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**Black Feminism , Afropolitanism and Intersectionality : from
Sojourner Truth’s “ Ain’t I a Woman ? “ to Adichie’s “ Americanah”**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the master degree in
“ literature and interdisciplinary approaches “

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Dedication

To my parents, I could not have done this without their prayers, a heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for their support.

To my loving sibling, Mohamed Ramez , despite his young age , his empathy and support eased the difficult times.

To my previous teacher, Aissa Assia Amina ,a dedicated teacher and a kind mentor, who is like a sister to me, one that I look up to, I would not be here if it wasn't for you. Thank you for believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself.

To my friends, who endured my nagging and plaguing self-doubt while struggling with their own problems.

And to all the brave heroines, doomed as the “other” ,who shall find the courage within themselves to speak back .

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Abstract

This research examines the notion of Black Feminism in Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I a Woman", and traces its expansion to Afropolitanism in Adichie's novel "Americanah". It also analyzes the theory of intersectionality and how it is perpetuated in both samples. First, using major themes of black feminist thought, an entailed analysis was provided in order to reflect on the impact that the speech promotes ; Then, a structural analysis followed in order to elucidate the ideology of the latter . It concludes with a vaunt on Truth's contribution to the sphere of Black Feminism, simultaneously with providing an exploratory reading to Adichie's "Americanah" focusing on the kaleidoscopic view of the characters and their experiences as hybridized diaspora. It deduces with embarking on the way the novel sanctions Africanism and values going home. This research further concludes with the theory of intersectionality that serves as available theoretical standpoint in this work that curate both the speech "Ain't I a Woman" and the novel "Americanah" to gauge at the intersection of the different identity markers that constantly subsume and doom minorities as "the other".

Keywords: Sejourner Truth ,Chimamanda Adichie ,Black Feminism , Afropolitanism , intersectionality , identity markers .

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“We have many booby men in de land, and they came from weak women, who say, I’ve got all de rights I want. “ (Sojourner Truth)

General Introduction

In the sphere of protofeminism, the roots of ¹feminism have been traced throughout centuries. Some scholars traced it to ancient Greece with Sappho, others to the regency period with Jane Austen, while many like Simone de Beauvoir traced it to the late medieval period with Christine de Pizan. However, despite having little consensus as to when the movement first began, it is commonly agreed upon that it was not until the late 19th century that feminism coalesced to a formal movement. Be-that-as-it-may, with the ardent emphasis on women's rights, the movement became more "white centric", solely focusing on "white middle class women in Western societies", thrusting aside a particular portion of black women who were left to face a great deal of de facto racism, because "at that time, blackness was nowhere around the category of woman". This exclusion led to the emergence of Black Feminism movement, employed by black women with the goal of expanding disproportionate attempts to voice the intertwined oppressions faced by women of color that was generated by "white America" or what Bell Hooks refers to as "*IMPERIALIST WHITE SUPREMACIST CAPITALIST PATRIARCHY*" (17).

Long before feminism and black feminism gained momentum as formal interwoven movements (arguably), women's rights in general, and black women's rights in particular, were created and sustained by one towering figure known as Sojourner Truth, who, in the midst of an austere grievance and a degrading slavery system was born into subjugation as Isabella Baumfree in Ulster Town, New York in 1797 and was predestined to be an advocate for the truth from early life. After turning into a devout Christian, Sojourner believed that she was on a holy mission, therefore; she changed her name to ²Sojourner Truth, and began a career as an evangelist, abolitionist, and a feminist. Thus, Truth dedicated her life to help those who experienced a wistful life survive in the outside world, using her eloquence wit and stalwart persona, in a continuous journey of preaching. She helped expose the long obscured experiences of black women and gave countless speeches all around the US. The suffrage that

¹ The French word "féminisme", first coined by French philosopher "Charles Fourier" in 1837 and used in English literature in the 1890's to refer to the movement aimed at elevating women's status in society and giving them equal rights, it was later characterized by Time periods under the term of 'waves',

² Sojourner means itinerant, translated as a traveler that preaches her truth

truth faced during her 28 years life as a 'Slave' is unfolded by Olive Gilbert (1801-1884) in the 1850's "the Narrative of Sojourner Truth", but it is more vibrant than ever in one particular speech where she questioned "Ain't I a Woman".

Intended as a rhetorical question, "Ain't I a Woman" targeted condemn chauvinists and self-indulged male activists who overlooked women of color in the discussion of abolition, and to hypocrite white feminists who excluded black women when fighting for women's rights, failing to look beyond their own race, says Crenshaw, a civil rights activist and a researcher of critical race theory on the matter:

When feminist theory and feminist politics that claim to reflect women's experience and women's aspirations do not include or speak to Black women, Black women must ask: Ain't We Women? If this is so, how can the claims that 'women are', 'women believe' and 'women need' be made when such claims are inapplicable or unresponsive to the needs, interests and experiences of Blackwomen. (66-67).

Within the core of black feminism, several interwoven movements have emerged, correlated with the history of slavery, misogynoir, and racism. The aim of these movements was to empower black women. Therefore, they adopted a wide range of different demands, different timelines and a loose geographic positioning, reaching all the way to Africa.

Under the frame of postcolonial feminism, these branches took different labels such as "pan-Africanism, Africana womanism, Afrofuturism and Afropolitansim". The latter is the focus of this thesis. As well as being named "Afropolitan Feminism", this branch is designed to document the experiences of the African diaspora in a more continent-wide and multiracial terms.

Sefi Atta in her "Bit of Difference", Chika Unigwe in "On Black Sisters Street", or even Taiye Selasi in her "Ghana Must Go", are but a few Nigerian authors promoting solidarity of African sisterhood. The emphasis of this research is one of those many. One critically acclaimed advocate of

Afropolitanism, Chimamanda Adichie, a Nigerian immigrant in the US, a feminist and a bestselling author, Chimamanda is well known for being an Afropolitan and for contributing in interrogating the contemporary struggles of the African diaspora as well as portraying brilliant dissections of modern attitudes towards the intersection of identity markers. Adichie voiced her experiences as an immigrant through her work with novels like “The Thing Around Your Neck” and “Half of a Yellow Sun”. However, one particular novel of hers is critically acclaimed as a tour de force that offers an exuberant account of ³counter – hegemonic agency, her 2013 “Americanah”, the latter which invoke modern issues of identity, transnational racism and Americanization deliberately accounts for the writer’s savoir-faire.

The insights of black feminism have increasingly become a subject of enquiry. Critics divided by numerous interests and aims of capturing the substance and dynamic of black women’s lives, have partitioned themselves accordingly. Literary critics of gender and race such as Angela Davis in “Blues Legacies and Black Feminism” and Bell Hooks in “Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism” applied Marxist analysis to work on the oppression of women of color by capitalist institutions. Others such as Kimberlé Crenshaw in “demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex” worked on underscoring black women’s issues in relation to race, gender and class, **vis-à-vis** other researchers like Patricia Hill Collins in “The Social construction of black feminist thought” chose to focus on exploring black feminism within the sociological canon. However, little importance has been given to its forerunners; Sojourner Truth and Chimamanda Adichie, and the advancement they had brought.

To add to this gap, the theory of intersectionality that seem to be a connecting loop to both black feminism and Afropolitanism, yet not enough available data seem to trace this connection nor articulate its nature .

³Counter-hegemony : a concept pioneered by Antonio Gramsci (1995) that refer to the process in which people adopt , create and develop discussions and ideas as a way of resisting different types of hegemony , especially social one.

This research aims to be a skeleton key to numerous doorways of gaps in existing literature and distinguish itself as a partial participator in expanding knowledge. It hopes to explore the expansion of black feminism and the contribution of its forebear; Sojourner Truth, using her speech as a case study alongwith tracing that expansion to Afropolitanism in Adichie's "Americanah", the second sample of this research. To conclude, it will employ the theory of intersectionality on both samples to demystify how identity markers intersect to yield oppression and misogynoir.

In order to remedy the vagueness and murkiness attributed, and achieve the previously mentioned goal, this research raises two main questions. The first question is how does Sojourner Truth's speech reflect black feminism? The second is how can Afropolitanism be traced in Adichie's "Americanah"?

These two questions have one sub-question is common; how is Black Feminism and Afropolitanism related to intersectionality ?

In an attempt to answer the previous questions using thematic analysis as an umbrella, this research adopts approaches of black feminist theory, gender and race theory, intersectionality theory and feminist sociological theory. The main research Methods applied to conduct this research are the analytical and descriptive method in order to analyze the issues that the two protagonists of this research tackle in their work. Thus, this research paper attempts to fill the existing gap and answer the previous questions in three chapters.

The first chapter " Black Feminism and Sojourner Truth" provides a theoretical analysis of the speech " Ain't I a Woman" as a primary corner stone of this research. It is divided into five parts. Using black feminist theory, the first part provides a general critical analysis of the speech while using rhetoric theory to analyze the rhetoric appeals used. The second part detects the ideology pioneered interchangeably with identifying five sub elements that maintained that ideology. The

forth part explores the theory of embodiment in relation to the speech. The chapter is concluded with a recognition of Sojourner Truth's contribution in the field of black feminism.

The second chapter titled "Afropolitanism in Americanah" opens with an introductory part that takes a reductive exploration of the nature of the term "Afropolitanism" and "Afropolitans". The second part uses "Americanah" as a sample to detect that aforementioned term. The next part serves as literary analysis of the novel in question by unpacking the central themes in it, concluding with the final chapter theory of intersectionality as a common agency for both samples.

Chapter I

Black Feminism and Sojourner Truth

I.1. Introduction

It is unarguable that Sojourner Truth's black feminist manifesto "ain't I a woman" projects an articulate challenge to the excruciating hierarchy of racism and sexism. In order to gain a generative understanding of its impact, one must interpret its meticulous structure and ideology; this is exactly the aim of this chapter, which is to highlight the bricks of the speech through a black feminist lens and bring attention to the contribution of its early advocate Sojourner Truth.

I.2. Critical Analyses of Ain't I a Woman

Truth is powerful and it prevails (Truth)

The 1951 Akron–Ohio meeting was known for being an extension of liberation struggles of enslaved African Americans and an adequate account of energizing women (i.e., white) with the way it carried the ideas, discussions concerning gender equality and women's suffrage at the time. Women, eager to free themselves from the sexist patriarchal hegemony, had worked collectively for a change, however colored women were not to be considered a part of that change, however, that situation was to be redeemed by the extemporaneous statement of Sojourner Truth.

Although there are many versions of the speech, and there is no proof that the words existing now matches the exact language that Truth used, nor that the refrain "Ain't I a woman" was present in her actual speech; the core of "Ain't I a woman" is still the same, evidently, many believe that Sojourner's dialect was highly shaped by Dutch which was her first language, therefore, the dialectical patterns of the speech are much more complex than that of an illiterate, 19th century speaker as it was commonly stationed, in part, the speech is represented as a strong rhetoric device with the use of three main persuasive appeals.

I.2.1. The Use of Three Persuasive Appeals (Logos, Pathos, Ethos)

Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle suggests that all great speeches , particularly persuasive speeches , are based on three rhetorical appeals or methods which are : logos , ethos and pathos , these three pillars are the main components of Sojourner’s speech , as she began with *logos*: “ ... that man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages , and lifted over ditches , and to have the best place everywhere . nobody ever helps me into carriages , or over mud-puddles , or gives me any best place !and ain’t I a woman ?

This passage speaks volume of the rhetoric of “ logos “ to appeal the audience’s logic while emphasizing the double standards and hypocrisy of white men , hand in hand with referring to herself as a woman ,who as opposed to white women , never received the same treatment they were (white men) promoting, instead of pointing out the immoral nature of slavery , she instead anchored herself as a slave and let her patently realistic experience as an *oppressed* speak for itself, this straightens her argument and corroborates a clear example of cognitive dissonance that is the absurd contradictions of white men who purposefully forced black women into the same labor as black men than assumed that women are decrepit and unable .

By using the element of pathos, Truth’s purpose was to evoke the hostile audience’s emotions by using her own personal incidents as examples “... I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And Ain’t I a Woman?” “Ethos” is used here to reinforce her credibility so that the targeted audience sympathizes with her somber story.

I.3. The Ideology of the Speech

Relying on a dystopian umbrella, the ideology of speech can be simplified in that of the claim of African American women’s inclusion as part of the discourse on women’s rights. Furthermore, the aforementioned ideology was carried out with a set of elements that were used as a touchstone to counteract the derogatory system that rendered African American women at the very bottom of the social ladder.

I. 3.1. Breaking Down the Elements of the Speech

I.3.1.1. Metaphor and Similes

“If my cup won’t hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn’t you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full? ”.Evidently , Truth here is not speaking of cups literally , here cups and their sizes represent people “ *men&women*” , and what’s inside the “*cup*” which is “*quarts and pints*”, represent “*intellect and capacities*”, since quart is worth more than a pint (*two pints make one quart*), this is an allusion to the innuendo belief that women have lesser intellectual capacities than men , if so she questioned , why wouldn’t they give women their small amount of demands .

I .3 .1.2. Irony

The same passage can be seen as an example of irony used by Truth , she used the “ stealing thunder “ technique , whereas she embraced the so-called facts and opposing views about women to strengthen and emphasizes her point , truth acknowledged her “ weakness “ and “ position “ from the very outset in order to turn them into a positive , indubitable theme , and a solid underpinning against her audience ; especially white men , since it was created by them in the first place ; by using this rhetorical device amid her speech , truth ; thereby , disarmed men’s logic and main argument .

I .3.1.3. Narrative

As Sojourner narrated,“ I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?..” presumably , the aim of this narration was to underscore an emotional persuasion and convince the hearers of her story since “ stories are powerful when put in the hands of leaders who know how to use them .“ (Baldoni) , with narrating her heartfelt sorrow of losing her children , she presents an adequate account of legitimacy that is “ mother’s grief “ , in fact , the idea that black women were as deserving of motherhood as them whites, was a strange idea at the time , black women were not seen as more than objects , let alone mothers ! ; hence , it is clear

that Truth was one of the few who introduced the information that black women and motherhood , if one might say, by narrating her story and detailing her agony in seeing her child been sold .

1.3.1.4. Biblical Illusion

As an evangelist and a preacher , sojourner's logic was profoundly intrigued by her faith , knowing the nature of her audience (mid-19th century middle-class white people) , they were most likely to be " devoted Christians " ; thus , in order to infiltrate her point and refutation of the biblical argument provided by men that women can't have as much rights as men because " Christ wasn't a woman " , Truth empowered her argument with two interpretations from the bible as well, "*Mary the virgin*" and "*Garden of Eve*" .

" ... Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him ... " , from the foregoing , Truth is suggesting that god had rely upon marry to bring Jesus into this world , and that no man was involved in the process , only a woman's uterus , simultaneously using "*the garden of Eve*" as a counterargument "... If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again!" (Truth) , without denying the claim of the ministers that Christ was a man and Eve brought sin into the world , she suggested that if one woman could turn the world upside down , it is unimaginable what would thousands of women do (they would make a positive change) , with that , she deflated her audience's assumptions and made it impossible for them to rebut what might otherwise be a logical notion .

I.4. Sojourner Truth and the Theory of Embodiment

Sojourner truth engraved the 19th century epoch as a towering figure , a sturdy woman with a commanding presence or as Harriet Beecher Stowe described her after meeting her " ... a tall, spare form arose to meet me. She was evidently a full-blooded African, and though now aged and worn with many hardships, still gave the impression of a physical development " (Stowe) , In order to Sustain this accolade as a

physically powerful African American woman, Truth adopted the assertions of physical strength and work, in other words, Truth focused on the ideology of ability, the latter simply aimed at subverting discriminatory, oppressing hierarchies that mistook physical strength as an indication for superiority, and vice versa, to better glean an understanding of Sojourner's ideology of ability, one must reflect on how she used her own experiences as evidence of capability " ...Look at me! Look at my **arm!** I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man ... " (Truth), a fellow abolitionist Olive Gilbert offered an instructive account on the Ohio conference in which Truth spoke, in a persuasive testimony of that remarkable moment, he stated that " when she arose to speak in their assemblies, her commanding figure and dignified manner hushed every trifler into silence (113).

I.5. Sojourner Truth's Contribution to Black Feminism

"She stands by the closing century like a twin sister. Born and reared by its side, what it knows she knows, what it has seen, she has seen..."(Gilbert 254); In a time when the word feminism was related solely to the white bourgeois society, came Sojourner Truth to question *Ain't She a Woman*, and initiate the resistance of multiple oppressions that African Americans had been through for centuries. Says Carleton Maabe, a history professor on the matter:

beginning in 1827, when few black women took cases to court, she took three cases to court, beginning in 1830, when few women, black or white spoke in public, she began to preach ... at a time when few women were so aggressive, she insisted on entering when it was doubtful that she as a black woman was welcomed (138).

Truth refused to yield to the systematic hegemonic Masculinity, thus, she continuously encouraged women not to ask for their rights but to straight up take them, using " ain't I a woman " to draw attention to the multiple oppressions experienced by colored women, a speech still functions as an iconic black feminist manifesto or as Elizabeth Fiorenza, a Feminist, biblical scholar and theologian

puts it “ her speech pioneers a theological approach that locates God, Christ, and the possibility of salvation in a women’s movement concerned with justice and well-being for all . “ (161), when obtaining the minimum amount of rights was unacceptable for white women and unthinkable for colored women , Truth was determined to demand the impossible , chronologically , the same demands advanced by Truth in the mid-19th century , were later carried out by NACWC in the 20th century, this indicates a remarkable impact of Truth on black women’s decision to finally own a voice ; moreover , over a career of three decades , Truth’s advocacy was celebrated in the 20th century , by inducting her into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1981 and issuing a Sojourner Truth **22 cent** commemorative stamp by the US postal services .

I.6. Conclusion

The impact of Sejourner Truth in empowering the movement of black feminism is traced in the reformed - yet fueled by the same purpose , the modern black feminism branch, Afropolitanism , the latter is advocated by one Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie , an Afropolitan feminist , that is to say , the next chapter is dedicated to unveiling the concept of Afropolitanism as well as illuminating the dimensions of being “ a diasporic outsider “ from the perspective of Adichie in her novel “Americanah” .

Chapter II

Afropolitanism and its Dimension in Adichie's Americanah”

II.1. Introduction

Within the postcolonial lens, black feminism took another modern label that is Afropolitanism, a branch of black feminism subsequently keen to represent what does it mean to be of an African diaspora /origin , in this context, Adichie’s “*Americanah*” candidly aimed at incorporating the different challenges of the diaspora subject in the racial-shaped west.

II .2.Towards a Definition of Afropolitanism

On a cultural scale , Africa being called “ the dark continent “ , vast as it is , it had always been seen as a mysterious, unknown place due to several factors such as the difficult environment , contagious diseases and the defensiveness of African tribes , this resulted a certain typecast in modern day , portraying the African continent as a separate place from the world that is too inappreciable to have any cultural or social value whatsoever ; ergo, Afropolitanism as a subculture movement conceived to voice the transitional life experiences and shifting identities of people of African roots who are situated in – or mobilize around the globe,came to alter this image and draw a parallel with “ Africa and the world “ , or as Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe , in an interview with historian Sarah Balakrishnan , put it “ a term for Africans to understand themselves as being part of the world rather than being apart ...it is a name for undertaking a critical reflection on the many ways in which, in fact, there is no world without Africa and there is no Africa that is not part of it...” (qtq. in Mbembe 29).

People of Africa /African diaspora have been in an ongoing struggle to contend the backlash of the European colonization that is tethered with the modern day “black nonexistence”. Hence, the aim of Afropolitanism is to challenge those tenets often related to Africans as being uneducated, savages and voiceless victims, the former is coterminous with the 20th century “pan-Africanism”. However, in contrast to the latter, the former came as a reaction to ‘Afro-pessimism and rejected all forms of victimization instead ; Afropolitanism is adopted and pioneered by those who call themselves “Afropolitans”, a population of contemporary, multilingual, Africans living in urban foreign cities, Taiye Selasi, an active Afropolitan scholar on the

African history, along with co-coining the term, she defines them in her “bye bye Babar” article “...as a group of ...beautiful, brown-skinned people..” (Para. 2) and “..you’ll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes...” (para. 3).

II.3. The Notion of Afropolitanism in *Americanah*

The novel *Americanah* is a novel that conveys the notion of what it means to be of an African diaspora in the 21st century in multiple landscapes of the globe (Africa , America and the UK) , the novel fits multiple descriptions such as that of a tapestry that documents the struggle of hybridized individuals, a comedy of manners ,a love story or alternatively a bildungsroman wherein Ifemelu , the main character documents her coming of age , by all means ,“ *Americanah* “ is a refutation to the victim fallacy that objects to the ‘Afro-pessimism and the frequent typical African fiction themes tackled in third world /postcolonial literature , whilst most African writers victimize their characters by positioning them as voiceless sufferers , Adichie’s characters are similar to those educated and ambitious individuals who are admirers of extra-continental travel and eager to join the “ real world “ as they know it . in the novel the author took it upon herself to nonchalantly pitch casual observations about the different perceptions about race , blackness , sexuality and identity in relation to African diaspora in the American society; for she is aware that these differentiations don’t penetrate the minds of Americans , with using her day- to -day experiences as a benchmark to narrate these differences, she presents an exuberant account that displays a reconfiguration of identity while taking a side in self-empowerment .

II.4. The Problems of Hybrid, Cross-Cultural African Immigrants (Themes)

II.4.1. Transnational Racism

II.4.1.1. America

Whereas Adichie’s documentation of the African immigrant experience is somehow perpetuated in satire and comedy , she never recoils from using solemnity to address the central themes in her novel , she uses a third – person omniscient narration style with a set of analepses to recollect the

protagonist's experiences , the novel evolve around the metamorphosis of Ifemelu , a Nigerian woman, thirteen years spent in a chosen exile , that is America , the novel precedes with a short vignette followed with a tacit commentary in which the protagonist casually expresses her struggle in finding a hair salon in her area that could work with her texture of hair , thus, she conveys a criticism of the discriminatory demeanors depicted in the mainstream beauty parlors where there is no room for “ the other ” in the social pyramid “she did not like that she had to go to Trenton to braid her hair.it was unreasonable to expect a braiding salon in Princeton... she wondered why there was no place where she could braid her hair...” (9)

Americanah also addresses the engrained de facto stereotypes that revolves around blackness , how Americans use blackness to construct and deconstruct a categorization system that operates as a mode of discrimination ,the novel articulates two acknowledged ways in which blackness serves to denigrate those with darker skin , first is in the misuse of the word “black “ , how Americans believe that the word encompasses everyone with a darker complexion , regardless of their race ,place of origin or nationality ; Adichie uses her protagonist Ifemelu to delineate an indirect resistance to the issue of racism , by portraying her as famous blogger on racism in America , parts of the blog are scattered throughout the novel , the following are remarks from an article in the blog under the maddening title :*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. (220).

The second stereotype is color blindness or the “ invisibleness of blackness “ , a dilemma where an “ *I-It* ” outweighs an “ *I-Thou* “ relationship , the latter completely eradicates the individualism of black people and objectify them to a color ; lastly with Using Barack Obama as a reference , Ifemelu also describes how “ lots of folk—mostly non-black—say Obama's not black, he's biracial, multiracial,

black-and-white, anything but just black. Because his mother was white “ (339) , emphasizing how society arbitrary impose a self- improvised and an absurd definition of the term black to fit their Agenda .

II.4.1.2. Africa (Nigeria)

Back in Nigeria , notwithstanding that race is a conundrum that Ifemelu never felt its weight, she is aware that Nigerians are deformed by whiteness ; where there is a palpable hierarchy that places lighter-skinned individuals in a higher rank (beauty wise) , and even mistaken someone for a mulatto is considered a compliment due to the conventional ideology that black is ugly and white is beautiful ; maybe the issue of race is not as pervasive as it is in the western world , but the dilemma of blackness is recurrent ; as the vestiges of colonialism and its ideologies didn't spare any African country ,the effects of a long-lasting prejudice and “ disgust “ evidently caused black people to “ acquire “racial self-loathing and with no way out of their bodies or as Frantz fanon puts it in his “ *black skin, white masks* “ that”.. Black people are locked in blackness..”, that hatred is disguised as prejudice against one another .

II.4.2.Identity

II.4.2.1. Americanization and Diasporic Double Consciousness

The ravages of diasporic transition in the context of identity is one of the strongest aspects unfolded in Americanah, as relatively being an authentic account of immigrants ; Ifemelu , after experiencing a traumatic debut in the US in terms of the clash of cultures ,she is trapped between America's distorted and complex racialized contextualization of race on one hand , and the affectation of other African immigrants who are eager for acceptance by the white society: thus , like them ,she is not only forced to embrace another character in order to survive but she adopts the same standards and uses them as codes of judgment ,and demolishes the things that characterize her African identity the most , her accent and hair.

In the scope of sociology, within this issue of loss of identity for diasporic individuals, the concept of ⁴*double consciousness* is avowed by Du Bois to articulate the psychological effects of signing someone as an “alien other”, in the context of this novel “diasporic double consciousness” best reiterates the African *immigré* coping mechanism, Africans of “Americanah” inhabit the position of a second insight, a twoness, the state of always looking at themselves through the race/black-demeaning eyes of others, thus, their consciousness cope with the latter in several ways such as faking an American accent in the case of Ifemelu or/and embracing the other’s mockery of them in the case of the African students that Ifemelu meets, and even Obinze’s friend, Emineke who misses home terribly but assumes that his British wife wouldn’t be able to survive the jangly nature of Nigeria, adding to Ifemelu’s friend Aisha who responds with “Africa” instead of precising the country she’s from to cope with American ignorance, to mention Auntie Uju who felt compelled to change her name from “you-joo” instead of oo-joo. “Justifying it with “It’s what they call me.” (109); to reiterate, these individuals whose internalization of Americanization coupled with the thrive for acceptance and success based on the western standards, acquire a confused, divided and shattered self-awareness, duality and an internal conflict that creates several dimensions of consciousness (triple and in some cases, more).

II.5. Post-Colonial Sexuality

In most post-colonial, third world communities, that combine misinterpretation of religion, conservative upbringing and patriarchal /sexist regimes, apart from abstinence-only discussions, everything sexuality – related is mostly fraught with peril and considered a Taboo, for girls in particular, the foregoing generates sexual befuddlement and proffer little - to no information concerning female body whether menstruation, sexual intercourse, contraception or even feminine hygiene, as it is the case of Ifemelu, as a Nigerian born and raised, her neurotic, overly

⁴A conceptual framework originally contextualized to African Americans experiences in the US, now expanded to encompass any marginalized group by a burdensome society.

religious mother seldom educated her about her femininity as a teen , followed by the second figure whom she looked up to her whole life , Aunt Uju, who “ ...talked her through her first menstrual period, supplementing her mother’s lecture that was full of biblical quotes about virtue but lacked useful details about cramps and pads. .” (58) ; Aunt Uju teaches Ifemelu to handle men as subjects who are controlled by their desires because “ boys will be boys “ , so she should be the one controlling the narratives , This constant typecast of women’s sexuality and the expectation of repressing one’s desire to meet the standards of a passive , agentless member subdued by the male-oriented agency all due to the gender schema and roles, plays a crucial role in Ifemelu’s perception of herself as an adult in terms of her body image and confidence , Hortense Spillers , a black feminist scholar illustrates how : “Black women are the beached whales of the sexual universe, unvoiced, misseen, not doing, awaiting their verb” , the damage of Ifemelu’s feminine persona is intensified when she is in the US , she confronts a more racialized view of her sexuality as a black woman , perhaps because black women’s sexuality subversion dates back to colonialism , through the eyes of the oppressor , the black female body had been engraved as that of a personal property , a wild , primitive , abnormal property, that can be violated and exploited , the point thus far , is that this is mirrored in today’s “ racialized western sexual imagination “ , for example , Ifemelu’s boyfriend Curt , his constant need of affirmation , is to an extent , a depiction of the sexual expectations from a black woman, thus he believes that he is inadequate ; as a result he is utterly insecure.

II.6. Abandoning the Self-Imposed Exile Using Hair as Salvation

Throughout centuries , hair in Africa had been seen as marker of African identity , tribes used hairstyles as a form of expression , whereas different hairstyles convey one’s social hierarchy , wealth , spiritual beliefs , and even marital status, Emma Dabiri, an Irish-Nigerian scholar and a feminist, believe that “ many African groups “ , she explained “ have associated the height of our hair as significant in relation to divine power “ . thus , it is no surprise that the protagonist , an Igbo , one of

the largest ethnic groups in Africa who are known for their mesmerizing hairstyle traditions, is going to use hair as benchmark to narrate her bildung . When the novel begin , American's white beauty standards pushes Ifemelu to yield to Americanization , the second she do that , her hair is the sacrifice she have to make ; “ ... She did not recognize herself. She left the salon almost mournfully; while the hairdresser had at-ironed the ends, the smell of burning, of something organic dying which should not have died, had made her feel a sense of loss.“ (203)

With her coming of age,she reconnects with herself and hair is present again,she finally decides to spruce it up ; and her opposition of the festering nature of Americanization becomes more palpable , it shifts from being a subtle refusal in form of an internal monologue fraught with tension , to a more demonstrative exhibition of self-empowerment with fatal changes that vary from dropping her fake American accent to ultimately deciding to go back to Nigeria . a move presumably intended to denounce the misleading utopian image that Nigerians of the novel have of the US .

II. 7. Conclusion

In “ Americanah “ Adichie took it upon herself to not only project the prolonged degradation experienced by the African diaspora , particularly women , in the western landscape ,but also condemn the contemptuous representation of them as passive victims and the narrow pioneering of the factors that results their struggles from a single angle , which is mainly race . this idea of considering this intersection of multiple identities is more demystified in the following chapter , with the aim of concluding how both figures of this work connect .

Chapter III

The Entanglement of “Ain’t I a Woman” and “Americanah” with intersectionality

III.1. Introduction

Knowing that most literary discourses attempted to tackle the case of the “ black alien other “ as solemnly generated by one factor , this narrow representation of black women’s struggles was thwarted by Kimeblé Krenchaw and her conceptualization of intersectionality, this chapter distinguishes black women as oppressed individuals by the intersection of multiple identity axes , it reveals this intertwining in the case of both “ Ain’t I a Woman” and “Americanah” with the hope of displaying how the theory intersectionality connects black women among past and present.

III.2. Scoping Intersectionality “Woman is the Nigger of the World ”

In the discipline of antiracism ,Critical race theorists far too often focused on the issues shared by colored women in the spectrum of American systematic and political oppression , the qualities that produces the latter had hitherto been pioneered as dichotomous, separate markers that need to be deducted as *vis-à-vis* components or *either* this or *that* , up until critical race theorist Kimebrlé Crenshaw , coined the term intersectionality in her 1989 *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex* paper , in it ,Crenshaw suggest that black women in particular , confront several factors of entangled oppression ,therefore their axes of identity should be studied in combination as opposed to emphasizing each one of them in isolation , therefore , the term intersectionality can be identified as a theoretical and an analytical framework that describes the way the person’s overlapping identity markers come together to perpetuate multiple types of oppression , aimed at expanding the epistemological terrain in black feminist theory , intersectionality is still functioning today as a springboard for literary scholars to gain an understanding of the overlooked mesogynoir , an eye-opening conceptual theory that shed light on individuals whom, for a while now , have been stifled by a collective interlocking systems of oppression.

In 2016 , Kimberlé Crenshaw was hosted by Ted Talks to furthermore articulate the concept of intersectionality , in the show ,Crenshaw posited the 1976 infamous case law of Emma Degraffereid

versus general motors as a living example , an African American woman who sued a car manufacturing company after refusing to hire her , Emma claimed that the reason for the refusal was under discriminatory grounds due to her race and gender, expectedly , Emma’s case never made it to trial ,and was dismissed by the judge , his argument was the fact that the company did hire African men as well as women ,to succinct ,Crenshaw believe that the judge dismissed the case while deliberately overlooking Emma’s intended point , that she confronted a double discrimination (*Crenshaw* , 00:05:05- 00:06:00) ; the judge under discussion simply refused to consider Emma’s claim under a fallacious assumption that allowing her to use two identity markers in her argument is utterly bias and would result the creation of a new category and/or will open a “ Pandora box” that will get other minorities to claim justice as well , (as if this is a bad thing) “...The prospect of the creation of new classes of protected minorities, governed only by the mathematical principles of permutation and combination, clearly raises the prospect of opening the hackneyed Pandora's box. “(qtq. In justia US law),Crenshaw argued the impact that the aforesaid case will have on black women stating that “..the case specifically illustrates how antidiscrimination doctrine generally creates a dilemma for Black women. It forces them to choose between specifically articulating the intersectional aspects of their subordination ...” (11)

While it seems only fair to point out the thing(s) that generate oppression , many critics don’t see it this way , intersectionality was widely criticized , many scholars believe that the former proffer a preferential demeanor to black women and demonizes its way to the top of the social ladder , Ben Shapiro , an American conservative commentator identified intersectionality as “a form of identity politics in which the value of your opinion depends on how many victim groups you belong to...At the bottom of the totem pole is the person everybody loves to hate: the straight white male. “ ,Shapiro adds that it’s “ a hierarchy of victimhood in which people are considered members of a victim class by virtue of membership in a particular group, and at the intersection of various groups lies the ascent on the hierarchy.”

III .3.Intersectionality in “ Ain’t I a Woman”

III.3.1. The Intersection of Race, Gender, Disability

Way Before intersectionality was echoed by the black feminist LGBTQ organization “Combahee river collective “ in 1974 and conceptualized Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 , it was addressed by Sejourner Truth in “ ain’t I a woman “in 1851, as previously mentioned , the speech point out the complex intersection of race , gender , and disability , whereas the discourse of racial subjugation was related merely to African American men and the discourse of gender discrimination was related to white women, or as Akasha and others titled it in their feminist anthology : “ *All the Women Are White; All the Blacks Are Men*“;for example when Truth said “... Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or negroes' rights ? ...“ (para 3) , she intended to highlight both the subordination of enslaved black people and women’s suffrage under the frivolous believe of white men superiority , thus by far ,the relation between race and sex is entangled and interrelated not separate ; to an extent , the speech targeted both the abolition movement for seldom focusing on black men when talking about slavery because she as a black enslaved woman has endured the same labor as enslaved black men and women’s liberation movement for seldom emphasizing white women when talking about women’s liberation because again she’s a woman but has never received the same treatment.

Although intersectionality began with a mere focus on race , gender and class , ever since the 1970’s the term kept evolving to include all axes of identity including ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, and disability ; in the context of “ ain’t I a woman “ , Notwithstanding that Truth embodied her arm as a strong bearing arm , she was in fact disabled , as mentioned in her narratives , “she had a badly diseased hand ... “ (39) , perhaps due to the continuous physical abuse by her owner; hence , Truth never identified her disability ; in fact ,she deliberately hid her disabled arm , presumably so that she will be able to authenticate and strengthen the ideology of gender equality that she was promoting ; in addition , capability was highly sanctioned at the time, to aggravate , a simple Google search of “

Sojourner Truth knitting “ will display many sources that portray modified pictures of her disabled arm ” knitting “ or both of her hands on her hip , or even the hand on bicep gesture! Which is a hideous act of Ableism .

III.4. Intersectionality in “Americanah”

III. 4.1. The intersection of Race, Gender, Class and Migration

As discussed in previous sections, the novel “Americanah” mirrors the different transnational struggles of diaspora subjects through an intersectional lens , although the protagonist , is expected by African Americans to relate to their experiences , her experience as a non-black American differs from theirs perhaps because she confronts a quadruple as a penniless , black , African female immigrant , that go beyond race or blackness, therefore it is crucial to consider the all of the markers when addressing the novel , as Crenshaw emphasize that “ the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated...” (03) , for example ; during her early time in America , Ifemelu suffers from financial difficulties , the constant racial discrimination make her job search remarkably difficult, she eventually respond to an online ad of a tennis coach in need of a female personal assistant , Ifemelu was called in for an interview , at the arrival , the sketchy white man invite her to his office and proffer sexual suggestions and offensive connotations about how he is in need for an assistant to help him “ relax “ , she feels unease and leave , but ends being manipulated into being sexually involved with him in exchange for \$100; in the context of the novel , the former violation comes from discrimination , and that discrimination is fostered by the protagonist’s identity markers , her race and gender for example , they both operate together , her race contribute to the systematic racism that won’t employ her simultaneously with her gender knowing that the tennis coach would have probably offered her a serious assistant position if she was a black man , add to the equation her class and migration, the result of former discrimination interchangeably

pushes her to negotiate her dignity and be involved with a man whose class and financial hardships, to manipulate her, a trauma she would have never suffered if she was born in America privileged with American rights and encouragement that would help her when in need.

Perhaps, the aforementioned incident is the most articulate example of intersectional oppression, how the entanglement of different diaspora identity markers operate in tandem to, abuse, violate and manipulate women of color, as said Patricia Hill Collins in her *Black Sexual Politics* that "... because black feminist analyses pay more attention to women's sexuality, they too identify how the sexual exploitation of women has been a basic ingredient of racism" (87).

III.5. Conclusion

The intention of this chapter was to work as a connection loop between the ideology of Sojourner Truth and Adichie, both of the advocates of black feminism, equilibrated past and present, and willingly carried out two faces of the same coin, they both share the struggle of being condemned to a second degree citizen due to their overlapping identities, and they both, most powerfully, managed to interrogate their viewpoints in a way that emanate aspiration and literary black feminist eloquence.

General Conclusion

In order to demystify the expansion of black feminism, it is crucial to examine it from two dimensions, early and modern, and to recognize its forbears, particularly those positioned outside of the academe, for they are not always identified, spurred on by a flair for powerful colored female combatants, this paper has been captivated by one Sojourner Truth and her exquisite feminist locution “Ain’t I a Woman”. Thus, it has tried to proffer a modest yet hopefully an adequate recognition of both her persona and her black feminist manifesto by analyzing its structure and ideology to see how it displays a mythological reflection of justice, another black feminist who adopted a new reformed branch of black feminism that goes by the name of Afropolitanism is also recognized, Chimamanda Adichie and her novel “Americanah”, to better trace how the novel reflects the notion of Afropolitanism, this research exemplified the major themes tackled in “Americanah” through a postcolonial black feminist lens.

These two figures, although not intentionally they both collectively advanced a compendium of the diverse struggles faced by black women, in different times and regions, to remain faithful to the core aim of this research which is to elucidate how the advancements of both Sojourner Truth and Adichie are connected, a chapter by the name of “*woman is he nigger of the world*” have been dedicated to interrogate the theory of intersectionality, in order to illuminate how these two colored women both share the same devastating effects of the intersection of their identity markers and that they had both, been condemned to a subservient position by western hierarchies of power, the former title is inspired by a song of the Beatles’ legendary singer John Lennon, which in a way, might prime us to wonder, since woman is the nigger of the world, the oppressed subaltern subject at the bottom of the social ladder, what does that make the *colored woman*? Where does it position her? and what is her gain from both the abolition and feminism?, all these questions were reopened and explored in former work; thus by far, what the reader must grasp from this work is that the elimination (in all senses of the term) of black women has not, indeed, since Truth’s time, changed, it had only been

reformed and evolved if not deteriorated , to include more categories of colored women and target their axes of identity.

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