

Literature and Human Rights: A Study on the Role of Literature in Promoting Human Rights

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Abstract: *Human rights are one of the factors that ensure the hopes of the common man. Sadly, however, it is not uncommon to see these rights violated by dictatorial regimes. When this happens, literature must take the initiative to bring light to such violations and help people sympathize with those whose rights are abused. This article explores the relationship between literature and human rights. It argues that literature can play a paramount role in promoting human rights in two ways. First, literature, being a reflection of reality, can expose the various human rights violations and abuses happening across the world and this will help people to be more aware of these violations. Secondly, using its unique power to touch the hearts and minds of people, literature can make people more sympathetic towards those who suffer and live in pain as a result of violations of their human rights. Two African short stories—**The American Embassy** and **Sola**—written by the Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, have been analyzed to substantiate this argument. The analysis revealed that Adichie shows how the basic human rights articles in the UNDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), including freedom of expression and the right to work and to work in safe and favorable conditions, are ignored and violated in the two stories set in two different African nations—Nigeria (during General Sani Abacha’s years) and Gambia (under Yahya Jammeh’s dictatorial rule).*

Keywords: *literature, human rights, African literature*

Introduction

Human rights are commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being (Sepulveda et al., 2004). However, these basic rights have somehow been taken, or are being taken away from a vast section of the population across the globe. Although almost all nations ratified and signed the UNDHR (Universal Declarations of Human Rights) and other human rights instruments that aim to end the violations of human rights, activities and practices that violate human rights such as freedom of speech, racism, oppression, exploitation, poverty, subjugation of women,

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forceful exploitation of children's labour, ethnic cleansing, forced population transfers, torture and genocide are still rampant across the globe.

As Goldberg and Moore (2012) argue, literature and human rights have been bound together for a long time; however, it is only in recent years that they have been intersected as common or overlapping areas of inquiry. The relationship between literature and human rights at times seems intricate. As Rae (2009) pointed out, opinions about the relationship between literature and human rights tend to be at once impassioned and vague. He argued "human rights are generally held to be worth fighting for and literature one way of fighting for them; literature is thought to be a progressive activity and addressing human rights theme one way of ensuring its social relevance (Rae, 2009, p.13).

Literature promotes values of human rights directly and indirectly. It aims to transform the impact of the reading experience into a motivation for social action. Sartre (1988) in his book, *What is literature?*, argued for the moral duty of intellectuals, as well as the ordinary citizen, to take a stand in face of political conflicts, and especially those in their region. Literature according to Sartre is a tool which provides a dual action: first as a mirror to the oppressor, and second, as a guide and inspiration to the oppressed. Stressing the strong ties between literature and human rights, Raj (2012) also states that world literature has always addressed events that arguably are comprised of human rights stories. According to *Novel Rights*, literature has a unique capacity to touch the hearts and minds of people, and engages them in a way that is distinct from political or academic texts. It can even lead to a personal or general positive change. As such, literature is an important tool for the promotion of human rights. Literature has been and will continue to be the great promoter of a culture of human rights (Raj, 2012).

This paper, therefore, shows how literature can cultivate a better understanding of human rights through a critical evaluation of characters, analysis of scenarios, and examination of diverse historical voices. It will also attempt to manifest the enormous power of literature to promote human rights, drive change and motivate people to take action. This article first defines and surveys the common understanding of the term human rights. It then briefly discusses the relationship between literature and human rights by showing how they must be understood in complementary terms rather than in terms of one always being in the

service of the other. Finally, the paper critically analyzes two African short stories—*The American Embassy* and *Sola*—written by a Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, by identifying the human rights issues raised in the stories.

What are human rights?

Scholars have defined human rights in more or less a similar fashion as rights which are inherent to the mere fact of being human. According to Sepulveda, et al. (2004) human rights represent basic values common to all cultures, and must be respected by all countries worldwide. Similarly, Rae (2009) described human rights as any rights that can be shown to follow from a set of human values existing independently of the laws and customs of particular states or societies.

The concept of human rights is based on the belief that every human being is entitled to enjoy her/his rights without discrimination. Human rights are distinguished from other rights in two ways (Sepulveda, et al., 2004). Firstly, they are characterized by being inherent in all human beings by virtue of their humanity alone; inalienable (within qualified legal boundaries), and equally applicable to all. Secondly, the main duties deriving from human rights fall on states and their authorities or agents, not on individuals. The most important implication of these characteristics, according to these scholars, is that human rights must themselves be protected by “the rule of law” (Sepulveda, et al., 2004, p. 6).

Even if the origins of human rights may be found both in Greek philosophy and the various world religions, it was in the Age of Enlightenment (18th century) that the concept of human rights emerged as an explicit category (Rae, 2009; Sepulveda, et al., 2004). In this period, “man/woman came to be seen as an autonomous individual, endowed by nature with certain inalienable fundamental rights that could be invoked against a government and should be safeguarded by it” (Sepulveda, et al. 2004, p. 3). Accordingly, from this time forth, human rights were considered as elementary preconditions for an existence worthy of human dignity.

At the end of the 19th century, there was a need for international standards for human rights due to the introduction of labour legislation by the industrial countries. As Sepulveda, et al. (2004) state, this legislation

raised the cost of labour and had worsened their competitive position in relation to countries that had no labour laws. This forced the states to consult with each other and agree on common labour regulations. Therefore, even though the classic human rights had been acknowledged long before social rights, it was remarkably the latter that were first embodied in international regulations.

The traditional view that states have full liberty to decide the treatment of their own citizens came to an end due to the atrocities of World War II (Clapman, 2009). The signing of the Charter of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 brought human rights at the core of international law. The Charter contains a number of articles specifically referring to human rights, and all UN members agreed to take measures to protect human rights. Less than two years later, the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), which was established early in 1946, submitted a draft Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the Declaration in 1948.

Dubbed by many scholars as the most significant human rights document of the modern period, the Declaration sought to strengthen the rights provisions laid out in the UN Charter. Although it drew its contents substantially from aspects of Enlightenment thinking, as Schulz (2002) pointed out, the Declaration was the first such document to assert the “indivisibility, inalienability and inviolability of certain rights for all human beings.” The Declaration begins by stating that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” (UNDHR, 1948). Article 1 goes on “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reasons and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (UNDHR, 1948). From that developed twenty nine further articles dealing with, among other things, security and protection (from discrimination, violence and persecution), freedom (of thought, belief, assembly, expression and movement), participation (in political, cultural and family life) and fair treatment before the law.

Even though the UNDHR has been adopted by all member states of the United Nations, there are still some people who criticize the notion of universal human rights on various grounds. These critics claim that since the rights itemized in the Universal Declaration grew out of a Western Enlightenment tradition, they have no bearing on non-Western practices

(Schulz, 2002, p. 26). They further argue that human rights are alien to some cultures which may prefer to prioritize other principles (Clapman, 2009, p. 12). Some are even cynical about the Declaration. They retort:

The whole idea of "universal" human rights is actually a gigantic fraud, where Western imperialist or ex-colonial powers try to pass off their own, very specific and localized, idea of what "rights" should be as universal, trampling roughly over everyone else's beliefs and traditions (Clapman, 2009, p. 12).

Interference in domestic affairs is another reason often raised by the critics of the Declaration. These critics fear that human rights are becoming instrumentalized, used as pretexts for intervention by powerful Western countries in the political, economic, and cultural life of weaker countries from the South (Clapman, 2009). However, human rights advocates respond to the critics saying that all values have some cultural source and of course the value of human rights emerged out of an Enlightenment tradition. However, it must be understood that its origin is no measure for its validity (Schulz, 2002, p. 26). They further maintain that the modern human rights movement and the complex normative international framework have grown out of not only the enlightenment tradition but also of a number of transnational and widespread movements such as anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, anti-slavery, anti-apartheid, anti-racism, and feminist and indigenous struggles everywhere (Clapman, 2009). According to these advocates the question to ask about human rights is not, "Are they true?" Rather it is, "Do they work? Do they work to spread empathy, combat cruelty, and protect the weak from their oppressors? The experience of the international human rights community is that these do" (Schulz, 2002, p. 27).

Literature and human rights: An interdisciplinary approach

There is a dearth of scholarly work that deals with the relationship between literature and human rights. In fact, it is only in recent years that intellectuals have started to recognize and understand the intersection of these two seemingly distinct disciplines. Anthony (2012) uses the term "ungovernable" to describe the complex relationship between literature and human rights. He maintains that it is impossible to plot all the ways in which these fields are imbricated, or the ways in which they fall short of each other; they have infinitely productive overlappings and ungovernable openings.

Now many scholars have come to terms that both literature and human rights are complementary to each other and that literary works are potent and rich resources to correlate and study the concepts of human rights. As Goldberg and Moore (2012) state, the various literary genres (poetry, fiction, drama, memoir, and essay) evoke the yearning of peoples to be awarded the right to live in safety and with dignity so that they may pursue meaningful lives, and these literary genres record the abuses of the basic rights of people as they seek to lead lives of purpose.

At this point, it seems appropriate to pause and ask questions like “What has literature got to do with human rights?”; “How can literature promote the values of human rights?”; and “Can human rights contribute in any way to promote literature?” It is important to deal with these questions to properly understand the nexus between literature and human rights. The first and second questions have been dealt by scholars in a relatively similar manner. Many literary critics contend that literature has something to do with human rights or promotes the values of human rights because of its power to make people sympathize with others. The renowned civil rights activist and Nobel laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, maintains that literature and human rights are inextricably linked with humans’ power to empathize with others. He argues, “If, by reading a story we are enabled to step, for one moment, into another person’s shoes, to get right under their skin, then that is already a great achievement” (Amnesty, 2009). He further contends that through empathy, it is possible to “overcome prejudice, develop tolerance and ultimately understand love. Stories can bring understanding, healing, reconciliation and unity.”

Similarly, Barzilay (2013) echoed the same idea in her article entitled “The power of literature Vs. The power of hatred”. According to this writer and human rights activist, many novels possess tremendous power to open up new worlds and inspire a capacity for empathy. Explaining the importance of the ability to emphasize and the role literature plays to make this world a better place, she writes:

Being able to empathize makes it easier to be kind, tolerant and willing to consider other points of view. It makes it harder to adopt prejudiced stances, helps to guard against aggression and conflict and may even encourage people to take positive action on behalf of others. It also helps young people to put their own problems in perspective. These are all values that lie at the heart of human rights – and we can find them in novels.

Lucskay (2007) has also explained the role literature may play in promoting human rights by pointing out what constitutes human nature. He notes, even if human beings are endowed with reason, a great deal of the integral part of human nature and existence is unconscious, emotional, and based on desires none of which have internal logic. Hence, the majority of decisions that humans make are governed by emotions and feelings rather than reason. Therefore, he concludes, literature can illuminate human nature and existence in its fullness and it can play a crucial role in understanding humanity and consequently the principles of moral propriety defined in human rights.

As has been indicated in the above discussion, literature can be set to work in the service of promoting human rights. However, it has to be understood that the reverse is also quite true. The freedom to express ideas, beliefs and thoughts through literary medium is one of the basic human rights guaranteed in the UNDHR. The Declaration contains a couple of Articles that clearly promote the production of artistic (literary) works and freedom of expression. For instance, Article 27(2) of the Declaration states, “Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is an author.” Article 19 of the Declaration also guarantees one’s freedom to express his/her ideas by stating “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.” Therefore, as (Rae, 2009) concludes, we need to think of literature and human rights together in a complementary relation rather than thinking of one (usually literature) always being in the service of the other (human rights).

Promoting human rights: Adichie’s *The American Embassy* and *Sola*

Born in Nigeria and studied in the United States, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is acclaimed by many critics as one of the prolific contemporary African authors. Her works have been translated into many languages and have appeared in various publications, including the *Financial Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Granta*, and *Zoetrope*. Her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) is set in Nigeria and deals with the “coming-of-age story of Kambili, a 15-year-old girl whose family is wealthy and well respected but who is terrorized by her fanatically religious father.” (Luebering, ND).

Half of a Yellow Sun (2006), Adichie’s second novel, explores the war in the late 1960s between Nigeria and its secessionist Biafra republic. In this

novel, Adichie vividly shows the brutality of the war which resulted in the displacement and deaths of hundreds of thousands of people (Luebering, ND). In 2009, she released *The Thing Around Your Neck*, a critically acclaimed collection of short stories that contemplate the “legacy of Nigerian independence: crime, political corruption, poverty and violence” (Nurse, 2009). *Americanah* (2013), her latest novel, focuses on the romantic and existential struggles of a young Nigerian woman studying (and blogging about race) in the United States. Adichie has received several prizes for her works. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, won the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize in 2005 and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award. Similarly, *Half of a Yellow Sun* became an international bestseller and was awarded the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction in 2007. It was also named as a *New York Times* Notable Book and a *People* and *Black Issues Book Review* Best Book of the Year. In addition, she won MacArthur “genius” grant in 2009, and in 2010 appeared on the *New Yorker*’s list of the best 20 writers under 40.

According to Barillaro (2013) most of Adichie’s stories deal with ethnicity and the life of Africans at home in Nigeria and those living in the United States who have experienced many challenges. Her works also examine the consequences of the Nigerian civil war and the ethnic conflict also known as the Biafran War, that took place from 1967 to 1970 as well as with the brutal regime of Sani Abacha who ruled Nigeria from 1993 to 1998 (Minter, 2011).

The American Embassy is one of the stories published in the anthology of short stories entitled *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Using the brutal consequences of General Abacha’s harsh, corrupt political system as a backdrop, *The American Embassy* explores the difficult lives endured by people in Nigeria and their desperate desire to escape to the western countries. The story begins with a mother standing in a long line outside the American Embassy in Lagos to request refugee status. The woman seems to be there but is not there, in the sense that she’s indifferent about what is going around her, until she’s nudged off by a man behind her, who afterwards tries to have small talk with her even though she shows no interest for chitchat.

As the story develops, the narrator brings to the fore what is on the woman’s mind—readers will understand that the “woman had buried her child in a grave near a vegetable patch in her ancestral hometown of Umannachi” (p. 133). The government, at the time, in the story, is of the

dictatorial Abacha, and her husband is a pro-democracy activist and the first journalist to write a story that publicly accuses General Abacha of inventing a coup so that he could kill and jail his opponents (p. 138). The Abacha regime launches a big manhunt operation to catch him, but his wife (the woman who is the main character in the story) and his colleagues, smuggle him out of the country in the trunk of a car. Frustrated and furious that he slips through their fingers, government agents storm his residence and shoot and kill Ugonna, their only son who screams out of fear amid the horror.

Consequently, the main character requests an asylum visa to the United States, where her husband also aims to secure the same kind of visa in the near future. But once she reaches the emigration official, she hesitates to describe how her son was brutally murdered. She told herself that "she could not hawk Ugonna for a visa to safety", and decided to stay back and plant flowers on her son's grave rather than use his death to get an American visa. So, the visa interviewer is unable to grant her request telling her that she does not have enough "evidence" to validate the claim that government agents are responsible for her predicament

In *The American Embassy*, Adichie gives readers a vivid description of what it felt like to live under Abacha's dictatorial military regime. As Onyegbula (2001) quoting U.S Department of State, Nigeria Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997 writes, the years of military rule under General Sani Abacha were characterized by gross human rights abuse and repression of political dissent. According to the report:

The Abacha regime carried out widespread repression of human rights advocates, pro-democracy activists, journalists and critics of his government. Extrajudicial killings, torture, assassinations, imprisonment and general harassment of critics and opponents were the hallmark of his administration.

In the story, we witness a number of cases where government agents and soldiers violate the basic human rights of individuals who oppose the government as well as those of ordinary citizens (including children) who have never been involved in any kind of anti-government movements.

At the beginning of the story, for instance, the narrator, who waits for her visa in front of the American Embassy, sees a soldier mercilessly flogging a bespectacled man. This sets the stage for the atrocities that will soon to follow as the story progresses:

She turned to look across the street, moving her neck slowly. A small crowd had gathered. A soldier was flogging a bespectacled man with a long whip that curled in the air before it landed on the man's face, or his neck, she wasn't sure because the man's hands were raised as if to ward off the whip. She saw the man's glasses slip off and fall. She saw the heel of the soldier's boot squash the black frames, the tinted lenses (Adichie, 2009, p. 131).

The narrator further reflects on the soldiers' power, lack of compassion, their disregard for human rights and their indifference to the citizens of Nigeria by drawing attention to the "glower on his face"; "the glower of a grown man who could flog another grown man if he wanted to, when he wanted to" (p.131). She then recounts what happened to her husband (a pro-democracy activist and a journalist) who was detained for two weeks and brutally assaulted by the government soldiers; the soldiers had "broken his skin on his forehead leaving a scar the shape of an L" (p. 135). She also reports how the soldiers sent by the regime to arrest her husband sexually assaulted her after they stormed her residence:

He (one of the soldiers) sat down on the sofa, where her husband always sat to watch the nightly news on NTA, and yanked at her so that she landed awkwardly on his lap. His gun poked her waist. *Fine woman, why you marry a troublemaker?* She felt his sickening hardness, smelled the fermentation on his breath.....She pried herself free and got up from the sofa, and the man in the hooded shirt, still seated, slapped her behind.

Ironically, most these violations and abuses take place at the gate of the American Embassy which represents the United States of America that always boasts that it has the responsibility to promote democratic values across the world and defend the human rights of all human beings. One of the persons waiting in line to enter the Embassy for his visa seems to take note of this and quips "Sometimes I wonder if the American embassy people look out of their window and enjoy watching the soldiers flogging people" (p. 134).

To sum up, *The American Embassy* expresses the horrors inherent in a military dictatorship with vivid picturesque descriptions. It also shows how the basic human rights Articles included in the UNDHR are ignored and violated by Abacha's military regime. For example, Article 5² of the

²**Article 5:** No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

UNDHR states that people must never be treated inhumanly, brutally and cruelly. However, we see government soldiers degrading and inhumanly treating dissidents (for example, the journalist) as well as innocent civilians who are caught in the middle between the government and its opponents (the mother who is sexually assaulted by government agents and her little son who is shot and killed are cases in point). The government soldiers that we find in the story are given absolute power to do whatever they like to the citizens with impunity. Article 19³ of the same declaration also guarantees that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. However, in the story we come across a journalist jailed, beaten and persecuted by government forces. His right to liberty and to live in a safe and secured environment (Article 3)⁴ has also been violated, and he flees his country to escape persecution as a result.

The other story selected for analysis in this paper is *Sola*. *Sola* is among the stories compiled in an anthology titled *Freedom, Short Stories Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* published by Amnesty International in 2009. In this anthology, stories by the best writers from around the world are included to mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Each story explores at least one of the Declaration's thirty articles. *Sola* is set in contemporary Gambia and is mainly connected with Article 23 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Work and Fair Wages".

This story narrates the life of Sola, a witty, cheerful and humorous person who is full of life despite the fact that he lives with a meager income he earns from his work and the physical disability he has been living with since his birth. Sola walks with a limp but never considers this a problem; in fact, he usually makes fun of himself when he explains his disability to people. In his first encounter with the narrator, for example, he tells her to walk slowly so that he can catch up with her in a self-mocking smile. "Don't walk so fast. I can't catch up with my three-quarter leg. The midwife pulled me out too roughly." Sola is a journalist and works for 'Express'—a government press known to be the mouth piece of the Gambian president. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that he resents working for the newspaper because his writings are heavily

³**Article 19:** Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

⁴**Article 3:** Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

censored by his editor, Mr. Mahoney. Expressing his disappointment, he once tells the narrator how Mr. Mahoney cut and killed his story because he thought the original piece “might offend the president.” However, he has to keep working for the press as he needs the money to pay for his brother's school fees and to support his father and his sister.

Sola gets tired of all this censorship and finally decides to tell the world the truth about his country and the despotic president by writing a long investigative piece which will be published in Europe. He feels that he has a responsibility to express his concerns about the future of his country and the best way to do that is by publishing his piece abroad. He then tricks his editor by showing him a “tame version” of his piece while publishing the original version or the “real thing” as he calls it, abroad. His editor gets mad when he finds out this and threatens Sola. Finally, policemen come to his house and take him away. The narrator (Sola's friend and lover) and his father go to every police station and hospital looking for him, but they could not find him. No one could tell them his whereabouts. Sola disappears, and the government releases a statement stating that “it does not have any knowledge of Sola's arrest”.

Like *The American Embassy*, *Sola* portrays the violations of the rights of people who live in countries ruled by dictatorial regimes that seize power by force. It narrates the grave human rights violations that Gambian journalists and pro-democracy supporters have to endure living and working under the dictatorial regime of President Yahya Jammeh who seized power in a military coup in 1994. Jammeh's government is notoriously known for targeting voices of dissent including journalists, human rights defendants, political opponents and critics. According to the Human Rights Watch report, “forced disappearance, arbitrary detention and other human rights violations are common under the government of Yahya Jammeh”. The report further states that “Gambian journalists have faced harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention for carrying out their legitimate work.”

These human rights attacks against the press pursued by the Gambian government are at the center of *Sola*. The story tells readers how it is unsafe to work for private newspapers that are anti-government by making reference to the death of Deyda Hydara⁵—a journalist who was

⁵Deyda Hydara was the founder of the Independent newspaper, *The Point*. In the newspaper he had a popular column 'Good Morning President', where he highlighted

gunned down by government forces in 2004 for writing articles that oppose the government.

His father (Sola's father) said that he'd liked it when Sola began to work at the Express because working for a paper that had never been anti-government meant that what had happened to Deyda Hydera would not happen to Sola. I remember when Hydera was shot in Banjul, I remember how Hydera wrote so angrily, so boldly, about press freedom, about the excesses of the president.

Considering the government's horrible reputation of its treatment of dissidents, we expect that Sola—the journalist in the story—will probably suffer the same fate. In the story, we do not know for sure what happens to him except that “he has disappeared”.

It can generally be said that the text shows how Gambia is a difficult place to work for journalists under Jammeh's government in which the act of repressing journalists and dissidents is considered as the only way to maintain power and stifle opposition. It expresses the lack of freedom of speech in the country. In addition, it makes a point about how difficult it is to apply Article 23⁶ of the UNDHR that grant people, among other rights, the right to work and to work in favorable conditions. It is hard to imagine that dictatorial African governments, like the Gambian government, are willing to grant these rights especially to journalists. In fact, as it is indicated in the story, such dictatorial governments try everything that they possibly can to stop journalists (this can go as far as threatening and killing them) from writing the truth and what they believe in.

Conclusion

This article has explored the relationship between literature and human rights. It argues that literature can play paramount role in promoting human rights in two ways. First, as a reflection of reality, literature can expose the various human rights violations and abuses happening around

areas of concerns in the country. It is widely believed that Hydera was murdered by the Gambian government in connection with his work. He was fatally shot by unknown attackers on 16 December 2004.

⁶Article 23:

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

the world. Secondly, using its unique power to touch the hearts and minds of people, literature can help people become more sympathetic towards those people who suffer and live in pain as a result of the violations of their human rights. Two African short stories—*The American Embassy* and *Sola*—written by the Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have been analyzed to substantiate this argument.

In *The American Embassy*, Adichie shows the atrocities that took place in Nigeria during General Abacha's rule by providing readers different cases of human rights violations. Apart from that, by providing detailed description about the major character—a woman grieving the murder of her only child—she makes us feel the pain that the mother is going through. Similarly, in *Sola*, Adichie indicates the cost of writing the truth in countries that are ruled by dictatorial regimes by taking Gambia as a case in point.

As Raj (2012) argues the highest desire of humans is to lead a life in which one can enjoy freedom of speech and freedom of belief, and has no fear of suppression. She further underscores that human rights are one of the factors that ensures the hopes of the common man. Sadly, however, it is not uncommon to see these rights violated by dictatorial regimes. When this happens, literature must take the initiative to bring light to these violations and make people sympathize with those whose rights are abused and show their solidarity. Adichie's stories have succeeded in doing that. The stories also “reiterate the significance of literature not merely in aesthetic but also in social and political terms” (Sarkhel, 2015). In conclusion, literature and human rights are always interdisciplinary and work for the good of the society. To quote Raj (2012) “literature is indeed a window into the soul of humanity”.

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