about that and say that they would kill her for no reason. Some say that they would break her by saying, “Ah could break her if she wuz mine. Ah’d break her or kill her. Makin’ uh fool outa me in front of everybody” (Hurston, 2000, p. 88). Hearing how hurtful and ruthless their words are, Janie does something she has never done before. She joins the conversation without having to ask anybody’s permission.

Sometimes God gits familiar wid us womenfolks too and talks His inside business. He told me how surprised He was ‘bout y’all turning out so smart after Him makin’ yuh different; and how surprised y’all is goin’ tuh be if you ever find out you don’t know half as much ‘bout us as you think you do. It’s so easy to make yo’self out God Almighty when you ain’t got nothin’ tuh strain against but women and chickens.” (Hurston, 2000, p. 88-89)

The words that come out from Janie succeed at making people surprised, especially Jody, since he never teaches her to speak like that. Moreover, it is in front of everybody in town which is considered very brave to deliver such thought. At this time, Jody learns Janie’s independence to speak up and it scares and upset him at the same time by saying, “You gettin’ too moufy, Janie,” (Hurston, 2000, p. 89).

### ***Self, Change, and Personal Empowerment***

Janie finds out that marrying Logan Killicks is not making any changes in her life. Besides the disability to love Logan, she also feels trapped in a marriage where she is prevented from doing many things; everything is under Logan’s control. Months and months pass by, she finally meets Jody Starks, who offers her a better life and a better marriage. She believes she does not want the world she is living in with Logan. Thus, she needs to choose her dream life by leaving him. Nikki Giovanni states, “We’ve got to

live in the real world. If we don’t like the world we’re living in, change it. And if we can’t change it, we change ourselves. We can do something” (as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 117).

One night, Janie bravely communicates her willingness to leave Logan, says “S’posin’ Ah wuz to run off and leave yuh sometime. . . Ah might take and find somebody dat did trust me and leave yuh.” (Hurston, 2000, p. 36). The need to change is possessed by Janie Crawford to save herself from oppression.

## CONCLUSION

As discussed before, this research demonstrates that the protagonist, Janie Crawford, is subjected to objectification by her husbands, Logan Killicks and Jody Starks. They are compelled to dominate Janie and treat her as an object since they live in a patriarchal culture. She is considered to be a woman who is meant to be obedient to her husbands, and this idea eventually causes them to engage in gender oppression by verbally or psychologically objectifying her.

Husbands who internalize patriarchy feel superior to women. Logan Killicks, for example, demeans Janie by asserting that he is the one who assists her in obtaining a better life — and that she should be grateful for it. Jody Starks frequently criticizes Janie and constantly alludes to his position as Mayor as a means of managing Janie’s life according to his whim. The novel contains 10 distinct instances of objectification. Thus, it demonstrates how Zora Neale Hurston wishes to demonstrate that objectification is a significant and critical issue that must be addressed, as the findings suggest many forms of objectification in the novel.

As an African-American woman who has faced gender discrimination, she has developed strategies for survival. She chooses to persevere despite the torture becoming increasingly harsh. Janie is persecuted in a variety of ways, both alone with Jody and with the community. She is frequently controlled by Jody — unable to make independent decisions. Essentially, whatever she desires is contingent upon her husband’s approval.

She had been married to Jody for twenty years, and her constant objectification made her realize she could no longer stay in that position. This knowledge precipitates Janie's resistance. She combats objectification using a number of different ways. She only wishes to demonstrate that she is not as meek and frail as her husband believes. Internal coping techniques include resting on faith, standing on one's shoulders, and respecting oneself, as well as particular coping strategies such as avoiding, rising up, and fighting back. All of these techniques, the research demonstrates, are practical ways in which Janie Crawford resists objectification.

African-American women, on the whole, possess what is referred to as self-definition. Self-definition is a term that refers to the ability of women, particularly African-American women, to identify themselves independently of others. Janie Crawford's major source of resistance against objectification becomes her self-definition. As previously mentioned, African-American women are able to identify themselves since they are conscious of their circumstances and are unable to rely on anybody except themselves. There are four self-definition concepts: Black Women's interaction with one another; self-esteem and respect for oneself; self-reliance and independence; and self, change, and personal empowerment. Janie Crawford may appreciate her existence as a human being in light of these concepts, particularly as a woman who leads her to her own liberation. As a result, her capacity to identify herself aides her in coping with objectification.

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