

## The Interpretation of Maya Angelou's Selected Poems: Gender Discrimination

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**ABSTRACT:** This study is aimed to find out the poems in *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* that associated with the theme "Gender Discrimination" and how gender discrimination portrayed in *Maya Angelou's Selected Poems*. Gender discrimination is any unequal treatment based on gender. The data are taken from *Maya Angelou's selected Poems*. They are *Caged Bird*, *Still I Rise*, *Equality*, *Weekend Glory*, and *Phenomenal Woman*. The research method is qualitative descriptive. The research applies expressive theory and also intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. The results of this research are the gender discrimination reflected in five *Maya Angelou's Selected Poems*. *Caged Bird* pictures a woman imprisoned by the social stereotype because of her gender. *Still I Rise* shows a woman faces the prejudices on her gender but still rises. *Equality* portrays a woman who faces in equality patiently. *Weekend Glory* reflects the black woman who faces the paradigm of white social. The last, *Phenomenal woman* shows the pressure by the sociality based on gender. In conclusion, the woman faces gender discrimination so much but despite that, they are not giving up and still rising up her confidence.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender Discrimination, Inequality, Woman

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is an art of writing which expresses feeling based on many aspects of our life such as culture, tradition, social, economic, politic, and language. There are three genres of literature such as: poetry, prose and drama. Each of them has its own uniqueness which has been written with literary language. From those literary genres, poetry or poem is having a special way of expressing the speaker's intention which is full of imagination to be understood.

Poetry is the idea or mind of the poets which are flowing as a media to express a certain kind of perceptions, feelings, and thoughts [1]. Furthermore, poem or poetry is one of literary works which is full of imagination and expressions of feelings. It is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"[2].

Many studies have explored the analysis of the popular poems. Some are focusing on gender discrimination. The studies are presenting *Discrimination of Female Leaders in Dwilogi Poetry and Novels: The Study of Feminism and Inter textuality*. It uses the theory of feminism and inter textually aims to describe the forms of discriminations of female leaders. [3]. In addition, the studies explore the gender discrimination in *Maya Angelou* [4] [5]. The related previous studies also found by the exploring *The Way Black Women Face Racial Problems in Maya Angelou's Poems* [6]. Supported by the finding which explores *The Types and the Roles of Feminism in the Angelou's Selected Poems* [7]. *Maya Angelou* is one of the most influential voices today. She is a poet, novelist, educator, dramatist, producer, actress, historian, filmmaker, and takes care of civil rights. In *Stamps*, *Angelou* not only experienced the brutality of racial discrimination, but she also absorbed gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is any unequal treatment based on gender and may also be referred to sexism [8]. Women had to deal with issues of sexism the black women specifically had to deal with the issues of both sexism and racism. Her words and action continue to stir our souls, energize our bodies,

liberate our minds, and heal our hearts. She becomes an inspirational character especially for women all around the world.

Women are always seen as weak creature that makes them easy to be treated unfairly. Since birth into the world, women have the same position and degree as men, but over time and the times have progressed women are positioned below men and despised. This certainly affects the lives of women and raises various problems [9]. It is the measurable equal representations of women and men have role each other, so that men and women should receive an equal treatment”.

The author applied *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* by Meyers Abram. It contains of four approaches to interpret literature such as objective theory, expressive theory, mimetic theory, and also pragmatic theory. In this study, she primarily used expressive theory which is relatable with gender discrimination in *Maya Angelou's Selected Poems*. Beside expressive theory, she also used descriptive qualitative method, the intrinsic and extrinsic approach to convey the message and interpret the poems [10].

This study is interesting. It presents a form of discrimination in a literary work that is poem. The issue of discrimination has been long issued all around the world in different regions, countries and communities. Through *Maya Angelou's Selected Poems*, the issue of poverty and the lack of experience of women to gain access to the law is one of the factors that women lack protection and respect. Furthermore, the researcher chooses to analyze poems *Caged Bird*, *Still I Rise*, *Equality*, *Weekend Glory*, and *Phenomenal Woman* by Maya Angelou which portrays gender discrimination. The objectives of the study are: to figure out which poems in *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* are associated with the theme of gender discrimination, and to analyze how gender discrimination is pictured in *Maya Angelou's Selected Poems*. Thus, this study is focusing on the five of *Maya Angelou's Selected Poems*. They are *Caged Bird*, *Still I Rise*, *Equality*, *Weekend Glory*, and *Phenomenal Woman*

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Gender Discrimination

“Discrimination” derives from Latin, where the verb „*discrimire*” means “to separate, to distinguish, to make a distinction”. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the term *discriminate* appeared in the English language. The term “discrimination” generally evolved in American English usage as an understanding of prejudicial treatment of an individual based solely on their race, later generalized as membership in a certain socially undesirable group or social category.

"Gender" typically refers only to behavioral, social, and psychological characteristics of men and women [11]. In addition, gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in families, societies, and cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations about the characteristics of women and men (femininity and masculinity), such as the subordination can be changed or ended. Women and men are equally same [12]

Gender discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of one gender member by the other gender member, especially the male unequal treatment of women, which holds that one gender is superior to the other [13]. In other words, it is based on the physiological differences between men and women to identify men and women in terms of social status and economic status [14]. Gender discrimination is any unequal treatment based on gender and may also be referred to sexism. Characteristics of gender discrimination are in many situations where a person shows a prejudice toward another that would occur in the opposite sex. It is clearly stated that women and men were basically equal-that women had the same mental abilities as men, the same talents, and the same mental and physical toughness and capacity for logic and rational thought.

### Poetry

Literature is body of written works. Literature may be classified according to a variety of systems, including language, national origin, historical period, genre, and subject matter. Literature is divided into several parts like novel, poems, plays, and poetry and all of them have the unique side which has been written with literary language [15].

Poetry derived from Greek word *poiein* means to make or to construct. *Poietis* means the maker or the making and it became poetry, the art of a poet. Poetry is one of literary works which is full of imagination and expressions of feelings. In addition, poetry is the idea or mind of the poets are flowing as a media to express a certain kind of perceptions, feelings, and thoughts”. Poetry presents considered feeling in highly structured language. It is precisely concentrates on meaning and attitude rather than being emotional. A poem is emphasizing symbol, imagery, figurative language, rhythm, and rhyme. Poem is also should has meaning to convey the message which delivered by the author. Afterwards, poem has provided some aspects such as: sense, feeling, tone and intention [16].

- a. Sense is the subject matter of the poem.
- b. Feeling is the attitude of the writer towards the subject matter.

- c. Tone is the attitude of the writer towards the reader or reality.
- d. Intention deals with the reason of the writer to create the poem.

In the book *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* by Meyer Abrams contains four approaches to interpret literature; objective theory, expressive theory, mimetic theory, and also pragmatic theory Meyer Abrams [17]. One of those theories is expressive theory. Expressive theory is embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Literature is on the other hand can say as a process of imagination which controls feeling and mind of the author. The primary source and subject matter of poem are the attributes and action of the poet's own mind. This theory elaborates that the artist puts himself become the major element generating both the artistic product one and the criteria by which it is to be judged.

### III. METHOD

The descriptive qualitative research is the method applied in this study as it can adequately describes the phenomena of the language in society. Having the natural setting as a direct source of data, and the researcher is the principal instrument are the characteristics of this qualitative research [18] [19]. The data of this study is gained from *Maya Angelou's Selected Poems*. They are *Caged Bird*, *Still I Rise*, *Equality*, *Weekend Glory*, and *Phenomenal Woman* as the primary source and also some books and biographies which are related to the topic as the secondary source [20].

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Gender Discrimination in the Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou is one of the greatest poets who become an omnipotent literature's figure. She has written a lot of literary works about women and society since teenager. She is not only absorbed by gender discrimination but also racism which spreads in America. Women have to deal with varies of issues and Maya Angelou as the black women specifically has to deal with the issues of both gender discrimination and racism. Through her book *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou*, she represents that women may lack of experience, protection and respect in society but the voice of gender equality has risen all over the world.

Gender discrimination in Maya Angelou's poems can be seen as portrayed in five of selected poems, such as: *Caged Bird*, *Still I Rise*, *Equality*, *Weekend Glory*, and *Phenomenal Woman*.

#### 4.2 Gender Discrimination in Maya Angelou's Selected Poems "Cage Bird"

This This poem contains two main points. They are "bird" and "cage". Bird is a metaphor of freedom and cage is as a prison. The poet describes bird as freedom because bird can fly wherever and whenever he wants. This poem is about Maya Angelo's dark past who is raped by her mother's boyfriend. The cage is a symbol of the prison or limitation of doing something. The poet uses the pronoun "his" for both free bird and cage bird to show the equality for being men and women. The author will differentiate it through the analysis so the reader will understand the gap or gender discrimination reflected in this poem. The first line gives us a picture of free bird "The free bird leaps" means he is free to do whatever he likes. In the next line the poet uses "wind" and "floats downstream" as metaphor of white tradition. It means a definite power and gender marker that men are more superior to the women. "and dips his wings" means the free bird fly to a place that he wanted and "in the orange sun rays" is a symbol of the place of the caged bird that is prison. Even though the color of sun rays is orange, but the color orange here is a symbol of prison uniforms in the U.S. which means that the free bird comes to the narrow cage (the place) of the caged bird. Maya Angelou is trying to describe how powerful the men are. The expression "and dares to claim the sky" means that the men have the absolute authority in owning and managing the government while she is staying in her cage.

The free bird leaps  
on the back of the wind  
and floats down stream  
till the current ends  
and dips his wings  
in the oranges unrays  
and dares to claim the sky.

(Lines1-7)

The second stanza start with the word "but" which shows a different situation from the first stanza. The caged bird represents a human who is suffering. She stalks quietly so she will not be seen by anyone else. The caged bird is possessed and cannot move at all. It is all about her past experience when she is traumatize by an appropriate act by her mother's boyfriend. "His wings are clipped" and, "his feet are tied" owner of the caged

bird shuts the door from seeing the outside world. But the caged bird has a not her way to fight, she sings about the freedom even though nobody will listen to her.

But a bird that stalks (Line8)  
His wings are clipped and his feet are tied  
So he opens his throat to sing.

(Lines12-14)

The third stanza talks about how the women are afraid of the oppression from the men. They are trembled and their voices are shaken but they keep on their faith, keep singing until the world hears their painful story. The "tune" symbolizes the hope to achieve the justice. The caged bird (as the woman) still sings the song of freedom.

And his tune is heard (Line 19)  
For the caged bird sings of freedom (Lines 21-22)

The fourth stanza talks about how the men care only about the wealth more than the struggle that women have faced. "Breeze" and the "fat worms" are symbolized as the hope and opportunity for the free bird (the men). The speaker uses auditory devices "the winds" to give the poem a continuous flow. "The sighing trees" is as personification as a symbol of suffering which means even the nature feels sorry for them (the women). In the last line in this fourth stanza clearly states "and he names the sky his own". This line shows the man has an absolute authority in doing anything he likes.

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.

(Lines 23-26)

The women are in deep misery. They have walked through their dreams which have been dead and she is ready to let go and die "his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream". The word "Shadow" represents the soul that screams loudly but cannot be heard. The next lines are the repetition from the previous lines in the second stanza. Maya Angelou describes that even though "his wings are clipped and his feet are tied" they have not lost hope completely and still fight for their rights. This stanza shows that the women will never give up.

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

(Lines29-30)

The last stanza is the repetition of the third stanza which emphasizes that it is all about the caged bird's deepest desire. They dreamed of a freedom to live the life without the judgments and stereotypes of social life. Along with racism, gender discrimination has raised for over the centuries. The caged bird (the women) claims that they also can do everything that the free bird (the men) can do even in managing the country. The message of this poem is that equality may be hard to take place but as long as there is hope everything is possible. Everyone can be locked up or laid back but no one can stop us in expressing how we feel. Discrimination is a social illness that needs to be abolished. May be there is no equality between men and women but the poet want us to keep on walking to the freedom. The only way for the women to save themselves are keep singing, having a voice and standing up for their rights.

### **"Still I Rise"**

This poem is attributed by Maya Angelou for all women who face discrimination during their lifetime. At first, the background of this poem is about the survival of Black people in America and it continuously gives a big impact for women treated unfairly in social life. By reading her poem, the readers feel the effort show to overcome the gender discrimination and also her personal obstacles which have happened in her life. The message of this poem is loud and clear. She repeats the word "Still I rise" many times as a mantra which means she will rise again until she gets what she wanted.

Maya Angelou uses "you" that refers to the men and "I" refers the women. It has been usually written in the first person plural or in the first person singular, where "I" means "we". Maya Angelou uses the narrative type of poem that helps her to speak more about the ups and downs of her life history. In short, this poem is a discussion between men and women in each situation of the oppression during her lifetime. This poem portrays a strong person who talks about resolution overthrown the prejudices and paradigm. This poem is written straight forwardly to show the determination of the speaker. Maya Angelou teaches us to keep going on whatever life throws us. We have the pride and hope within us, never allow anyone to let you down and still we will continue to rise.

In the first stanza, we can see that the speaker is angry about the social gap that happened. The first line "You may write me down in history" is about the direct declaration to the oppressors about how she has overcome her difficulties long time ago. "Tro din dirt" refers to the black women. "But still, like dust, I'll Rise" this line contains simile that is "Dust" means that she will rise again as the scripture says that "dust" refers to life. She will live her life again bravely.

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

(Lines1-4)

The first two lines of this stanza start with the rhetorical question. These rhetorical questions are sarcastic and provocative. The word "sassiness" means impudent and it also emphasizes "beset with bloom" which has negative meaning of trouble and depression. The next line gives a smash to the oppressor by using metaphor "Cause I walk like I've got oil well" means Maya Angelou value she herself with. "Oil wells pumping in my living room" does not mean wealth in a monetary sense but represents the spirits we have. "Pumping in my living room" show she will rise again, full of spirit that continuously rises in her heart.

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

(Lines5-8)

The third stanza is using simile, "moon" and "sun" are the analogy to nature which show eternity. She will rise as moons and suns, and the tides of the ocean flow. The next lines show how she keeps her desired continuously rising to the top. The second repetition of "Still I Rise" is to emphasize of how determined and confident the speaker has overcome the hardship.

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

(Lines9-12)

The fourth stanza is another one which starts with rhetorical question "Did you want to see me broken?" and metaphor "Bowed head and lowered eyes?". The tone of this stanza is grim. She describes that the women are full of pain and suffer. The question shows her feelings, they are hurt physically and mentally. They want the women not only feel broken but also "bowed their head and lowered their eyes". The speaker of this poem is comparing how a person's shoulders drop as they lose confidence and feel down similar to how tears drop on one's face when being upset or hurt.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
shoulders falling down like tear drops  
weakened by my soulful cries.

(Lines13-16)

Rhetorical question in the first line in this stanza below is to show the misery of the speaker. The tone in this stanza is confident. She provokes the oppressors by asking for answer "Does my haughtiness offend you?" The speaker suggests the oppressors not feeling depressed because of her. In the second stanza she values herself as oil wells and now in this stanza she describes herself as gold mines which are the symbols of joy and confidence.

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

(Lines17-18)

There are "You" here refers to the men and "me" as the women. The speaker mentions "shoot, cut, and kill" which suggest the same expressions for torment action to assert that what the men have done is as terrible as knife or gun. "The dust" from the first stanza and "air" in this stanza are the main symbols of the endurance of hardship. Like air, she will never die even if the history has been difficult but her spirit will always triumph and there's no discrimination can hold her back.

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.

(Lines21-24)

The seventh stanza start with a rhetorical question which sounds like when the speaker is asking if "you" are jealous of her or not. The tone is provocative. The line "Does it come as a surprise" is not about a question to answer but a statement which declares that "a surprise" is not a good thing but otherwise for the oppressor. "That I dance like I've got diamonds" suggests a free spirit of doing anything. After using oil wells, gold mine s, now Maya Angelou uses diamonds to describe how valuable she is. Diamond refers to wealth and power. The last line in this stanza "At the meeting of my thighs" is an imagery of expressing her sexuality of being a woman.

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?

Lines25-28)

The next stanza contains repetition of "I rise" which shows us that Angelou continues to fight against the stereotype of social life at that time. The tone in this stanza is prayerful. She states that the past may full of shame or failure but she will rise. "Up from a past that's rooted in pain" suggests the sorrow of slavery and discrimination in the past may not be changed, but again she will never give up. In line 33 Maya Angelou describes herself as "Black Ocean" leaping and wide which is usually used to create a sense of fear and evil. A black ocean is used to describe a harmful ocean. "Black ocean" symbolizes Maya Angelou herself and all the black women. Maya uses the image of a "black ocean" to describe the fear and terror that happened to her since the beginning to her present life. This stanza is closed by a statement in line 34. She expresses all the pains of being discriminate by others and how she endured it.

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.

(Lines29-34)

The last stanza describes her desire to leave the nightmare that she got over the years. She has a great vision that tomorrow will be better. She claims that she is the gift and the person who will change their destiny. She is the icon of hope that will free the slaves. This line shows how badly she wanted to be free from discrimination. In the next lines, she continuously repeats that she will rise which shows determined she is to be free as a human.

I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

(Lines41-43)

This poem has a positive vibe and strong tone to the world. Based on the above analysis, we can see that the subject matter of this poem is gender discrimination. Every line that she shares through this poem shows how desperate she wanted to be free as a human being and treated fairly which she has dreamed of all the time. Maya Angelou expresses her feeling line by line like she is talking to the readers, so the readers can feel and understand the poem emotionally. This poem is expected to make the reader realize that discrimination is in humanity. People need to know that all types of discrimination like gender discrimination, racism, or even bullying is unworthy. Humans are all guilty of discriminating people. This poem has a great message like the title itself that is "rise" no matter what happened in life just keep our hope. Hope keeps us strong and alive.

### **Equality**

Equality today has been an important concern in this world. The varieties of cultures, beliefs, races, and gender cause the gap between one another. There are nine stanzas in this poem. It mostly contains four lines in each stanza except for the third, the sixth, and ninth stanza which contains two lines for each. This poem uses the first speaker, the pronoun, "I", "me", and "my" as women and the "you" as men. The writer will analyze stanza by stanza and focus on gender discrimination which portrayed in this poem.

The first stanza is talking about how inferior the women and how the men ignore the man treat them unequally. Maya Angelou as the speaker describes how terrible the experiences of harassment and inequality just because she is a woman. The poem is about the movement to the freedom and equality for African American women experienced on gender discrimination, individualism, yet racism. The tone of this stanza expresses anger to the men. "You declare you see me dimly" announces that she is nothing based on the social personal standard of judging. "The glass" (line 2) is the metaphor of the women as fragile as glass. She shouts and reveals herself, the men pretend to be deaf and blind for what the women have said and done. "though I

stand before you boldly, ”shows her Confidence for breaking the rule the man has made. Even though they are classified in “rank” by their wealth or appearance, she will stand for equality.

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

(Lines1-4)

The second stanza talks about the perspective that the women try to fight for new identity-out of the previous identity, lower class or slaves. The first line shows how her feeling. “You do own to hear me faintly” means she is discriminated by the men. Maya Angelou is clearly stated “as a whisper out of range”, the man pretending to be deaf and not hears all the pain that the women have expressed. All the shouts that the women voiced are fainted. There is a sense of loudness reflected by the word “beat out”. It shows her hard effort to gain her wish. “and the rhythms never change” means although the world does not hear their painful screams, the women will keep on voicing, for their rights, for their equality.

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.

(Lines5-8)

The tone in this stanza is optimists. Each stanza have the same idea which is put in two lines, “Equality and I will be free,”. It emphasizes the equality as the dream of all the women and nothing can hold them back. It is a statement which keeps them strong, they are still shouting and waiting until the equality become reality.

Equality and I will be free.

Equality and I will be free. (Lines 9-10)

“Wanton” has negative meaning that is disgraced. Wanton and shadow create the inferiority. “that I fly from man to man” explains they claim that she serve man to man who are not their husbands. She explicitly explains that the man says she is worthless and easy to use. “Shadow” suggests that the women are unseen by the man because of their social hierarchy. Gender discrimination makes women and girls become vulnerable especially to sexual exploitation and keeps them trapped in these industry. This thing happens because of the limited education and career opportunities for women. In the last line, she is asking for an answer that will be never be answered by anyone that shows she is invisible and ignored by the society. At the end, they will never comprehend her position.

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?

(Lines11-14)

The first two lines in the fifth stanza discribes her past memories full of misery and shameful feeling. She is suffered from “the painful history” and “shameful past” mentally and physically, yet she will not easily give up. The word “marching” is metaphor that implies struggles, but she chooses to keep living. “And you keep on coming last” means the women believe that one day the people who treated the woman fairly will be defeated and they will achieve their dream that is equality.

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

(Lines15-18)

The next two lines are the repetition from the third stanza “Equality and I will be free”. It has the same lines and same purpose of the previous statement that she wanted to be free. These two similar lines are as the cuts to the next verse. It is like a chorus in a song that repeatedly pronounced by the speaker, because these lines are the wish that she dreamt for over the years.

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

(Lines19-20)

The seventh stanza is about how the women speak louder so the world will listen and help them to stop the injustice. There are visual images “blinder” and “vision” and “padding” and “ear” which mean that nobody cares of about what happened to her. The tone in this stanza is full of anger because she is annoyed by the man’s act. The woman’s begging for justice that the men have power on. They close their eyes and pretend not to hear what the women say. There are auditory and visual images from words “crying” and “ears” mean she is full of sadness. They know she cries but no one listens and empathizes towards her.

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.

(Lines21-24)

Optimism is the tone of the eighth stanza. Maya Angelou conveys her message through auditory images that is "hear" for listening to something. It describes how the woman is on fire. She keeps repeating "the tempo" means her voice is telling us that they desperately need to step out from their bitter history and establish new lives with their new identity. The speaker is using the tactile images to convey her message that is as long as the blood throb through her veins. She will always fight for her dream that is equality. "The drums" shows how powerful and noisy they are. It will always "beating nightly" means it will never end until they achieve the freedom. She passionately sings for equality and she keeps in faith that she will be free.

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

(Lines25-28)

The last stanza is the declarative lines in this poem. It is not only a closing statement but also the main purpose of this poem. The same sentence that shouts repeatedly is to show her spirit to make equality happen. She shouts optimistically that she will achieve her dream that is equality. Equality, and I will be free" she says faithfully.

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

(Lines29-30)

This poem is about a woman who talks loudly what she experiences in the society but the people ignore her. Maya Angelou speaks through this poem that she will fight for the same rights for all human being a side from either color or gender, beliefs, race, appearance or economic background. She sends message for all the people that they must have the same rights.

### **"Weekend Glory"**

Weekend Glory is a poem about living life gratefully without comparing yourself to others. It is known as a song of freedom. Most of people use their weekend differently to other day. They spend weekend as a very good day and it might be a special day to meet friends, family, or even gather the church. Through this poem Maya Angelou breaks the standard of social life. The poem is about her past experience while working and living in the white society. She destroys the boundaries of being compared from one to another based on color, economic status, gender and race. She explicitly tells people to love yourself, and have a great life which full of happiness rather than focus on someone else's life. She wants to say that every human is having their own uniqueness.

This poem contains fifty lines divided into eight stanzas. Thus, each stanza does not have the same number of lines but each stanza explains about the distinction of white woman and black woman's way of life. This poem is quite different from other poems that the writer has analyzed. It does not only talk about the act or a raw deal of men to women but also woman to woman. The writer will focus more in gender discrimination which portrayed in this poem.

The first stanza reflects the reality that happens in the society. Maya Angelou describes the people who live in wealth do something they like and ignore humanity. She declares how people have no empathy to others. They only care about showing up to fulfil their personal desire. This stanza gives us an idea about how the high social class acts in real life while having their weekend. They buy everything just to impress other people. Wasting out the money they have note earned to keep their dignity. "Some clichy folks" means that there are people in same manner or position doing anything they like without any concerns. In the third line, the speaker explains how they waste their money to satisfy their desire. Maya Angelou uses slang words and apostrophes to show an act that are continuously repeated to show how human chase the popularity in daily life. They believe that showing up will make them more valuable in society. "Stretch in' their backs" shows how they act like people who pose like model or someone who owe everything. They dare to claim the world because they have more money than others do.

Some clichy folks  
don't know the facts,  
pos in and preen in  
and put tin' on acts,  
stretch in their backs.

(Lines1-5)



The second stanza shows that „they“ refers to the riches. They buy new house to show their power. In the line 8, she claims that they even pawn their souls which mean that they have debt in the local bank. These lines imply that they want to impress and amuse people to show that they have a better life more than others. They waste time for showing up their car, riding in the city “act in bored” showing they are still acting to be okay.

They move into condos  
up over the ranks,  
pawn their souls  
to the local banks.  
Buying big cars  
they can't afford,  
rid in' around town  
act in bored.

(Lines6-13)

Third stanza explains about the rich people to keep telling her to go to church to spend her weekend. They claim she must get better in the church rather than seeing and commenting on them, because they are in the different class. The word “ought to study” shows a command state to the woman. They talk like they are always right.

They ought to study me on Saturday night.

(Lines 15)

In the following stanzas, Maya Angelou switches from talking about rich people who waste their stupid weekends to her fun weekends. The tone in this stanza is being blessed. She proudly describes her weekend's life. She explains that she has the right way in living. She goes to work at the factory, lives a happy life, she has no worries in paying her “bills”. The expression “I get my hair done is a metaphor of an independent life. In the other words, she takes care of her outer beauty because beauty is not about color and a good life is not seen from how much money have you have spent. In second last line in this stanza, she is revealing that she truly lives independently and she is proud of having a great and healthy weekend.

My job at the plant  
aint the biggest bet,  
but I pay my bills  
and stay out of debt  
I get my hair done  
For my own self's sake,

(Lines16-21)

She finds that a simple life is the best way of living. She donates some money to her church, she makes plan for their weekend, hang out with some good friends, meet some men, out for a date and enjoy the Saturday night. The color’blue” in this line explains about the genre “where the music is blue” is explicitly talking about the blues show or jazz music originating among Blacks in the Southern USA. She describes that she has the best weekend. She is earning money while spending her fun weekend with her black friends.

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 blue  
And to the point.

(Lines24-30)

She becomes the talk of the town. “Folks write about me.” means people under estimate her for her work and being poor. People also see that she is not determined by them. The poet describes “how I work all week” as an expression of the proud of who she is, how she spends all weeks working to make money for living. She laughs while dancing means that she is happy for real. She is not acting like the rich people who just bragging their expensive stuff. “And turn away from worry”, this expression describes herself as a proud lady because she is an independent woman.

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 sassy glance

(Lines31-38)

“They” as man is showing off their riches to accuse her ways of living. In the next lines, she fights back saying they are living in the same life and they are facing the same thing that is to survive. This stanza shows that however strong she is, even though the men put her down, she is clear with her vision of life. She is proud of her identity for being a woman.

They accuse me of livin'

(Line39)

The last stanza contains the conclusions of the poem. The following lines show that she is happy with her simple life. There is a metaphor in this stanza “My life ain’t heaven”, “but it sure ain’t hell”. She declares her life might not be as perfect as heaven which full of wealth, but it is neither as hell of being poor because she lives as she wants to do. She bravely states “if I'm able to work” means she is not living a luxury life but still she is happy for who she is. We can see Weekend Glory is a kind of literary criticism to people who set wealth as desire. In all the condition she shows her thankfulness of her life despite people who judge or mocked her. In this poem she answers that a happy life is not about money. She has lacks of money, works in factory but as long as she “get paid right” it is enough for her. “and have the luck to be Black’ the second closing lines in this poem clearly state that she is proud of being a black woman.

My life ain't heaven  
but it sure ain't hell.  
I'm not on top  
but I call its well  
and have the luck to be Black  
on a Saturday night.

(Lines43-50)

Weekend is a glory for everyone, they all deserve that. She declares the life that she lives in is a world that she always dreamt of. Her weekend shows how grateful she is in her simple life. She declares that she is proud of her identity.

### **“Phenomenal Woman”**

Phenomenal woman is a poem about an African-American woman who is proud of herself as a black woman in the white society. She declares that beauty is not only about the physical appearance. She repeatedly says she is proud being born as a woman. The gender discrimination that they have received from the society makes the speaker see things differently. She knows that they also designate to live like other people do. In real life woman does not have the courage to speak out her mind because the stereo type that continuously rises in the society. Woman is weak creature and her position is always below the man. But in this poem, the speaker challenges the sociality, showing herself confidence and power as a phenomenal Black woman. The speaker uses diction and figurative language to show the black power of the speaker as a Black woman. This poem is divided into four stanzas. Each stanza has the same purpose that is confidence for being yourself. The speaker of the poem begins every stanza by describing her situations and how people treat her as a Black woman.

“Pretty women” here as plural is to explain that the one who ask is another woman not the speaker. There are words “cute” and “built” means that she is just an ordinary woman. She is not a good body shaped woman. She is not a woman that will be accepted in the social beauty standard because she is not having model appearance which are thin, tall and white to suit a fashion model’s size. The next following lines imply she is talking but ignored by “they” implies the man. She is not giving up to explain herself. In contrary she is happy to answer and challenge them.

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.  
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size  
but when I start to tell them,  
They think I'm telling lies.

(Lines1-4)

Line 7-9 contain the parts of body they are “the hip, step, and lips” of the speaker. She explains that she is confident of them all, even though it is not explained enough about how the span of the hips are, how is the step stride and how curl are the lips. She just wants to show that she has a pride.

The span of my hips,  
The stride of my step,  
The curl of my lips

(Lines7-9)

The first stanza ends up to show that she is proud being herself towards the image about herself as "black woman". She is "phenomenal" which means extraordinary who can do everything. The expression "That's me" means that she is different in her own way.

I'm a woman  
phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

(Lines10-13)

The second stanza disses the white social. She claims that she is as cool as the man. She dares to say that the man will "Fall down on their knees, even though at that era the Black woman was not accepted as gorgeous as white woman because of the beauty standard of the society. In the next lines, it continuously explains that the man swarms around her, "a hive of honey bees" refers to how popular she is like the queen bee in the town. She is confident that they will admit her black woman in the society.

Fall down on their knees.  
Then they swarm around me,  
A hive of honey bees

(Lines18-20)

From line 21-25, she says something to describe herself for the second time. It shows how the eye, teeth, waist, and feet of the woman are represented. "The fire in my eyes" means she is full of passion. The fire symbolizes the spirit of flames. The flash of my teeth" means bright smile. We will smile and show our teeth when we feel happy. "The swing of my waist" shows the movement of the woman. "And the joy in my feet" shows how joyful she is when she takes step by step in her life. All these lines portray how strong her beliefs that she will attract people to pay attention to her. She is confident to show that they can be discriminated by their gender, but they will never give up to strive a better condition.

I say,  
It's the fire in my eyes,  
And the flash of my teeth,  
The swing in my waist,  
And the joy in my feet

(Lines21-25)

The following lines are the repetition from the first stanza. It is to emphasize her beliefs, and her power. She does not care about what people think of her. She will always show her true self as a woman. She is "phenomenal" and nothing to shame about it.

I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

(Lines26-30)

The third stanza shows that the men wonder about her. It shows that her effort has been paid off. Even though the men still cannot see what it is, she passionately explains it to them. "My inner mystery" (line 34) means she has the inner beauty that cannot be seen by the man. Generally, people will believe what they see, it can be appearance but she has inner mystery that cannot be solved by the man.

My inner mystery,

(Line35)

The next lines imply the smile which are "breasts", and "style". She is confident for her appearance. The word 'Sun' symbolizes light, it can also represent as the happiness she brings when she smiles. She has a true power by being different than others. The poet might not be acknowledged in beauty standard but she becomes trend setter that followed by others.

I say,  
It's in the arch of my back,  
The sun of my smile,  
The ride of my breasts,  
The grace of my style.

(Lines38-42)

The lines below are the third repetition of the word "phenomenal". It is like a mantra continuously said by her. It is to emphasize her power that she is phenomenal and nothing to worry about, because she will never lose her trust on herself.

I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

(Lines43-46)

In the last stanza, she explains why she is different from the others. She tells them that she will never bow her head or run away from reality. Furthermore, in the next lines, she says "When you see me passing," "It ought to make you proud." She declares they must be proud that she is brave now. Even though she is not a model who walks in the catwalk, she is not a powerless woman anymore that people always underestimate. She is extraordinary in her own way. She has strong personality and she is special and people must appreciate her.

When you see me passing,  
I thought to make you proud.

(Lines51-52)

She says "It's the click of my heels" means it is in her next step or movement. The hair, the hand and the care are representations of her power. The bend of my hair" is a visual imagery defining her beauty. She has a control of everything and emphasizing the role of herself as a strong woman. Everything needs her care. The speaker frequently uses these lines to strengthen her claims.

It's in the click of my heels,  
The bend of my hair,

(Lines54-55)

The reason she is phenomenal is because she is a woman. It concludes the whole poem that may be discriminated being a woman but they will survive because they have a strong confidence. The beliefs that they will live like other people without social gap will come true. She is a woman, phenomenally.

"Cause I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

(Lines58-62)

## V. CONCLUSION

There are five of Maya Angelou's Selected Poems which associated with the theme of Gender Discrimination. The poems are Caged Bird, Still I Rise, Equality, Weekend Glory, and Phenomenal Woman. In that selected poems, women has a strong personality and her own way to face gender discrimination. Overall, the five *Maya Angelou's Selected Poems* portray the speaker as a strong personality, brave and confident woman to fight against injustice that is gender discrimination. Each poem expresses her feeling as a brave woman who dreams to change the sociality's stereotype towards woman. The speaker displays several ways to survive or fight in society, but the most important thing is being confident and grateful both as a woman and human being.

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