



MIGRATION, RACISM AND INTEGRATION OF THE PRECARIOUS
MARGINALITIES IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

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Abstract

The issues of racism and migration have become great global concerns. Before now, people migrated to escape the ugly realities prevalent in their various countries. Currently, terrorism, war and economic recession seem to have changed the narratives, and have led many to redefine the relationships of various human races, which in turn has directly or indirectly amplified racial concerns across the globe. Europe and the America currently face the challenge of coping with migrants. This paper interrogates poverty and insecurity as the major causes of migration by Africans to Europe and America and the dangers and contradictions that migration pose to the migrants in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. The essay contends that the migrants face discrimination, dislocation, nostalgia and racism in their host societies, and concludes that racism remains a harmful destroyer of the hopes and aspirations of the third world countries as demonstrated in the encounters and relationships between African and White characters in the novel.

Keywords: migration, Diaspora, racism, precarious, marginalities

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Introduction

The human nature is dynamic and receptive to change which could be voluntary or involuntary, just as man deploys all efforts in his quest to ensure that his basic needs and security are guaranteed. Human beings move to the extreme to ensure that their survival is achieved, even if it means giving up one uncomfortable location for a better one. Migration, in Latin '*migrare*' means to change residence. William Petersen, a social scientist, defines migration as the more or less permanent movement of people across space (534). Migration is referred to as any residential movement which occurs in the process of going from one country, region or place of residence to settle in another. The duration of the settlement varies which largely depends on the purpose of the movement (Bhugra and Becker 19). Other scholars have defined migration as the change in the centre of gravity of an individual's mobility pattern. Victor Piche defines migration as the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement (141). In Nigeria for instance, migration occurs, because migrants believe they will be more satisfied in their needs and desires, if they migrate to the Western Hemisphere in search of "a greener pasture". After the end of colonisation, the West was assumed to be the commercial and cultural hub of the world. The migrants believe that the centre signifies realms of possibility, fantasy, wish fulfillment where identities and fortunes might be transformed. The migrants did not know the centre was also a place of banishment, unlawful practice, oppression, social disgrace and frustration (Ugwanyi 252).

Human beings have migrated for various reasons since their emergence as the centre of creation. Among these reasons are: prolonged droughts, floods, environmental degradation and natural disasters. In Nigeria for instance, social reasons have prompted many more migration than natural phenomena. Examples are unemployment, civil unrest, inadequate food supply, bad governance, poverty and more.

The effects of migration vary widely. The sending countries may experience both gains and losses. It affects the corporate national reputation, which is the good and bad name to the country. If it is negative, rubs off on the nation. The developing countries suffer from "brain drain", the loss of trained and educated individuals to migration. For instance, There are more Nigerian scientists and engineers working in the United States than there are in Africa. The effects are widespread because such movement decimates indigenous populations through warfare with invaders and through vulnerability to diseases, alteration of physical characteristics through adoption and inter marriages, changes in cultural characteristics through the adoption of the cultural patterns of other people among others. Many native groups lose their traditional homelands and languages as they are absorbed into larger societies. Regrettably, some Nigerian children cannot speak their native language because they were born and raised abroad.

Migrants face many difficulties while abroad, including: discrimination, dislocation, nostalgia, racism among others. A valid and active sense of self may be eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration (Maxwell, 1963, 43), the migrant is alienated of vision, from the society and struggles hard to fit in and belong. Furthermore, the diasporic individual often has a double consciousness, a privileged

knowledge and perspective that are consonant with post modernity (Appaidura 76). The individual living in the diaspora experiences tension everyday between living 'here' and remembering 'there' i.e. between memories of place of origin and entanglements with places of residence and between the metaphorical physical home (Boehmer 170). Besides, the experience of loss, marginality, displacement and exile is intensified through the experience of racism and intensifies the negative experience generated in the individual. The migrant holds on to memories which hold the past and present together, they give shape and texture to identities that are fragmented by migration, displacement and diasporic living. People who migrate tend to seek an environment similar to the one they left, they imagine and re-imagine their homes and bond with those they had previously thought of as strangers.

The institution of literature is under the direct control of the imperial ruling. One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. The imperial education system installs a standard version of the metropolitan language as the norm and marginalizes all variants as impurities. According to Edward Said, a mimicry of the centre proceeding from a desire not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed causes those from the periphery to immerse themselves in the imported culture, denying their origins, in an attempt to become more English than the English (223). Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated and medium through which conceptions of truth, order and reality become established.

A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement, crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective relationship between self and place. A critics, Maxwell is of the opinion that "a valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation or voluntary removal for indentured labour." The alienation of vision and the crisis in self image which this displacement produces is found in Nigerians who travel overseas (44).

Migration has had some telling effects on the migrants as seen in the characters in *The Lonely Londoners*, Samuel Selvon's novel. This novel captures the life of West Indians in Post-World War II London, a city which the migrants consider the centre of the world. The work revolves around Moses Loetta, a Trinidadian who moves to London and who after over ten years' sojourn there achieved nothing and increasingly becomes homesick as he gets old. The characters migrated to London for a better life but ironically met bitter coldness both from winter and the prejudice of their hosts. They experience hunger, hopelessness and discrimination in their employments. Their routine consists of work or looking for a job and various petty pleasures (Selvon, 1972). The characters in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953) are not different. He tells the story of the mundane events in a young boy's life. The main concern is not about the individual consciousness; rather, Lamming uses the growth and education of G as a device through which to view the legacy of colonialism and slavery in a Caribbean village.

Through the protagonist, we see the effects of racism, feudalism, capitalism, education and emigration on his small town. G migrates to London and the United States, returns to his home in the Caribbean and helps his home country obtain Independence (*In the Castle* 67). In *The Emigrants* (1954), he explores the massive Post

War II migration of West Indians to Great Britain. His story focuses on a group of emigrants who travel by ship from the Caribbeans to England, a place they have been taught to believe is culturally superior to their native Islands. Once settled in their new environment, the emigrants discover a lack of welcome, disillusionment and a feeling of alienation and subsequently long for home. African-American literature is full of works that illustrate the migration and urbanization of African Americans which starts with the emancipation of slaves. According to Naipaul, the requisite for happiness was to be born in a famous city. To be born on an island or in an obscure country, second hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder (141-2).

In Adichie's, *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009), we see how Akunna travels abroad believing that the grass is greener on the other side of the hill. On the first page, we see how they all believe that in a month, she will have a big car and a big house, only for them to discover that she is wrong. The title implies the choking isolation of Akunna, a Nigerian who relocates to the United States only to find out that her new country is not what she expected it to be. We see how she is soon alienated and lonely. She gets menial jobs when she says she will work for two dollars less than the other workers; she stays in a tiny room with a stained carpet. We also see some of the embarrassing questions she is asked; whether she has seen a car before and many others such humiliating questions.

In Sefi Atta's collection of short stories entitled *Lawless and other Stories* (2008), "Twilight Trek", "A Temporary Position" and "Last Trip", we see the illegal connection and desperate attempts many Nigerian youths make to cross overseas. In "Twilight Trek," Nigerians are desperate to travel overseas despite all the tortuous experiences encountered in the process. This quest becomes inevitable considering the insensitive leadership and the uncomfortable atmosphere at home. Consequently, people commit all sorts of crime in order to raise the capital with which to travel, despite the fact that being a Nigerian is an anathema in obtaining visas to most Western and American countries. These days, many Nigerians as well as people from other under-developed countries have died on their way to overseas. The narrator remembers what his mother had told him, all things considered, to trek overseas is reasonable. A man she knew hid himself in the wheel of an aircraft that flew overnight to London. It could have been the low temperature or high altitude that finished him. Immigration officers discovered his body two days later. They deported him back for his burial ("Twilight Trek").

More pathetic is the fact that after one succeeds in crossing over, one still has to pass through the ordeal of surviving the social and political-geographical confrontations. Thus, it soon dawns on one that home will always remain the best. It is this home sickness, alongside the temporariness of one's stay wherever that is not one's native land that infiltrates into the subject matter of "A Temporary Position". While in the diaspora, one conceals one's identity as a Nigerian to avoid being repatriated. They carry fake names on their CVs; one's name is not the curse but the country.

In Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Moving the Centre: Struggle for Cultural Freedom* (1993), he is concerned with moving the centre in two senses: between nations and within nations; in order to contribute to the freeing of the world cultures from the restrictive walls of nationalism, class, race and gender. Between nations, the need is to move the

centre from its assumed location in the West to a multiplicity of spheres in all the cultures of the world. Within nations, the move should be away from all minority class establishments to the real creative centre among working people in conditions of racial, religious and gender equality.

Racism

The word 'Racism' brings so many thoughts to one's mind whenever it is mentioned. It could mean different things to different people. The meaning that a person ascribes to this word depends on his or her personal disposition, which could be influenced by his/her political, social or even psychological leanings. It could mean a belief, an idea, a concept, a reality, an ideology or a political system. Racism has been in existence since time immemorial and it keeps evolving with the society. It has taken different forms in different eras.

In the 19th century and up till the early 20th century, racism manifested itself in the transportation of blacks to the new found land. Blacks were dehumanized, exploited and lynched by the Whites in the United States of America and some European countries. The Whites were seen as supreme beings over and above people of other colours. The Whites were the PRIMUS INTERPARES of the era. Racism in that era manifested itself in so many barbaric acts. There were race riots where White mobs beat and killed Blacks, destroyed their property and invaded their neighbourhoods. In that era, Blacks were not allowed to attend the same schools with the Whites; they were prevented from voting. They were separated from the White community and could inhabit only a section of the community. They were not allowed to intermingle with the Whites.

In 21st century America, there is the purported belief by the Whites, that racism is no longer in existence. However, the reality of the existence of racism is still felt by non Whites as well as by African-Americans. Racism does not manifest in violence alone. There are other subtle ways through which racism sticks out its ugly head in contemporary times. However, the Whites believe that violence alone is the language of racism. Adichie, in *Americanah* (2013) rightly observes that:

...racism exists but racists are all gone. Racists belong to the past... the manifestation of racism has changed but the language has not.

A look at the definition of "racism" gives us more insight into the meaning of the word. Racism, according to the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* (8th edition), means the unfair treatment of people who belong to a different race; violent behaviour towards them (1206). *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines it as poor treatment of or violence against people because of their race. A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

The United Nations does not define racism but rather gives a definition to "racial discrimination". The term "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (UN International Convention on the Elimination of all Racial Discrimination). "Racism is

about the power of a group and in America, it's white folks who have that power", according to Ifemelu, Adichie's major character in *Americanah* (327).

Racism emanates from "race." "Race is not biology, race is sociology. Race is not genotype; race is phenotype...it's about how you look. Not about the blood you have. It's about the shade of your skin and the shape of your nose and the kink of your hair" (337). So that one cannot say that he/she has a white blood while all his/her bodily features showcases him/her as being black. One cannot say that he/she is white whilst having a dark skin, just because he/she has a white in his/her ancestry.

Marginality

Marginality is used in a variety of contexts. The term refers to texts, ideas or peoples existing on the boundaries of a conventionally accepted space. The theory of marginality originated in the early 20th century within a sociological context to describe the production of marginalized individuals whose immigrant backgrounds suspended them between their native cultures and their host societies. The problems of hybrid identities and divided selves introduced by the discourse of marginality have extended beyond the field of sociology and is frequently employed to question the rules of hegemony and exclusion in gender, culture and literary studies. This paper uses the term "marginality" widely to include those conditions, rights and privileges that are denied people on account of their skin colour which directly or indirectly has made the world to be in a serious precarious situation.

Review of Related Literature

According to Margaret Koskei, *Americanah* interrogates the challenges faced by female African immigrants. She compares and contrasts male and female experiences by analyzing the author's vision and impression of African immigrants and establishes an interconnectedness between race, gender and class which are major challenges. In her article, Stefanie Reuter opines that Adichie succeeds in tracing the learning process which leads to a critical consciousness regarding race and her own position as a black woman through the character of Ifemelu. In her submission, the central character grapples with her social surrounding and thereby develops an active consciousness and reflectivity. She concludes that the novel is a bildungsroman as a result of the process of the central character's development.

In their own critique of *Americanah*, Ahumibe and Nnamani focus on the issue of gender inequality and submit that the females are usually regarded as the exploited and helpless others who have been oppressed by the male folk. They equally establish that gender identity and inequality are social constructions, constructed in the society of men and women and contend that the reconstruction of gender imbalance should be done by the same agencies that gave it a life such as religion, law, custom, politics and literature. Aretha Phiri is of the opinion that Adichie has, in her conversation and in *Americanah*, suggested that Africans (in the Diaspora) articulate themselves differently from African-Americans. She contends that this issue is a very contested rather than universally accepted subjective terrain and concludes that blackness points significantly to the diversity and dynamism of black culture.

From the foregoing reviews, it is clear that the present paper is a significant departure from existing scholarship. Though it examines the issue of blackness, it goes further to question the reduction of people to social ghettos based on the colour of

their skin. The paper is not concerned with the issue of gender as the duo of Ahumibe and Nnamani posit but on the human race in general. It focuses on the likely implications of reducing people to nothingness, simply on account of their skin colour.

In *Americanah*, the subtle segregation of Blacks in America is greatly portrayed. Although American non-Blacks would not like to accept that anything is about race, their excessive 'colour line consciousness' always manifests in every action they take. Yet, they are quick to say: "Oh it's not really race, it's class. Oh, it's not race, it's gender. Oh, it's not race, it's the cookie monster" (325). The Whites love to say that racism is over but however one looks at it, racism is not over. Americans and the West pretend that race means nothing. They think that if they avoid the use of the word 'black' in qualifying a black person that they are no longer colour conscious. In their colour blindness, they tend to avoid its use entirely or, subtly substitute it with another word. Unknown to some well-meaning Whites who avoid the use of the word 'black' and replace it with another, the Blacks see that act as being sarcastic. This is evident in *Americanah* when Ifemelu and Ginika visit a clothing store at the checkout, the blonde cashier inquires from Ginika which of the two salespersons that help them out. When Ginika tells her that she does not know their names instead of the cashier to ask if it is the white girl or the black girl, she plunges into a series of unnecessary questions: "was it the one with long hair?" "the one with dark hair?" (127). Since the cashier knows that both salespersons possess these qualities, as later observed by Ifemelu, the right question should have been: "was it the black girl or the white girl?" (127)

But she avoids that because she is "...supposed to pretend that you don't notice certain things" (127) as Ginika says, "Even a person's skin colour; lest you be labelled 'racist'." Kimberly constantly uses the word 'beautiful' in a peculiar way. Describing Ifemelu's name, we are told it is: "...such a beautiful name. Really beautiful" (146). And would always say: "I'm meeting my beautiful friend from graduate school" or "We're working with this beautiful woman on the inner-city project" (146).

As Ifemelu would later discover, Kimberly only uses the term 'beautiful' to describe blacks, who would turn out to be quite ordinary-looking. One day, as Ifemelu is drinking tea with Kimberly at the huge kitchen table, the latter points at a plain black model in a magazine, whose only distinguishing feature is her very dark skin and says: "oh, look at this beautiful woman. Isn't she just stunning" (146, 147)? Thus, Ifemelu retorts: "No, she isn't. You know you can just say 'black.' Not every black is beautiful" (147). To the blonde cashier and Kimberly, they are being 'colour blinded'. They think that by merely attempting to disregard certain racial characters in their social interactions, they could be termed 'liberals' as regards racism question. However, their purported colour blindness is merely seen as an "abstract liberalism." That is why, in a discussion on racism among Ifemelu, Blaine, Shan, and some of Shan's friends, Bill says: "Lots of liberal white folks are looking for black friends, it's almost as hard as finding an egg donor who is a tall blonde eighteen year old at Harvard" (335).

This is despite the fact that blacks are everywhere in America. Why is this so? This is because, these whites separate the main concept of racism from its form. There is no gain saying the fact that Kimberly would never truly consider Blacks as being beautiful. The blonde cashier is also conscious of the fact that "black is still black" even though she has to pretend not to notice certain things. And the purported "liberal

white folks" are just abstract liberals. There can be nothing like colour blindness. Blacks will always remain blacks and must be seen as such. Colour blindness can never be used in that sense. It is only an eye defect. There can only be a pluralistic view of racism where there would be no conflict between being a black or white American. The idea of viewing black as 'evil' could also be seen in *Americanah*. Whenever anything bad happens in any American community, the Blacks are blamed because: "you have to blame the black kid first" (349), as Dike says when he is accused of hacking into the school's computer network. This accusation is irrespective of the fact that Dike knows not how to hack and is equally with his mum, Auntie Uju through out the day of the alleged hack.

Moreover, the incident with Mr. White, a security guard at the library, further buttresses the point that Blacks are seen as potential evil-doers and law-breakers. When Mr. White's friend visits him at the university, he gives the friend his car keys because he wants to borrow his car. The friend gives Mr. White some money which the latter had lent him earlier. A white library employee, watching them, assumes that the two black men are dealing on drugs and calls a supervisor. The supervisor calls the police who comes and leads Mr. White away for questioning. (343). To the well meaning library employee, he is being a patriotic citizen. His instinct as a White, does not leave him a positive option as to what the two Blacks could be doing. Instead, he can only imagine the worst. And what does the university say when it realises that Mr. White is innocent? "A simple mistake that wasn't racial at all" (343). This response in Blaine's words, "...is total bullshit" (343). When it concerns the Whites, the opposite is the case as they are all regarded as angels. When Marlon, Jane's husband makes advances at Ifemelu telling to her: "I've been thinking about you. I want to talk to you" (112). Ifemelu could not tell her friend and his wife, Jane. This is because Jane would never hold Marlon responsible for anything, her light skinned, hazel-eyed Marlon whom everyone wanted (112).

Even the colour blinded racists are equally colour prejudiced. They forget that there is only but a nuance between the Whites and people of other colours. That is why when Barack Obama indicated interest in vying for the president of the United States, we see the kind of harsh responses that people send to Ifemelu's blog about the man. One says: "How can a monkey be president? Somebody do us a favour and put a bullet in this guy. Send him back to the African jungle. A black man will never be in the white house, dude, it's called the white house for a reason" (355). This does not abhor the man that Barack Obama is but the idea of a Black as the president of the United States.

Racism could also take the form of Whites seeing Blacks as inferior. A White will be comfortable losing out to a fellow White in a contest but not to a Black. An analogy to explain this is that of a lion and a goat. They see themselves as the lion and the Blacks as a goat in an animal kingdom and it is impossible for a lion to lose out to a goat in a fight. When this happens, that lion's pride will be greatly hurt. That is why, in this novel, when Shan meets a Gambian woman who lives in London and who is in love with a white English guy that abandons his wife for her, all that Peter, another of Shan's friend, can say is: "his wife must feel worse knowing you're Black" (335). Not that the wife would feel bad about another woman, but because she loses out to a Black woman.

Yet, the Whites do not accept that racism still exists. They do not want to hear someone talk about race. That is why Shan's editor, after reading her manuscript has this to say to her: "I understand that race is important here but we have to make sure that the book transcends race, so that it's not just about race" (334). And why does it have to transcend race? In Shan's words, it is because: "...race is a brew best served mild, tempered with other liquids, otherwise white folks can't swallow it" (334). In all, their "racism is a thing of the past, lots of folks today don't mind a Black nanny or black limo driver. But they sure as hell mind a Black boss" (351). Thus, the question: "does racism still exist?", lingers on.

Though "...racists are all gone. Racists belong to the past..." (315),... "racism is over, slavery was so long ago" (326), one could rightly say that racism still exists albeit in other forms that are mild and subtle. The question is: in the face of this new form of racism, how does one get integrated into the American society without losing himself/herself to it? A look at the meaning of integration would be of help. It involves uncomfortable adjustments of Blacks to the American society. That is why Ifemelu has to use relaxer on her afro hair when she is preparing for a job interview even when she is not comfortable with, but because "we want you to get that job", as Ruth says: "I need to look professional for this interview, and professional means straight is best but if it's going to be curly then it has to be the white kind of curly, loose curls or, at worst, spiral curls but never kinky" (204).

In America, full integration into the society by the Blacks is not automatic; it takes time just as Tomas Jimenez observes:

Full integration into U.S. society and economy generally takes more than one generation, with children of immigrants reliably outperforming their parents in educational attainment, occupational status, wealth, and home ownership. Resident(sic) segregation also decreases between first and second generation, and rates of intermarriage between ethnic and racial groups increase. Language proficiency improves dramatically as well.(immigrants in the united states: how well are they integrating into society?) (122)

As one can see, the rate at which racism was expressed in the 19th century is not the same way it is being expressed now. Formerly, it took the form of violence and an overly segregation. Blacks were not allowed to attend the same schools as the Whites. A black man stopped to allow a white man to pass, and Blacks were lynched by Whites and so on. Today, racism still exists, albeit in a new form. W.E.B Du Bois rightly states: "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" (14). Du Bois, identifies this as the concept of double consciousness. Racism still expresses itself in subtle forms because the modern day Blacks are consciously, steadily and slowly integrating themselves into the community of the Whites. This is in contrast to the Blacks of the nineties who were docile and passive on race issues.

It seems that the remedy is a proper integration of Blacks into the White society. However, the extent of this 'proper integration' is not clear. *Americanah* tries to capture a perfect picture of the psychological crises, struggles and endless efforts Blacks undergo in order to get integrated and accepted in a society of people that look at them with contempt and pity. Sometimes, they go to desperate extremes in their attempt to get integrated and become acceptable to their white counterparts. This is why Emenike opts to marry a woman who is much older than him, just because she

is 'White' and he is eager to belong to the white society. In this integration quest, Blacks are conscious of their environment and make efforts to be in their best behaviour. When Ifemelu hears Blaine speak Ebonics with Mr. White, she is surprised; and when she tells Blaine that she has never heard him speak Ebonics before, Blaine replies: "I guess I've become too used to my White People Are Watching Us Voice"(342). We also see Ginika desiring to be thin because in America, "thin" is a good word; and when "somebody tells you that you lost weight, you say thank you"(124).

Whereas many Blacks think that the best form of integration is that which comes with a total alienation from one's original identity, some want to remain who they are and still find a way of integrating properly into the American society. For instance, Emenike strongly wishes to be identified as a White. If it were possible for him to bleach his black soul and skin, he would gladly do that. His stay in America, over time, alienated him from his true identity. He develops an American accent, and sees racism as a non-issue. Once, at a dinner, when he is asked if he had ever had to deal with racism issues, Georgina asks him to tell the story of the taxi he hailed one night on Upper Street. The cab's lights are on from afar, but when the cab approaches him, the lights go off, and after the cab passes him, the lights come on again and it stops for two white woman (275). Emenike tells the story in a much different way than he had told it back then when it happened. He no longer mentions the rage he had felt standing on that street and looking at the cab. "He was shaking, his hands trembling for a long time..." he had told Obinze. "But now, sipping the last of his red wine, flowers floating in front of him, he spoke in a tone cleansed of anger"(275).

Ifemelu's attitude is different from Emenike's. Though Ifemelu lives the American dream she is not alienated from her root and identity. She makes great effort to imbibe American accent (432). This demonstrates that even with a full integration into the white society, one can still not be alienated from one's roots. This is rightly pointed out by Wambui about Kofi: "Kofi's parents came from Ghana when he was two years old...if you go to their house, they eat kenkey every day. His father slapped him when he got a C in a class. There's no American nonsense in that house. He goes back to Ghana every year"(140).

This kind of integration which is devoid of alienation, should be adopted by Blacks who find themselves in white communities. Although those Blacks that lose their blackness in the process of integration are not usually to be blamed most times, it is the attitude of Blacks towards their fellow Blacks, as well as their disposition anything coming from their countries of origin that bring spurthe desire for alienation in people. An instance is Dike's dislike for Nigeria and his distaste for a visit to his country (113). Another instance is the reaction of the old woman that Blaine meets during his campaign for Obama, who, expressing her disbelief in the Black race says: "I didn't think this would happen even in my grandbaby's lifetime"(148). There is self-hatred. Blacks believe more in Whites than they do in their fellow Blacks. One sees Auntie Onenu's preference for people with American certificate for employment. All these may be as a result of the thorny issues regarding Blacks' existence in a world dominated by white colonialism. Thus, it calls to reason that in the face of such apparent discrimination and humiliation that many Blacks desire to be alienated from their roots by opting to be Americanised

It would be right to say that true self expression by a person in his/her present society, must be preceded by a proper social integration into that society. And for a proper social integration by the Blacks in white communities to be achieved, "Blacks should be independent and proactive in order to achieve better social integration in America" (Rubin et al. 20). "Immigrants' social integration as a function of approach-avoidance orientation and problem-solving style". *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 498-505). Without this proper social integration, Black men, in Du Bois' words: "would be shut out from their world by a vast veil" (2). The result of this being that; the black man would then harbour "two warring ideals in one dark body" (2); the white and the black ideals. This brings about an internal conflict, which can only be resolved by a proper social integration.

Consequently, many Blacks are balky as regards the expectations of an average American. They are steadily expanding their horizons and finding better ways of expressing themselves. They seem not to bother about what the white man thinks of them anymore. Although it is natural for a Black to bother about acceptance in a white community, by the Whites. But with time, these Blacks out-grow such worries and prefer to remain whom they are and worry less about the indignities perpetrated by the American color line. That is why in *Americanah*, when Ifemelu just arrived America, "she hungered to understand everything about America, to wear a new, knowing skin right away: to support a team at the super bowl, understand what a twinkie was..." (135). She even desires to have an American accent so that the Americans would not have to take their words in bits while addressing her. And at a time when she is to go for a job interview, Ruth, her friend advises her to loosen the braids and straighten her hair so that she would have the "white-girl swing" in the hairdresser's words. Because: "we want you to get that job" (203). However, with time, when she is properly socially integrated, she no longer desired to *Americanise*. Instead, she "makes an effort not to have an American accent" (432) and even had to cut her hair and wear an afro while still living her American dream.

Blacks also look for uniting factors and a language through which to express them in their common grievances against racism. These uniting factors can occur as a result of positive or negative happenings, and this determines the kind of language through which the self expression would come about. In the novel, we see black women with "long trailing dreadlocks, small Afros, big Afros, twists, braids, massive raucous curls and coils" (212); who decide to come together and host a website named: HAPPILYKINKYNAPPY.COM. These women, "were done with pretending that their hair was what it was not, done with running from the rain and flinching from sweat; they complimented each other's photo and ended comments with 'hugs'" (212). These women, have discovered a medium and a language to express themselves as black women. "they sculpt for themselves a virtual world where their coily, kinky, nappy, woolly hair was normal" (212). They have overcome that fear of rejection which is the main woe of self expression.

When the incident with Mr. White happens, and all that the university can say is that it is a mere accident, Blaine's eagerness to organise a protest is also a way of self expression. It is obvious that many Blacks apart from Mr. White, had suffered, suffer and will still suffer the same trouble if the the Blacks do not express their grievance over such an act. This is the uniting factor that leads to their use of the

protest as a language for their self expression. The two black associations in *Americanah*, are also ways that Blacks come together for better self expression through The African Students Association (ASA) and the Black Student Union (BSU). These two unions help them to meet and make friends with their African-American brothers and sisters in a spirit of true pan-Africanism. It gives them an opportunity to relate with their fellow Blacks, discuss the problems that they are facing on individual levels, which usually are common amongst them all, and proffer solutions to the problems. The Union could also serve as a good medium of self expression by the blacks. This is because, in the bodies, the blacks feel relaxed with their fellow blacks, do not feel vulnerable and as such, there is also, no fear of rejection.

Conclusion

In the novel, Adichie tries to portray the fact that racism still manifests in American society albeit in subtle, non-violent forms and that Blacks still suffer racial prejudices. Though Blacks no longer get stoned and killed, or prohibited from attending schools designated for Whites, yet the Whites are more comfortable with Blacks as their servants but never as their bosses. Ironically, some Blacks do not help matters as they pander to White taste and a total integration into White culture and mannerisms at the expense of their own. This paper, therefore, concludes that in order to evolve a peaceful and harmonious world, Adichie is of the view that different skin colours should be made to complement and not to conflict with one another as the more a particular race pushes the other (s) to the margins, the more precarious the less advantaged race (s) becomes. The author endorses a level-playing ground across borders for all irrespective of their skin pigmentation. This, is hoped, will attenuate the hardship suffered by Blacks in their bid to be at home with and in their host society.

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