

THE AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS TALES IN A THING AROUND YOUR NECK AND AMERICANAH

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Abstract

*African writers have written on the experiences and social dilemma of immigrants in foreign lands. Most of these immigrants lose their identities in foreign lands and in trying to acclimatize to the new rules, new ways of life, people, culture and environment, the emigrants find themselves torn between homelessness and alienation. Using trauma theory, an extension of the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud, this paper explores how the author has represented African experiences in the Diaspora using Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing around Your Neck* and *Americanah* to project these experiences and traumatic effects on the characters. Overall, the paper provides an invigorating and incisive analysis of the different degrees of experiences of migrants when they cross the border, leaving home for a new and alien country. It recommends a strong consideration of return or escape as the only recourse when racism or other forms of inhuman treatments become unbearable.*

INTRODUCTION

The world is constantly changing and people try to adapt to these changes. When these changes begin to manifest in the society, literary artists as observers start portraying them in their works. Migration is one of these changes in society that impact on patterns of behavior and human condition. Migration is the movement of people from one place to another. It can be international (movement between different countries) or intra-national (movement within a country, often from rural to urban areas). It has also become a common trend and more people are migrating now than any other point in history. This is because

they move in order to improve their standard of living, to give their children better opportunities, or to escape from poverty, conflict and famine. Today, with modern transportation and communications, more people are motivated and able to move. People move for a variety of reasons. They consider the advantages and disadvantages of staying versus moving, as well as factors such as distance, travel costs, travel time, modes of transportation, terrain, and cultural barriers. Migration affects every region of the world, and many countries are now simultaneously countries of origin, destination and transit. Large numbers of migrants today move between developing countries such as America, Britain, Russia, Canada, Australia, Italy, and around 40 percent of the total global migrant population are involved in intra- continental or internal migration.

Accordingly Colin Palmer (14) observes that migration took place around ten to twenty thousand years ago when Asians migrated to America. They left their country to settle in North and South America. Some equally settled in the Caribbean Islands. The Jewish diaspora started about two thousand years ago. Muslims also started creating communities by spreading their religion and culture to Asia, Europe and Africa in the eight century. Europeans began colonization of African countries around 15th century and gradually got into other countries in the world. During this time, Africans were forcefully sent to America and Europe to perform the exhausting task of working in the American plantations from ‘sun up to sun down’, which later blossomed into the transatlantic slave trade that lasted about three centuries and deprived African societies of their most virile members and created the first African diaspora in the Americas. The Africans in this first diaspora were sought after for their physical strength. Goldstein in his book *Black Live and Culture in the United States* describes the migration of the blacks to the United States as: “the forceful migration to America which represented one of the greatest and oldest dispersal of people throughout man’s experience” (86).

The blacks, abducted from Africa from the early 1700s to the 1800s through the aid and betrayal of their fellow Africans were transported to America, Canada, the Caribbean Island and other parts of the world. These Africans taken to America were later referred to as “Afro-Americans”. They were put to work on cotton fields and sugar cane plantations as slaves. They toiled hard even under the extreme cold weather conditions and were badly treated by their masters. Although Africa is known for communal living and brotherhood the blacks were deprived of their culture, language, indigenous names, religion, and language. They however began expressing themselves through Negro-spirituals, which marked the beginning of their artistic expressions. As it stands, black slaves have risen to tell the story of their unpleasant experiences of slavery and oppression through the literary and creative medium. The majority of such literary texts were called “Afro-America text”.

In recently, times, the unstable economy of most African nations, coupled with lack of employment opportunities, security and access to the basic necessities of life, appears to have triggered another exodus from the continent. This time, however, migration is voluntary and in some cases, involve the most educated members of the various African states. This brain drain has over the years created a second African diaspora in America and the western world. These migrants emigrate from one continent in order to seek education, employment, and better living for themselves and their children. There in the foreign land, they are subjected to series of traumatic experiences. Today African migrants or migrant returnees, present a mixture of willing and unwilling migration from the African continent. Ronald Segal writes on black migrants saying ‘to redeem the past with a creative meaning; to recognize and insist that we must treat one another as equally human, beyond differences of race or nationality, religion, or culture.’(8) This suggest that African's are treated differently and in fact oppressed, suppressed and traumatized perhaps because of their

colour and continent. In the early 1700s a limited amount of Afro-American Literature came into existence. Basically, the anti-slave literature emanating from America centre on abolition of slavery and slave trade, the quest for freedom, equality, and the quest has continued to serve as foundations for migrant literature from the early stage to this age. At the turn of the 20th century, books by authors such as W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington debated whether to confront or appease racist attitudes in the United States. During the America civil rights movement, authors such as Richard Wright and Gwendolyn Brooks wrote about issues of racial segregation and Black Nationalism.

In the African continent, with the dawn of literacy, many literary works have been written to capture African experiences and cultural inclinations. Such works as Buchi Emecheta's *Kehinde and the New Tribe*; Chimamanda Adichie's *Thing around Your Neck* and *Americanah*; Isidore Okpewho's *Call Me By My Rightful Name*; Armah's *Osiris Rising*; and Ike Oguine's *A squatter's tale* have captured African migration experiences. The literature of blacks in the Diaspora generally often tend to explore issues of freedom and equality which were long denied black people in their foreign homes along with other experiences and expectations such as African cultural practices, racism, religion, slavery, a sense of home and many more. As no writer writes in a vacuum, the experiences of Africans in the Diaspora constitute their body of literature. Diasporic literature treats issues and experiences of Africans in an alien land. Fern Eckman is of the opinion that 'one writes out of one thing only, one's experience (3). This means that a writer is mostly a partaker of the events of which he writes about. Africans were great story tellers long before slavery and slave trade. Africans were familiar with literature and art for many years before their contact with the Western world. To understand fully the experiences inherent in a diasporian life, one must realise that the African is not without a cultural past, although he may be many generations removed from it before regaining it in literature and art. The presence of Africans in foreign lands has generated a rich

literature that is creative as well as expository which explores the implications of settlement in the foreign land, and translates the formation of an imagined identity away from the homeland or motherland.

This paper uses Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works - *The Thing around Your Neck*, and *Americanah* to explore the immigrants' experiences as portrayed in her works. Thus, it proposes to examine the attitudes that are filtered through the characters' traumatic experiences in the foreign land. The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the trauma theory as an extension of the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud. Sigmund Freud highlighted the idea of unrepressed feelings in the life of a man which has a way of affecting him greatly in his adulthood. In his bid to provide a cure for so many neurotic patients he had, he was able to discover how some unfulfilled desires and repressed feelings in the past exert a great control in the psychological nature of a person in adulthood. This he believes affects the character greatly and could lead to depression or some degree of deformity. This work studies the effect of immigrants' experiences on the characters and arrives at the fact that fears and trauma create a major problem to immigrants. Trauma theory is deemed relevant because the major characters in the texts under study are all traumatized.

The immigrant African writers of fiction are therefore able to bring the horrors of their traumatic experiences in foreign lands to the fore in their literary exploration. In order to address the decadence of neo-colonial Africa and to reconstruct its painful realities, writing becomes an elemental tool for survival to most of the African writers in America. By choosing a permanent home there, they occupy an unstable and complicated position towards Africa, the memory of which, although inextricably linked to the postcolonial disillusionment, remains a presence in their lives, shaping their outlook and surfacing always in their works. Hence, Africa becomes a symbol of some sense of loss, relentlessly driving

various African writers abroad to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of turning or being mutated into 'a pillar of salt'.

In this situation, one may ask, what pushes these people away? It may be the political instability in their mother land, corruption, insecurity, poverty, unemployment and so on. This brings to mind Adebayo Williams, views that: "the crisis of governance and democratization in Africa has left a profound mark on its literature, African writers have played a crucial role in the political evolution of the continent particularly in influencing the turbulent trajectory of the post-colonial state in Africa"(49). Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Laureate, aptly captures the benefits of an African writer in exile, most especially during the agonizing period of military rule in some African countries playing on the term "brain drain", Soyinka comments: "lucky drainees! The brain of their stay-at-home colleagues will be found as grisly sediments on the river bed of the Nile, or in the stomach lining of African crocodiles and vultures"(172). Therefore, physical distance from home with its attendant experiences of sorrow, victimization, bitterness, loneliness, dejection, depression, and nostalgia which is painful and a very agonizing experience remains their lot. The African writers in Diaspora react constantly to their condition of displacement in their works. The Nigerian literary writer used in this discourse was able to broach the issue of migration in her works and show through her characters what it means to be a black immigrant in America and Britain. The works portray issues of migration experiences in an alien country and attempts to point out that the great 'American Dream' is one of the pre-occupations of many youths from different countries who believe that their dreams of success and fame would be met in America but alas, those great expectations may never be fulfilled. In the stories used in this discourse the writer demonstrate an insight into her characters and expands their range to include characters that have left Nigeria for a new life in the United States and Britain. She takes seriously her role as the mouthpiece for the experiences of those living in foreign countries. However, this is the driving force

behind many writers coming out of Africa. It is also the black writer's burden to be moved by what one sees and yet not be bound by it. In her works she brings to our focus what the experiences are like and how blacks are oppressed at the levels of colour, sex, and race. The works portray how this situation changes the lives of the characters and the struggle they face trying to retain their dignity. Many of the characters in the novel and short stories are immigrants who had come to the United States for studies or to join their spouses or to look for a better life. These stories and other works illuminate the promise and ultimate disappointment of the immigrant.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes post-colonial stories and most often she exposes the difficulties Africans encounter living abroad and in their own homeland. *Americanah* is a love story woven around childhood sweethearts at school in Nigeria whose lives take different paths when they seek their fortunes in America and England but it is also a brilliant dissection of modern attitudes to race, spanning three continents and touching on issues of identity, loss and loneliness. It tells the story of Ifemelu, a spirited young girl with strong opinions and her teenage boyfriend, Obinze, who grew up with romanticized notions of the West, shaped by the literature of Graham Greene, Mark Twain and James Baldwin. When Ifemelu is presented with an opportunity to continue her postgraduate studies in Philadelphia, she takes it. Some years later, Obinze, too goes in search of a better life, but to Britain.

In England, Obinze struggles to get hold of the ever-elusive national security number that will enable him to work legally. During the polite conversation at Emenike's lunch party with a former classmate in Nigeria; with each guest trying to out-do the other with their earnest political correctness, Adichie writes that they 'understand the fleeing from war, from the kind of poverty that crashed human souls'. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu finds it difficult to get part time work. She gets turned away from menial jobs as a waitress, bartender or cashier. Her fellow students speak to her

with painful slowness, as if she cannot comprehend Basic English. In class, she is singled out as someone who will intuitively understand the plight of African Americans because of some half formed belief in a nebulous, shared 'black' consciousness.

For Adichie, lives of Africans (Nigerians) in the diaspora and the general problems of living in the diaspora are very dear to her creative mind. This dearness is anchored in the fact that out of the twelve stories in *The Thing around Your Neck*, six of these. 'The Thing around Your Neck', 'The Imitation', 'On Monday of Last Week', 'The Shivering' and 'The American Embassy'- touched on diasporic experiences. This fondness of the foreign experiences of Nigerians is further demonstrated by the fact that *The Thing around Your Neck* assumes the titles of the collection making it of great importance in relation to others. These experiences are discussed below.

DIASPORIC EXPERIENCES IN *AMERICANAH* AND *THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK*

Racism

Americanah works as an intervention, a welcome caesura in a dirge of immigrant abjection often made inaudible or incomprehensible by the continuous popular urging that the world is post-race. It provides a measured a story-not too violent to be unbearable, or too relentless as to be agonizing, or too horrific as to be unreadable-that serves as a gentle reminder that racism is very much alive and growing stronger. In America Ifemelu becomes aware of race, though she arrives in the United States without a concept of race. Immediately, on arrival, she 'became black'. Her blackening occurs as a result of the covert and overt racism she witnessed and experienced. As a result, she became a prominent blogger. Her blog is informed by her daily encounter with racial difference, encounters which form the titles of her articles.

Ifemelu's story is animated by her writing of a blog on race in America and by her love for Obinze, her high-school sweetheart, whom she left in Nigeria and who endures a life of hardship in

Britain before returning to Nigeria. Important also is her Auntie Uju with whom she lives when she first arrives the U.S. Ifemelu witnesses the growth of her aunt's son, Dike, and his troubled development hints at the terrible difficulty of raising a young black man in American. Ifemelu begins with a description of the unique pleasures of Princeton. It has no smell. She liked taking deep breaths here. She likes the campus, grave with knowledge... This place of affluent ease'. Immediately, there's a negation in the offing. She could pretend to be someone else, someone especially admitted into a hallowed American club, someone adorned with certainty.' With that she launches into a litany of all that she finds unpleasant, the many ways admittance and belonging are nonetheless denied to anyone colour. The discomforts accumulate and become particularly pointed when she recounts a man telling her, '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. 'She uses the story of this encounter for an article in her blog - the writing of which might be cathartic, but this assertion lingers as a moment of trauma. Later, when her cousin Dike attempts suicide, that early declaration seems portentous and concretely true, made even more so because of how Dike's suicide is elided. America does not want black babies; black babies growing up in America see that they are not wanted.. If America somehow manages not to annihilate them, they are compelled by America to annihilate themselves.

Americanah deals not only with how racism is implanted on a wider scale, but also the smaller incidents of every day; reflecting differing cultural values and definitions between Nigeria, the US and the UK . When she moves to Philadelphia to study, Ifemelu is greeted by her friend from home Ginika, who had moved to the US a few years previously. 'With an American mother, Ginika was envied in Nigeria for being 'half – caste,' yet in America, she tells Ifemelu, 'I'm supposed to be offended when someone says half – caste. I've met a lot of people here with white mothers and they

are so full of issues, eh. I didn't know I was supposed to have issues until I came to America. Honestly, if anybody raise biracial kids, do it in Nigeria' (146).

However, in *Americanah*, Adichie shows that racism in America is insoluble. Ifemelu cannot imagine authentic love across racial borders in America. African blacks in America and American blacks are also separated by a racial barrier-she expends a lot of energy in her blog detailing the differences between 'American Blacks' and 'non – American blacks.' Because these romantic failures are not attributed to any clearly defined schisms that are common to failed relationships everywhere – Ifemelu's infidelity is attributed to a deeper, underlying hidden cause as reflecting what Fanon writes of the conceptual problem about love To support this exertion, Ifemelu notices daily, casual racism while Curt does not. Curt only notices blatant racism, such as when a spa attendant refuses to wax Ifemelu's eyebrows. At moments such as that one, he rallies to her defence, oblivious that his white, male, always – effective, always – authoritative defence only underscores and re – inscribes the racist structure in which they live.

When they walked into a restaurant with linen – covered tables, and the host looked at them and asked Curt, "table for one?" Curt hastily told her the host did not mean it 'like that'. And she wanted to ask him, 'How else could the host have meant it?' When the strawberry – haired owner of the bed – and – breakfast in Montreal refused to acknowledge her as they checked in,...(339).

It is this type of experience, of being rendered invisible - of one's white lover being wilfully complicit in this unmaking, of being reminded of one's marginal, inferior status - that Ifemelu suffers and from which she recoils. It is these moments that sabotage their relationship, and that hints at the untenable nature of 'multiracial' relationships. Such experiences will be easily recognizable by immigrants of colour and black Americans. With Obinze, Ifemelu was at ease; her skin felt as though it was her right size.

Exploitation

Obinze, in the UK; has to live a life in many ways worse than what he might have endured in Nigeria. He does so because the possibilities for a better life in Britain are ostensibly more easily reachable than they could ever be back home. Working illegally, he takes menial jobs as a janitor then as a packer for a trucking company and is exploited by other immigrants whose help he needs. He endures this, always conscious of an idea he believes in—that anyone can start low and, in short order, ascend here, in the highest point of the globe. For Obinze, living in the UK illegally severely constrained his prospect. In order to work and earn a living, he has to borrow a National Insurance card from another slightly better established immigrant. To do so, he has to part with a percentage of his salary or lose everything altogether. Because he is undocumented, he cannot travel out of Britain for fear of being apprehended by immigration authorities, because he is designated as ‘illegal’ he is consigned to only the lowest paying jobs where the surveillance technologies of the state are permissively applied. His life is one of imperilled, involuntary immobility. In order to break out of this lack of access, Obinze arranges to marry someone with papers and in the process falls in love with the girl, Cleotilde, with whom he is paired by brokers. On the day of his wedding, minutes before he can become a citizen, he is discovered, detained, and summarily removed from the country.

Americanah takes us from Nigeria to America, to Britain and back. It is very much concerned with the ways in which imperialism operates now, in commerce and through culture. Ifemelu’s Nigerian ex-boyfriend, Obinze, having returned to Nigeria from his own emigration to Britain is instructed that as part of starting his business. He was advised after registering his own company to find a white man from one of his friends in England to become his General Manager. This is how Nigeria works and it is in fact how business almost everywhere in Africa works. Obinze gets

one of his former colleagues, a truck driver, to join him in Nigeria and Obinze's business thrives. More striking is that this white 'General Manager' does nothing for the business but lives in luxury in Nigeria and remains valuable simply by virtue of his whiteness. Furthermore, one of the stories in *A Thing around Your Neck* titled 'On Monday Last Week' tells the story of the nasty and slavish jobs that immigrants are forced to do. Without proper residence papers, Tobechi like other Nigerians was driving a taxi in Philadelphia for a Nigerian man who cheated all his drivers because none of them had papers (83). At the same time his newly arrived wife was doing the common job wiping the buttocks of the stranger's child (78). Collectively and individually, the indignities serve as a yardstick for measuring the lives of Nigerians in Diaspora. 'The Thing around Your Neck' is most typical of those stories that deal with the experiences of Nigerians in America. Here, Adichie presents to us the oppression the blacks pass through that is of race, colour, and sex. It touches on the false and over bloated expectations of Nigerians about to move to the United States. In his views, Asoo Iorbee writes that 'the general belief is that of comfort, ease, good food, plenty of dollars, employment and general economic and social security with additional feelings that excesses will be sent home to augment the conditions of relations at home' (16).

The short story opens to portray that;

You thought everybody in America had a car and a gun, your uncles and aunts and cousins thought so too. Right after you won the American visa lottery, they told you. In a month you will have a big car. Soon a big house...In comparison to the big car and house the things they wanted were minor –handbags and shoes and perfumes and clothes. You said okey, no problem (115).

On the contrary you found out that your uncle who had put your name on the lottery list could no longer take care of you and you had to be on your own. In the process,

You ended up in Connecticut, in another little town... you walked into the restaurant... and said you would work for two dollars less than the other waitress....You could not afford to go to school, because now you paid rent for the tiny room with stained carpet..... Sometimes, you sat on the lumpy mattress of your twin bed and thought about home (117)

Subsequently, want and loneliness set in. Poorly paid jobs, high apartment rates and finally a desire to return home which is not tenable because of the cost of a ticket. Respite comes in by an arrival of an American boyfriend whose liberal paternalistic relationship is able to pay bills and improve living conditions and in return you give him sexual satisfaction for his efforts in helping you. This relationship affords her the opportunity of writing home and getting a reply that her father had died years back. Finally she is able to go home with a promise to return. Ifemelu's encounter with the tennis coach made her to be disillusioned and all the expectations of coming to America died. After the encounter her psychological disposition soon began to degenerate into an unknown bitterness, anger, a suppressed violence with the world. It terrified her and began to rise in her. She nurses an illusionistic desire to destroy everything, shatter America and replace it in the shape she would wish it to be for her. She began to plan and execute her own ways of surviving in a cruel and harsh environment. The search led her to a tennis coach, a pervert and sexually disoriented personality. He was a little tennis coach that needs some naked contact with a lady to be able to relax and sleep. He pays anybody willing to indulge a hundred dollars bill per encounter. The hundred dollars was enough for Ifemelu's house rent. She had resented the job and walked away but when she could not secure a job and her house rent and tuition fees were due, she had no choice than to go back to the tennis coach and sleep with him. As observed by Ngozi Ozoh and Adaobi Ihueze:

That particular incident was to mark a turning point in her life. The encounter was what robbed her of a part of herself that she never recovered again. The experience was devastating. That was something she may never have done in Nigeria, but she did in America, because she has to survive, and the American environment made it so. The environment was organized to frustrate blacks and when you can not cope anymore, you could have a free ticket back to your country as a deported citizen. (26)

Adichie, after the incident depicts Ifemelu's trauma thus:

She walked to the train, feeling heavy and slow, her mind choked with mud, and, seated by the window, she began to cry. She felt like a small ball, a draft and alone. The world was a big place and she was so tiny, so insignificant, rattling around emptily. Back in her apartment, she washed her hands with water so hot that it scalded her fingers, and a small soft welt flowered on her thumb. She took off all her clothes and squashed them into a rumpled ball that she threw at a corner, staring at it for a while. She would never again wear those clothes, never touch them. She sat naked on her bed and looked at her life, in this tiny room with the moldy carpet, the hundred-dollar bill in the table, her body rising with loathing. She should never have gone there. She should have walked away. She wanted to shower, to scrub herself, but could not bear the thought of touching her own body... (182)

She had called Auntie Uju but was surprised that she did not care about what she did to get the money. She had called her for some words of comfort, to keep her going like she usually does

when they were in Nigeria but the call confirmed the environmental influence on Auntie Uju. She has become part of the American system and lives by its code. She has fully integrated herself in the main stream of survival. The psychological trauma of the event left her with a gap, an emptiness that lasted for over sixteen years.

Deceit and Disappointment

The "Arrangers of Marriage" syndrome remains one of the most touching sympathetic and sorrowful stories that this collection (*A Thing around Your Neck*) offers. It brings out the callousness of men in their relationship with women. It is the story that subtly expresses disgust towards attitudes of men and silently but clearly elucidates Adichie's feminist tendencies clad in a rather subtle tone. It is the story of an innocent young girl ordered to marry an American based doctor who has fraudulently married before. Her husband is critical, pretentious, and so eager to fit in that he has even changed his name from Ofodile Emeka Udenwa to Dave Bell. Ofodile Udenwa (now called Dave Bell) ceaselessly lecture his newly arrived Nigerian wife on the importance of using America expressions instead of the British English they learnt in Nigeria, he even instructs, Chinaza to go by "Agatha Bell" to get ahead. Due to the level of oppression, Ofodile believes he needs to disguise in order to blend into the society. As the girl tells us,

I had imagined a smooth drive away snaking between cucumber-coloured lawns, a door landing into a hallway, walls with sedate paintings. A house of those of the white newlyweds as in the American films that NTA showed on Saturday nights ... (But) the room was hot, old, musty, smells hung heavy in the air (167).

The very first impressions of the young girl reveal disappointment but as usual, she does not revolt but repeatedly blames the arrangers of marriage. She laments,

They did not warn you about things like this when they arranged your marriage. No mention of offensive snoring, no mention of houses that turned out to be furniture-challenged flats. (168)

She further laments,

The arrangers of marriage only told you that doctors made a lot of money in America. They did not add that before doctors started to make a lot of money they had to do an internship and a residency programme, which my new husband had not completed (174).

Disappointments in this short story are twofold: the insecurity, the callous and sadistic machinations of the marriage and the entire deceptive appearance and allusion of America.

Loneliness and Mental Imbalance

'The shivering' advances the issue of desolation of Africans living in America and the uncertainty surrounding their lives. Chinedu one of the characters in the story tells us

I am out of status. My visa expired three years ago. This apartment belongs to a friend ... I am going to get a deportation notice from immigration anytime soon. Nobody at home knows my real situation. I haven't been able to send them much since I lost my construction job (163).

The precarious existence of Chinedu reported here is perfectly representative of the scores of Nigerians living in the United States. With the intervention of Ukamaka, one of the characters in the short story we are further told a Catholic Reverend assures Chinedu that he is not going to be deported but that there will be a way out. Chinedu's joy on hearing this positive assurance can only be imagined. This saps the energies of the Africans living in America under this condition and makes them

completely uncomfortable. Their lives continually hang in a balance and this leads to mental instability.

In 'Imitation' the story is not so much on the imaginary comfort of life in America but the loneliness and insecurity of African wives living in America without their husbands. In situations such as this, the glamour which America is supposed to offer disappears and is replaced with despair, weariness and self-hatred. This is further heightened by unsolicited news from home concerning amorous lives of husbands left living in Africa. In this case Obiora, an international businessman buys a house in America where his wife and children live. Despite all the comfort available to them, his wife rejects any continued stay in America and concludes that they are moving back to Lagos at the end of the school term and that they will rather visit America during the holidays. The reasons she gave looked genuine but the real reasons remain the lack of warmth in the American life, the loneliness and the lack of company and the general unfriendliness of American existence. Again, life as lived in Africa when compared with that of America leaves no bases for comparison in terms of the warmth, friendliness and communalism exuded by Africans towards one another.

CONCLUSION

The central issue in these stories relates to the question of appearance and reality. What America portends to the ordinary Nigerian desirous of migrating for greener pastures, and the reality of existence in it as experienced by those lured to live there. By reading these novels which project accounts of black lives and the conditions of blacks in the diaspora,, we will be able to place them within a broader and deeper narrative of abjection and struggle. Adichie in the works used in this discourse strips the gloss off the idealized version of America that Africans have and transform the notion of African ignorance to Westerners. Although, in these stories, Adichie's characters love and are fiercely protective of their homeland, America holds the promise or opportunity for improved

standards of living, which they realize sometimes too late, that these notions are not often supported by reality.

Finally, these works function as a sort of beginner's manual which an African might pick up after crossing the Atlantic and landing in a strange territory. The works describe the unlivable nature of the American and British dreams for minorities and the unwelcome status of such people. They propose a strong consideration of return or escape as the only recourse when the inevitable racism against blacks becomes unbearable.

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