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### **Examining the impact of Migration and Identity Issues of the African Diaspora in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah***

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**Abstract:** Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* explores the migration and identity struggles of the African diaspora, particularly those from third-world countries. This paper examines how characters like Ifemelu and Obinze navigate racial discrimination, cultural displacement, and assimilation in Western societies. Drawing from postcolonial theorists, it highlights the loss of cultural identity and forced adaptation immigrants face. However, Adichie also emphasizes resilience, as seen in Ifemelu's rejection of the American dream in favor of her Nigerian roots. The novel critiques racial biases and the commodification of identity, advocating for cultural preservation and self-acceptance in a globalized world.

**Introduction:** The novel *Americanah* is written from the perspective of western culture context that shows the identity formation and its related issues of African expatriates. She brings this content via number of characters like Ifemelu, Obinze, Uju and many more native African characters. This story touches the lands of Nigeria, America and England. Many African fictions talked about the sufferings of slavery and colonization. This work collectively mentions the issues of expatriates under post colonial atmosphere. This covers racism, inequality, displacement of culture and identity crisis. Apart from many research papers. Adichie clearly projected the impact of migration and identity issues of black people from the third world countries.

This paper is about the challenges faced by the characters found in *Americanah*. That is based on the concept of identity challenges of black people who live in America for the purpose of work as well as higher studies. Adichie clearly projected the issues like cultural shock and racial inequalities faced by African immigrants from the first world countries that exist even in twenty first century. People from Israel and other European countries merely face such difficulties but not up to the level of people from third world countries. So that the context of 'diaspora' and 'identity' carry different meaning for the people from such poor countries. There they experience the identity issue after making migration from their country. So this paper is focusing on identity issues experienced by the people who left their roots and culture in their mother land because of poverty, civil war and terrorism. In their mother land, native people would be poor due to their economical condition but they never

experience any cultural inferiority since they live among their own community. They would never feel about isolated in the name of colour, culture and language.

**Diaspora in Context: Migration and Identity:** From the language of Greek, this word ‘diaspora’ is derived. This word actually denotes the practice of throwing seeds over vast land. This act of throwing seeds would produce plants not in uniform way as farmers do in agriculture. So that various plants shall be found in random order. This can be compared with the lives of people who settled in various countries without having any proper country for them. Here every one can remember Israelites who once tormented over many centuries. After Elizabethan period, the process of colonization made many civilians as refugees and they were forced to be either as slave or as rebellions. So the term ‘Diaspora’ developed into many contexts through the description of post colonial writers and critics such as the integration of multi culture, searching the real identity in a world that is moving towards globalization.

After the era of industrial revolution, colonization, the working class people started to question their existence and tried to find their real identity out of materialistic culture. This search is about answering to the questions such as “Who am I? and “Where do I belong?” (Columbus, 2019). The search for identity started to expand its branches in different categories such as gender, race, and also language. From Latin, the word ‘identitas’ is derived. In English, this word is used to identify a person as who he is or what kind of a person he is. At present these terms are associated with large number of people who belong to same community, country and territory. Thus the terms are born like addressing people as ‘Indian’, ‘American’, ‘Russian’ and ‘African’. (Hogg, 2014). Academic discussions on identity have evolved through three distinct levels: people who are looking for enlightenment as their identity, the common centralized social identity, and the decentralized identity that emerged in post-modern period. Over time, however, the focus shifted towards understanding identity in the context of societal influences. This change was largely shaped by thinkers like communist philosopher Marx, and many more post-WWII theorists, who highlighted the significant role of different platforms and structures in the general society in the formation of identity (Hogg, 2014). At present, the term identity is not static but changing due to materialistic consumer culture. Possessing wealth eradicates all types of inferior things in any society. (Baumann, 2013).

**The Identity issues of African Diaspora found in *Americanah*:** Erik Erikson in his work *Identity: Youth and Crisis* used the term ‘identity crisis’ to state the destroyed values of one person’s identity. (Erikson, 1968). In some cases, some set of community or race feel as isolated or alienated when they are not able to tolerate the suppression of particular community or race that is found in major number in a particular territory or a country. A person or community is closely associated with their language and culture. However, exposure to unfamiliar environments often heightens self-awareness and stirs deep emotions during the intervention of foreign culture over native culture. For those in the diaspora, these challenges become more pronounced, leading to face psychological pressure when they are

not able to adopt themselves. Edward Said portrays the act of exile as an agonizing yearning for one's native country, a sentiment perfectly reflected in literature that talked about diasporic issues (Said, 2000). Works such as *Americanah* highlight the identity struggles and search for belonging faced by African migrants in foreign societies.

The main issues faced by the third world country people are stress that makes an impact in their mental health and the question of existence because of disconnected culture. This reflects in economy, language and ill-treatment. To make a sustainable life in American land, Ifemelu had to adapt the new American culture by rejecting her roots once placed in Africa. There is no freedom to these third world people to follow their desires instead they are forced to compromise their expectations. They are instructed to reflect the superior society culture and behavior as a mirror to be treated as one among them. Foucault's perspective on the influence of societal power over identity highlights the limitations experienced by individuals in the diaspora (Foucault, 1977).

African immigrants can compromise themselves in their culture, language and dress code but not with their names. Their name would reveal their true identity and make an uncomfortable atmosphere in a foreign land where their culture is treated as inferior. So some immigrants have to hide their real name to survive there with their false identity. (Saussure, 2011). This is considered as a sad practice that they have to abandon their culture, food habit, religious practice and name also. They are not given any choices to live their life as they wish to live in first world countries. In order to avoid racial discrimination, Uju in *Americanah* had to modify her true Nigerian identity as she had to be accepted in her working place. This continues to their children also when they have to move with native American students. The expectation of western countries over African people is projected through the relationship of Ifemelu with Curt and Brain. Here Adichie talks about the interracial issues and its treatment between a black girl and a white guy.

**Reconstructing the true Identity of Diaspora:** Many African diaspora who settled well in western countries many years ago, still address their native country as "homeland" (Berry, et al, 2023) instead of the country where they settled. This is similar to Srilankan Tamil people remember their birth place even though they have settled in European countries, USA and Canada. However, Adichie exactly touches the act of reconstructing the identity of African diaspora in her *Americanah*. While choosing the language paper in the school, Uju chooses English instead of Igbo language. Though the government has given a freedom of choice, she has to select the second tongue since her children has to survive in that country. Thus the true identity of the younger generation of Africa is detached. This can be applied over the children of Indian parents who settled in America many years ago. All these identity reconstruction would be practiced over the first generation children of African diaspora only, after many generation they may carry the reconstructed identity of first world only. The novel underscores the strength and determination of characters like Ifemelu, who upholds her Nigerian roots despite the pressures to assimilate and the racism she encounters in the United States. Her decision to return to Nigeria questions the conventional idea that success is

defined by American standards, highlighting her deep and unbreakable bond with her native country. This is where people can understand the difference between “community” and “society”. (Tonnies, 2001). One is specific and another one is general. In this novel, Ifemelu runs a blog to expose the racial discrimination of US over African diaspora. This is an example that how these African diaspora would like to share their emotions as a community and not as a part of first world society. So, Adichie beautifully establishes the importance and values of being connected with African heritage that is necessary for identity. This can be addresses as racial consciousness. In post modern world, culture and identity is commercialized as a product in materialistic world. That’s why business sectors, foreign universities are making new platforms to support multi-culture contexts. Adichie’s style of narrative is trying to establish a new culture that is adapting diaspora through their community and language to respect their identity instead of imposing unfamiliar language and religious practice to them. The concept of “Subaltern” (Spivak, 2000) is exercised by Ifemelu’s character that is recovering the values of lost identity can be done through by protecting the mother tongue. Ifemelu’s character gets this awakening when she interacts with Kimberly who is her employer.

**Conclusion:** The title of the fiction is *Americanah* where as Ifemelu’s character gets rest after leaving her American dream or Americanized dream which is not her pursuit of happiness. Her quest ends after embracing her true identity from where she was born. Throughout her blog posts, Adichie makes awareness about cultural and racial discrimination of first world countries. Even the native black Americans are treated well than the African immigrants. They are simply identified as ‘Others’ from the perspective of native Americans. That’s why these immigrants have to carry ‘double identity’ in their life while they live in foreign soil. Gradually they possess hybrid identity and forget themselves as a diaspora. However, Adichie’s characters are not choosing that path, instead they choose the less used path that is reinventing their identity. Adichie’s other works like *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* also talk about race, gender inequality, and class issues. As a writer, Adichie has overcome ‘xenophobia’ and projected herself as a writer with proper Nigerian identity instead of Americanized identity. *Americanah* explores the importance of reclaiming African identity from dominant Western narratives that often obscure the continent’s authentic representation. As a third-generation African writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie plays a vital role in reinvigorating African literature. She challenges the dominance of Western perspectives, bringing Africa and its diaspora into global literary conversations. Her work, along with that of renowned authors like Nobel laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah, highlights the rising influence of African voices in literature. These writers provide fresh insights and contribute to reshaping discussions on African and Black identity in a global context.

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