

**IDENTITY CRISIS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS IN DIASPORIC NOVELS IN
CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH***

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Abstract

Literature x-rays the happenings in our societies because the writers draw their inspirations and materials from their immediate environment to expose the socio-political, cultural, economic and religious realities of the people. In the course of exposing these anomalies, the writers adopt various styles and techniques from which perspectives, they unveil their works. Therefore, this paper studied identity crisis and disappointment in diasporic novels but with special emphasis on Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*. The theoretical framework adopted is hybridity which pays attention to the impact of cultural differences on individuals within an environment but from different backgrounds. The data for the research were from the texts studied which form the primary source, and other scholars' opinions in texts, journals, abstract and the internet which form the secondary sources. The researcher recommends that writers of fictional works should adhere to the conventions guiding literary production so as to portray vividly their visions.

Keywords: Identity, Diaspora, Discrimination, Neglect, Unemployment, Culture, Hybrid

Introduction

In every contemporary society, literature is always a means of social criticism, reconciliation and re-direction. It has the ability to mirror life in any given society by pointing out the fundamental problems that disturb the society. These societal issues could be political, social, or economic. The writers therefore, take up the responsibility of locating these issues and facing them squarely through their works. The literary artists write as a means of advancing certain ideas for the liberation of the society. Writers are members of the society and cannot be excluded from it, therefore, writers and their works are pillars of any given society and they cannot be neglected. They stand as social critics, preachers, agitators, and advocates of any society they find themselves. Therefore, literature is the ability to create, imagine, and express an idea; or composition through a definite method and the study of the method itself.

However, literary writings are aroused as a result of man's effort to document the happenings, events, and activities in his society. Every literary work of art revolves around a given society and therefore should contain the events, activities and happening in a particular society. Literature projects societal issues, experiences, and conditions of a group of people found in a given society. Therefore, literature as a field of study strives and makes an overwhelming landmark in the history of mankind. He borders on societal norms, fundamental issues, social structures, and conditions of the masses.

Search for Identity

Issue that often comes up in literature is the search for identity. Nwachukwu in *Africans and Identity* says that:

The notion that modern European scholars have engaged in the search for "self is a critical common place but this offers no guarantee that it is true. It could be argued that sincerity was no longer the problem for the European because he had lost his obsession with accommodating what one appears to be to what one is that is, to one's self" (68).

He further says that the above issue raises the question of authenticity, the concern to transcend what one seems to be or what society, state, culture and history have tried to make men by what one really is, beyond sincerity and hypocrisy. To him, Africans are trained in systems dominated by European culture. The African's concern is not with an inner voyage of discovery of a self. His concern is his public role, not his private self. The African asks always, not "Who am I?" but, "Who are we?" His problem is not his own but his people's (69).

In a paper presented at the "Travel and Uniting Conference of the University of Wolverhampton," W.B. Smith (1930) writes that: "People often ask the question of what defines someone's identity. Is it the colour of his skin? His language? His birthplace? It could be a combination of all these factors" (56). He says that although the term identity has a long history, deriving from the Latin root "idem," implying sameness and continuity, it was not until the twentieth century that the term came into popular usage (57). The psycho-historian, Erik Erikson in his *Construct of Ego Identity* says: "Identity is a process located in the core of the individual; and yet also in the core of his or her communal culture, hence making a connection between community and individual" (156). He developed the term identity crisis during the Second World War in reference to patients who had lost a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity (basically confused by the identity they have assumed and the one the war was forcing on them) and subsequently generalised it to a whole stage of life (as part of his epigenetic life-stage model of the eight life stages of man). Here, Berger in *Invitation to Sociology* says: "Youth is identified as a universal crisis period of potential identity" (157).

Basically, the problem of identity always pops up as a result of migration. Patrick Henry in *Migration and Literary Identity* says that "migration may have collapsed; he barrier between time and space but it has also raised the question of who a person really is" (112). Thus, the migrating author in Diaspora, says Patrick, has been rejected and alienated by that singular action of migration, both at home and abroad. They have been seen as too foreign, not even deserving of being called Africans by their home contemporaries while they are still seen as foreigners in the land of residence (113), Quoting Omeje (1992), a performance poet, Patrick writes: "We have been denied of citizenship and identity by our contemporaries at home; the same way we are being denied by those abroad" (115). Hence, most of these writers create characters in the same state similar to their own. Further, Patrick says that a progressive examination of African literature reveals that after the arrival of the Europeans on African shores in the sixteenth century, slave trade boomed and literature became one of the ways of retaining whatever identity the slaves may have. As literature was still in its oral form, the slaves share their stories as they move from one location to the other. A slave's fear is that he may never return to tell where he was taken and the telling of his story to the people he meets on his way is to mark his path to the unknown and make his transition to the spirit world safer as orality was still the main vehicle to commune with the spirit world (118).

Udeh (2007), in *Trends and Issues in Nigerian Literature* writes that when the tumult of independence was at its peak, the myth about white superiority began to wane in the mind of the average Nigerian citizen. Hence, Africans began to travel to Europe for the acquisition of knowledge. Thus, these Africans having imbibed without adulteration the western culture strove to be like the Europeans. This striving was an unrealistic fantasy and an effort in futility basically with their black skin. They lost grip of the cultural values of their people and they became black white men and found themselves in a most contradictory situation (107). So, it is pertinent to note that the identity question is only answered by the person concerned. It is an assertion of self, the way the respondent perceives himself and not what or how he is perceived. Ujowundu C. (2007) in *A Guide in Studies in the Novel* opines:

The position of the individual in search of his identity within his society may be dangerous for him because he may run the risk of being grossly misunderstood by the majority who may then see him as an alien and bent on dragging the society into his alien world. Due to his position, he becomes rejected (47).

He went further to place characters in three categories:

- those whose identity crisis arose from dual cultural experience (Adichie's characters in *Americanah* belong here);
- identity crisis as a result of the reluctance of the individual to live up to certain expectations.

- identity crisis deriving from the individual's certainty that the way of life of his community is wrong, even if the majority accepts it without question (47).

The individual in search of identity as can be seen is therefore an outsider, a bat, one whose moral and ideological perceptions belong nowhere and out of tune with the wishes of the larger society. Besides, the common misconception inherent in the minds of Africans about America to be a land flowing with milk and honey has prompted the researcher to do a study on African immigrants and their experiences abroad. The researcher's aim is to bring to limelight the sordid experiences encountered by African immigrants on relocating to America.

For centuries, citizens of the world have arrived on American shores with little more than a suitcase and a dream of a better life. The promise of freedom and opportunity continues to lure foreigners to the United States, even though stories of hardship and isolation comprise the bulk of African immigrant literature. Having reached the Promised Land, immigrants find themselves faced with unimaginable obstacles. Even Americans who have had a chance to adapt and become "successful" -according to the traditional definition of material success as defined by the American dream, experience feelings of cultural isolation and otherness. Refugees, those who go to America seeking protection from war or political or religious persecution, face entirely different problems. Many of these people long for home and do not necessarily crave the rewards promised by the American dream. Despite the myriad reasons that push them, African immigrants share a sense of isolation that, in some ways, defines their life experiences.

This study refers to immigrant experiences in regard to the state whereby the characters who are immigrants often lacked sense of belonging and were alienated in the host country due to challenges like racism and socio-economic exclusion among other factors. The theoretical framework that will guide this study is Hybridity. Members of the diaspora often experience two or more cultures. This phenomenon is called hybridity, which is defined by Hein as a mixture of cultures and as a negotiation process between cultural differences (433). There are not only differences between different cultures but also within one culture because every culture is generally hybrid as every culture is the product of a mixture (434). As such Hein claims that hybrid identities are identities which are developed by contact, similarities and differences of various cultural contexts (434). Hein also points out that there is homogenous and heterogeneous mixture. If the mixture of two different products become a third product then it is a homogenous mixture; if the two products do not combine and therefore do not become one uniform product as the homogeneous one then it is defined as heterogeneous.

Hybridity has frequently been used in post-colonial discourse to mean simply cross-cultural 'exchange'. This use of the term has been widely criticized, since it usually implies negating and neglecting the imbalance and inequality of the power relations it references. By stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political impacts on both the colonized and the colonizer, it has been regarded as replicating assimilationist policies by masking or 'whitewashing' cultural differences. The idea of hybridity also underlies other attempts to stress the mutuality of cultures in the colonial and post-colonial process in expressions of syncreticity, cultural **synergy** and transculturation.

Hybridity is in fact, one of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in postcolonial theory, hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new **transcultural** forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. As used in horticulture, the term refers to the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, 'hybrid' species. According to HoloHolquist (1986).

Hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc. Linguistic examples include **pidgin** and **creole** languages, and these echoes the foundational use of the term by the linguist and cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, who used it to suggest the disruptive and transfiguring power of multivocal language situations and, by extension, of multivocal narratives. The idea of polyphony of voices in society is implied also in Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque, which emerged in the Middle Ages when 'a boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture' (4).

The term 'hybridity' has been most recently associated with the work of Homi K. Bhabha, whose analysis of colonizer/colonized relations stresses their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities. Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls the "Third Space of enunciation" (37). Cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space, which for Bhabha makes the claim to a hierarchical "purity" of cultures untenable. For him, his recognition of this ambivalent space of cultural identity may help us to overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity in favour of the recognition of an empowering hybridity within which cultural difference may operate. As he says;

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory... may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. (38).

It is the 'in-between' space that carries the burden and meaning of culture, and this is what makes the notion of hybridity so important. The criticism of the term referred to above stems from the perception that theories that stress mutuality *necessarily* downplay oppositionality, and increase continuing post-colonial dependence. There is, however, nothing in the idea of hybridity as such that suggests that mutuality negates the hierarchical nature of the imperial process or that it involves the idea of an equal exchange. This is, however the way in which some proponents of decolonization and anti-colonialism have interpreted its current usage in colonial discourse theory. It has also been subject to critique as part of a general dissatisfaction with colonial discourse theory on the part of critics such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Benita Parry and Aijaz Ahmad. These critiques stress the textualist and idealist basis of such analysis and point to the fact that they neglect specific local differences.

The assertion of a shared post-colonial condition such as hybridity has been seen as part of the tendency of discourse analysis to de-historicize and de-locate cultures from their temporal, spatial, geographical and linguistic contexts, and to lead to an abstract, globalized concept of the textual that obscures the specificities of particular cultural situations. Pointing out that the investigation of the discursive construction of colonialism does not seek to replace or exclude other forms such as historical, geographical, economic, military or political, Robert Young suggests that;

The contribution of colonial discourse analysis, in which concepts such as hybridity are couched, provides a significant framework for that other work by emphasizing that all perspectives on colonialism share and have to deal with a common discursive medium which was also that of colonialism itself: . . . Colonial discourse analysis can therefore look at the wide variety of texts of colonialism as something more than mere documentation or 'evidence'. (163)

However, Young (1990) himself offers a number of objections to the indiscriminate use of the term. He notes how influential the term 'hybridity' was in imperial and colonial discourse in negative accounts of the union of disparate races – accounts that implied that unless actively and persistently cultivated, such hybrids would inevitably revert to their 'primitive' stock. Hybridity thus became, particularly at the turn of the century, part of a colonialist discourse of racism. Young draws our attention to the dangers of employing a term so rooted in a previous set of racist assumptions, but he also notes that there is a difference between unconscious processes of hybrid mixture, or creolization, and a conscious and politically motivated concern with the deliberate disruption of homogeneity. He notes that for Bakhtin, for example, hybridity is politicized, made contestatory, so that it embraces the subversion and challenge of division and separation. Bakhtin's hybridity 'sets different points of view against each other in a conflictual structure, which retains "a certain elemental, organic energy and openendedness" (21–22). It is this potential of hybridity to reverse "the structures of domination in the colonial situation" (23), which Young recognizes, that Bhabha also articulates. Bakhtin's intentional hybrid has been transformed by Bhabha into "an active moment of challenge and resistance against a dominant colonial power . . . depriving the imposed imperialist culture, not only of the authority that it has for so long imposed politically, often through violence, but even of its own claims to authenticity" (23).

Young does, however, warn of the unconscious process of repetition involved in the contemporary use of the term. According to him, when talking about hybridity, contemporary cultural discourse cannot escape the connection with the racial categories of the past in which hybridity had such a clear racial meaning. Therefore 'deconstructing such essentialist notions of race today we may rather be repeating the past than distancing ourselves from it, or providing a critique of it (27). This is a subtle and persuasive objection to the concept. However, more positively, Young also notes that;

The term indicates a broader insistence in many twentieth-century disciplines, from physics to genetics, upon 'a double logic, which goes against the convention of rational either/or choices, but which is repeated in science in the split between the incompatible coexisting logics of classical and quantum physics' (26).

In this sense, as in much else in the structuralist and poststructuralist legacy, the concept of hybridity emphasizes a typically twentieth-century concern with relations within a field rather than with an analysis of discrete objects, seeing meaning as the produce of such relations rather than as intrinsic to specific events or objects. Whilst assertions of national culture and of pre-colonial traditions have played an important role in creating anti-colonial discourse and in arguing for an active decolonizing project, theories of the hybrid nature of post-colonial culture assert a different model for resistance, locating this in the subversive counter-discursive practices implicit in the colonial ambivalence itself and so undermining the very basis on which imperialist and colonialist discourse raises its claims of superiority.

Search for Identity and Disappointment in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*

Americanah is a new kind of migration story, one that reflects a political shift and a literary one. An incredibly rich tapestry of Nigerian and American life and the ways a handful of vivid characters try to live in both worlds simultaneously.

Kathlyn Schulz speaking on Adichie's *Americanah* says in 2013 *New York Magazine*:

Adichie has scaled up. *Americanah* traverses three genres (romance, comedy of manners, novel of ideas), three nations (Nigeria, Great Britain, the United States), and within each, a swath of the social spectrum as broad and as difficult to nail as the hand spans in a Rachman in off concerto. It is about identity, nationality, race, difference, loneliness, aspiration and love, not as distinct entities but in the complex combinational relations they possess in real life.

Americanah explores the tainted and struggling situation that African emigrant in America are locked in. A start novel of realism, Adichie in *Americanah* explores and analyses the circumstantial identity search these emigrants are involved in, having found themselves in an alien world quite different from the one they have always known. As stated earlier, identity crisis in this novel is engineered by migration. Migration in effect brings about dual cultural experiences by the character which leads to alienation for most of them.

Adichie presents her characters as people in dilemmatic situation. Should they exert their identities as Africans in America or should they keep their Africanness aside and imbibe and assimilate the American culture in themselves for the spur of the moment and when they reunite with their roots, they can pick up their set-aside culture? The former seems impossible because Adichie presented an America or, rather, realistically painted an America where, in order to survive, you must belong and belonging not as an African but an African American. This state of unresolved dilemma results in identity crisis and the pangs of alienation experienced by the characters.

Notably, these characters are well on their way to becoming Americans. They choose instead to become Americans; an identity predicated on experiences rather than nationality, trajectory rather than place. Significantly, the peak of identity crisis is reached when these emigrants eventually return to where they emigrated from. Having become new beings, can their African identities resurface again? The search for African identity begins at this phase but their Americanness will always raise heads. The duel between these two cultures and its resultant effects on characters was what Adichie presents in *Americanah*.

The novel opens in Princetown, a town so pristine it actually sounds that way. The story begins nearly twenty years earlier, in Nigeria, when the teenager Ifemelu and a boy named Obinze fall in love. Surrounded by corruption and dysfunction, they eventually respond, as many members of their real life generation did, by leaving. Ifemelu goes to the United States, Obinze rejected by America's post-9/11 gatekeepers heads to England, on a tourist visa. He, of course, overstays. Eventually, he is discovered and sent back to Nigeria where he begins an ascent that culminates in a fancy house, a wife and daughter, and a distant, vicious alienated boredom. Meanwhile in America, Ifemelu finds herself surviving through work so humiliating that she cuts off all communication with Obinze and effectively with herself. Gradually, though her life swings upward as well, she launches a blog about race in America, earns readers and speaking fees, buys a condo, and begins dating a handsome conscientious Yale professor. Yet, by the time we meet her in that salon at the beginning of the novel, she has decided to trade all this for a one-way ticket back to Nigeria.

Having left Nigeria because of the political disillusionment, Ifemelu arrives America. In America, she is besieged by racism and denial. She discovers the most potent of all invincible strings-the nuclear force of our social physics-race. Adichie's analysis of that force is specific, damning, clarifying and comprehensible. She is merciless about white liberal attitudes towards race, with their prevailing mix of awkward self-consciousness, contented ignorance, self-satisfaction and submerged fear. It is pertinent to quote Jeannette Macaulay at this point. He says:

Because of racial discrimination, these people within the confines of territories which had been allotted to them by the government have not been able to lose the dominant aspects of their culture which later on, fused with the dominant aspects of the foreign culture to form a synthesis. This synthesis may be an unconscious evolution as comes out in forms of jazz or the calypso (81).

Some of the observations of racial discriminations are recorded in Ifemelu's blog. A middle-aged man suggested writing about adoption to Ifemelu on her blog. He says:

"Ever write about adoption? Nobody wants black babies in this country and I don't mean biracial, I mean black. Even the black families don't want them" (4).

Ifemelu was particularly caustic about everyone's anxious racial jostling; black immigrants towards African Americans, Caribbean immigrants towards Nigerians, Senegalese towards Nigerians, Nigerians who went abroad towards those who stayed behind and so on. These acts of racism led to many immigrants to sell their African identities to become full bred Americans and the "long stay" in America should earn them this "Americanness." While discussing with Aisha at the salon, Adichie voiced. Ifemelu's thoughts: "To earn the prize of been taken seriously among Nigerians in America, among Africans in America, indeed among immigrants in America, she needed more years, six years, she began to say when it was just three and a half. Eight years she said when it was five. Now that it was thirteen years, lying seemed unnecessary but she lied anyway. "Fifteen years," she said (16).

Just for survival, many Africans discarded their names (i.e. their identity) and took up new identities, especially Nigerians. Ifemelu noted this in page 8. She had once been somebody else. This dialogue ensues between Auntie Uju and Ifemelu:

"I talked to one of my friends, I don't know if you remember her-Ngozi Okonkwo? She's now an American citizen and she has gone back to Nigeria for a while, to start a business. I begged her and she agreed to let you work with her social security card." "How? I'll use her name?" Ifemelu asked.

"Of course you'll use her name" (106).

Adichie's exploration of the conflict of identity crisis is subtle, with the full complement of satire and caricature. She realizes this in the form of a drive attack on both the Nigerians who are sufficiently enchanted with especially the American culture, ethos and mannerisms to the extent of proposing a substitution of their own. She does not just lament what America can do to the Nigerian in terms of engendering a blatant disregard for things Nigerian. She also regrets what Nigerians can do to themselves by way of seeking cultural acceptance by Americans. It is in this respect that AbiolaIrele,

taking a cue from Hegel's dialectics sees alienation as a "willed movement out of the self and a purposive quest for new horizons of life and experience" (601).

Back in Nigeria before Ifemelu left for America, Adichie exposes what America could do to some Nigerians. She does this through a discussion of Ifemelu and her friends. Ginika plans on travelling to America and this conversation ensues in her apartment: "Ginika just make sure you can still talk to us when you come back," Priye said.

"She'll come back and be a serious Americanah like Bisi," Ranyinudo said.

And at the thought of Bisi, a girl in the form below them who had come back from a short trip to America with old affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurry "r" to every English word she spoke (65).

Obinze on his part had spends part of his childhood in America. He seems to have developed a phobia for African things and an undying love for American things. Adichie says: "He was fluent in the knowledge of foreign things, especially of American things.

He often said 'Go to Manhattan and see how things are.'" (67) He even knew details about American presidents from a hundred years ago.

Adichie did not leave Obinze's mother out. Ifemelu observes in her thoughts: "What sort of mother in right mind asked her son's girlfriend to visit? It was 'odd.' Even the expression 'come to lunch' was something people said in books" (68).

Adichie's use of the word "odd" means that it is bizarre seeing such acts from an African woman. It was typically American but it came from an Igbo woman. When asked why he is really into America and their ways, Obinze responds, "I read American books because America is the future" (70). Obinze had lost hope in Africa. He believed America was the way forward. Ifemelu went further in her observation of Obinze's mother, being mesmerized by her ways: "Obinze's mother, her beautiful face, her air of sophistication, her wearing a white apron in the kitchen was not like any other mother Ifemelu knew" (70).

The clutch of America on immigrants, especially Nigerians, seems so strong because one cannot stop wondering why Ifemelu herself would succumb to this clutch and spell of Americanness. She had once said to Obinze: "I go very often to the village with my mother, at least five times a year" (61). While she was leaving for America, Ranyinudo said: "The next time we see you, you will be a serious Americanah" (100). One would be forced to disagree with Ranyinudo because of Ifemelu's strong ties with her roots but her actions afterwards would make Ranyinudo's statement unarguable. Just after three years of stay in America, Ifemelu makes a call to a telemarketer and the man says: "You sound totally American" (175), even after saying she was a Nigerian. Ifemelu's thoughts after she hung up confirmed her fears because of her changing nature.

Only after she hung up did she begin to feel the stain of a burgeoning shame spread all over her, for thanking him, for crafting his words "You sound American" into a garland that she hung around her own neck. Why was it a compliment, an accomplishment to sound American (175)?

On another occasion, an Ethiopian taxi driver tells Ifemelu that she does not look African at all and when Ifemelu asks why, he says: "Because your blouse is too tight. I thought you were from Trinidad or one of those places. You have to be very careful or America will corrupt you" (206).

Ifemelu had completely forgotten what Nigeria felt like. During a call with her mother, Adichie says, "When her mother said there had been no light for two weeks, it seemed suddenly foreign to her, and home itself a distant place. She could no longer remember what it felt like to spend an evening in candlelight" (159). On another occasion, she forgot that there was a kiosk near her house (200).

Adichie went on and on attacking Nigerians who were enchanted with the American culture and ethos Ifemelu called Auntie Uju in America and this dialogue ensued:

"Yes, this is Uju." She pronounced it you—joo instead of oo-joo.

"Is that how you pronounce your name now?"

"It's what they call me."
"Well, that isn't your name" (104).

Aunty Uju had resorted to calling herself you-joo instead of oo-joo because Americans called her that. Her inability to insist on using the right pronunciation of her name suggests that American clutch and grip is too strong. At a grocery store, Aunty tells Dike her son to put something he had picked up back. Adichie describes it thus. "Dike put it back,' with the nasal sliding accent, 'pooh-reet-back.' And with the accent emerged a new persona, apologetic and self abasing" (108). In the car, Aunty Uju reprimands her son better by pulling his ear. When Dike pressed his palm to his ear in pain, Uju said to Ifemelu:

"This is how children like to misbehave in this country. Jane was even telling me that her daughter threatens to call the police when she beats her. Imagine. I don't blame the girl, she has come to America and learned about calling the police" (109). Jane's daughter would not do that in Nigeria because African believes in the cliché, "spare the rod and spoil the child," even the police. Nigerian parents even go corporal just to correct a child. Aunty Uju's reprimanding of Dike in the car away from glaring eyes shows that if she had done it in the open, Americans around could report her to social services.

Even at that, Uju was bent on making Dike a complete American. When Ifemelu spoke Igbo to Dike, Aunty Uju's response was, "Please don't speak Igbo to him. two languages will confuse him" (109). Ifemelu responds that they all spoke two languages while growing up and Uju replies: "This is America. It's different" (109). Uju had become someone else. Her identity as a Nigerian was in question. Ifemelu gave in and concluded that America had subdued her (110). When Ifemelu first arrived America, a friend explains to her, "This is America. You are supposed to pretend you don't notice certain things." This is because of the curious behaviour of a cashier in a clothing store who, in asking which of the two sales people helped her, attempts to distinguish between the two of them on every imaginable basis except the obvious one—skin colour.

Worthy of note, Adichie satirically talked about these new identities and their state. This new Americanness was half baked and this "halfbakedness" was visible in its accents. Nigerians tried so hard to fit in by copying the accents of the Americans. Bartholomew, a man Aunty hoped to settle down with was one of such characters. Ifemelu observed:

He spoke with an American accent filled with holes, mangling words until they were impossible to understand. She sensed from his demeanour a deprived rural upbringing that he tried to compensate for with his American affectation, his gonnas and wannas (115).

On another occasion, in a restaurant, Ifemelu noted the accents of the waiters who were African: "When they spoke English to customers, it was broken, curious as though they had not quite eased into the language itself, before taking in a slangy Americanism. Words come out half completed" (9).

Africans in America are at crossroads in identity. They are not Africans anymore and neither are they full fledged Americans because each is half-baked in them. They are half Africans which is partly their doing and half Americans yearning and trying to be full-fledged but their half Africaness will always gnaw and rear heads displaying whom they really are which they have kept in denial. They are caught between two cultures and their identities are in chaos. In a nutshell, they are bats.

It saddens Ifemelu that her aunty's situation has reduced to settling merely for what is familiar. Adichie goes on and on taking a clean sweep and exposing what immigration to America could do to the identity of Nigerians. She presented us with more characters in the state of identity crisis. In London, Emenike, a friend of Obinze has completely turned British. He even married a white woman Georgina, not out of love but just to be accepted in the British society. He now speaks and acts like the British. Hear him: "But the Americans love 'us.' Brits, they love the accent and the queen and the double-dealer" (272).

The emphasis on "us" implies that Emenike, a Nigerian, considers himself British. His Nigerianness had been sold off to the surprise of Obinze. When Ifemelu starts dating Blaine, an American, she tells her parents that she is leaving Baltimore to New Haven to live with him, but hear what Adichie has to

say: "Telling her father that she was moving in with a man to whom she was not married to, was something she could do only because she lived in America. Rules had shifted, fallen into the crooks of distance and foreignness" (314).

Adichie in her artistic grandeur created Dike as a character in a pathetic situation. His pathetic situation began right from birth—an African born in America. He knew nothing about Africa, his roots, though nobody would blame him. He is completely American but part of the blame would go to his mother who denied him from speaking two languages. Once with Ifemelu, Dike asks her: "Why are you doing that? Eating a banana with peanuts?" "That's what we do in Nigeria. Do you want to try it?" "No, I don't think I like Nigeria coz" (113).

America has made Dike hate his origins. After a meeting with some friends, Ifemelu thought of Dike and wondered what he was and what he would be considered as: "American African or African American. He would have to choose what he was or what he would be chosen for him" (147).

Dike becomes internally conflicted. He was an American by birth and African by roots and origin but how could he reconcile the two identities? He even wrote about his situation in an essay and his mother voiced out her feelings to Ifemelu: "How can he say he does not know what he is? Since when is he conflicted and even that his name is difficult." And Ifemelu responds: "I think he wrote that because that's the kind of thing they teach him here. Everybody is conflicted, identity this, identity that" (217).

This internal conflict in Dike must have made him think of his place and existence on earth, thereby making him to attempt suicide. He wanted to end it all because he believed he did not belong anywhere. He had no place in the society—in America and in Africa. His skin colour spoke against him in America and on a visit to Africa, he felt his disposition and behaviour spoke against him.

Ifemelu blamed Uju for Dike's attempt on his life and his feeling towards himself! "Do you remember when Dike was telling you something and he said, we black folks, and you told him you are not black?"

"I didn't want him to start behaving like those people and thinking that everything that happens to him is because he's black."

"You told him what he wasn't but you didn't tell him what he was. You never reassured him" (379).

Even on a visit to Nigeria, everything seemed strange to Dike. He is surprised to see so many black people like himself. When the power went off after he arrived, the buzzing, whirring sounds of Ifemelu's UPS startled him. He says: "Oh my God, is him" (425). He knew nothing about his roots but Adichie created in him a regret, a yearning, a hunger to have been part of this roots. He was like an alien in his own world. He wanted to be a part of this world. He says: "I wish I could speak Igbo" (424).

Worthy of note is Adichie's creation of a Nigerian character that remained unchanged. Ginika is such a character. Her long stay in America did not change whom she is, an African. Upon Ifemelu's arrival, Ginika had gone to pick her up. Ginika says: "We are entering university city and that's where Wellon Campus is, shay you know?" According to Ifemelu, "Ginika had lapsed into Nigerian English, a dated, overcooked version, eager to prove how unchanged she was. She had, with a strenuous effort, kept in touch through the years. Ifemelu did not have the heart to tell her that nobody said "shay" anymore. Adichie's creating of Ginika shows that there were still loyal and allegiant Africans in America that have refused to give in to the American spell of identity change.

It seems being Obinze's lover is part of Ifemelu's identity. Hence, when she gets involved with a tennis coach during her search for a job, she feels she has lost that identity. She, thereby, cuts all ties with Obinze. Armah's reunification motif is not an understatement because these Africans yearn to visit home. In a discussion with Obinze, Emenike says, "I miss Naija. It's been long but I just haven't had the time to travel back home" (265).

Blaine and Ifemelu are perfect together in their relationship but Ifemelu wanted more. The hunger to return home and back to Obinze cannot go unnoticed.

Adichie noted:

Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without constant urge to beg them out and shake off the soil and of course there was Obinze. Her first love, the only person with whom she had never felt the need to explain herself (6).

When Blaine asks her why she is leaving, she simply answers, "I have to" (7). Adichie further explains that phrase:

She had not had a bold epiphany and there was no cause. It was simply that layer after layer of discontent had settled in her and formed a mass that now propelled her. She did not tell him because it would hurt him to know she had felt that way for a while, that her relationship with him was like being content in a house but always sitting by the window and looking out (7).

Ifemelu eventually got reunited with Nigeria and her identity crisis began. Like Adichie described, "Lagos assaulted her" (365). Everything felt strange to her and in her thoughts, "she felt the dizzying sensation of falling, falling into the new person she had become, falling into the strange familiar. Had it always been like this or had it changed so much in her absence" (385)?

Ifemelu no longer remembered anything, even bus stops and the side streets but significantly, she dropped her accent as Ranyinudo observed. She was completely an Americanah. Adichie described further: "She was no longer sure what she was now in Lagos and what was new in herself (387). In Ranyinudo's house, the weather irritated her and she asked: "What sort of humidity is this? I can't breathe" (390). On a visit to aunty Onenu's house with Ranyinudo, she described the house as ugly but in her thoughts: "She had once found houses like that beautiful but here she was now disliking it with the haughty confidence of a person who recognized kibsches" (393). Doris, another American returnee, found herself hating and criticizing some Nigerian expressions which had been in vogue even before they left. Doris tells Ifemelu: "Don't you just hate it how people say I'm pressed or I want to ease myself when they want to go to the bathroom" (405).

Consequently, Ifemelu finds herself possessing two personalities, each personality in conflict with the other. She knows her deeds and actions are making her become an American. Her personality and psyche love American things but she does not want to accept that. She is scared of whom she is becoming. She is scared of her fading and diminishing Nigerianness. She fights so hard to make the African part of her to win the conflict and that is why she tries so hard to drop the American accent. In a meeting of American returnees, she finds herself in a pretentious state. While discussing with Fred, a fellow returnee, she defended things about Nigeria, even though they were in denial. Thus when Ranyinudo says, "You are no longer behaving like an Americanah (393), she is pleased with herself. Also, in a discussion with Obinze, she uses the word asshole (435), an American word. When Obinze says it's an American word, in surprise she replies, "Is it?" (435). America had become part of her.

On another perspective, when Ifemelu gets reunited with Obinze, she feels that that lost identity of hers has been restored but Obinze finds himself in a dilemmatic and hazy situation. His, is the highest point of identity crisis. Their long period of separation and denial overcame them. Obinze could not control himself anymore. Who exactly is he? How could he reconcile these two conflicting situations, being Kosi's husband and Ifemelu's lover? Who is he exactly or who did he want himself to be? The feeling of identity crisis is overwhelming. He describes Kosi as "that second skin that had never quite fitted him snugly" (456).

In Obinze's thoughts as the author described, "he blamed Ifemelu for making him a person who was not entirely in control of what he was feeling" (461). He begins to think about divorcing Kosi. He blames himself for marrying Kosi in the first place because of Ifemelu's appearance and like the writer voiced out, "since Ifemelu came back he found himself seeking stores of men who had left their marriages and willing the stories to end well, the children more contented with separated parents than with married unhappy parents" (467). Ifemelu is like part of his being and identity and an overwhelming spell which he has long been in search of and has eventually found but is in confusion on what to make do with this

newly found identity. When Obinze told Okwudiba about his intention to leave Kosi, Okwudiba feels his behaviour is so foreign. Hear him:

Most of us did not marry the woman we truly loved. We married the woman that was around when we were ready to marry. So forget this thing. No need of this kind of white people's behaviour. We don't behave like that please (472).

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that the study is good for Africans especially those in dire need to move to Western world in Search of greener pasture to read and see the hazards and problems faced by the Africans over there. It will also enhance in policy making by the government and government agencies in charge of Diaspora. This work will also add value to academic research on diaspora studies.

Conclusion

Adichie's engagement of Nigerian Diasporic realities and experiences has been privileged by her fairly extensive stay in the USA spanning more than one decade, one senses a significant biographic link between Adichie and the fiction of the Diasporic inclination, especially as many of her characters are young female characters in their prime, for whom emigration to America has meant the decisive turning point of their lives.

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