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Afropolitanism and the (Re)definition of African Identity in  
Chimamanda Ngozy Adichie's Americanah (2013)

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## *Dedication*

To all my family.

## *Acknowledgment*

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## *Abstract*

This research investigates how the members of new African generation who call themselves Afropolitan challenge racism and stereotypes in America. The study uses Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Americanah* as a case study. The choice of this novel is made on purpose because Adichie, is one representative of the Afropolitan movement in addition of being a feminist, this young Nigerian moves across nations questioning her identity not only as an African living in America but also as a woman. She is multilingual and a culturally hybrid i.e she has a mixed culture due to her constant encounters with the rest of the world. Moreover, through her novel, Adichie exposes characters who own more than one characteristic of the Afropolitan identity mentioned by Selasie, Mbembe and Gikandi. The research concludes that the Afropolitan individual challenges racism and stereotypes by first questioning the nation he is living as victim of the injustice inflicted on his minority group, then, asserting his national identity or the love of the country of origin. Finally, he expresses his attachment to his African culture as a brand of self-esteem and dignity.

# Table of content

<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>i</b>
	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>General introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter I: Identity Within the Lens of Afropolitanism</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Introduction.....	<b>3</b>
I-1- Toward a definition of identity.....	<b>3</b>
I-2- Three Types of Identities.....	<b>4</b>
I-2-1- National Identity.....	<b>4</b>
I-2-2- Cultural identity.....	<b>4</b>
I-2-3- Racial / Ethnic Identity.....	<b>5</b>
I-3- Afropolitanism.....	<b>8</b>
I-4- Afropolitanism and Pan-Africanism.....	<b>13</b>
Conclusion.....	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter II: The Afropolitan Identity in Americanah</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Introduction.....	<b>16</b>
II-1- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's life and major works.....	<b>16</b>
II-2- Major themes in Americanah.....	<b>18</b>
II-2-1- Relationships.....	<b>18</b>
II-2-2- Race, Racism and Stereotypes in America and Americanah.....	<b>19</b>
II-2-2-1- The myth of the post racial America.....	<b>19</b>
II-2-2-2- Race, Racism and stereotypes in <i>Americanah</i> .....	<b>20</b>

II-3- Relation of Afropolitanism to Americanah.....	22
II-3-1- Language.....	22
II-3-2- African ties.....	24
II-3-3- Education and Career.....	24
II-3-4- Cultural hybridity.....	26
II-3-4-1- Food.....	26
II-3-4-2- Dress.....	27
II-3-5- The Afropolitan consciousness.....	27
Conclusion.....	28
<b>Chapter III: The Afropolitan Challenge to Racism and Stereotypes in America...</b>	<b>29</b>
Introduction.....	29
III-1- Blogging as a counter story.....	29
III-2- Black hair and body image.....	31
III-2-1- Black is beautiful and the European Standard of Beauty.....	31
III-2-2- Hair as a symbol of African pride and dignity in Americanah.....	32
III-3- Return home as a pride of the African origin.....	34
Conclusion.....	36
General conclusion.....	37
Work cited.....	39
Appendix.....	44

## General Introduction

Africa is a vast continent. It is full of natural and human resources. However, it was perceived by the western world as the 'dark continent'. This concept was coined because there was less knowledge about the continent and its people. Europeans and Americans had always seen African people as savages who need to be saved. They were viewed as disorganized people with no specific culture and values who needed western ways of life in order to be civilized. Historically, African people were seen as enduring people, who could resist all forms of pain. Africa was devastated by the tragic Trans-Atlantic slave trade to promote the plantation in America and the European economy.

However, a new generation of African elite is raised. They are very savvy. They are intellectuals. They call themselves Afropolitans. Afropolitanism is defined by Selasi, Mbembe, and Gikandi. Selasi is a writer raised in Boston, studied at Oxford University and resided in Rome. She coined the term Afropolitan to this generation who are from African origin and travel around the world. In her article Bye-Bye Babar, she describes this new category of people as being from mixed ethnicity, multilingual and academics. They are aware of their origins and proud of their African flags. They do not accept to be victims and use their pen to wage the war against racism and segregation.

Moreover, Joseph Achille Mbembe who is a Cameroonian philosopher, also defines the term Afropolitanism from his own point of view. He views this generation of Africans as travellers moving from one place to another they may be born in Nigeria, educated in England, and living in America. All these experiences in addition to enrich their knowledge, and help them develop a transnational culture, make them conscious of who they really want to be. Gikandi who is a Kenyan literature professor, defines the term Afropolitanism as a new "way of being African in the world". They are multilingual and possess a cultural hybridity.

This thesis purpose is to investigate the way this new generation challenges racism and stereotypes in America. As a case study, Chimamanda Ngozy Adichie's novel *Americanah* is chosen. The reason behind this choice is that the writer is an Afropolitan.

To reach this goal, the research raises the following questions: First, how does this new generation of African elite who moves across nations face racism and stereotypes? Second, How do they behave when they are under evaluated due to their skin colour? Finally, What are the tools they use to challenge the racist societies they live in?

In trying to answer those questions raised above, the following hypotheses could be raised. It may be suggested that the Afropolitan neither represents the real and authentic African nor an American. Second, may be Chimamanda Ngozy as an Afropolitan wants to keep alive the African heritage and culture through the behaviour of the protagonist. Lastly, may the Afropolitan remain African in heart and live in America or Europe and be proud of his or her origins keeping a high degree of self-esteem.

This thesis tackles the questions mentioned above in three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to some definitions of identity within the lens of Afropolitanism. The national, the cultural and the racial identities are clarified as well as the concept of Afropolitanism. The second chapter is devoted to the novel *Americanah*. The Afropolitan identity is explored in *Americanah* in this chapter. It shows if the characters presented in this novel are Afropolitans. For that reason, some notions given by the scholars above are investigated in *Americanah* like education, career, African ties, language and cultural hybridity. The third chapter analyses the challenge of racism and stereotypes by the characters.

## Introduction

This chapter is devoted first to the definition of identity. Then there is an attempt to define types of identities related to Afropolitanism. The three types of identities within the realm of Afropolitanism are national, cultural and racial. After that, the term Afropolitanism is defined by different Tayie Selasi, Achilles Mbembe and Gikandi. Finally, the similarities and differences between Afropolitanism and Pan-Africanism are highlighted.

### I-1- Toward a definition of identity

Who are you? Could you answer this question? How do you define yourself? Are you going to answer by giving your name or your roots? It is very important to know who you are. Eric Erikson pointed out that “*in this social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity*” (brainy quotes. Web), yet, it is impossible to give one clear definition of what identity is (Lawler 7). Its definition depends on how individuals think about it (ibid).

Meriam Webster’s Dictionary defines the term identity as *The qualities, beliefs, etc, that make a particular person or group different from others*; or all the characteristics that are unique to our personality and differentiate us from other persons (Collins dictionary).

To answer the question “who am I”, Charles Taylor opposed the idea of defining the term identity by giving just the name of the person or his ancestry in his book *the Sources of the Self*. He defines identity as “*My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose*”. Taylor’s identification of identity relies on the set of principals served to guide a person’s action or the good qualities which someone have and constitute his dignity and self-respect (Fearon 13).

One may have several identities, some are personal and others are relations to the person’s society. As far as this research is concerned, it is interested in three types of identities: national, cultural and racial or ethnic. So, one may wonder what is the definition of those different identities.

## I-2- Three Types of Identities

### I-2-1- National Identity

It is the feeling of difference from others on the basis that we live in different nations. We belong to the Algerian nation, at the same time, we are different from the Tunisians or the Moroccans since they live in other nations.

Webster's definition of 'nationalism' is the individual's feeling of loyalty and pride to his country on the belief that it is better and of great importance. But why do people consider it so important to refer to their belonging to one nation when talking about their identity?

Parekh Bhikhusays in his book *A new politics of identity. Political principles for an interdependent world* that a nation is a political community which is made up of millions of men and women, who have their unique identities but have common constitutive features. Those constitutive features include a territory or a home where people have a sense of safety and a common historical experience. They also embody a specific culture which consists of traditions, beliefs and values without forgetting the common language (56).

Anthony. D. Smith declares in his book *national identity* that a community has six main characteristics. It has a collective common name like Nigeria, Egypt...etc. It has also a common ancestry and a shared history. The community has a common culture which is associated to a specific home land. Finally, its people have a sense of solidarity (Smith 21-22).

National identity is very important in the sense that it empowers unification. It promotes not only collective goals for the nation but also a sense of loyalty towards it.

### I-2-2- Cultural identity

Webster's Dictionary defines the term 'culture' as all the beliefs, attitudes, values, goals and practices that are specific to a particular community.

Cultural identity is the feeling of belonging to a particular group of people who has specific traditions and norms that characterize and guide them.

Stuart Hall argues that the 'inner core 'of the individual or 'the self' is not alone or acting separately but it is linked or in relation to a 'significant other'. The latter sustains to the subject or the individual 'values, meanings and symbols' i.e. the culture of the external world. He asserts also that cultural identity is formed by 'the interaction' between the self and the society. There is a kind of bridge called culturebetween 'the self' and 'society'(Hall 597).

Values, customs and cultural heritage are part of us and help us not only to identify with the world we inhabit, but also have a sense of unification with the society we live in. (Ibid 598)

### I-2-3- Racial / Ethnic Identity

Race and ethnicity are frequently confused but each term has its specific meaning.

Race is a social construct. It is the grouping of people on the basis of visual differences (Wolf) or race is the grouping of people on the basis of their physical characteristics, like the skin colour (light or dark skin) or the type of hair (kinky, curly or straight hair). In *Race, Science and Politics*, as mentioned in *Narrating Racism: a Comparative Study of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Chimamanda Adichie's Americanah* by Agoha, Chikaoha Justice, Benedict Rose defines racism as "the dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to hereditary inferiority and another group is destined to hereditary superiority". Here, Benedict links racism to nature.

In *Exploring Race and Ethnicity* article, race is a social construct. It is a tool to differentiate people. The dominant power (whites) use it to make a particular category of people privileged over another. For the dominant category, physical differences like skin colour implies also distinctiveness in mental abilities, achievement and capabilities. The distinction based on physical differences which is aimed to lower a particular category of people over another is called racism.

Historically, racism started with the transatlantic Slave Trade which was the transportation of African people across the Atlantic Ocean from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Transatlantic Slave Trade had three stages. The first stage consisted of the transportation of arms, textiles and wine from Europe to Africa. In the second stage, African people were deported from their homeland to America to work in the plantation. In the third stage, sugar and coffee were shipped from America to Europe (Encyclopaedia Britannica). The Transatlantic Slave Trade came into existence for the reason that as cited by Chikaoha Justice, Johnson H.H - a white man - defines Africa and the African man as :

*Negro in general is born a slave. He is possessed of great physical strength, docility, cheerfulness of disposition, a short memory for sorrow and cruelties... Above all, he can toil hard under the hot sun and in unhealthy climates of the torrid zone. He has little or no race-fellowship, that is to say, he has no sympathy for other negroes (146).*

This quotation alludes to the way the West views African people in the sense that from a Eurocentric point of view, African people are regarded as enduring, docile and resistant to all

kind of savagery. Therefore, they can serve the whites very well (Ibid). Besides, in 1962, the European historian Hugh Trevor Roper said in *The Rise of Christian Europe* that:

*Perhaps in the near future there will be some African history to teach. But at the present time there is none; there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness... and darkness is not the subject of history.*

From the past to the present day, Africa is viewed as a continent of darkness, emptiness, a place with no history to teach and with no significance. However, Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *The Ideology of Racism* as cited in Agoha, Chikaoha Justice dissertation, defines racism as:

*[Racism] is ideological weapon and it comes wrapped up in many forms: as religion, the arts, the media, culture, values, beliefs, even as feelings. [It] is one of the most devastating of all the ideological weapons wielded by imperialism today and it is meant to safeguard the entire system of exploitation of the many by the few in one nation and among nations... The great divide between the West and the 'Third World'... wears a racial camouflage: it is largely the whites of European stock versus the dark races of the earth... ideology and practice of racism facilitates... exploitation (135-138).*

Ngugi linked the idea of racism as purely imperialistic. It is a division of the world on the basis of the West versus the rest, Whites versus Blacks. This division facilitates the exploitation of a particular category of people to another.

Racial group is a term given for minorities with different visible characteristics. Those obvious characteristics are kind of hair, shape of the nose and skin colour. Skin colour is very important in the US because through history, skin colour was a means to classify people. They are either black or white. Thus racial identity is formed.

Racial identity is defined by the *APA dictionary of psychology* as the sense of being defined by others as being part or a member of a particular racial group. Hazel Rose Marcus defines racial identity in *Who Am I? Race, Ethnicity and Identity* as an individual's identity given by others. A person's identity is identified by his personal characteristics or how he likes to be, like for instance a daughter, a brother, an architect from one hand. From the other hand, the external identification given to the individual depending on the context that an individual is located in. Those external characteristics are age, race, gender and ethnicity. So, those characteristics are part of the individual's identity given to him by others or what others think who the individual is (page 362-363).

The term ethnic is defined by the *APA dictionary of psychology* as a particular group of people who have a shared language and culture. Ethnic identity is the sense of belonging to particular ethnic group who share a common history, language, culture and religion.

E. Trimble and Dickson (2010) say in their article *ethnic identity* that ethnic identity is the 'affiliation' of a person with a particular group. This affiliation could be racial, natal or symbolic. Racial affiliation refers to the physical characteristics that distinguish a person from others. Natal affiliation refers to the place of birth, the person's ancestors and origins that a person shares with other people. Whereas symbolic affiliation is religion, holidays, the type of food, clothes and celebrations or what we call simply culture. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin states in their book *Post-Colonial Studies, The Key Concept* 2007 that Schermerhorn (1970: 12) gives a clear definition of what does it mean ethnicity. He presents the social and the cultural features of it:

*A collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry (that is, memories of a shared historical past whether of origins or of historical experiences such as colonization, immigration, invasion or slavery); a shared consciousness of a separate, named, group identity; and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. These features will always be in dynamic combination, relative to the particular time and place in which they are experienced and operate consciously or unconsciously*

A significant feature of this definition is the function of those 'symbolic elements' that may provide a sense of ethnic belonging. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, physical features, cultural values, and cultural practices such as art, literature and music. Various combinations of these elements ('one or more') may be privileged at different times and places to provide a sense of ethnicity.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin give a clear definition of what is an ethnic group. They define it as: "*A group that is socially distinguished or set apart, by others and/or by itself, primarily on the basis of cultural or national characteristics.*" (77). This definition means that an ethnic group has its distinct by its national and cultural identity. They go further to define this term in relation to those living in diaspora. They say that:

*a group or category of persons who have a common ancestral origin and the same cultural traits, who have a sense of peoplehood and of group belonging, who are of immigrant background and have either minority or majority status within a larger society.*

(Isajaw 1974: 118)

This indicates that people living outside their country of origin, have a land and ancestors to whom they belong to. They share with them the same culture. So, an ethnic identity is the

person's thought of his in group relation. However, racial identity is the individual's thought of his out group relation (Marcus 371), or how society classifies his group. So, racial and ethnic identities are used to refer to the physical and cultural identification of a person as he affiliates himself to a particular group of people.

### I-3-Afropolitanism

The West, more often than not, has given one single image of Africa. It has been depicted as a continent of hunger and war (Adichie 2009). Its people are underdeveloped and have no importance in the world history. Africa has been seen as not belonging to the world. But a new generation of African elites begin to reveal the real image of this continent. They call themselves Afropolitans. They consider themselves as being part of the world not apart from it (Mbembe, 2016). Who are the Afropolitans? Where are they located? What are their aims and objectives?

The term Afropolitan was first coined by the Nigerian-Ghanaian, British born writer Taiye Selasi. She was raised in Boston, studied at Oxford University and resided in Rome. She created this term –Afropolitan– as a response to the question *where are you from?* People were not satisfied with her answer as she said '*from west Africa*'. They insisted and asked her more questions such '*have you lived there?*' Or '*where were you born?*' (Wings, 2012.p.38). So one may ask how this young writer define this term.

Selasi<sup>1</sup> defined the term in her article *Bye-Bye Babar* in the *Lip magazine*, March 3, 2005 as:

*They (read: we) are Afropolitans – the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already ... You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academics. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic or two, we understand some indigenous tongue and speak a few urban vernaculars. There is at least one place on The African Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city*

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<sup>1</sup>**Taiye Selasi** was born on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1979, from a Ghanaian and Nigerian parents. She is a writer, a photographer, a dancer and a novelist. She holds a BA in American Studies from Yale and an MPhil in International Relations from Oxford. Her famous novel is *Ghana must go* (2013). She has a number of short stories among them *Aliens of Extraordinary Ability* (2014) and *Driver* (2013). She is also a writer of two well-known essays *Bye-Bye, Babar (Or: What is an Afropolitan?)* (2015) and *Afropolitan, No Less and No More*. (Wikipedia).

*(Ibadan), or an auntie's kitchen. Then there's the G8 city or two (or three) that we know like the backs of our hands, and the various institutions that know us for our famed focus. We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world.*

From the quotation above, Selasi defines the Afropolitans as the newest generation who are of ethnic mixes. They are born from mixed parents, an African and a European or an American. The Afropolitan is multilingual. He can speak and understand English, a romantic language, its native one and some vernacular. The Afropolitan, according to Selasi, feels at ease in many geographical areas. Home for the Afropolitan is Africa, America or Europe as she states in her article, "*While our parents can claim one country as home, we must define our relationship to the places we live*". The Afropolitan is an intellectual and academically succeeding. He has a very successful career. (Ucham 46-48). Selasi tells that the Afropolitan is characterised by 'African ethos' and 'Africanethics' i.e. the Afropolitan is guided by an African beliefs and rules of behaviour (Webster's dictionary). For her, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the moment of '*redefining what it means to be African... to honour what is wonderful, unique...to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honour the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain our parents cultures.*' (Selasi).

The Afropolitan lives in or outside Africa as she claims '*whether one lives in an African country or not*', he is connected with his country of origin and shares with it its culture and traditions, at the same time, the Afropolitan may embrace the host country's way of living. The new African affirms himself by his traditional culture and beliefs which were ashamed of before. He considers his migration to other continents—for different reasons—as a new positive reflection of the continent rather than a loss. (Gikandi 11) even though, he is aware of the difficulties faced in the host countries.

For Selasi, the Afropolitan has much to do in Africa. '*It is high time the African stood up... Most Afropolitans could serve Africa better in Africa... To be fair, a fair number of African professionals are returning; and there is consciousness among the ones who remain, an acute awareness that there's work to be done*' (Selasi). The Afropolitan is willing to return to his country and serves it.

The Afropolitan expresses himself through art, music, literature. He uses several mediums. For instance, in writing, the novelist Chimamanda Ngozy Adichí and *Afraplean magazine*. There are shows like *the fashion show* which was organized in London on 2011. It exposes African fashion. '*The Internet has also played host to a number of blogs, discussion boards, and other online communities, which have brought together people from around the globe*

who subscribe to *Afropolitan values and culture*' (Alpha Abebe 2). She states also in the same article that "*the 'community', which is global and often manifests online, is made up of people who feel a sense of belonging with each other due to their shared connections to Africa*". Some online spaces are *AfriPop* which produce Afropolitan cultural content, blogs like *The Afropolitan Network* which was established in 2007 and an online boutique for Afropolitan articles. In art there is *Africa Remix Exhibition* and *Afro-polis*. In architecture, there is *Architecture Otherwhere*. We have also Afropolitan movements like *Afro-punk*. There is also *The Afropolitan magazine* which is produced in South Africa and gathers "Individuals, who seek all that is sophisticated and opulent, but however still manage to maintain a deep rooted consciousness of their heritage" (*Afropolitan magazine*).

For Selasi, the Afropolitan is aware of what is "*ailing in Africa*". He is conscious of the major problems which the African continent suffers from. The Afropolitan is a careful observant of the political, the economic and the social situation of his home land and tries to better it.

Another definition of what is Afropolitanism is given by the scholar Achille Mbembe<sup>2</sup>. He declares in his article published in *the Africulture magazine 2005* that Afropolitanism is:

*...an art, a philosophy, an aesthetics that can say something new and of signifier to the world in general. Today, many Africans live outside Africa. Others have freely chosen to live on the Continent, and not necessarily in the countries where they were born. Even more, many of them are fortunate enough to have experienced several worlds and have not ceased, in fact, to come and go, developing, at the turn of these movements, an incalculable wealth of look and feel. These are usually people who can express themselves in more than one language. They are developing, sometimes without their knowledge, a transnational culture that I call "Afropolitan".*

Mbembe asserts that Afropolitanism exists outside Africa as well as inside. This generation move across nations. They discover, understand and examine the world due to their movement. Those people speak different languages. They are multicultural beings. They import with them the culture of the places they live in but they have also an integral part inside them, which is their African heritage. They are as Mbembe claim "*artists, musicians and composers, writers, poets, painters*" (*Africulture magazine 2005*).

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<sup>2</sup>Joseph-Achille Mbembe, known as Achille Mbembe is a Cameroonian philosopher and a politician. He was born in 1957. He obtained his Ph.D. in history in 1989 from the University of Sorbonne in Paris, France. He also obtained a D.E.A. in political science from the Institute d'Etudes Politiques in the same city. His major work *On the Postcolony* (Wikipedia).

He also defines Afropolitanism as an:

*Awareness of the interweaving of the here and there, the presence of the elsewhere in the here and vice versa,...the way of embracing, with full knowledge of the facts, strangeness, foreignness and remoteness... and make the most of the traces of remoteness in closeness, to domesticate the unfamiliar... it is this cultural, historical and aesthetic sensitivity that underlies the term 'Afropolitanism' (Eze).*

In the quotation above, Mbembe asserts that due to the movement of people from and toward Africa, there is the presence of Africa in the world, at the same time, the presence of the world in Africa, because Africa is not only a starting point but also a destination of a number of people (Bertolt). It is this exchange of ideas, thoughts, behaviours and cultures in general which make Afropolitanism unique. It is embracing the new, what seems to be strange. It is accepting the new culture.

Mbembe claims that the centre of Afropolitanism is in South Africa. He thinks that “*South Africa is, in that sense, from a theoretical point of view, a very rich laboratory for anyone who would like to think beyond the racial.*” (Mbembe). We find Africans of different origins European, Asian, Indian ... (Mbembe). South Africa is a diverse country. It is recognized that South Africa has eleven official languages. Mbembe asserts that in South Africa, we must think “*beyond the racial*”, particularly in Johannesburg. It is not only a symbol of Afro-modernity but also it has positioned Africa in a high scale which makes it recognizable all over the world (Afropolitan magazine).

There is Maboneng precinct (a precinct is a part of a territory), in the east side of Johannesburg, which its architectural design reflects a global African identity. The precinct design was developed by Jonathan Liebmann who is a South African entrepreneur and an architect who collaborated with the architect Enrico Daffonchio. Liebmann was inspired by his movement all over the world. He used art to create a hybrid cultural area. In it, there is a combination between history and modernity, between Africa and the world. (the Afropolitan magazine).

The third definition of Afropolitanism was given by *Simon Gikandi*<sup>3</sup>. According to him (*as cited in Wawrzinek & Makokha 79*) Afropolitanism:

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<sup>3</sup> Simon E. Gikandi is a Kenyan Literature Professor. He was born on September 30th 1960. “ He graduated with a B.A [First Class Honors] in Literature from the University of Nairobi... He was a British Council Scholar at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland from which he graduated with a M.Litt. in English Studies. He has a Ph.D in English from Northwestern University. His major Fields of Research and Teaching are the Anglophone Literatures and Cultures of Africa, India, the Caribbean, and Postcolonial Britain, the “Black” Atlantic and the

*...can now be read as the description of a new phenomenology of Africanness – a way of being African in the world. To be Afropolitan is to be connected to knowable African communities, nations, and traditions; but it is also to live a life divided across cultures, languages, and states. It is to embrace and celebrate a state of cultural hybridity – to be of Africa and of other worlds at the same time.*

According to Gikandi, Afropolitanism is how to be African in the world. For him, to be Afropolitan is to have ties with specific African community, to know its traditions very well as a consequence of his birth. It is also to be multicultural and to know more than one language. It is simply to be cultural hybrid due to the movement across nations.

Hybridity refers to the cross-breeding or the mixture of two different species like plants or animals or the combination of two or more things. Hybridization has a lot of forms, linguistic, cultural, etc. It is a concept which exists long before. Through history, trade and conquest made an exchange of ideas, thoughts and traditions. Thus, producing new forms called hybrid cultures.

This concept was first coined by Homi Bhabha - who is an Indian English scholar and critical theorist - to refer to the contact zone between the colonizer and the colonized. He calls this zone the “third space”, which carries the “cross-cultural exchange”. “It is the in-between” space that carries the burden and meaning of culture, and this is what makes the notion of hybridity so important. Hybridity ... means simply cross-cultural exchange” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 109). As an example, the ‘Kiswahili’ is a hybrid language. It is initiated with the contact of the Arab and the African traders.

So, Afropolitanism is a new way of thinking. It is how to be African in the world without a sense of shame of the country of origin. This shame came from the colonizer in the past and the western world now. Africa is defined by the west as a country of hunger and war, a country where all people are alike and need a white savior. A country where all people are poor and do not think well (Adichi, Ted talk). Afropolitanism is the new African way of being in the world refusing to be like victims (Mbembe). Afropolitanism is the new identity where the African in the diaspora or inside the continent is proud of his Africanity. It is also to live a life across cultures i.e embracing some aspects of the life of the host country where the African lives, at the same time keeping the most important African sides - physical or moral alive.

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African Diaspora. He is also interested in the encounter between European and African languages in the modern period, literature and human rights, and writing and cultural politics” (wikipedia).

## I-4- Afropolitanism and Pan-Africanism

Historically, the Western world was in need of the labour force. So, a number of Africans were enslaved and forced to quit their homeland to reside in America and Europe. This involuntary migration was called “African diaspora”. At this level, Pan –Africanism was created (Niikando 2008.p31).

Niikando states in *Pan-Africanism African Nationalism -Strengthening the Unity of Africa and its Diaspora*-page 31, that:

*Pan-Africanism was originally conceived in the New World, rather than in Africa itself. Reacting to the brutality of slavery in the Americas and the Caribbean, people of African origin naturally yearning for their ancestral homeland and the dignity and freedom it represented, thought of creating a forum through which they could state their grievances and pave the way for a return to Africa.*

So, Pan-Africanism -as stated above-was initiated outside Africa as a reaction to the brutalities of colonialism and the harsh life which the slaves endured. Pan-Africanism’s objectives were to facilitate the return of the enslaved Africans to their homeland and to get rid of colonialism from the African continent. In addition to that, it was a reaction against racism in Europe and the West in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Niikando 32).

B.F. Bankie & K. Mchombu 2008 say, on page 33, that Kwame Nkrumah-a leader of Pan-Africanism-says “We are African people wherever we were born”. He insisted that wherever the place of birth of the Africans, they are bound by a common link, mainly history and culture i.e there are no borders which separates Africans all over the world. They have a common history and a common faith. Similarly, Afropolitanism has the same ideal as Mbembe (2006) says in his definition of Afropolitanism “*many Africans live outside Africa. Others have freely chosen to live on the Continent, and not necessarily in the countries where they were born*”. Besides, Pan –African leaders run parties like the Organisation of African Unity, succeeded by the African Union , African Unification Front, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa)...etc.They are interested more in politics .However , Afropolitan leaders run blogs ,magazines ,shows .They are interested in the cultural areas but also they are aware of what is going on the African continent as Mbembe says “ *Afropolitanism is an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world. It is a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity – which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the law of the world*”i.e. the Afropolitan is aware of everything concerning the politics or the economy of his African

continent .Both of them Pan-Africanism and Afropolitanism, seek for the African union as Kwame Nkrumah says “*common territory plus common culture may be the basis. It is on this basis that the new Africans recognise themselves as potentially one nation.*” (Kwame Nkrumah quotes). Usham states in her dissertation,*An exploration of Afropolitanism in Taiye Selasi’s Ghana must go and Chimamanda Adichi’s Americanah* that Chrisman (as cited in Nantambu 562) gave a more global definition of what is Pan-Africanism and their aims.He says that:

*The Pan African vision has as its basic premise that we the people of African descent throughout the globe constitute a common cultural and political community by virtue of our origin in Africa and our common racial, social and economic oppression. It further maintains that political, economic, and cultural unity is essential among all Africans, to bring about effective action for the liberation and progress of the African peoples and nations.*

One may understand that the Pan-African ideal is to unite Africa in all domains. The union is crucial to the progress of the African nations. Moreover, Pan-African leaders organized congresses aimed at creating “*African unity, African liberation from western imperialism, African development, peace and progress*” (Niikando32).Correspondingly, the Afropolitans run blogs,organize shows to show the African heritage and thus oppose the western negative concepts and stereotypes. Besides,both of them are longing for the return to Africa and improve it in all domains.

However,the main difference between Afropolitanism and Pan-Africanism is that the latter is an ideology which was “*rooted in the idea of a belonging to a particular racial grouping*”(Mbembe).Whereas,“*Afropolitanism emerges out of that recognition of the multiple origins of those who designate themselves as Africans*”(Ibid) because not all Africans are black,and not all blacks are Africans.So,those are some similarities and differences between Afropolitanism and Pan-Africanism.

## **Conclusion**

Afropolitanism is a way of being African in the world. It is living outside Africa with an African image. It is embracing the way of life of the host country without neglecting the African identity. So,one may wonder if the novelist Chimamanda Ngozy Adichie is Afropolitan? The next chapter explores Afropolitanism in her novel *Americanah*.

## Introduction

This chapter is devoted to Chimamanda Ngozy Adichie's novel *Americanah*. First, the life of the author and her major works including *Americanah*. Then, the main themes are exposed with an emphasis on the theme of race, racism and stereotypes as the main points of this research. This theme is tackled from different angles. How racism and stereotypes are seen by a white American man in "post racial" America. Then, how Nigerians immigrants in the United States are affected by them in the novel and in the real life. Then, the research shows how the Afropolitan identity is in fact the identity of *Americanah*'s characters to pave the way to the next chapter.

### II-1- Chimamanda Ngozy Adichie's life and major works

Chimamanda Ngozy Adichie is a Nigerian writer. She was born on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. Her father was a professor of statistics and her mother was the first registrar at the university. She is from Igbo ancestry. Chimamanda studied medicine in her homeland. In 1997, she travelled to the United States to Drexel University in Philadelphia where she studied communication and political sciences in which she has a B.A. She also received a master's degree in creative writing from John Hopkins University. In addition to that, Chimamanda studied African history at York University.

Adichie says in her TED conference (2009) that she started to read British and American stories at a very young age. Consequently, when she started to write at a very early age, all her characters were white resembling the British and the American characters. However, when she read Chinua Achebe's novels, she realized that characters like her, skin the colour chocolate could also exist in literature. So, she wrote her famous novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). It was a story of a wealthy young girl who was terrorized by her religious father. Adichie wrote also *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) on Nigeria-Biafra war. It was written on her parents' experience during this armed struggle which resulted in the death of a million of people. Adichie received awards on both novels - *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In addition to that, she has a collection of short stories, *The Thing around Your Neck* which was published in 2009 and an essay adapted from a speech she gave at a TED talk in 2012 which was called *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014).

Adichie is a prominent contemporary African writer. Her works are well-known all over the world. *Americanah* is her 2013 novel. It is a great story about, race, love and identity that make every one change his mind about the way he looks to the world (the guardian).

*Americanah* takes the reader to Lagos, Nigeria. It is narrated in three countries: Nigeria, America and Great Britain. The main protagonists Ifemelu and Obinze fall in love in Nigeria under a military rule government. Ifemelu decides to move to America to study 'because the strike lasted too long' (Adichie 91) in the Nigerian's university. In America, she discovers what does it mean to be black for the first time. She mentions it in her blog. She says:

*Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't care. So what if you weren't "black" in your country? You're in America now (p.220).*

Adichie admits in this quote that 'becoming' black reflects that blackness does not exist in Nigeria. Even in her real life, she does not think of herself as black only when she landed America. She mentions that in her interview with Emily Reddy for Pennsylvania State University:

*But like the character, I became black in America. I didn't think of myself as black when I was in Nigeria because there was no need. We identified based on different things, like religion and ethnicity, but not race in Nigeria. And to come to the US and discover that this new identity had been thrust on me — it wasn't so much about having this new identity, because I think that we take on new identities depending on where we are — but it was discovering that this new identity came with a lot of negative baggage; that to be black in America meant certain things, many of them really negative things (The English Experience 2016).*

Ifemelu struggles in America to find her way without losing connections to her country of origin. She starts her blog *Raceteeth or Various Observations by a non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America*. She wants to tackle the subject of race and blackness from her own perspective. After a long time in America, Ifemelu decides to return to Nigeria. She returns where "race doesn't really work here. I feel like I got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black" (Adichie 476). In Nigeria, she is described by her friend as *Americanah* as the title of the book indicates. She has acquired a new identity. She is neither fully Nigerian nor American.

Obinze is another character in *Americanah*. He is a young, intelligent Nigerian man. He is the son of an educated Nigerian family. He is fascinated by the life in America, the land of hope and opportunities. Obinze demands a visa from the American embassy in Lagos. Unfortunately, he was refused by the blond-bearded man. The agent says to him "sorry, you don't qualify" (Adichie 223). So, he moves to England after his graduation where he finds

difficulties to become a full citizen. At the end, he is deported to his native country Nigeria where he marries and becomes rich.

Aunty Uju is another character in Adichie's *Americanah*. She is very strong and resistant. In Nigeria, she becomes the mistress of a general in the army. She is forced to live in Nigeria after his death. In America, she lives with her only son. She faces so many troubles to become a doctor due to her race.

There are other important characters in the novel. Ifemelu's mother is very religious. She tries to apply religion in every situation she encounters. Ifemelu's father who longs to be graduated from school. Dike is Aunty Uju's son from the general. He faces a lot of troubles in school due to his race. He attempts to commit a suicide as he was each time denied from his rights and accused of causing crimes. Kimberly is Ifemelu's friend and boss. She is very wealthy. Blaine is an African-American professor at Yale. Curt is Kimberly's cousin. Both of them fall in love with Ifemelu. Mariama is the owner of the salon where Ifemelu gets braided. Aicha and Halima are two African women living in America facing troubles due to their race.

## **II-2- Major themes in *Americanah***

### **II-2-1- Relationships**

The central theme in *Americanah* is the romantic love between Obinze and Ifemelu. Before their separation, they have an idealized love. Obinze is "Her first love, her first lover, the only person she had never felt the need to explain herself to." (Adichie 6). In America, Ifemelu cuts off contact with Obinze. She dates Curt and Blaine while Obinze marries Kosi. They are separated by distance but they still long to reunite again. Another relation revealed in *Americanah* is the one of the general and his mistress Aunty Uju. Adichie describes this relation as a materialistic relationship. It is based on marrying to gain money. Adichie wants to idealize the romantic love between Ifemelu and Obinze to show that this kind of relations lasts forever. It is pure and in higher rank in comparison to the other relations.

## II-2-2- Race, Racism and Stereotypes in America and Americanah

### II-2-2-1- The myth of the post racial America

In 2009, the time of Barack Obama's election, Tim Wise<sup>4</sup> was interviewed by the journalist David Cook on the myth of the post racial America and the white privileges. The article was published under the title *By the Colour of Their Skin*. In this interview, Wise unveils the truth about the American society and how whites are privileged over blacks.

Tim Wise defines racism as the ideology that keeps one race either superior or inferior on the basis of the skin colour. He considers two types of racism. First, there are "the easily seen racist" like the Klansmen or those who claim the superiority of the whites. Their racism is apparent and they do it overtly. Second, there is the hidden racism. It is the most dangerous as he calls them "the passive racists". Wise says that in a society like America, they deny and do not believe in the superiority or the inferiority of races, but they collaborate silently in some social practices without questioning them. He says that if they don't challenge the system about such practices, they are racist and they do agree about such habits. He gives a number of examples where racism persists in America. So, one may wonder how and where does racism happen.

First, the American system gives whites people more privileges than the blacks. People of colour are discriminated in terms of housing and employment opportunities. This discrimination means depriving the blacks from a number of opportunities. Jobs which are applied with black names, are 50% denied in comparison to those applied by whites. So, the whites benefit from them i.e. what is a disadvantage for the blacks will be the advantage for the whites.

Second, he claims that if a white student answers wrongly a question, he will not be blamed. They do not say he does not deserve to be in school because he is white. The American whites are also stupid, incompetent and mediocre, but this is never linked to their race.

Then, the blacks are three times stopped by the police to search for drugs in comparison to whites.

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- <sup>4</sup> Tim Wise was born in 1968 to a lower middle class white parents in Nashville, Tennessee, United States. His maternal ancestors were land owners and slave holders. Whereas, his parents ancestors escaped from Russia's oppression and sought refuge in the US. Wise wants to follow Dr Martin Luther King's path fight for a society based on equality and justice. He has written many books including *Anti-Racist Reflections from an Angry White Male*, *White like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* and *Race and Whiteness in the Age of Obama*.

Finally, when a white person shoot another, white Americans do not ask what is wrong with him because they are ‘white blind’ not ‘colour blind’.

Wise is asked by the journalist if racism is a natural part of being human and if we are born with. He replies that,by our nature, we notice “facial features,hair texture, skin and eye colour”. However, the problem is when we focus on the skin colour and gives it great importance to lower a category of people .He proclaims that the segregation laws are the best proofs that racism is not natural .If people naturally deny others on the basis of their skin colour, there will be no laws which separate them.

The interviewer asks Wise that the Americans do not see racism in the society .Wise replies that racism is a social fact. Skin colour has social meaning and affects people’s lives .Skin colour is the privilege and the honour for whites and undermines blacks. He says that people of colour are not seen as experienced people,or people who have talents. They are always inferior and disqualified.

Tim Wise certifies that racism didn’t end with the civil right act or the voting act. Racism continues and will never stop.

So, those are some realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by a white American .people of colour are still discriminated in a society that claims justice and equality for all its people.

## **II-2-2-2-Race,Racism and Stereotypes in Americanah**

Adichie reveals in *Americanah* how difficult and complex it is to come from African origins in America.She says that she discovers her blackness in America for the reason that in Nigeria,blackness does not matter.They have Ethnic differences but not distinctions based on skin colour.Race is A key element in changing individual’s lives (Maher 2017).Ifemelu says that “*I only became black when I came to America*” (Adichie 290).In another example,she says that “*race doesn’t really work here.I feel like I got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black*”(Adichie 447).Ifemelu compares in those two sentences between Nigeria and America in terms of race.In America,Ifemelu feels that she is under evaluated and without importance,whereas in Nigeria,she feels a sense of security and protection by her home country (Maher 2017).in another example,Ifemelu writes in her first post on her blog:

*To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America, You Are Black, Baby*

*Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I’m Jamaican or I’m Ghanaian. America doesn’t care. So what if you weren’t “black” in your*

*country? You're in America now. We all have our moments of initiation into the Society of Former Negroes. (Adichie 220)*

Ifemelu tries to convince all blacks coming to America that their skin colour matters a lot when they land that place. It matters because it is related with historical facts like slavery. She also tries to convince her black readers that wherever they come from, for America, they are alike, all blacks without distinction. In another example, Ifemelu says:

*When a crime is reported, pray that it was not committed by a black person, and if it turns out to have been committed by a black person, stay well away from the crime area for weeks, or you might be stopped for fitting the profile (Adichie 221).*

Ifemelu warns blacks to be far from any committed crime in America done by a white or a black person. For the reason that, all the blacks look alike for white people (Adichie 120). In another image given by Adichie through her protagonist Ifemelu on page 221:

*If you're telling a non-black person about something racist that happened to you, make sure you are not bitter. Don't complain. Be forgiving. If possible, make it funny. Most of all, do not be angry. Black people are not supposed to be angry about racism. Otherwise you get no sympathy.*

Adichie wants to reveal in this passage that even if the blacks are hurt by racist actions, they are not allowed to complain. They must not be angry. They have to forgive also.

Ifemelu asserts that,

*race is not biology; race is sociology. Race is not genotype; race is phenotype. Race matters because of racism. And racism is absurd because 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. (Adichie.p.337).*

Race for Ifemelu is “not part of the genetic constitution of an individual” (Meriam Webster). It is about “the observal properties of an organism” (Meriam Webster). Race for Ifemelu is how people perceive your appearance. It is about the colour of the skin and the type of the hair. It is a judgement about the way the individual look. So, this is the reality of race and racism in America.

Stereotypes are defined by the *APA dictionary of psychology* as an exaggerated generalizations about a particular group of people. It is a judgment- most of the time negative- that a category of individuals possess certain qualities distinct to them. In *Americanah*, there are a lot of instances where the writer exposes some stereotypes concerning the African people. Ifemelu's aunt says that all Africans look alike for white people (Adichie 120). For white people, Africa is place that needs charity because “Ifemelu wanted, suddenly and desperately, to be from the country of people who gave and not those who received, to be one of those who had and could therefore bask in the grace

*of having given, to be among those who could afford copious pity and empathy.*”(Adichie 170).Whites see Africans very poor, therefore, they need help.So,Africans are all the same for whites and need savers according to Ifemelu.

Adichie herself suffers a lot from stereotypes.She tells the audience in her TED talk *The Danger of a Single Story* (2009), that her professor criticizes her novel.He says that her characters are resembling him, a middle class educated man. Therefore,her characters are not “*authentically African*”.She says that the professor has one single story about Africa.He thinks that Africans are “*incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner.*”For the westerners, Africa is a land of catastrophe, darkness and of people who do not think well. For Adichie,there is one single story about Africa and “*The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.*”(Adichie 2009).So,African are seen as poor people suffering from everythingfrom an alien land.

### **II-3- Relation of Afropolitanism to Americanah**

In this section, the research is going to explore Afropolitanism in *Americanah*,using the definitions given by Selasi,Mbembe and Gikandi.The aim is to see if the characters presented in this novel are Afropolitan or not. The areas of exploration are: language, connection to the country of origin, career and the cultural hybridity of the characters.

#### **II-3-1- Language**

Selasi,Mbembe and Gikandi agree up on that the Afropolitan is multilingual.Multilingualism is present in *Americanah*.Adichie uses a lot of Igbo which “*is the principal native language of the Igbo people, an ethnic group of south-easternNigeria. The language has approximately 24 million speakers, who live mostly in Nigeria and are primarily of Igbodescent.*”. This language as cited by Christina Seiringer Gaubinger, Drogojevic, Giles and Watson declare that it is an indicator for “*geographic background,ethnicity and social class as well as stereotypes attributed regarding their traits*”. For instance, when Obinze’s wife Kosi calls him,she uses “*Darling, kedu ebe I no?*” which means “*where are you?*” (Adichie 21). In addition to that,Ifemelu speaks Igbo. At the hair dresser salon,she is asked by Aicha-a worker there-if she speaks Igbo.Ifemelu replies by

"of course I speak Igbo" (Adichie 40). Moreover, Ifemelu knows some proverbs in her indigenous language. She challenges Obinze –her boyfriend- on who knows better Igbo proverbs than the other. Ifemelu says "*Acho afu adi ako n'akpa dibia. The medicine man's bag has all kinds of things*". He responds to her "*E gbuo dike n'ogu uno, e luo na ogu agu, e lote ya.*" which means "*If you kill a warrior in a local fight, you will remember him when fighting enemies.*" (Adichie 61-62). Ifemelu responds: "*Many guys won't even speak Igbo, not to mention proverbs*" (Adichie 62). Ifemelu's surprise about Obinze's mastery of Igbo proverbs shows that it is of great importance that this new generation know their indigenous tongue from one side. From the other side, proverbs are considered as truth given by old generation's wise man, and this new generation's insistence on knowing them marks the link between the new and the old generation. Another example given by Adichie is when Ifemelu describes her father as "*when he spoke Igbo, it was the only time he seemed unconscious of his own anxieties*" (Adichie 48). As if Igbo, their indigenous tongue is the language of belonging, comfort, nature and home, they are very comfortable and at ease when they speak Igbo (Gaubinger 33).

Adichie presents also characters speaking a foreign accent as mentioned in Selasi's definition. Yinka, a classmate to Ifemelu and Obinze's high school "*went to England often and lived in Ikoyi and spoke with a British accent*" (Adichie 55). Even Ifemelu starts using an American accent when she landed America for the first time.

As Selasi defines in her Article, the Afropolitan knows some vernacular which is "the language of ordinary speech." (Webster's dictionary) or the everyday American language meaning. In America Ifemelu does her best to know some vernacular. In a passage on page 5, Genika –Ifemelu's friend- tells her that in America, they say *big* instead of *fat*. For the reason that *fat* has bad connotation and means *stupid* or *bastard*. However, "*'thin' is a good word*" (Adichie, p. 124), but in Nigeria, "*when somebody tells you lost weight, it means something bad. But here somebody tells you that you lost weight and you say thank you*" (Adichie 124). This implies that there is a big difference between what people think and say in America and in Nigeria.

Adichie also uses some French language words as cited by Selasi that the Afropolitan knows a Romantic language. The Romantic or the Romanic language is originated from a language spoken by the Romans like for instance Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Romanian and Catalan. The French word that Adichie uses are *veranda* (Adichie 41). Ifemelu-Americanah's protagonist can express herself in English. She creates her blog using the English language.

Adichie uses through her characters the English language, Igbo or the indigenous tongue, some words in the French language and some vernacular.

### II-3-2-African ties

Selasi says that there is one place on the African continent that the Afropolitan has very solid ties. Gikandi says that *“to be Afropolitan is to be connected to knowable African communities, nations and traditions”*. So the Afropolitan has links with Africa even though he lives abroad. Let us see that in *Americanah*.

Ifemelu feels at ease in front of a group of African students. This meeting was in Wharton Hall. There were *“Nigerians, Ugandans, Kenyans, Ghanaians, South Africans, Tanzanians, Zimbabweans, one Congolese, and one Guinean sat around eating, talking, fuelling spirits, and their different accents”* (Adichie 139). They discuss their problems. Ifemelu feels as though she is in her homeland in the presence of African friends. This meeting comforts her for her longing to Nigeria. The other example given by the writer on page 222, when Ifemelu encounters her friend Kayode. *“They hugged, looked at each other, said all the things people said who had not seen each other in many years, both lapsing into their Nigerian voices and their Nigerian selves.”* Here Ifemelu remembers her homeland Nigeria and how she misses it. Besides, the protagonist writes an e-mail to her boyfriend Obinze where she says *“I recently decided to move back to Nigeria.”* (Adichie 19). Finally, she creates a Nigerian website, a Nigerian profile on Facebook and a Nigerian blog (Adichie 6). So, those evidences from *Americanah* prove that Ifemelu has strong ties with Nigeria.

### II-3-3- Education and Career

Selasi says in her article *Bye-Bye Babar* that the Afropolitan is academically successful. He is an intellectual. She says also that the previous generation seek professions like *“doctoring, lawyering, banking or engineering”* (Selasi, paragraph 6). However, the new elite generation are *“branching into fields like media, politics, music, design...”* (Ibid).

Adichie insists on depicting educated characters. They are academics. Her characters are not starving in the foreign countries (Adichie 2009). First, in Nigeria, Ifemelu enters a school which requires very good marks in the entrance examination. This is shown in a passage on page 66, where Adichie says *“she would not be here, if she had not done so well on the entrance examination and if her father had not been so determined that she would go to ‘a school that builds both character and career’”*.

Second, Ifemelu travels from Nigeria to America to continue her higher studies. Then, she has received “*the research fellowship*” in Princeton (Adichie 354) where she is supposed to give “*a public talk at the end of the year*”, and be well paid (Adichie 354). It’s like a dream becoming true for her. “*She liked most of all, that in this place of affluent ease, she could pretend to be someone else, someone specially admitted into a hallowed American club, someone adorned with certainty*” (Adichie 3). This demonstrates that Ifemelu is very proud of her self. Finally, she has worked as an editor of a women’s magazine called *Zoe* in Nigeria (Adichie 391). One may also not neglect that she is a blogger about issues which concern race. So Ifemelu is an intellectual person and does so many things in her life. Third, Adichie also uses characters like Obinze’s mother who is a professor at the university. Obinze also is graduated from university. Adichie presents some books that are read by Ifemelu and Obinze to show that they are from an intellectual category. Adichie refers to that on page 60 in a conversation between the two characters:

*“I saw you holding a James Hadley Chase, near the lab. And I said, Ah, correct, there*

*is hope. She reads.”*

*“I think I’ve read them all.”*

*“Me too. What’s your favourite?”*

*“Miss Shumway Waves a Wand.”*

*“Mine is Want to Stay Alive? I stayed up one night to finish it.”*

*“Yes, I like that too.”*

*“What about other books? Which of the classics do you like?”*

*“Classics, kwa? I just like crime and thrillers. Sheldon, Ludlum, Archer.”*

*“But you also have to read proper books.”*

*She looked at him, amused by his earnestness. “Aje-butter! University boy! That must*

*be what your professor mother taught you.”*

*“No, seriously.” He paused. “I’ll give you some to try. I love the American ones.”*

*“You have to read proper books,” she mimicked.*

*“What about poetry?”*

*“What’s that last one we did in class, ‘Ancient Mariner’? So boring.”*

*Obinze laughed, and Ifemelu, uninterested in pursuing the subject of poetry.*

Another character presented by Adichie is Auntie Uju. She is a doctor. Auntie Uju says: *“The hospital has no doctor vacancy but the General made them create one for me”* (Adichie 45). Adichie uses intellectual, successful and academic characters.

### **II-3-4- Cultural hybridity**

The movement of the Afropolitan across nations gave birth to a new culture which is the mixture of different cultures. Gikandi says in his definition, that the Afropolitan is going *“to embrace and celebrate a state of cultural hybridity – to be of Africa and of other worlds at the same time.”* Besides, Mbembe says, *the Afropolitan is developing “a transnational culture”*. So, let us see the cultural hybridity of the characters and consider the kind of food that they eat and their way of dressing.

#### **II-3-4-1- Food**

Adichie cites some Nigerian food like *“rice and fried plantains”* (35), *“rice and meat and coleslaw”* (51), *“boiled corn and ube”* (232), *“Ofada rice”* or *“chicken stew”* (388) as if she wants to expose to the reader some of the Nigerian traditions.

Aicha –a worker at the hairdresser salon– asks Ifemelu if she wants something to eat. Ifemelu replies that she has a *“granola bar”*. It is something “organic” which is made of *“whole grain with real fruit”* (Adichie 39). The ladies are astonished from her answer. They are wondering why such choice. Ifemelu adapts a new way of eating. She is *“drinking chocolate that was too rich, eating croissants that were too grainily whole wheat.”* (Adichie 310), which means *“She enjoys the unfamiliar”* (Adichie 113). Adichie also presents Obinze cooking organic food. As she states in a passage on page 310, he *“cooked organic vegetables and grains whose names she could not pronounce –bulgur, quinoa. [...] He told her which grains had protein, which vegetables had carotene, which fruits were too sugary”*, as if Ifemelu and Obinze want to adopt a healthy food.

Another example given by Adichie where she talks about Ifemelu. She says that Ifemelu misses some Nigerian food while in America like *“jollof rice cooked with a lot of oil, fried*

*plantains, boiled yam but she longed also ,while in Nigeria, a lot of things she was accustomed to in America” ( Adichie 409). This show how much Ifemelu develops through her movement across Nigeria and America, a mixed desire of food.*

#### **II-3-4-2- Dress**

Adichie talks about Ifemelu on page 135 when saying “*she hungered to understand everything about America,to wear new...*”.Ifemelu wants to change her way of dress .Another example is when Ifemelu meets her friends returnees from all over the world in Nigeria.This meeting called the *Nigerpolitan club* meeting.Adichie describes the members of this including Ifemelu as “*chic people, all dripping with savoir faire, each nursing a self-styled quirkiness— a ginger-coloured Afro, a T-shirt with a graphic of Thomas Sankara, oversize handmade earrings that hung like pieces of modern art. Their voices burred with foreign accents.*”(Adichie 407).The Afropolitan dress is a mixture of African -world mode due to their movement across nations.

So, the returnees or those chic people wear Afro, mixed with the kind of dress of the country they are living in. Adichie quote confirms with Selasi’s definition of Afropolitanism.

#### **II-3-5- The Afropolitan consciousness**

Selasi wrote in her article *Bye-Bye Babar* that “*what most typifies the Afropolitan consciousness is the refusal to oversimplify, the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa*”.What typifies the Afropolitan is his will to understand what pains his country of origin.He criticizes what is bad in politics or economy.His aim is not only for criticising but to substitute those bad situations by real and concrete savoir –faire (Selasi); their education and their travel across countries make them learned a lot. This new knowledge will be applied on their African countries to promote them. As Selasi states that the Afropolitan has much to do in Africa and he is thinking on “*how to invest in Africa’s future*” (Selasi. Paragraph 11).

In *Americanah*, thereare several passages where Adichie criticizes the situation in Africa.The passage on page 64 demonstrates Ifemelu listening to her friend’s father .The father criticizes the system of education in Nigeria where he says “*We are not sheep. This regime is treating us like sheep and we are starting to behave as if we are sheep. I have not been able to do any real research in years, because every dayI am organizing strikes and talking about unpaid salary and there is no chalk in the classrooms.*” He criticizes the educative system which does not facilitates their intellectual progress. Instead, they are very

passive and they have only to follow the regime forced on them. Another example demonstrates Ifemelu's collaboration with other students to make a strike against the Nigerian's universities bad situation. Ifemelu's mother-who is a professor at the university-replies that she "*understand the students' grievances*", but they are not enemies. The military regime has not paid their salaries for a month. She wonders how could they work if they do not eat (Adichie 91). This shows the worst situation of the Nigerian universities. Ifemelu also criticizes the wealth of the pastor Gideon. She is convinced that the big house and the car are bought from money collected at each service and not given by God (Adichie 44). Ifemelu wants to awaken the congregation among them her mother, that the pastor is not only laying but also corrupted.

So, the Afropolitan is aware of every pain in his country.

### **Conclusion**

The characters presented in Adichie's novel *Americanah* are very close to the Afropolitan model. They share more than one characteristic mentioned by the three main scholars who define Afropolitanism. They are multilingual. In addition to their indigenous language, they speak English and they know some American vernacular. They have a successful career. They are educated. They have a mixed culture or they have a hybrid identity. It is apparent in their food and their way of dressing. The characters are also very conscious of what is happening in Nigeria since they have very strong ties with Africa.

## Introduction

*Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.*(Adichie.TED talk.2009).

From the quotation above, Adichie wants to empower the black community in general. She wants to rebuild their broken dignity through storytelling. In this chapter, the challenge of racism is revealed through Americanah. In this section, the research shows the different strategies used by the Afropolitan person to resist racism and stereotypes. So, what are these strategies?

### III-1- Blogging as a Counter Story

A blog is a discussion published on the net consisting of update posts. Posts are written in reversed chronological order i.e the most recent post appears the first. The online blog allows visitors to leave online comments which enable them to be “part of the site's community and thus feel more engaged.” (Joyce3). This communication between the blogger and the reader differentiates the blog with other websites. Bloggers do not only produce posts but also construct social relations with their readers who leave viewable comments which make the blog either popular or not. Blogs provide talks on particular subject like politics, business, sports.

Blogs belong to the new media which is a means of mass communication using the Internet. Barbara Hauer- Nussbaumer states in her dissertation *Out of Africa New Media, back writing and the African Diaspora* that “The blog gives its readers a strong sense of the author's presence.” (p21). Therefore, as Hauer- Nussbaumer states taken from Lievrouw 2011, blogging is a platform where a person can give his personal point of view to confront the dominant regime. Joyce declares in her essay *Blog for a Cause* (2015), “A blog is a great advocacy tool because it allows any individual with an Internet connection to launch a campaign for social change with a potentially global reach. It gives ordinary citizens incredible power to question authority, act as alternative sources of information, organize supporters, and lobby those in power.” (3) Castells 2007, describes the opposition or the confrontation of the hegemonic culture, politics and power as a counter power or back-writing (Hauer- Nussbaumer22).

Back writing is providing a counter- story to the dominant story. Hauer- Nussbaumer says that castells 2007 states that the counter story is “*the capacity by social actors to challenge and eventually change the power institutionalized in society.*” . This resistance to the dominant

regime could be political ,cultural,economic ...etc. has as objective to change thoughts and behaviours. So,blog writing is a way of writing –back (Hauer- Nussbaumer2014).

In *Americanah*, Adichie, through her protagonist, is using the blog under the title “*Raceteenth or the Various Observations about American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non- American Black*” (205), as a writing- back or a counter story the dominant or hegemonic white behaviours concerning the question of race, racism and stereotypes.She is using the “*blog to fight against an injustice...and human rights abuse.*”(Joyce 3).

Ifemelu,*Americanah*protagonist, writes her blog in English .She chooses this language to reach the world. English is not only the perfect language to reach the American audience, especially the authoritarian system about the issue of racism in America,but also It is understood by most African countries and Africans all over the world, says Amel Osman El-Rayis in her dissertation *Blogging,in Chimamanda Ngozy Adichie,is a Way of Writing Back* on page number 9.Through this blog,Adichie criticizes the American institutions.She says:

*Racism is about the power of a group and in America it's white folks who have that power. How? Well white people don't get treated like shit in upper-class African American communities and white folks don't get denied bank loans or mortgages precisely because they are white and black juries don't give white criminals worse sentences than black criminals for the same crime and black police officers don't stop white folk for driving while white and black companies don't choose not to hire somebody because their name sounds white and black teachers don't tell white kids that they're not smart enough to be doctors (Adichie 327)*

Adichie makes the American society aware of why blacks could not get loans .Why the blacks are misjudged for the same crime as whites? And why companies do not hire this particular category of people.She mentions to the whites,to which degree racism affects black people's lives.Through this passage,Adichie tries to question the American authority to give the blacks back their rights.Adichie wants to make the American society uncomfortable because this blog is for the blacks “*who don't talk about life experiences that have to Do Exclusively with Being Black.Because they want to keep everyone comfortable .Tell your story here.This is a safe space.*”(307).She uses the word ‘safe’ to mention that, in the American society ,there is no place safer than her blog to talk about racism.In addition to that, she wants all the blacks to participate in this blog and pour their anger in it (Al-Rayis8).

Ifemelu's blog becomes very successful as it touches a very sensitive issue. *"The blog had unveiled itself ...It surprises her, pleased her...Its readers increased, by the thousands from all over the world"* (Adichie304).

So, Adichie knows that Black people are in need for opportunities to question the issue of race in America. She uses the blog to give a chance for them to claim their rights in an oppressed society from one side. From the other side, she uses the blog in her narrative as a writing – back to not only unveil the true American reality concerning the issue of race but also to challenge the prevailing stereotypes concerning the black minority group, because *"There is no doubt that we are all equally human, but the course of history has made it possible for some people to question the humanity of others, which has grave consequences for all of us. And so, we need to combat and challenge and complicate stereotypes."*(Adichie).

### III-2-Black Beauty and Body image

#### III-2-1-Black is Beautiful and the European Standards of Beauty

Hair is the most significant symbol of the African aesthetics. According to Soul Shava in his chapter *African Aesthetic, The* from *The Sage Encyclopaedia of African Cultural Heritage in North America*, African aesthetics *"... refers to the African perception and appreciation of the nature, beauty, and value of artistic expressions or representations of African origin"*(page 3). It is related to the history, culture, and religion of the African people. It provides a symbolic image of what it means to be African to the world. It is very symbolic. As Shava points:

*The essence of the African aesthetic is its representation as a construct of African people on the continent and people of African descent in the diaspora that articulates African culture, identity, and spirituality. It is how Africans consciously define their own concept of beauty—that is, the African-derived standards of perceiving... or applying aesthetic values or knowledge of things African. The African aesthetic is African centered, and it reveals the cultural bond between Africans in the continent and abroad.*

The prominent African aesthetics are dress, hairstyle, music (song or dance), verbal arts (poetry, oratory performance), rhythm, designs (African architecture and decorative patterns). Those elements are powerful significance of the African origin and identity (shava p.3).

Historically, black women were used to work in white masters' houses as well as in the plantation. The masters knew very well the powerful connection of black women with their hair. As cited in Brewington's dissertation page 13, Byrd and Tharps states that *"the hair's*

*value and worth were heightened by its spiritual qualities... the hair [was] the closest thing to the heavens, communication from the gods and spirits was thought to pass through the hair to get to the soul.*". So, the masters planned to destroy women psychologically. They shaved women's heads to not only "*erase the slave's culture and alter the relationship between the African and his or her hair.*"(Ibid) but also to acquire a new black personality who is dropped from her African identity as well as easy to manipulate and conquer since it is destroyed morally (Ibid).It was the masters who created those standards of beauty. Byrd and Tharps say as cited in Brewington's dissertation on page 19, "*white slave masters reinforced the 'good-hair'... by selecting the lighter-skinned, straighter-haired slaves for the best positions within his household, he showed they were more desirable... they were also more valuable.*"

White masters relied on their own standards of beauty which consisted of being white blue eyed, with straight blond hair as the distinctive traits that characterized white beauty.However, the "BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL" slogan reversed everything. The latter is a cultural movement which emerged in 1960's in the United States. Its aim was to demonstrate that beauty is not exclusive to the white skin. This movement encouraged black individuals to stop whitening their skin and stop relaxing their hair in order to feat the white standards of beauty thus looking Afro and being proud of it was very much encouraged. This movement started as a consequence of the negative perception of the black body, only fit for slavery and servitude which was the dominant ideology in America.

### III-2-2-Hair as a symbol of African pride and dignity in Americanah

Throughout the novel, Adichie presents different characters' point of view about the notion of hair.Braided hair for UntyUjuis an image of unprofessionalism. She said that she has to take her braids out and relax her hair for the interview if she wants to look professional (Adichie119).For Uju, professionalism is linked to relaxed hair. Because this is America. "*You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed.*"(Ibid).Ifemelu also is advised to relax her hair to get a job quickly (p 202).

However, Ifemelu travels from Princeton to Trenton to braid her hair "*on an afternoon ablaze with heat.*"(Adichie2).There is so much heat that "*the chocolate bar in her handbag had melted.*"(Ibid). Ifemelu carries much importance to her hair. She supported all this pain just for braiding her hair. She is infused with African values and culture.

In the braiding salon, Ifemelu senses a kind of loss when trying to relax her hair.The hairdresser says to her "*Just a little burn,*"(Adichie203) but Ifemelu was not happy with this

new look because there is the smell of burnt, “*of something organic dying which should not have died*” (Adichie203). Ifemelu senses the loss of the African heritage and the African identity. Adichie through one of her characters passes a message for those black women who want to relax their hair. She says on page 208 that “*Relaxing your hair is like being in prison. You’re caged in. Your hair rules you ... You’re always battling to make your hair do what it wasn’t meant to*”. For Adichie, relaxing hair means changing an entire life. As if you choose to live in a prison and limit yourself. By relaxing the black kinky hair, for Adichie, you choose to live another life far from being African because hair matters a lot in giving sense to the African heritage and identity.

Ifemelu decides to take several actions to preserve her African identity. First, she resolves to go natural and cut her hair. She was prised by her friend Wambui. She says to her “*You look beautiful. Your bone structure shows so well now. You’ll get used to it,*” (Adichie208).

Second, Ifemelu joins the online community called *happilykinkynappy.com* (Adichie212). They formed “*for themselves a virtual world where their coily, kinky, nappy, woolly hair was normal.*” (Ibid). In this website, women give instructions on how to use natural products to protect their hair. Ifemelu learns from them “*to avoid shampoos with silicones, to use a leave-in conditioner on wet hair, to sleep in a satin scarf*” (Ibid). They sell also a made home products. Ifemelu orders “*products from women who made them in their kitchens and shipped them with clear instructions: best to refrigerate immediately, does not contain preservatives*” (Ibid). So, those products do not contain chemicals which destroy the natural texture of the hair. Women like Ifemelu want not only to live a healthier life but also to be proud of being African. In addition to that, this website gives Ifemelu more trust in herself to keep her hair natural because she falls in love with her hair (Adichie213).

Ifemelu and other black women want to embrace their natural African look to challenge the European standards of beauty. Tyler Berkeley Brewington 2013, states in her dissertation *Taking the Kinks Out of Your Hair and Out of Your Mind: A study on Black hair and the intersections of race and gender in the United States* that those beauty standards were initiated by European colonists. They were used to destroy the African women identity, to break down their self-esteem and torture them morally. For decades, whiteness is considered as the norm and blackness is the reverse (page 6). Therefore, blond hair is the natural hair which fits the standards of beauty. However, the black hair is unnatural. Beauty is also socially constructed like race. It is a tool to oppress black women (Ibid).

However, Adichie through her protagonist Ifemelu wants to break down the old beauty standards and empower the black woman personality. Byrd & Tharps say that “*change is occurring within the Black community, as more and more people embrace natural styles that emphasize the unique texture of Black hair rather than trying to hide it.*” (Brewington 170).

Brewington states that Saro-Wiwa, Zina says in her article *Black Women’s Transition to Natural Hair* (2012) this transition “*demonstrates... [a] level of self-acceptance [that] represents a powerful evolution in black political expression. If racial politics has led to an internalization of self-loathing, then true transformation will come internally too.*” (page 30).

Ifemelu is aware of her cultural identity. She wants to give value to the African heritage and preserve it by embracing her natural hair and gives a higher position to the African female identity. She is also “*challenging and resisting societal norms of beauty, while at the same time, reclaiming the Black body and hair as beautiful*” (Ibid). She is like silent activist claiming for not only for the dignity of the African people but also she has a very confidence in herself as an African. Sybil Dione Rosado- PhD-States in her dissertation *Nappy Hair in the Diaspora: Exploring the Cultural Politics of Hair among Women of African Descent* on page 80 that Gloria Wade Gayles says in her essay *The Making of a Permanent Afro* that “*an activist with straight hair was a contradiction. A lie. A joke . . . never again . . . would I alter my hair . . . In its natural state, my hair would be . . . A symbol of my self-esteem and racial pride*”

Adichie wants to reverse the standards of black women’s thought about beauty. She insists on going with natural hair because it is healthier from one side .From the other side it is “*a symbol of race pride and political consciousness*” (Baldomir Pardiñas). She is reinforcing the claim “BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL” and bring more respect and dignity to many of her peers.

### III-3- Return home as a pride of the African origin

Ifemelu travels to the United States to continue her studies. She spends 13 years there. She is able to complete her studies, works, runs a blog. She is financially comfortable. But the spite the fact all those privileges in America, Ifemelu feels an ache to return home.

*It had been there for a while, an early morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness. It brought with it amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness (Adichie 6).*

Ifemelu feels a strong desire to return to Nigeria because “*Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil*” (Adichie 6). Ifemelu feels at peace “*to be at home, to be*

writing her blog, to have discovered Lagos again. She had, finally, spun herself fully into being”(Adichie 475).

Daniel Warner -a graduate from the Institute of International Studies, Geneva-states in his article *Voluntary Repatriation and the Meaning of Return to Home*: “Home, therefore, is the association of an individual within a homogeneous group and the association of that group with a particular physical place”( 162). Ifemelu wants to return to Nigeria because she not only longs to her country of origin but also,she is proud of her ethnic belonging.

As Warner points on page 163

*The human need to belong is more than one for protection or for the means of individual development: it is also a need to be among one's own. Belonging also relates not only to a community of people but, normally, also to a land (the 'motherland' or the 'fatherland' or the land of one's ancestors). Man is not an ethereal spirit living outside space or time but a terrestrial creature with roots in a land and its history. A 'people' is formed by physical propinquity, a native soil and a shared history that has formed common beliefs and values (i.e. its culture or civilization) and conferred on it an identity. The link between a people and a land is a profound one.*

From the quotation above, Warner explains the need for an individual to belong to a particular place in which he has very strong ties. He shares not only a common history and ancestry with the people of that land but also the same beliefs and values. The individual feels a deep tie with that land. Ifemelu decision to return to Nigeria is out of that deep feeling which ties her with the country of her ancestors and a pride in her ethnic belonging.

In another instance, Adichie points that she is pleased with the American way of life but she does not want her children to be raised there. She says:

*I like America. It's really the only place else where I could live apart from here. But one day a bunch of Blaine's friends and I were talking about kids and I realized that if I ever have children, I don't want them to have American childhoods. I don't want them to say 'Hi' to adults, I want them to say 'Good morning' and 'Good afternoon.' I don't want them to mumble 'Good' when somebody says 'How are you?' to them. Or to raise five fingers when asked how old they are. I want them to say 'I'm fine, thank you' and 'I'm five years old.' I don't want a child who feeds on praise and expects a star for effort and talks back to adults in the name of self-expression. Is that terribly conservative?*

From this quotation, Adichie rejects the American way of educating children. She is doing so to not only give much importance to the African way of raising children but also to challenge the American stereotypes on the African people.

Selasi points that the Afropolitan has much to do in his homeland (Bye-Bye Babar). Ifemelu starts working as an editor in a Nigerian magazine. She brings her knowledge and experience to invest them in her country of origin as Priyanka Debnath 2016 points in his article *Leveraging Return Migration for Development: the Role of Countries of Origin*:

*returnees contribute to their countries of origin in a number of ways including bringing their human capital and skillset acquired in host countries, investing in local economies with their remittances and wealth accumulated while abroad, utilizing their transnational linkages to facilitate innovative business partnerships and ventures between the host and origin countries and acting as social change makers in their home countries.*

Ifemelu wants to challenge the American society. She brings her experience to promote and develop her Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter reveals the different ways the Afropolitan challenges the American stereotypes on the black minority group. As an Afropolitan, Ifemelu creates a blog to not only shed light on the various instances where the blacks were marginalized but also to question the American government on how it is painful to act in such a way. She also tries to preserve her cultural identity. She keeps her hair natural and stops relaxing and using chemicals. It is a way to challenge the prevailing stereotypes on the black people that they all look alike, they are savage and have no culture. Finally, she decides to return to Nigeria in an attempt to demonstrate that even though she has been living in America, considered as the world's super power, she is returning because she is proud of her Nigerianess and Africaness.

## General Conclusion

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a talented writer. She won several awards including Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction in 2007 for *L'Autre Moitié du Soleil*, MacArthur in 2008 for fiction and National Book Critics Award in 2014 for *Americanah*. She refused to be silent. She faced the reality through her story telling. Storytelling matters a lot for her. Through storytelling, Adichie tries to rebuild her broken dignity.

In *Americanah*, Adichie presents a counter-story, where she gives a voice to those people of colour who are marginalized by the American and the European societies. The counter-story challenges racism and stereotypes. Adichie uses this kind of writing to oppose the worst situation existing in America.

The main purpose of this dissertation is to know how the new African generation who call themselves Afropolitan face and challenge racism? Or how the Afropolitans manage to empower themselves and give sense to their African identity within societies which under evaluate them?

As a case study, Adichie's novel *Americanah* is analysed. Ifemelu -the protagonist- travels to America to continue her studies. There, she experiences for the first time what does it mean to be black. In America, she is the other because her physical characteristics do not fit the white race norms. So, she faces a new reality which does not exist in her home land Nigeria.

Through *Americanah*, Adichie presents a character who is morally solid. Ifemelu is infused with African ethics and ethos. Ifemelu does not give up what she is brought up with. She does not want to be assimilated in the white main stream. In America, she realizes that she is different. This difference marginalizes a lot of people like her. So, she starts her blog to give a counter story. She contests against the American society behaviourism. She shows to the American society she is living in that the Afropolitan is aware of everything around him. She also decides to keep her hair natural to give sense to her ethnic identity. She wants to tell the world that she belongs to an African ethnic group. She decides to preserve her hair natural thus looking Afro to confront discrimination and racism which is based on the physical appearances. Moreover, she longs to return to her home country to expose to the American society how much she is proud of being Nigerian and belonging to the African community. Even though America is the country which everyone dreamed to visit, Adichie exposes her love for her country of origin. Her love of Nigeria gives her power, self-esteem and dignity.

Through this novel, Adichie wants to tell the world that challenging racism will be effective if the individual tries to question the government in a tactful way about the current injustices inflicted on the minority groups. Besides, it is necessary to love the country of origin despite all sorts of difficulties. Finally, the African people should be proud of being Africans as they should work to preserve their ancestors culture, their heritage to have more self-esteem, dignity and pride.

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## Bye-Bye Babar by [TaiyeSelasi](#)

It's moments to midnight on Thursday night at Medicine Bar in London. Zak, boy-genius DJ, is spinning a FelaKuti remix. The little downstairs dancefloor swells with smiling, sweating men and women fusing hip-hop dance moves with a funky sort of djembe. The women show off enormous afros, tiny t-shirts, gaps in teeth; the men those incredible torsos unique to and common on African coastlines. The whole scene speaks of the Cultural Hybrid: kente cloth worn over low-waisted jeans; 'African Lady' over Ludacris bass lines; London meets Lagos meets Durban meets Dakar. Even the DJ is an ethnic fusion: Nigerian and Romanian; fair, fearless leader; bobbing his head as the crowd reacts to a sample of 'Sweet Mother'.

Were you to ask any of these beautiful, brown-skinned people that basic question – 'where are you from?' – you'd get no single answer from a single smiling dancer. This one lives in London but was raised in Toronto and born in Accra; that one works in Lagos but grew up in Houston, Texas. 'Home' for this lot is many things: where their parents are from; where they go for vacation; where they went to school; where they see old friends; where they live (or live this year). Like so many African young people working and living in cities around the globe, they belong to no single geography, but feel at home in many.

They (read: we) are Afropolitans – the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/jazz lounge near you. You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic or two, we understand some indigenous tongue and speak a few urban vernaculars. There is at least one place on The African Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city (Ibadan), or an auntie's kitchen. Then there's the G8 city or two (or three) that we know like the backs of our hands, and the various institutions that know us for our famed focus. We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world.

It isn't hard to trace our genealogy. Starting in the 60's, the young, gifted and broke left Africa in pursuit of higher education and happiness abroad. A study conducted in 1999 estimated that between 1960 and 1975 around 27,000 highly skilled Africans left the Continent for the West. Between 1975 and 1984, the number shot to 40,000 and then doubled again by 1987, representing about 30% of Africa's highly skilled manpower. Unsurprisingly, the most popular destinations for these emigrants included Canada, Britain, and the United States; but Cold War politics produced unlikely scholarship opportunities in Eastern Bloc countries like Poland, as well.

Some three decades later this scattered tribe of pharmacists, physicists, physicians (and the odd polygamist) has set up camp around the globe. The caricatures are familiar. The Nigerian physics professor with faux-Coogi sweater; the Kenyan marathonist with long legs and rolled r's; the heavysset Gambian braiding hair in a house that smells of burnt Kanekalon. Even those unacquainted with synthetic extensions can conjure an image of the African

