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RACISM IN ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

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ABSTRACT

A person or an individual is known by his or her identity through various aspects such as name of the person, country, class, culture, religion, way of lifestyle, gender, profession etc. When the individual faces struggle in his life, he is unable to identify himself with the country or culture he is living with. Due to this crisis of racism and identity, he searches for his home where he can develop as an individual. In the novel *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie offers a wide approach to the intricate relations between blacks and whites. She expands her boundaries into portraying the relationship amongst blacks in different parts of the world. Ifemelu, the protagonist of *Americanah*, is a powerful character with different prospects and objectives in life affected and influenced by her race. She becomes a famous blogger and goes through several romantic relationships which affect her personality and shape her identity. These relationships and American culture affect her and help her grow into a strong, independent character.

A person or an individual is known by his or her identity through various aspects such as name of the person, country, class, culture, religion, way of lifestyle, gender, profession etc. With the help of these aspects an individual is identified in the society. When the individual faces struggle in his life, he is unable to identify himself with the country or culture he is living with. Due to this crisis of racism and identity, he searches for his home where he can develop as an individual, find a stable life and bring a balance between his wishes and the culture and tradition of his land. In the context of a female individual, the reason for the loss of identity of a woman is due to the fact that her identity is overshadowed by the presence of male individuals who possess the supreme power and position in every patriarchal society. Women are generally identified in connection with male members such as father, husband, son, uncle etc. and not by her own name or profession. Woman is the other of man.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an African feminist. She says that the problem with gender is that it shapes who we are. She is also angry as to how gender functions today. It is a grave injustice. Anger has a long history of bringing about positive change. She is also hopeful because she believes deeply in the ability of human beings to make and remake themselves for the better.

In the novel *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie offers a wide approach to the intricate relations between blacks and whites. She expands her boundaries into portraying the relationship amongst blacks in different parts of the world. Ifemelu, the protagonist of *Americanah*, is a powerful character with different prospects and objectives in life affected and influenced by her race. She becomes a famous blogger and goes through several romantic relationships which affect her personality and shape her identity. These

relationships and American culture affect her and help her grow into a strong, independent character.

Americanah tells the story of Ifemelu, a spirited young girl with strong opinions and her teenage boyfriend, Obinze, who grows up with romanticised notions of the west. When Ifemelu is presented with an opportunity to continue her postgraduate studies in Philadelphia, she takes it. Some years later, Obinze goes in search of a better life to Britain. Obinze returns to Nigeria and becomes a wealthy man as a property developer in the newly democratic country. Ifemelu gains success in the United States. She is known for her blog about race in America, entitled "Race: A Series of Observations About American Blacks". The novel is written in flashback, as Ifemelu has her hair braided in a New Jersey salon in preparation for going home to Nigeria after 15 years in America. The final section of the book follows Ifemelu's return and her reunion with Obinze who is married to someone else.

At the beginning of the novel, Ifemelu is about to have her hair braided before returning to Nigeria. Adichie uses the word of hair braiding to show how political and personal issues race can become definitely interwoven. The girls who work at the salon are all non-native Americans.

Ifemelu looks at Aisha, a Senegalese woman with patchwork skin who has two Igbo boyfriends. She insists that Ifemelu should meet them and urge them to marry her. It would have been a good blog post. "A Peculiar Case of a Non-American Black, or How the Pressures of Immigrant Life Can Make You Act Crazy (A21-22).

Ifemelu struggles in the search for an identity, an identity that goes through a lengthy process of adaptation as a consequence of the changes that she withstands. Her life is altogether normal when she lives in Nigeria. She goes to school, she has a family and a boyfriend. She does not feel the burden of racism since everyone is like her, black. When she moves to America she uncovers the ways in which whites surrogate black people because of their skin colour. "When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person,

race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. But we don't talk about it. We don't even tell our white partners the small things that piss us off and the things we wish they understood better, because we're worried they will say we're overreacting, or we're being too sensitive." "As long as the black man remains on his home territory, except for petty internal quarrels, he will not have to experience his being for others... For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man." (A89-90).

Ifemelu in the search for her true essence encounters different factors that contribute to the shape her identity. This provides the protagonist's development through three different points of view. It is crucial to analyse Ifemelu's and Obinze's affinity to delve into the relations established between African people. The examination of Ifemelu's and Curt's relationship permits us to bring out the intricate and tortuous world of black and white relations in America. By examining Ifemelu's affair with Blaine, the reader can access the world of African American culture and the many inconsistencies that exist regarding racism.

Through the exploration of *Americanah* one can distinguish a two-way relation between these two categories as necessary ingredients that contribute to the shaping of black women's identity. From the very beginning of the novel, the reader encounters several situations when the protagonist is exposed to various types of discrimination such as cultural background, gender, ethnicity or racial group and economic position. The significance of these diverse discriminatory layers is profoundly harming and unjust to black women as they are dragged to the bottom of the social ladder.

Racism is triumph social evil which is root cause for all the other problems like identity and psychological issues. Adichie has conveyed clearly about racism in *Americanah*.

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