




# Universitas Ahmad Dahlan 79

## Hasil Cek\_ Wajiran

-  CEK TURNITIN 3
-  INSTRUCTOR-CEK JURNAL 3
-  Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta

---

### Document Details

Submission ID

trn:oid::1:3079791949

Submission Date

Nov 15, 2024, 9:11 AM GMT+7

Download Date

Nov 15, 2024, 9:16 AM GMT+7

File Name

ty\_and\_Empowerment\_in\_Kasi\_Lemmons\_SELF-MADE\_English.edited.docx

File Size

56.9 KB

13 Pages

5,616 Words

33,230 Characters

# 7% Overall Similarity

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.

## Filtered from the Report

- ▶ Bibliography
- ▶ Quoted Text

## Match Groups

- 30 Not Cited or Quoted 5%**  
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
- 4 Missing Quotations 1%**  
Matches that are still very similar to source material
- 0 Missing Citation 0%**  
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
- 0 Cited and Quoted 0%**  
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

## Top Sources

- 4% Internet sources
- 4% Publications
- 2% Submitted works (Student Papers)

## Integrity Flags

### 0 Integrity Flags for Review

No suspicious text manipulations found.

Our system's algorithms look deeply at a document for any inconsistencies that would set it apart from a normal submission. If we notice something strange, we flag it for you to review.

A Flag is not necessarily an indicator of a problem. However, we'd recommend you focus your attention there for further review.

### Match Groups

- **30 Not Cited or Quoted 5%**  
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
- **4 Missing Quotations 1%**  
Matches that are still very similar to source material
- **0 Missing Citation 0%**  
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
- **0 Cited and Quoted 0%**  
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

### Top Sources

- 4% Internet sources
- 4% Publications
- 2% Submitted works (Student Papers)

### Top Sources

The sources with the highest number of matches within the submission. Overlapping sources will not be displayed.

1	Publication	Rosita Scerbo. "The Afro-Descendant Woman in Latin American Diasporic Visual A...	1%
2	Student papers	University of West London	1%
3	Student papers	North Harris Montgomery Community College District	0%
4	Publication	Hill Collins Patricia. "Black Feminist Thought - Knowledge, Consciousness, and the...	0%
5	Internet	www.apablog.org	0%
6	Internet	dn790007.ca.archive.org	0%
7	Internet	www.royalliteglobal.com	0%
8	Internet	www.wamc.org	0%
9	Student papers	CSU, Los Angeles	0%
10	Student papers	King's College	0%

11	Student papers	Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru	0%
12	Internet	mabdaa.aliraqia.edu.iq	0%
13	Publication	Atina Ndingeng. "The Impact of Austism on Ethnic Minority children in Middle an...	0%
14	Student papers	Prospect High School	0%
15	Student papers	University of South Australia	0%
16	Internet	www.kaupapamaori.com	0%
17	Internet	crystalhammon.com	0%
18	Internet	journal2.uad.ac.id	0%
19	Internet	www.tandfonline.com	0%
20	Internet	www.transhumanist.com	0%
21	Publication	Hogar Najm Abdullah. "African American Masculinities in Ann Petry's Oeuvre", U...	0%

# Empowerment Through Entrepreneurship: An Intersectional Analysis of Race, Gender, and Class in *Self Made*

Wajiran Wajiran\*

Department of English Literature, Ahmad Dahlan University-Indonesia

Ana Widiyanti

Department of English Literature, Universitas Sains Al-Qur'an-Indonesia

Corresponding Author: wajiran@enlitera.uad.ac.id

## Abstract

This study examines the portrayal of black women's empowerment, intersectionality, and entrepreneurship in the miniseries *Self Made*. Through a qualitative analysis of key scenes and dialogues, the research explores how the series reflects the socio-economic struggles of its main character, Sarah Breedlove, as she navigates racial, gender, and class oppression to become America's first self-made black female millionaire. Grounded in black feminist theory and intersectionality, the study highlights Sarah's entrepreneurial journey as a vehicle for personal and collective empowerment, challenging dominant beauty standards and offering economic opportunities to marginalized black women. The analysis reveals how the series critiques systemic racism and sexism while celebrating resilience and community solidarity. Furthermore, the research identifies the series' contribution to the ongoing discourse on racial and gender equality, particularly in the context of capitalist economies. By focusing on the intersectional experiences of black women, the study provides insight into how cultural representations like *Self Made* can inspire social change and foster a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by black female entrepreneurs. This research contributes to media studies, feminist theory, and African American cultural history by highlighting the transformative power of entrepreneurship as a tool for empowerment.

**Keywords:** Black feminism; discrimination; intersectionality; beauty standards; Self Made; Sarah Breedlove.

## Introduction

The Netflix miniseries *Self Made* is inspired by the life of Madam C.J. Walker and is directed by Kasi Lemmons. The miniseries was released on March 20, 2020, and has garnered praise for portraying Madam C.J. Walker, an African-American businesswoman who became the first female millionaire entrepreneur. In the series, Madam C.J. Walker is depicted through a character named Sarah Breedlove. The show explores complex and diverse storylines and delves into concepts of black feminist theory. It touches on themes such as black women's empowerment, autonomy, the interconnectedness of different forms of oppression, the pursuit of economic independence, and the examination of societal norms surrounding beauty. *Self Made* pays homage to Walker's enduring influence and contributes to feminist discourse by offering a critical perspective (Nupus & Junaedi, 2023).

Sarah's depiction of experiences in *Self Made* highlights the independence of black women whose contributions are often overlooked. The character played by Octavia Spencer in the film demonstrates grit and determination while facing racial and gender barriers prevalent at the time. This portrayal is consistent with black feminist theory, which underscores the importance of strengthening the perspectives of black women facing structural oppression. Sarah (Walker) exemplifies an ethos of self-reliance and empowerment through business activities, which serves as a source of inspiration for future generations of black women (Abbar et al., 2019; Wajiran, 2024).

9 The film explicitly addresses intersectionality, a foundational idea in Black feminist theory, by depicting Sarah's challenges and successes. Intersectionality, as conceptualized by Crenshaw (1989), explores how different types of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and classism, overlap and affect people differently (Crenshaw, 1989). *Self Made* depicts Sarah's struggles within a corporate environment dominated by white men and her relationships with black women in the hair care sector. This multifaceted portrayal offers a sophisticated understanding of the intricacies faced by Black women entrepreneurs.

The concept of economic empowerment is prominently featured in *Self Made*. This portrayal model exemplifies Sarah's efforts to build a path for herself and her fellow black women to achieve financial independence and success. Through creating a prosperous business empire, Sarah achieved economic independence and provided many jobs and leadership prospects for other black women. Thus, Sarah was able to empower her fellow black women. This story aligns with feminist concepts that promote economic independence to combat gender and racial discrimination (A. Y. Davis, 1997). Through the character, Sarah's legacy exemplifies how entrepreneurship can significantly promote social and economic progress among disadvantaged groups.

In addition, the miniseries offers a critical analysis of cultural beauty norms that have systematically devalued black women's natural hair throughout history. Sarah's creation and marketing of hair care products is seen as an act that promotes personal and collective freedom. This effort challenges limited standards of beauty and encourages self-approval. This critique is fundamental in feminist discourse. It often examines the detrimental effects of Eurocentric beauty ideals on women of color (Mendrofa, 2020; Wajiran, 2024). *Self Made* contributes to a broader redefinition of femininity and empowerment by honoring diverse expressions of beauty.

19 Ultimately, *Self Made* is a feminist work that illuminates the complex challenges and successes experienced by Black women from multiple perspectives. The miniseries highlights Sarah's entrepreneurial career, focusing on individual initiative, the intersection of different social identities, financial empowerment, and the reshaping of societal ideals of beauty. These themes pay tribute to Walker's lasting impact and offer critical perspectives for modern feminist theory and practice. The narrative also displays her continued significance in the ongoing struggle for gender and racial equality.

1 Given the significant themes explored in *Self Made*, this paper must be written to contribute to the scholarly discourse on black women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, and the intersectional challenges they face. While *Self Made* has been praised for its portrayal of Madam C.J. Walker's legacy, there is a need for a deeper academic exploration of how the

series contributes to black feminist theory, particularly in its depiction of entrepreneurship as a form of resistance against systemic oppression. By analyzing the miniseries through the lenses of intersectionality and cultural representation, this paper seeks to fill a gap in current literature regarding how popular media can serve as both a reflection of societal challenges and a tool for advocating change. This research will offer valuable insights into the intersections of race, gender, and class and demonstrate how cultural texts like *Self Made* can inspire new understandings of black women's empowerment and resilience in capitalist economies while challenging historical and contemporary beauty norms.

### Literature review

Black feminist theory provides an analytical framework for understanding Black women's diverse experiences and obstacles at the convergence of race, gender, and class. Prominent scholars, including Bell Hooks (1981) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000), have emphasized the importance of prioritizing Black women's perspectives and experiences in feminist discourse (Collins, 2000; Hooks, 1981). These theoretical frameworks highlight how different types of oppression, hindering and reinforcing, affect the realities that Black women experience differently from White women or Black men. The intersectionality paradigm, first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, is crucial to understanding the multiple dimensions of discrimination and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989).

*Self Made* is an important work that supports black feminist theory by emphasizing the empowerment of black women. The depiction of Walker's commercial odyssey through a character named Sarah Breedlove emphasizes her persistence and determination in overcoming racial and gender barriers. This story aligns with the black feminist focus on independence and self-determination. As explored by Hooks (1981) and Collins (2000) (Collins, 2000; Hooks, 1981). Sarah epitomizes the grit and ingenuity of black women, defying historical and modern stereotypes that often overlook their achievements.

The series perfectly demonstrates the concept of intersectionality through the severe challenges Sarah faces in a socio-economic environment characterized by racism, misogyny, and classism. Intersectionality, as conceptualized by Crenshaw (1989), offers a theoretical framework for understanding how different types of oppression affect individuals differently. *Self Made* explores Sarah's corporate trials and encounters with fellow African-American women in the hair care sector. It provides insight into the complexities of a complicated and challenging journey.

The fundamental focus of *Self Made* is economic empowerment. This is illustrated by the struggles of the main character, Sarah, who seeks to build financial independence and prospects for her fellow black women. This concept is consistent with feminist beliefs that promote economic independence to overcome gender and racial discrimination (C. A. Davis, 1982). Through establishing a thriving business, Sarah achieved economic independence and provided many jobs for other black women. This picture shows that entrepreneurship can positively change underprivileged communities' social and economic conditions.

The *Self Made* series also addresses the critique of conventional beauty norms. A topic that is prominent in feminist discussions. Throughout history, Eurocentric beauty ideals have

neglected the natural hair of Black women. This has hurt the self-esteem and social acceptance of black people both amongst themselves and amongst white people. *Self Made* challenges limited and exclusive beauty standards by portraying Sarah's creation and promotion of hair care products as an act of individual and group emancipation. This critique is crucial to understanding the broader consequences of beauty standards on Black women's identity and empowerment. As such, the series promotes a reinvention of femininity that encourages inclusivity and self-acceptance by honoring different expressions of beauty.

*Self Made* can be a robust literature that can be used to explore key themes in black feminist thought. This series highlights Sarah's entrepreneurial path, emphasizing black women's self-reliance, economic empowerment, and a critique of cultural ideals of beauty. These themes pay tribute to Walker's enduring influence and offer critical perspectives for modern feminist thought and practice. The series contributes to ongoing discussions on gender and racial equality, demonstrating the importance of the black feminist perspective in understanding and confronting structural injustices.

10 While black feminist theory and intersectionality have been extensively explored by scholars such as Bell Hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, there remains a gap in the literature regarding portraying these concepts through popular media, particularly in the context of entrepreneurship and beauty standards. Existing scholarship has thoroughly analyzed the intersections of race, gender, and class in shaping black women's lived experiences. Yet, few studies focus on how these intersections are depicted in historical biopics like *Self Made*. This gap is particularly notable in discussions on how black women entrepreneurs, like Sarah Breedlove (Madam C.J. Walker), use business as resistance and empowerment. While *Self Made* emphasizes economic independence, self-determination, and a critique of Eurocentric beauty standards, there is limited academic exploration of how such media representations contribute to the broader discourse on black women's entrepreneurship and empowerment. This study addresses this gap by analyzing *Self Made* as a cultural text that portrays the intersectional struggles of black women in business and by examining its contribution to feminist and intersectional theories in the context of capitalist economies and beauty culture.

## Research method

12 This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing textual analysis to examine the representation of black women's empowerment and intersectionality in the miniseries *Self Made*. The primary focus is on understanding how the series portrays race, gender, and class struggles in the context of entrepreneurship. The method involves identifying key scenes, dialogues, and character interactions that reflect the socio-economic and cultural dynamics influencing the main character, Sarah Breedlove. This approach allows for a deep exploration of empowerment, resistance, beauty standards, and how these themes align with black feminist theory and intersectionality.

The data for this research consists of selected scenes, dialogues, and plot developments from the miniseries *Self Made*. The scenes were chosen based on their relevance to the study's objectives, such as instances where Sarah encounters racial or gender-based discrimination,



her entrepreneurial journey, and moments that reflect her empowerment and the empowerment of other black women. Additionally, historical references, cultural symbols, and portrayals of beauty standards as depicted in the series will be analyzed. This qualitative data will be complemented by secondary sources, such as scholarly literature on black feminism, intersectionality, and African American cultural history, to provide a theoretical framework for interpretation.

The analysis method involves a thematic analysis of the collected data, focusing on recurring patterns and symbols related to race, gender, and class. Using the lens of intersectionality, the study will examine how these elements are intertwined and represented in Sarah Breedlove's story. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) is employed to deconstruct dialogues and narratives, revealing how power dynamics, oppression, and resistance are communicated. The findings will then be compared with existing black feminist scholarship to assess the series' contribution to the discourse on black women's empowerment, identity, and cultural resistance. This comprehensive approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how *Self-Made* reflects and challenges social structures by portraying the main character's journey.

## Discussion

### *Synopsis of the movie*

The story begins with a woman named Sarah Breedlove, who works as a housekeeper for a white man named Addie Munroe. While working as a maid, she only earned a meager wage. This wage was not enough to support her family. During her work, she also received bad treatment from her employer due to discriminatory treatment as a poor person as well as a black person. Ironically, while facing these severe problems, her life was made even more difficult by the attitude of her husband, who did not work and only drank. He is often rude to her. He also looked down on her as a woman.

One day, Sarah came to Addie, who worked as a hair growth seller. Sarah's hair loss due to stress from the burden of life could be improved with the hair growth cream sold by Addie. She expressed interest in helping him sell the product. She wanted to work as a hair growth cell. When Sarah expressed her desire, she was insulted because she did not deserve to be a salesperson. This is because she is a black person who, according to white people, does not need to present herself. After all, she is a black person who does not have the attractiveness of black people (38:35). Addie says the job that suits her is washing and preparing food, which is a job that is not difficult to do.

Despite Addie's rejection, Sarah secretly continued to sell the hair growth cream. She sold it to black people who lived in her neighborhood. The sales received a very positive response. Thanks to her persistence, Sarah could sell quite a lot of the hair growth cream. Unfortunately, her success did not get a positive reaction from Addie (36:25). The reason is that Sarah needed to ask permission before selling her merchandise. She was accused of stealing Addie's goods. It was not because of the lack of authorization to sell the product but because Addie wanted to be independent of Sarah, who was only a washerwoman. As a white person, Addie Monrue

thought that Sarah did not deserve to have a job as a cleaner. It was considered that it would worsen the quality of her products.

Receiving this unfair treatment, Sarah finally decided to make her hair growth cream. Sarah realized that she had a talent for business. This was discovered after the merchandise in the form of hair growth cream was sold out quickly. She also ventured to learn how to make hair growth cream from Addie products. Although he was caught and scorned by Addie, he was still determined to develop his own business. Initially, he had offered cooperation to Addie, but it was rejected outright because of racism.

Sarah decided to make her hair growth cream, which she sold to people close to her. Sarah's sales method is still limited to black women. Interestingly, she cooperated with black people who wanted to work with her. Thanks to the help and support of her family, she was finally able to create a salon and sell hair growth cream successfully. She was able to rival her main competitor, Addie Munroe, who also had the same business.

Even though her business was already well established and she was getting good customer feedback, Sarah still needed help. The investors, mostly men, did not support Sarah's business. Sarah's proposal to expand the business was not treated positively because a woman owned the business. The investors only wanted to provide assistance or investment if her husband ran the business. They canceled their investment plans after the potential investors discovered that Sarah owned the business.

Sarah was not discouraged by the discriminatory treatment. After struggling in various ways, she convinced the community and investors that she could run the business well. She also received good support from the community, especially black people and some investors who began to open up that a woman could also do business.

### *Representation of Black Women's Agency*

*Self Made* portrays Mrs. C.J. Walker (played by Octavia Spencer as Sarah) as a strong figure who defies racial and gender boundaries. This representation aligns with black feminist ideals, emphasizing women's agency and resilience. Sarah's story is not just about economic success but also about challenging societal norms and creating new opportunities for black women.

Sarah's character portrays determination and persistence in holding principles. Despite not having the support of those around her, she continues to act on the views she considers proper. She is persistent in fighting for her desire to establish a hair growth cream business. Despite being ridiculed and underestimated by others, she still believed in the success of her business. At the beginning of her pioneering work, she was taunted by Addie Monrue that she was not worthy to be the seller of the product. This view is because Sarah is a black woman who is considered unsuitable to be a seller of these products.

Meanwhile, despite not having the support of her closest confidant, her husband, she stuck to her guns and continued to run the business with her daughter. The husband's disapproval indicates that there are interests between men and women in terms of roles in the family. Undeniably, not all men or husbands want their wives to be more advanced than themselves.

This is a very relevant argument to the conditions of society both for the African community in general and for African Americans. This indicates that male power or dominance is still extreme among black people in the United States.

Sarah's aspiration to become a businesswoman was an advancement. At that time, women were generally only a complement to their husbands. If a woman worked, she could not exceed her husband's success. That is why a husband will typically limit women's activities or gait in the social context, including in running a business.

Besides the business conditions still experiencing ups and downs, CJ (Sarah's husband) has reminded Sarah to reduce her business capital so that their family finances remain stable. However, Sarah has strong principles, so businesses must be patient and optimistic. To produce success cannot be just a flash in the pan. "You do not just plant a seed and expect fruit the next day." (21:48).

### *Intersectionality*

The series highlights the cross-racial struggles Sarah faces, including racism, sexism, and classism, by focusing on Sarah's fight against the white-dominated and male-dominated business world and her conflicts with other Black women in the hair care industry. The series underscores the layers of oppression that black women face. This approach is crucial in feminist theory, which advocates an intersectional understanding of identity and discrimination.

Sarah received unfavorable treatment because she was a black woman. As reflected in the conversation between Sarah and Addie, she was the first starter in the hair growth cream business, and she mocked Sarah, who was starting a business in the same field.

"I got a hamper full of dirty laundry with your name on it." (minute 30:39). Addie spoke this sentence because Sarah worked for Addie as a laundry worker from the beginning. In addition, when Sarah started the business, she had the opportunity to expand it to another city. Although there was already a way to expand her business, she also faced challenges from her husband, CJ Walker, who did not agree to follow the move to another city. When Sarah said, her husband laughed at her dream of becoming a billionaire in the hair growth cream business. Well, I cannot argue with that. -Yeah (29:03). Her husband doesn't want to move to Indianapolis, where the prospects for Sarah's hair growth cream business are high. CJ said, "I ain't movin' to Indianapolis. I love you, but I ain't movin's." (28:52). CJ's expression is a disagreement with Sarah, who dreams of expanding her business. It can be interpreted that CJ underestimates Sarah's ability because she is a woman. In addition, it could also be CJ's disagreement because she wants to be independent of Sarah, who is more successful than him.

### *Empowerment through Entrepreneurship*

The journey of the main character, Sarah, illustrates how entrepreneurship can be a path to empowerment for marginalized women. By building a successful business, Sarah gains financial independence and can empower other black women by providing them with employment and leadership opportunities.

*Self Made* offers an in-depth exploration of empowerment through entrepreneurship. The extraordinary journey is portrayed by the main character, Sarah, who becomes America's first black female millionaire. This analysis explores how the series illustrates the transformative power of entrepreneurship, especially for marginalized communities, through various theoretical and empirical perspectives.

Sarah Breedlove's story exemplifies economic empowerment. A fundamental tenet of feminist theory that advocates for women's financial independence to achieve gender equality. By creating a successful line of hair care products customized for black women, Sarah gained financial independence and provided economic opportunities through employment and training for thousands of black women.

The series clearly illustrates how Sarah's business offers a form of economic agency to black women, allowing them to support their families and communities. This form of empowerment is essential in capitalist societies, where financial stability often translates into increased social and political influence. The business model built by Sarah provides an example for future generations of Black women entrepreneurs, illustrating the potential of entrepreneurship to drive systemic change.

Beyond the economic benefits, *Self Made* highlights the cultural and social empowerment achieved through Sarah's entrepreneurial endeavors. By marketing beauty products specifically aimed at Black women, Sarah challenges prevailing beauty standards and promotes a positive self-image among her customers. This cultural empowerment is crucial as it addresses internalized racism and a sense of inferiority fostered by dominant Eurocentric beauty ideals.

Sarah's insistence on using black women in her advertising and promotional materials helped normalize black beauty and pride. This act of cultural resistance is an essential aspect of her empowerment strategy, in line with black feminist theory emphasizing the importance of cultural representation and identity politics (Hooks, 1981).

The series also portrays entrepreneurship as a form of resistance to systemic oppression. Sarah's success in the beauty industry is portrayed as a resistance to the socio-economic barriers imposed by a racially segregated society. Her ability to navigate and ultimately overcome these barriers demonstrates the power of entrepreneurship as a tool for social justice and resistance.

Sarah's business practices, such as creating a sales force of black women who act as brand ambassadors and community leaders, further illustrate how entrepreneurship can foster community solidarity and collective improvement. This approach empowers individual women and strengthens the social fabric of African-American communities, contributing to broader efforts for racial equality and empowerment.

From a theoretical perspective, Sarah's entrepreneurial journey in *Self Made* can be analyzed through intersectionality, which examines how different forms of discrimination intersect and impact individuals. Sarah's experience as a Black female entrepreneur encapsulates the intersectional nature of racial and gender oppression, and her success highlights the importance of overcoming these overlapping barriers.

### *Challenging Beauty Standards*

The series also criticizes society's beauty standards, which have historically marginalized Black women's natural hair. Sarah's hair care products are portrayed as tools for personal and community liberation, allowing black women to embrace and enhance their natural beauty. The issue of beauty is one of the main themes in the series. The main character faces challenges to societal beauty standards that have historically marginalized black women.

Historically, beauty standards in the United States have been dominated by Eurocentric ideals that often devalue the natural features of black women. This can be seen particularly in their hair texture and skin color. These standards are perpetuated through media, advertising, and social practices, leading to the widespread internalization of these norms among women of color. This internalization often results in the use of harmful practices and products to conform to these ideals (Alemu et al., 2023).

The protagonist, Sarah, 's entrepreneurial success is rooted in her development of hair care products that specifically cater to the needs of black women. The products were revolutionary innovations because they met the physical demands of black hair and promoted pride and self-acceptance among black women. By creating and marketing products celebrating black beauty, Sarah challenged her time's prevailing Eurocentric beauty standards (Ingrid, 2022).

The series depicts Sarah's efforts to uplift black women through beauty culture as a form of social and economic empowerment. In her advertising campaigns, Sarah's insistence on using models with natural black hair is portrayed as a radical act that defies dominant beauty norms. This representation is in line with a black feminist perspective that views beauty culture as a site of oppression and resistance (Hooks, 1981).

*Self Made* has been praised for its nuanced portrayal of the complexities surrounding black beauty standards. The series highlights how Sarah's products and marketing strategies helped redefine beauty for black women, encouraging them to embrace their natural features. This narrative is crucial in understanding the broader implications of beauty standards on racial identity and self-esteem.

From a theoretical standpoint, the series' challenge to beauty standards can be examined through the lens of cultural hegemony, as described by Antonio Gramsci. Cultural hegemony refers to the domination of a culturally diverse society by a ruling class, which manipulates the culture of that beliefs, explanations, perceptions, and values so that the imposed worldview of the ruling class becomes the accepted cultural norm (Wajiran, 2013). In this context, Sarah's beauty products represent a counter-hegemonic force that seeks to subvert dominant beauty ideals and promote alternative standards that validate black beauty.

The issues addressed in *Self Made* remain relevant today as the beauty industry grapples with inclusivity and representation. The series serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle against narrow beauty standards and the importance of promoting diverse and inclusive representations of beauty. Walker's legacy, as depicted in the series, continues to inspire contemporary movements that advocate for the acceptance and celebration of natural black beauty.

15

2

### *Cultural and Historical Context*

Director Kasi Lemmons emphasizes the cultural and historical context of Walker's life through the main character, Sarah. It incorporates her story into a broader narrative of black women's struggles and achievements. This historical framing is crucial to understanding the systemic barriers women like Walker face and overcome.

*Self Made* is set in the early 20th century and offers a rich depiction of the cultural and historical landscape that shaped Sarah's life and achievements. Understanding this context is crucial to appreciating the series' narrative and broader implications.

6 The early 1900s was a time of significant social and economic transformation in the United States, especially for African Americans. This period is known as the nadir of American race relations. It was characterized by widespread racial segregation, disenfranchisement, and violence against black people (Ortega RP., 2023). The legacy of slavery, reinforced by Jim Crow laws, created systemic barriers that limited opportunities for African Americans in almost every aspect of life (Frances, L. & Grayson, Bennett, 2010).

Sarah's story unfolds against intense racial discrimination and limited economic opportunities. As a black woman, Sarah faced numerous obstacles due to her race and gender. Her achievements in this context highlight the extraordinary nature of her success and underscore the resilience and ingenuity required to overcome such systemic barriers.

14  
3 One of the historically significant movements during this era was the Great Migration. This event was characterized by millions of African Americans moving from rural areas in the South to urban areas in the North and Midwest between 1916 and 1970. The search for better economic opportunities and an escape from oppressive conditions in the South drove this migration (Nakayama, 2024; Wilkerson, 2010). Sarah is migrating from the South to the North to establish her business in Indianapolis, which has since emerged as a center of African-American culture and enterprise.

In the face of racial discrimination, African Americans established their businesses and institutions. This was done to foster a sense of community and economic independence. It was a form of resistance to the dominant economic structure that excluded them. Madam C.J. Walker's (Sarah) success as an entrepreneur in the beauty industry is a testament to the black community's spirit of independence and empowerment. Her business provided personal economic benefits and created jobs for thousands of black women. It enabled them to achieve financial freedom and improve their social status (Peiss, 1998).

20 The cultural beauty industry became a significant economic and social empowerment avenue for black women during this time. Beauty products and services offered Black women opportunities for entrepreneurship and professional advancement in the job market. In addition, beauty culture played an essential role in shaping the identity of African Americans and resistance to racist beauty standards. Sarah's products are essential in promoting pride in black identity and appearance. It is an effort to challenge dominant norms that denigrate black beauty.



The miniseries also depicts the early period of the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural movement that celebrated African-American cultural expression and intellectual achievement. Although *Self Made* predates the height of the Harlem Renaissance, Walker's (Sarah's) life and work are part of a larger narrative of African-American cultural awakening and empowerment. Sarah's success story contributed to African Americans' growing sense of pride and possibility. These achievements laid the groundwork for future cultural and social movements.

*Self Made* vividly describes the cultural and historical context in which Mrs. C.J. Walker (through the main character, Sarah) lived and thrived. Her story is emblematic of the broader African-American struggle for economic independence, social justice, and cultural affirmation during difficult times. By placing Sarah's achievements in this context, the series honors her legacy and illuminates the lasting impact of her contributions to African-American history and culture.

## Conclusion

21 In conclusion, the narrative of Sarah Breedlove, portrayed as Mrs. C.J. Walker, in *Self Made* illustrates the powerful intersection of race, gender, and class in her journey toward success. Despite facing systemic oppression from both white and black communities and enduring sexism even within her household, Sarah's resilience and entrepreneurial spirit allowed her to transcend societal limitations. Her rise to become the first self-made African-American female millionaire highlights her determination to challenge established norms, defy racist beauty standards, and provide black women with tools for empowerment—both economically and socially. The series emphasizes her success and her role in fostering pride in black beauty and creating economic opportunities for marginalized women.

The solution presented in Sarah's story lies in the importance of perseverance, self-belief, and community solidarity in overcoming structural barriers. Sarah's entrepreneurial approach, focusing on empowering black women through business and beauty, serves as a model for resisting societal limitations. By creating products tailored to the needs of her community and offering leadership roles to black women, Sarah established a legacy of empowerment that extended beyond personal financial gain. Her journey underscores the transformative power of entrepreneurship, particularly for marginalized groups, and continues to inspire movements for racial and gender equality today.

## References

- Abbar, I. M., Othman, W. M., & Waham, J. J. (2019). The Impact of Hegemony and Apartheid against African American Women: A Critical Study of Alice Walker. *Malaysian Journal of Social Science and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 4(4), 76–80.
- Alemu, W. G., Due, C., Muir-Cochrane, E., Mwanri, L., & Ziersch, A. (2023). Internalized stigma among people with mental illness in Africa, pooled effect estimates and subgroup analysis on each domain: systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Psychiatry*, 23(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-023-04950-2>

- Collins, P. H. (2000). Black Feminist Thought Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. In *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (2nd Editio). Routledge. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203900055>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 19(8), 139–167.
- Davis, A. Y. (1997). Race and Criminalization: Black Americans and the Punishment Industry. In *The House that Race Built* (pp. 264–279).
- Davis, C. A. (1982). Self, Society, and Myth in Toni Morrison's Fiction Author ( s ): Cynthia A . Davis Published by: University of Wisconsin Press Stable URL : <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1208158> REFERENCES Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article : re. *Contemporary Literature*, 23(3), 323–342.
- Frances, L., E., & Grayson, Bennett, T. (2010). The Legal Creation of Raced Space: The Subtle and Ongoing Discrimination Created through Jim Crow Laws. *The Berkeley Journal of African-American Law & Policy*, 12(1), 145. <https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38XC8T>
- Hooks, B. (1981). *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. South End Press.
- Ingrid, B. (2022). Black Beauty Culture Matters: Race, Gender, and Consumer Capitalism. *Journal of Women's History*, 34(1). <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2022.0003>
- Mendrofá, M. P. (2020). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis To the Language Use and Display in Whitening Cosmetic Product Advertisements. *SAGA: Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 1(2), 119–126. <https://doi.org/10.21460/saga.2020.12.45>
- Nakayama, D. K. (2024). The Great Migration and Healthcare to Black America. *American Surgeon*, 90(1), 5–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00031348231181098>
- Nupus, P. Z. T., & Junaedi, F. (2023). Representasi Perlawanan Terhadap Rasisme dalam Series Netflix Self-Made: Inspired By The Life Of Madam C.J. Walker (2020). *Komuniti : Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Teknologi Informasi*, 15(1), 27–53. <https://doi.org/10.23917/komuniti.v15i1.19466>
- Ortega RP. (2023). Segregation was already hurting Black health 100 years ago. *Science. Epub*. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adj2239>
- Peiss, K. (1998). *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*—University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Wajiran, W. (2013). The Domination of Ideas and Intellectuality in Gaining the Power and Hegemony in Man And Superman by George Bernard Shaw. *Jurnal Humaniora UGM*, 25(2), 143–150. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.2357>
- Wajiran, W. (2024). The portrayal of black women in Toni Morrison's Beloved, The Bluest Eye, and Song of Solomon. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 5(3), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.58256/f5hm1396>
- Wilkerson, I. (2010). The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration. *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*, 13(4). [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol13/iss4/25?utm\\_source=scholarworks.umass.edu%2Fadan%2Fvol13%2Fiss4%2F25&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCove](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol13/iss4/25?utm_source=scholarworks.umass.edu%2Fadan%2Fvol13%2Fiss4%2F25&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCove)



rPages