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The oppression of women in selected narratives by Namibian female authors.



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Abstract

The oppression of women, especially in African narratives, has been attributed to many factors, culture being the dominant amongst others. Culture and tradition have a variety of notable aspects to offer and there is much to appreciate, cherish and preserve. There are, however, some cultural practices and beliefs that are harmful. They disrespect, devalue, suppress and destroy human dignity. Harmful gender practices such as widow cleansing, girls' initiation and others that marginalize women, are the focus of this study. This paper

examines various cultural practices that oppress women as they are reflected in selected narratives of Namibian female writers. After gaining its independence in 1990, Namibia passed laws protecting the rights of women against various forms of oppression. With its history traced and rooted in the old and strong patriarchal norms, beliefs and practices, the notion that men are superior to women still affects women in the modern world. Cultural practices which marginalize women are still in existence, enforced by some of those that feel that they are important and superior. Through different women organizations, Namibian women demand and take the right to speak about those practices. Some have voiced them in writing or speaking out and breaking through the debilitating silencing. In the more formalized political and social field, this can be seen in women's networking through women's movements and solidarity groups, which are working towards equality in civil societies. It is therefore against this background that this study looks at female oppression; on how cultural practices enhanced or fuelled women oppression as well as various forms of oppression as highlighted in the selected narratives by Namibian female authors. They are from the book entitled, *We must choose life* (2008), compiled by Elizabeth !Khaxas, a Namibian feminist. These narratives are a testimony of the courage of Namibian women who express their agony and suffering in their own words.

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