

## Black Africanity and Afro-optimism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013)

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**ABSTRACT:** One of the phenomena African political authorities have not managed to overcome so far is the mass emigration of Africans of working age to western countries. Most of the emigrants think of the West as an el dorado where they will surely see their dreams come true. So most of them who cannot get a visa, take the illegal routes (the desert or the sea) at the risk of their lives. But once they reach their host countries, they are confronted with many new challenges. These are the main issues which Adichie deals with in *Americanah* where she has also shown her optimism as to the future of Africa and has urged black Africans, especially those who have been to the West, to take pride in their cultural identity. One may wonder what Adichie's motives are for displaying optimism with regard to Africa's future and for exhorting black Africans to self-esteem. From a postcolonial perspective, this paper will be about Black Africanity and Afro-optimism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013). Based on culture, race and psychology, this study will first analyse the narrator's deriding the complex towards the West and the Whites, and then will help examine the author's call upon Black Africans to assume their real identity.

**KEYWORDS :** *emigration; cultural; identity; challenges; postcolonial; complex.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

One of the phenomena which African political authorities have not managed to overcome so far is the mass emigration of Africans of working age to western countries. Bad governance, collapsed educational system, unemployment, poverty and armed conflicts are among the pull factors for Africans to emigrate to Europe and America. Most of the candidates for emigration think of the West as an el dorado where they will surely see their dreams come true. So most of them who cannot get a visa, take the illegal routes (the desert or the sea) at the risk of their lives. But once they reach their host countries, they are confronted with the harsh realities of immigration such as lack of legal papers, difficulties in finding a decent job, racism. They also have to adjust to foreign cultural context and often end up alienated. These are among the issues which Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie deals with in her third novel, *Americanah* (2013). Other literary texts dealing with the same themes are : Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), Ike Oguine's *A Squatter's Tale* (2000), Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005), Dinaw Mengestu's *Children of the Revolution* (2008), Brian Chiwava's *Harare North* (2009), *We Need New Names* (2013) by No Violet Bulawayo, *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* (2014) by Tendai Huchu, *Behold the Dreamers* (2016) by Imbolo Mbue, to mention but a few. These novels detail the life experiences, particularly the challenges of African characters who migrated to western countries and, later on, are cheated by life there. This article focuses on *Americanah* where Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has shown her optimism as to the future of Africa and has urged black Africans, especially those who have been to the West, to take pride in their own cultural identity. One may wonder what Adichie's motives are for displaying optimism with regard to Africa's future and for exhorting black Africans to be proud of themselves.

From a postcolonial perspective, this paper turns around Black Africanity and Afro-optimism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013). According to Elleke Boehmer (1995:3), postcolonial literature, "rather than simply being the writing which 'came after' empire . . . is that which critically scrutinizes the colonial relationship . . . it is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives." Defining postcolonial literature too, Professor Ato Quayson observes :

... postcolonial literature is a broad term that encompasses literatures by people from the erstwhile colonial world, as well as from the various minority diasporas that live in the west. Postcolonialism has also been a term used to reinterpret western canonical literature from a variety of fresh and diverse perspectives.

Based on culture, race and psychology, this study will first analyse the narrator's deriding the complex towards the West and the Whites, and then will help examine Adichie's call upon Black Africans to assume their identity.

## II. THE COMPLEX TOWARDS THE WHITES AND THE WEST

The complex towards the Whites and the West can be seen through the credibility and the respect granted to people in the Nigerian business sector simply because they have a white general manager. Hence, Nneoma's advice to her cousin, Obinze, who is also the main male protagonist in the novel under review: *"And after you register your own company, you must find a white man. Find one of your white friends in England. Tell everybody he is your General Manager. You will see how doors will open for you because you have an oyinbo General Manager."* (34). No need therefore to check the real identity of the oyinbo man, as illustrated in the case of Obinze's general manager, Nigel, who is a delivery truck driver in England. Banks, for example, willingly allocate loans to a company whose general manager is a white man because they do not question the company's reliability and solvency.

The complex towards white people and the West is noticeable in the area of education as well. Thus, Mrs. Akin-Cole, a famously old woman, advises Kosi to send her daughter, Buchi, to the French school in order to learn French, that is to say 'another civilized language' in addition to English: *"Of course they teach in French but it can only be good for the child to learn another civilized language, since she already learns English at home."* (36). Mrs. Akin-Cole makes it clear that she does not regard African languages as civilized languages. Her mentality reminds of the impact of colonialism on the colonial child which Ngugi wa Thiong'o talks about in his collection of essays *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986): *"... his own native languages were associated in his impressionable mind with low status, humiliation, corporal punishment, slow-footed intelligence and ability or downright stupidity, non-intelligibility and barbarism..."* (1986 :18). By rating English and French higher than her native languages, Mrs. Akin-Cole embodies the type of African whom the colonizers wanted, that is the one who denies his own language and therefore his culture: *"Language carries culture, ..."* (1986 : 16).

As for Adamma, a middle-aged woman, though she finds the French school appealing, she suggests that Kosi send Buchi to Sidcall Hall as they teach the British curriculum there. These self-abasing suggestions push Kosi's husband, Obinze, to break his silence, confronting the women with the question: *"Didn't we all go to primary schools that taught the Nigerian curriculum?"* (36). Mrs Akin-Cole and Adamma are puzzled that Obinze should consider sending his daughter to schools teaching the Nigerian curriculum where, according to Mrs. Akin-Cole, Buchi will be taught by 'half-baked Nigerian teachers'. So Mrs. Akin Cole warns Obinze: *"If you decide to disadvantage your child by sending her to one of these schools with half-baked Nigerian teachers, then you only have yourself to blame"* (37). These two women manifestly underestimate the Nigerian educational system for the Western one. Here, Mrs. Akin-Cole is reminiscent of the late Malawian president, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who founded the Kamuzu Academy, meant for preparing the brightest pupils in English for universities like Oxford, Harvard, Cambridge, Chicago and Edinburgh. Ngugi recounts: *"For good measure no Malawian is allowed to teach at the academy – none is good enough – and all the teaching staff has been recruited from Britain. A Malawian might lower the standards, or rather, the purity of the English language."* (1986 : 19). Hence, Ngugi's indignation: *"Can you get a more telling example of hatred of what is national, and a servile worship of what is foreign even though dead?"* (19).

Kosi herself had already considered sending Buchi to Sidcot Hall before Adamma made the suggestion, and for the same reason as Adamma: *"Oh, yes, Sidcot Hall," Kosi said. "It's already on top of my list because I know they teach the British curriculum."* (36). Kosi's friends too, the married couple Jonathan and Isioma, have registered their son in a nursery-primary school headed by an Englishwoman. It is eventually to this school that Kosi and Obinze go, accompanied by Jonathan and Isioma. The first words the white headmistress utters just after the introductions are very telling: *"Many high-level expatriates bring their children here,"* (385). In effect, the headmistress knows that Nigerian parents coming to her school prefer the British curriculum to the Nigerian one. Thus, to inform these parents that high-level British expatriates bring their children to her school cannot but impress them. Obinze does not lose sight of this fact: *"... Obinze wondered if this was something she said routinely. She had probably said it often enough to know how well it worked, how much it impressed Nigerians."* (385-6).

Nigerian political rulers too prefer western schools for their offspring to the national ones. The political rulers are supposed to ensure that Nigerians have renown schools and universities which give quality education and to ensure the stability of the educational system. Unfortunately, they do not fulfill this duty mainly because their children study abroad: *"Strikes now were common. In the newspapers, university lecturers listed their complaints, the agreements that were trampled in the dust by government men whose own children were schooling abroad."* (107). It is important to note here that Nigeria is the tip of the iceberg insofar as this is the case in many sub-Saharan countries. Besides, young people who have been to the West in order to study are given preferential treatment to the detriment of those who have not. Adichie denounces this fact through one of the commenters of the blog post by Ifemelu, the main female protagonist, about the Nigeropolitan Club: *"Why*

should Nigerians who school abroad have a choice of where to get posted for their national youth service? Nigerians who school in Nigeria are randomly posted so why shouldn't Nigerians who school abroad be treated the same way?" (431). By adopting this attitude, authorities are indirectly encouraging migration.

Living in the United States where black people are considered an inferior race, the Nigerian and Senegalese immigrants, Bartholomew and Aisha, use skin bleaching products to keep a high profile. Instead of taking pride in their black complexion, they have shown they would rather have white skin than be black. It is commonly women who lighten their skin for beauty reasons, this is why Ifemelu does not understand Bartholomew's attitude: "*What kind of man bleaches his skin, biko?*" (127). If Bartholomew is apparently getting away with the practice without health problems, this is not the case of Aisha "... *who had a skin condition, pinkish-cream whorls of discoloration on her arms and neck that looked worryingly infectious.*" (16-7). One may wonder whether having a light complexion is worth the state in which Aisha's arm is: "*My aunt is a doctor. I'll take a picture of your arm and ask her what she thinks,*" Ifemelu said. (377).

As for Ifemelu's aunt, Aunt Uju who welcomed Ifemelu in America, she does not want white Americans to take her for a Non-American Black. Her disagreement with her son Dike at the Grocery store, Key Food, is illustrative of her low self-esteem. In effect, when Dike, disobeying his mother, took a blue carton of cereal from a shelf and walked quickly to the checkout counter, Aunt Uju did not feel free to make her will be respected in front of the cashier, a white woman. She was complaisant instead:

"Dike, put it back," Aunt Uju said, with the nasal, sliding accent she put on when she spoke to white Americans, in the presence of white Americans, in the hearing of white Americans. *Pooh-reet-back.* And with the accent emerged a new persona, apologetic and self-abasing. She was overeager with the cashier. (117).

Only when the Nigerian family got out of the store and, therefore, were out of the white woman's sight did Aunt Uju correct Dike: "*Because the cashier was watching, Aunt Uju let Dike keep the cereal, but in the car she grabbed his left ear and twisted it, yanked it.*" (118).

One fundamental element of one's identity is one's cultural language. Yet, Uju does not want her son to be spoken to in his cultural language. By telling Ifemelu not to speak Igbo to Dike, Aunt Uju wishes that the boy had a good grasp of the English language, that is to say other people's language, to the detriment of his mother tongue: "*Please don't speak Igbo to him,*" Aunt Uju said. "*Two languages will confuse him.*" (118). Ifemelu is justified in being confused: "*What are you talking about, Aunt? We spoke two languages growing up.*" (118). Reacting to her niece's remark, Uju argues that they are not in Nigeria, but in America. However, her argument is not convincing in the sense that African immigrants such as the Fula people speak their own language to their children and this does not prevent the latter from speaking the language of their host country fluently. That is just a matter of being attached to one's cultural identity.

If Aunt Uju speaks Igbo to Dike only when she gets angry, this is not the case with Obinze's cousin, Nicholas. He lives in London with his wife, Ojiugo, and their two children, Nna and Nne. Both father and mother are Igbos but Nicholas will not talk to the children in the Igbo language: "*He spoke to them only in English, careful English, as though he thought that the Igbo he shared with their mother would infect them, perhaps make them lose their precious British accents.*" (251). Nna and Nne even have someone tutoring them in French at home but their father does not deem it necessary to teach them their cultural language. The children's British accents provide their parents with a feeling of satisfaction. Ojiugo, for example, was replete with joy after Nne asked her, in a posh accent, if she might have a jam sandwich. Addressing Obinze, Ojiugo expressed her happiness as follows: "*You see how she sounds so posh? Ha! My daughter will go places. That is why all our money is going to Brentwood School.*" (254).

Concerning Emenike, another Nigerian immigrant in England, the age difference between him and his white wife, Georgina, is simply ridiculous: "... *his oyinbo wife who is old enough to be his mother.*" (261). Actually, most of the time, black African men engage in this kind of marriage, especially with White women, which reflects once again the inferiority complex which many Africans have towards the Whites. Emenike is one of these Africans: "*He was making fun of his wife, but Obinze knew, from the muted awe in his tone, that it was mockery colored by respect, mockery of what he believed, despite himself, to be inherently superior.*" (277). Emenike and Georgina have recently been to Hong Kong and then to America and yet he pretends that one of the reasons why he still cannot travel back home is that Georgina would not survive a visit to Nigeria. She can survive a visit in America and even in Asia but not in his own country: "*He had cast home as the jungle and himself as interpreter of the jungle.*" (278). This evidences the feeling of not belonging the character of Georgina has towards his own culture. He draws a line between his community and himself. He would rather act as interpreter that just observes the lifestyle of his people, but does not get involved in anything. Such people cannot keep a high profile in traditional Africa and might end up outcast.

Moreover, the way Emenike recounted, in the presence of Georgina and her white guests, how he was victim of an act of racism from a cab driver is also indicative of his complex towards white people. He had already told Obinze the story and in this version, he was on Upper Street one night waiting for a cab. One

showed up from afar with its light on and, therefore, he hailed it. But when the cab got close, the driver turned off the light and drove past him. Then, the driver stopped a little way away to take two white women. Emenike told Obinze that he was so enraged that he was shaking and his hands were trembling. However, when his wife asked him to tell the story in front of their white guests, Emenike distorted it. Obinze "... *was struck now by how differently Emenike told it.*" (289). The point is Emenike did not mention the rage he felt because this would offend the guests.

Contrary to Emenike, Mrs. Akin-Cole, Adamma, Aunt Uju, Nicholas, to name but a few, who are not proud of being Africans, other characters assume their black African identity.

### III. ASSUMING ONE'S BLACK IDENTITY

In *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie also presents African immigrants who, though living in the West or have been there, are not alienated to the extent of denying their cultural identity. The reader can notice many examples of Black Africans who take pride in their cultural heritage. Thus, living in the United States where black women's natural hair and a foreign accent are often sources of stigmatization, Wambui does not use hair relaxer like many black women, neither does she speak with an American accent. She first drew Ifemelu's attention during a history seminar: "*A firm, female voice from the back of the class, with a non-American accent...*" (147) and when Ifemelu turned, she saw a young woman whose "... *natural hair was cut as low as a boy's and her pretty face, wide-foreheaded and fleshless, reminded Ifemelu of the East Africans who always won long-distance races on television.*" (147). Actually, Wambui is from Kenya and she is the president of the African Students Association (ASA). Wambui is the one who informed Ifemelu about the meetings of the African Students Association which took place in the basement of Wharton Hall where Ifemelu met Kenyans, Nigerians, Ugandans, Ghanaians, Zimbabweans, Tanzanians, South Africans, etc.

One of the main reasons that have brought these students together is their attachment to their black African identity. For instance, in his welcome talk to two new students, Mwombeki advises them, in a way tinged with humour, not to be influenced by the lack of decency of American couples: "*Standing in line at the cafeteria, the girl will touch the boy's arm and the boy will put his arm around her shoulder and they will rub shoulders and back and rub rub rub, but please do not imitate this behavior.*" (150). So Mwombeki makes it clear to the newcomers that they should not copy everything from Americans. Living in the USA, they are likely to adopt, by necessity sometimes, some American practices but these should be positive ones. Besides, they should not forget who they really are, as exemplified with the family of Kofi, a member of the ASA. His parents came to the USA from Ghana when he was two years old and he speaks with an American accent. However, "*If you go to their house, they eat kenkey everyday*" and "*There's no American nonsense in that house.*" (150). Furthermore, Kofi goes to his native Ghana every year, which evidences his attachment to his African roots.

The stay of Iloba, a kinsman of Obinze, in Britain has not alienated him either. This is illustrated by his sense of solidarity and hospitality vis-à-vis a kinsman and above all by the food he served Obinze. As a matter of fact, while Obinze badly needed a National Insurance number and requested Iloba's help. He managed to find Vincent Obi who was ready to rent him his. As they were waiting for Vincent in Iloba's flat, Iloba put a plate of *chin-chin* and bottles of beer on the table: "*It seared a sharp homesickness in Obinze, this ritual of hospitality. He was reminded of going back to the village with his mother at Christmas, aunties offering him plates of chin-chin.*" (262).

By making the difference between the students of the Black Students Union (BSU) and those of the ASA, Mwombeki has shown the ASA students' love for and pride in the African continent. In effect, still in his welcome talk, he tells the two newcomers that they can go to the BSU as well, but he also specifies:

The Africans who go to BSU are those with no confidence who are quick to tell you 'I am *originally* from Kenya' even though Kenya just pops out the minute they open their mouths. The African Americans who come to our meetings are the ones who write poems about Mother Africa and think every African is a Nubian queen. (150)

At the meetings of the ASA, Ifemelu "*felt a gentle, swaying sense of renewal*" (149) and soon became friends with Wambui. It should not be surprising therefore that Ifemelu feels shame after thanking the American telemarketer for telling her that she sounds American. In fact, soon after her arrival in the U.S., Ifemelu had been victim of communication stigmatization from a white woman (Cristina Tomas) while enrolling at a university because of her foreign accent. Since then, she had practised an American accent so much so that the telemarketer pointed out to her that she sounded totally American. Ifemelu wonders why it should be "*a compliment, an accomplishment, to sound American.*" (187). The introspection she has made leads her to revert to her natural accent: "*Ifemelu decided to stop faking an American accent...*" (185).

Ifemelu also decided to stop using hair relaxers or adding weaves to her hair. In fact, Wambui had acquainted her with the website *HappilyKinkyNappy.com* where a community of black women promote natural hair. Among the posts she read on this website is the following one by Jamila1977: "*I love the sistas who love their straight weaves, but I'm never putting horse hair on my head again.*" (226). Ifemelu was in a beauty

supply store, choosing among weaves, when she remembered Jamila's words. She left the store without buying any weave and then wrote on *HappilyKinkyNappy.com* : "*Jamilah's words made me remember that there is nothing more beautiful than what God gave me.*" (226). This explains why when she went to Mariama African Hair Braiding, in preparation for her travel back home in Nigeria, she told Mariama she wanted a medium kinky twist. Besides, to Aisha's question that why Ifemelu does not use a relaxer, the latter answers : "*I like my hair the way God made it.*" (19).

Ifemelu decides to go back to Africa while many Africans, particularly young people, are deserting the continent for Europe and America in search of better living conditions. She resolves to leave the U.S. and return to Africa while racist Americans like Laura regard Africans living in the States as "*privileged Africans,*" (180) regardless of the difficult situations they are often confronted with in this country. Ifemelu could have stayed in her host country : "*Her blog was doing well, with thousands of unique visitors each month, and she was earning good speaking fees, and she had a fellowship at Princeton...*" (12). Nevertheless, she made the decision to go and work in her country. Back in Nigeria, Ifemelu was employed as a features editor of a women's monthly magazine called *Zoe* before she resigned and put up a blog *The Small Redemptions of Lagos*, a blog which is also doing well. What is more, the main female character of the novel is only the tip of the iceberg, for many young Nigerians have left the West to go and invest at home, which she knew via the social network :

She scoured Nigerian websites, Nigerian profiles on Facebook, Nigerian blogs, and each click brought yet another story of a young person who had recently moved back home, clothed in American or British degrees, to start an investment company, a music production business, a fashion label, a magazine, a fast-food franchise.

The cases of these returnees and Ifemelu are good examples of Adichie's afro-optimism, that is the optimism as to a positive future for Africa. Through the return of these young Nigerians to their home country, Adichie calls upon the African youth abroad, who have the possibility, to come and invest in Africa and thus participate in the economic development of the continent.

In addition, Adichie shows that though these former immigrants assume their black African identity, they are strongly influenced by western lifestyle :

... a small cluster of people drinking champagne in paper cups, at the poolside of a home in Osborne Estate, chic people, all dripping with savoir-faire, each nursing a self-styled quirkiness—a ginger-colored Afro, a T-shirt with a graphic of Thomas Sankara, oversize handmade earrings... (415)

The Afro and the graphic of Thomas Sankara are very significant here. The afro hairstyle is an expression of one's pride in being black. It originated from Africa but it was popularised in the United States during the 1960s by the *Black is Beautiful* movement whose aim was to challenge white "*... beauty standards that had marginalized and denigrated black features and aesthetics.*" ("*Black is Beautiful.*" [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_is\\_beautiful](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_is_beautiful)). As for the graphic of Thomas Sankara, it indicates that these youths identify themselves with the late president's revolutionary vision which reflects his concern for the development of Africa, his love for Africa : "*He had a vision for an Africa that was bold, free, proud and unfettered and he proclaimed this vision insistently.*"

However, as mentioned above, these returnees are deeply influenced by the life in Britain and America. Being accustomed to western foods, they are often dissatisfied with the foods in Nigerian restaurants, so much so that Bisola suggested that they go to a restaurant on Akin Adesola street (Victoria Island, Lagos) : "*The brunch is really good. They have the kinds of things we can eat. We should go next Sunday.*" (417). The sentence "They have the kinds of things we can eat" has baffled the heroine. Ifemelu does not really see herself in the "we" the notion of togetherness. As far as she is concerned, Ifemelu does not have any problem with the local foods : "*She loved eating all the things she had missed while away, jollof rice cooked with a lot of oil, fried plantains, boiled yams...*" (417). At her parents' too where she spends weekends, neither does the heroine complain about food. If anything, she enjoys her mother's meal : "*only when she began to eat her mother's stew, an oil layer floating on top of the pureed tomatoes, did she realize how much she had missed it.*" (405).

Adichie denounces the haughty attitude of the returnees through Ifemelu's blog post about the Nigeropolitan Club. In the post, Ifemelu expresses her 'ras-le-bol facing' the absurdity of the complaints of the club's members. They regularly complain "*... about the many ways that Lagos is not like New York*" (430). The heroine wants them to know that Lagos cannot be like New York. Besides, it has never been Lagos' calling to be like this American city. She also tells them to get over themselves and know that the eating habits in the West are not the same in Nigeria. So instead of moaning about their cook's incapacity to prepare western foods, they should teach him how to do so : "*If your cook cannot make the perfect panini, it is not because he is stupid. It is because Nigeria is not a nation of sandwich-eating people and his last oga did not eat bread in the afternoon. So he needs training and practice.*" (430). A commenter of the post echoes Ifemelu's disgust and decries the arrogance of these former immigrants : "*Thank God somebody is finally talking about this. Na wa for arrogance of Nigerian returnees.*" (430)

Also, the author's afro-optimism can be noticed via the example of Obinze. He had applied several times for a visa at the American embassy in Nigeria and each time he had been denied of it. With the help of his mother, he eventually went to Britain but spent only three years there and was repatriated. Later, his cousin Nneoma presented him with Chief, a wealthy man who put Obinze in business. Now Obinze is a successful businessman. He believed that he could only succeed abroad but the financial power which he had gone to look for in Europe was not found until he returned home. So Adichie shows that going to the West is not always synonymous with success. She seems to say that, no matter what, it is always possible to make it at home.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

After giving, in her third novel, the reasons that lead Africans of working age to decide to emigrate to Europe and America, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has pointed out the problems which African immigrants are often confronted with in their host countries. In the face of unemployment, collapsed educational system, bad governance, poverty and armed conflicts, more and more African human resources leave the continent legally or illegally to seek a better future in the West. But once in the western nations, they face challenges such as difficulties in finding a good job, racism, lack of legal papers... They also have to adjust to foreign identity which often leads to alienation. In *Americanah*, alienation is mainly characterized by inferiority complex towards white people and the West, as illustrated with the examples of Aisha, Bartholomew, Auntie Uju, Nicholas and Emenike. But the inferiority complex vis-à-vis the Whites and the West does not concern immigrants only. One can also find it among Nigerians living in Nigeria, as exemplified through Mrs. Akin-Cole, Adamma, Nigerian political rulers, the favouritism towards Nigerians who school abroad and companies with a white general manager. In fact, this complex is one of the psychological consequences of colonization. As a result, Adichie urges black African immigrants to assume their black African identity. They should not let western culture corrupt them. Thus, they should feel free to wear their hair natural and to speak without British and American accents. In this regard, the Nigerian writer indicates Ifemelu, Wambui and some of the Nigeropolitan Club members as sources of inspiration. Furthermore, as a black African, one is proud of Kofi and his family who, though living in America, still eat *kenkey* and in whose house "there's no American nonsense." Even if he came to the U.S. when he was two years old and now he is a university student, Kofi goes back to his native Ghana every year. One has the same feeling towards Iloba not only on account of the *chin-chin* he still eats in England but also on account of his solidarity and hospitality vis-à-vis a kinsman in need, hospitality and solidarity being cultural values in many black African societies. Through the examples of the Nigerian returnees and Obinze's economic success, Adichie has shown her afro-optimism. These returnees have willingly left Britain and America, after getting their degrees, in order to go back home and invest. This happens while the present and the future of sub-Saharan Africa are negatively perceived by the western world and even by many Africans, and while a lot of Africans prefer to stay in the West for good. Ifemelu is one of the such returnees. She has got what she went to look for in the United States, has returned home after thirteen years abroad and has set up her own activity. As for Obinze, Adichie has demonstrated through his life experience that African candidates for emigration should not be blindfolded by the western dream. They can find in their native countries the economic success they are going to look for in Europe and America.

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