

**“Nigrescence” in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Americanah*:
A Psychoanalytic Approach**

By:

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Abstract

“Nigrescence” is a French word that means the process of becoming black in a cultural-psychological sense. William Cross’s theory of psychological Nigrescence is the best known theory of Black identity development. Psychologically, being black makes the individual suffer the physical, psychological, emotional, and social injuries of racial discriminations. The beginning of the twenty-first century marked the emergence of the ‘third generation’ of Nigerian writers, such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chris Abani and Chika Unigwe, who explore the cultural and social complexities of their country of origin, as well as other themes such as, immigration to Europe and America, the problems of race and racism and the quest for identity. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel *Americanah* (2013), based on the black identity development model of William E. Cross, focusing on selected racial experiences that help in the development of the protagonist’s, Ifemelu, self-image as a black person during her journey from Nigeria to the United States and how she succeeds in developing a positive racial identity while simultaneously adapting to American culture.

Keywords: Chimamanda Adichie, *Americanah*, Race, Black racial identity, Nigrescence

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The history of racial identity in the United States began with the European colonization of North America and continues into the twenty-first century. The early writings of W. E. B. Du Bois assumed that race played a historically important role in the lives of Black people in the United States. Theorists such as Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe and Bailey W. Jackson III perceive the models of racial identity development as “tools for understanding how individuals achieve as an awareness of their sense of self in relation to race within a larger social, cultural, and historical context” (1). Further, race has been defined by racial identity theorists as a “sociopolitical construction in which racial groups are not biologically distinct, and these racial groups experience different conditions of domination or oppression” (Helms 181).

The fact that African immigrants are, not only changing the demographics of the US but also redefining the meaning of “blackness”, leads to new challenges and insights on the interpretation of race on the one hand, and the production of more studies of Black racial identity development on the other hand. Black racial identity development (BRID) has often been constructed in models that describe consequent steps through which Black individuals move from a negative to a positive self-identity in the context of their racial group membership. Madonna G. Constantine, Tina Q. Richardson & Eric M. Benjamin hold that over the last half century, many theorists e.g., Akbar, 1979; Baldwin, 1980, 1981, 1984; Cross, 1971, 1978, 1991, 1995; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 1996; Helms, 1984, 1986, 1990, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; B. Jackson, 1975; G. G. Jackson & Kirschner, 1973; Kambon, 1992; Myers, 1988, 1993 have delineated models to explain the Black identity development process (96). Some

of the early theories e.g., Cross, 1971, 1978; B. Jackson, 1975; Thomas, 1971 were formulated in an attempt to define healthy Black Identity Development. In spite of the different needs and purposes of these approaches, “they ... appeared to represent explorations of the Black identity-development process, and responses to centuries of racism that have been factors in most theories and institutions of psychological study” (Constantine & Richardson 95).

One of the most influential models of developmental theories of racial identity was established by William E. Cross, Jr. It was called the “Nigrescence” model. Nigrescence is a French word meaning “the process of becoming Black”. Cross’s work was “a reaction to theories of Black self-hatred, which dominated mainstream thought on the psychology of African Americans” (Schaefer 1106). He suggested that the socialization of the Africans/African Americans into the dominant culture cause them to lose their racial identity (Jackson 173). As a result there was a necessity to develop a model of self-discovery that helps the African/African American individual to acquire a strong identity, that is “essentially a resocialization experience from a non-Afrocentric identity to an Afrocentric identity” (173).

Cross’s model has produced an extensive amount of work over the past three decades and continues to inspire scholars in the present time. His model has focused on emotional, cognitive, and behavioral processes associated with being Black in the American society. The racial identity stages are best described by Robert T. Carter as being:

Composed of corresponding attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards both oneself as a member of a racial group and members of the dominant racial group. The manner in which one's own racial identity is integrated into one's personality depends on numerous influences, such as family, society, one's own interpretive style, and the manner in

which important social-political contexts influence this aspect of one's identity (4).

The problem lies in the fact that people of color in America find themselves caught between a longing for acceptance into the American culture and the consistency that they must maintain as a collective in order to adjust to the very culture into which they seek acceptance.

Cross used a five-stage model to describe a Black person's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors as he or she moves from a White frame of reference to a positive Black frame of reference. These stages originally included pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization/commitment (Cross 1971). The revised model combines the internalization and internalization-commitment stages into one internalization stage (Cross 1991). The model has proved to be particularly appealing to researchers and clinicians alike because of its seemingly developmental thrust.

According to Cross, the individual, in the Pre-encounter stage, has not yet begun the process of developing a racial identity and little thought is given to the Black experience (Ehlers 165). In this stage, racial identity attitudes toward one's blackness are negative and white culture and society are idealized (Carter 1995). This stage "is characterized by two identities: Assimilation identity and Anti-Black identity" (Connerly and Pedersen 59). Cross, Parham, and Helms describe the Pre-encounter stage as follows:

At the core of Pre-encounter is an aggressive assimilation-integration agenda. An individual in Pre-encounter is simultaneously searching for a secure place in the socioeconomic mainstream and attempting to flee from the implications of being a "Negro". A Negro in Pre-encounter is depicted as a deracinated person who views Black as an obstacle, problem, or stigma rather a symbol of culture,

tradition, or struggle. A Negro in this stage is preoccupied with thoughts of how to overcome his stigma, or how he or she can assist Whites in discovering that he or she is “just another human being” who wants to assimilate (qtd in Carter 90).

As the standardizing prejudices of U. S. society favor whiteness and devalue blackness, Richard T. Schaefer in *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society* (2008) suggests that the Black individual in this stage tends to hold a white, Eurocentric frame of reference. “However, Black individuals eventually encounter an event or series of events by which they recognize that such assimilation is not fully possible” (1106).

Regarding the encounter stage, the individual realizes his/her race and how he/she might be observed by others. This stage may be preceded by a significant crisis or incident of racism which brings about a new realization concerning the status of race relations between Whites and Blacks. It is marked by feelings of confusion about the meaning and significance of race and by an increasing desire to become more connected to a black identity (Carter 90). Consequently, in light of the encounter experience, the individual becomes energized and ready to change into a new person and tries hard to reinterpret the world and his or her race experiences. In other words, this stage pushes the individual outside his or her comfort zone and may cause him/her to be baffled, anxious, or even dejected. People may seek additional information and justification for their newly developing identity. This state may be accompanied by emotion, guilt, and anger that are generalized toward Whites. Although there are significant changes in the individual’s identity at this point, yet there may be little apparent manifestation.

Between the Encounter stage and that of Internalization /Commitment one, there is a transition that Cross refers to as Immersion/Emersion. This stage begins with the immersion process that is marked by intense involvement in Black

culture. Robert T. Carter claims that in this stage, an individual idealizes Black culture and denigrates Whites and White culture (91). And Susan T. Fiske & Jennifer L. Eberhard add that the Immersion/Emersion is described as identity in “transition” in which the individual is focused on trying to develop a different understanding of his/her race or search for what it means to be “Black” (192). Eventually, the individual makes an effort to explore aspects of one’s own history and culture with the support of people from one’s own racial background.

The next stage according to Cross is Internalization. As individuals move to this stage, they recognize that both Blacks and Whites have strengths and weaknesses. A sense of pride replaces the guilt feelings and there is also an attempt to increase the depth of their understanding of Black culture (Cross 1971). That is, they “recognize that racism is a part of the fabric of this society and actively engage in the development of coping strategies to help buffer against the negative impact of prejudice and discrimination” (Fiske 192). Their experiences are valued in this stage and viewed as positive and important and at the same they accept and respect differences in Whites (Carter 91).

Finally, in the internalization–commitment stage, the individual finds ways to utilize one’s personal sense of blackness into a positive sense of racial identity to participate in commitment to social activism which promotes social and political justice for members of his/her racial group. The individual in this stage engage in activities that make them feel empowered and attempt to control their hurt, anger, and their feelings of pain, anger, hopelessness and helplessness. In doing so, they use their voice to speak out against racial injustices. It is also important to stay connected to family and friends, community, neighborhood, and spiritual communities for shared wisdom and support and collective strength. One way of coping with race and of supporting one another is to participate in protests with community and family through connection, solidarity, and strength across generations. Other ways to feel empowered can also come through writing blogs,

editorials, or poetry. Attaining one's identity was explained by Helms and Piper (1994), as:

The maturation process potentially involves increasingly sophisticated differentiations of the ego, called "ego statuses." Although it is possible for each of the racial-group appropriate statuses to develop in a person and govern her or his race-related behavior, whether or not they do depends on a combination of life experiences, especially intrapsychic dissonance and race-related environmental pressures, as well as cognitive readiness the statuses are hypothesized to develop or mature sequentially. That is, statuses share space within a multilayered circle (symbolizing the ego) and the status(es) which occupies the greatest percentage of the ego has the most wide ranging influence over the person's manner of functioning.

(126-128).

According to Cross, during the racial identity development, not all individuals are able to progress to a higher and healthier stage. Some can stop at one stage or even regress after progressing. Progression or regression depends heavily on various factors, such as, "one's personality, support systems resources and experiences" (Neville & Tyness 229).

Contemporary African literature demonstrates and integrates the decentered realities of African writers themselves as they negotiate and engage with diverse forms of diaspora experience, dislocation, otherness, displacement, identity, and exile.

As an African novel, Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* is a new travel narrative where the twenty-first century African immigrants are in the process of constructing

an identity for themselves in Europe and the United States. It discusses diverse subject matters: race, identity, home and exile, culture, self-definition, sexism, romance, hair and food politics and homecoming. The complex dynamics of race are presented through the lives of the African migrants, especially, of Ifemelu, the protagonist. The study focuses on Ifemelu's experiences of racism in America, how these experiences affect her self-definition, and how the resulting evolution and acceptance of her identity propel her to return to her homeland. That is why *Americanah* lends itself to be analyzed in the light of William Cross's model of Racial Identity Development.

Regarding Chimamanda Adichie, she became a very popular writer with her short story collection *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009), and her novels *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007) and *Americanah* (2013). She was born in Nigeria and shows a close connection to her national legacy throughout her works. During Adichie's childhood, there was a lack of black characters in the British children's literature that she used to read. When she started to write stories, all her characters were "white and had blue eyes and played in the snow and ate apples and had dogs called Sock" ("African 'Authenticity' and the Biafran Experience" 42). She first encountered black characters when she read Chinua Achebe's masterwork *Things Fall Apart*. After reading his book when she was 10, for the first time she found characters with whom she could identify and realize that people who looked like her could exist in books. Her desire to write was sparked by Achebe's work. That changed when she arrived in the United States for college. As a black African in America, she was confronted with what it meant to be a person of color. In Adichie's own words: "It didn't take me very long to realize that in America black was not necessarily a good thing, and that black came with many negative assumptions. And so I didn't want to be black. I'm not black. I'm Nigerian. I'm Igbo. I'm not black. Race was not an identity I was willing to take." (Interview with Damian Woetzel). That is why, race as an idea became something that she had to explore and learn in her writings.

By the time “*Americanah*” was published in 2013, it was well received by both critics and audiences, and it was awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award in March, 2014, and shortlisted for the Baileys Women’s Prize for fiction in the same year. Its popularity generally goes back to the unique perspective it highlights on issues of race, identity, and immigration in the United States. Some reviewers describe the novel as “a tale of enduring love set over three continents; it is an articulate and outspoken novel that addresses the many layers and implications of race and racism” (Culture Trip). Others view it “a brilliant treatise on race, class and globalization, and also a deep, clear-eyed story about love - and how it can both demand and make possible the struggle to become our most authentic selves” (Catherine Chung), or “a social satire masquerading as romantic comedy, in which Adichie is uniquely positioned to compare racial hierarchies in the United States to social striving in her native Nigeria” (Emily Raboteau).

When Adichie was asked, in an interview with Kate Kellaway in *The Guardian* (2013), what the novel is about, she said: “It is about love. I wanted to write an unapologetically old-fashioned love story. But it is also about race and how we reinvent ourselves. It is about how, when we leave home, we become another version of ourselves”. Adichie’s words set the core of this study. The study proposes to approach Ifemelu’s character, focusing on selected incidents and situations in America that contribute to reaching positive identity. The novel is comprised of flashbacks recounting the stories of the two lovers, Ifemelu and Obinze, their growing up in Nigeria, and their move to the U.K., and the U.S.. Though the story is told from the omniscient narrator’s point of view, it delves deeply into Ifemelu’s journey after leaving her homeland, Nigeria, heading to America and returning back home thirteen years later, presenting to the reader her perspective of her migration experience. It presents her struggles in search of an identity that goes through a long process of transformation as a consequence of the social and psychological injuries that she undergoes. Adichie skillfully mixes present actions with past memories. This helps Ifemelu to move back and forth to the matters of race and culture that affected her identity development.

The story of Ifemelu is “a new kind of black novel, an exploration of blackness that does not highlight injury or trauma” (Yogita xiv). Kevin Nosalek suggests that Ifemelu, in Nigeria,

was an observer to the trauma of those around her like her father... and her Aunt Uju, a doctor who ...is forced to suddenly flee from Nigeria when the General whom she has been a mistress to dies in a plane crash and his family threatens Uju's life. As a witness to trauma rather than the victim of trauma, the issues plaguing others in Nigeria is depersonalized for Ifemelu. Her exile to the United States is voluntary, setting the stage for her disillusionment with America, idealization of Nigeria and eventual return to the homeland (35).

Moving to the analysis of Adichie's *Americanah*, the study highlights selected examples of Ifemelu's experiences of racism in America, how they affect her self-definition, and to what extent the resulting evolution and acceptance of her identity propel her to return to her respective homeland.

We start to learn about Ifemelu that she is a strong-willed and proud Nigerian woman. She is considered a dynamic character as the novel takes us through her school time in Nigeria, to her acceptance in a Nigerian university, the interruption of her education by an academic strike and her departure for the U.S. where she spends thirteen years in order to complete her postgraduate studies. Her vision of America depend on television shows and advertising: "She saw herself in a house from *The Cosby Show*, in a school with students holding notebooks miraculously free of wear and crease" (99).

Growing up in Nigeria like Adichie herself, Ifemelu's life is a normal life, that is to say, she goes to school, she has

a family and a boyfriend and she does not feel the burden of racism since everyone is like her. She arrives in the United States unaware of the concept of race. Soon afterward, she becomes black. Her blackening occurs as a result of feeling terribly disrespected in her everyday life; she experiences subtle and explicit discrimination. This is relevant to Frantz Fanon's words in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, when he reveals that black people only become aware of their 'blackness' in the eyes of the White society. (Fanon 89-90).

Ifemelu's lack of experience about the word "black" in Nigeria is a representation of Cross's pre-encounter stage, where the individual considers "himself or herself to be race neutral, there is little thought about race and being Black is not important. For some individuals, this stage can also be characterized by anti-Black attitudes and sentiments." (Mtose & Bayaga 506). As we see, Ifemelu comes from a country where history is marked by colonial struggles and tribal conflicts, but race is not an issue because Nigeria has not experienced racial tensions in the same way other African countries, such as South Africa has.

On her first night in America, Ifemelu begins to realize that the stereotypical, middle to upper class America is not like "The Cosby Show... with students holding notebooks miraculously free of wear and crease" (99) or the place her boyfriend, Obinze "the American expert" had so idealized. She is introduced to the country's complicated racial politics and hierarchies, though she has not fully realized it yet at this stage. These racial political complications are best described in one of Ifemelu's blogs titled "Understanding America for the Non-American Black: What Hispanic Means" when she states that,

Hispanic means the frequent companions of American blacks in poverty rankings...Hispanic means the chocolate-skinned woman from Peru...Hispanic means the biracial-looking folks

from the Dominican Republic...you're a race called Hispanic (105).

This sense of inferiority begins for blacks with the feeling that they belong to the most despised race in the human community from the perspective of the 'Other'. It is noticed that the successive painful experiences she witnesses and confronts in America, starting from her disconnection with the area of America she lives in, moving to the hairdressers' disapproval of her natural hair texture and pushing her to relax it, along with her struggling to find a job and her inability to pay her rent; all these factors develop Ifemelu's awareness of being "Black".

In an interview with John Williams in *New York Times Blog*, Adichie declares that Ifemelu is a female character "who is not safe and easily likable, who is both strong and weak, both prickly and vulnerable". That is why she easily becomes a victim of being black in America, or someone seen as an outsider. For instance, she loses a number of jobs, including a babysitting job, on account of her blackness. Laura, her boss's sister, assumes she is unintelligent because she is black. Moreover, her hair represents her struggle for identity. This is shown when she changes her attitude toward her hair after arriving to the U.S. As a poor student, she couldn't regularly afford enough money for relaxing her hair at a salon. However, she was convinced she couldn't appear in front of people with her natural hair; to the extent that on the day before a job interview she bought herself a bottle of relaxer and tried to straighten it herself. The result was a head full of bleeding sores. Her resulting hair is described as "hanging down," as if it were defeated or sad (250). Thus, as Ifemelu sacrifices her natural hair to submit to American beauty standards, she feels a sense of defeat and identity loss. This stage in her life is marked by feelings of confusion about the meaning of race.

Moving to another form of racism, which is the language discrimination. This kind of inequity occurs when a person is treated differently because of his/her native language or other

characteristics of the language skills. This is shown in Ifemelu's encounter with Cristina Tomas, at the admission office at university, on her first day at college. The White US-American woman addresses her in very slow-spoken English: "I. Need. You. To. Fill. Out. A. Couple. Of. Forms. Do. You. Understand". Cristina's way of speaking makes Ifemelu think as if she must "have some sort of illness that made her speak so slowly, lips scrunching and puckering" (133). But soon she realizes that Cristina Tomas was speaking in this way because of Ifemelu's foreign accent. At this moment:

{Ifemelu} felt ...like a small child, lazy limbed and drooling.... Ifemelu shrank. In that strained, still second where her eyes met Cristina Tomas's before she took the forms, she shrank. She shrank like a dried leaf. She had spoken English all her life, led the debating society in secondary school, and always thought the American twang inchoate; she should not have cowered and shrunk, but she did. And in the following weeks, as autumn's coolness descended, she began to practice an American accent. (133-134)

After experiencing discrimination on the basis of her Nigerian origins and her Blackness, Ifemelu suddenly feels worthless. Consequently, she decides to adapt her attitude to US-American norms so as not to be regarded as inferior. This negative situation becomes her first encounter with the feeling of the "otherness". After three years, her American accent is perfect and she is able to hide her Nigerian accent so that people on the telephone think that she was white and educated.

It is noticed that although Ifemelu has a remarkably strong personality and is proud of her Nigerian origins, her new life in the US forces her to temporarily give up her original identity some months after arriving. What antagonized her is her realization how her bond to Nigeria has become weaker and that she turns to be the person she never wanted to be. Cross's second stage, the encounter stage, is highly

applicable to such feelings. During this stage, the individual realizes that “his or her old frame of reference is inappropriate and so he/she begins to explore aspects of a new identity” (Mtose & Bayaga 506). Cross claims that at this stage, an individual in his/her journey towards race consciousness, either plays a positive role in his/her identity or a negative one (Sue & Sue 238). In Ifemelu’s case, the rejection of her looks and accent, and her attempts to adapt to the American standards of beauty and fluency are indicative of only one negative identity characterized by low self-esteem. She chooses to “share in the benefits associated with the language of the dominant group and to avoid the inferiority associated with the indigenous languages of the marginalized communities” (Jackson II 423). At this stage, losing one’s language means “losing a philosophy of life and world view” (ibid 424). This attitude is changed later in the novel when she decides to give up the American accent that makes her sound never truly herself.

Ifemelu's success at being American makes her feel more disconnected from her life back home: her parents and her old home. When her parents come to visit her in America, they seem somehow small and provincial, in comparison to everything about America. Ifemelu feels guilty and disappointed when she realizes that she looks at Nigeria with American eyes. “On the day her parents left for Nigeria, she collapsed onto her bed, crying uncontrollably, and thinking: what is wrong with me? She was relieved that her parents had gone, and she felt guilty for feeling relief” (303-304). Ifemelu, at this stage, resents herself for feeling disappointed in her parents’ company that she is no more the daughter she used to be. This shows to what extent her lost identity and her inability to properly maintain her origin become a source of anxiety.

The narrative continues detailing Ifemelu’s struggles in the journey of identity formation especially in her personal relationships. Ifemelu’s first American boyfriend is Kimberly’s cousin Curt from Maryland. He is handsome, very rich, and always in a good mood. He is immediately fascinated

by Ifemelu's exoticism and asks her out. Adichie uses foreshadowing through her choice of the name Curt. The adjective curt is often used to describe a way of speaking that's brief and blunt. It comes from the Latin word *curtus*, which means "cut short, abridged", alluding thus in the context of the novel to the shortness of the relationship and its inability to transcend racial hatred. When she starts dating Curt, she encounters racism from the white American women that surround her. She observes Curt's mother's attitude towards their relationship. The mother is a very rich woman, who pretends that America is "colour-blind" (293) and talks about her son as "her adventurer who would bring back exotic species" (198). She declares that she "would tolerate anybody he liked, but she felt no obligation for affection" (*ibid.*). Ifemelu, who has already experienced a lot of racial assault, is not even angry at her. However, sometimes, when she feels discriminated against, she does not tell Curt what she thinks, "because she wished it were obvious to him."

Regarding Curt's white friends, they looked at Ifemelu in surprise when Curt introduces her to them as his girlfriend, "a surprise that some of them shielded and some of them did not and in their expression was the question "why her?" (290). For Ifemelu, Curt's love and affection are a source of pride to her that give her a new look and identity. His world lifts her for a moment out of the life of hardship and trauma lived by other African immigrants in America. With Curt, Ifemelu changes: "She became, in her mind, a woman free of knots and cares, a woman running in the rain with the taste of sun-warmed strawberries in her mouth" (196). However, their relationship was described by Curt's family as "disgusting" (198). She is told "we don't do curly" (208) at a beauty salon. Although she feels happy with him, yet there is a feeling of inferiority about herself. It is noticed that although Curt widens Ifemelu's social circle, yet she is never comfortable in the presence of his white friends, who drive her into issues of "race and color and monochromatic identities she is unwilling to accept" (Ludwig 123). Her rich Nigerian background is lost because she is simply "black" in America's eyes. It is at this point that Ifemelu feels most disconnected from her true identity and discontented with her role as Curt's girlfriend.

The starting of a writing blog hence coincides with Ifemelu's breakup with Curt, shaping a broader sense of racial self-awareness of which the blog is symbolic. The blog can be considered the turning point in Ifemelu's life allowing the reader to see how she sees herself and how she wishes to present herself to the outside world. By starting her blog, she puts aside the anger and guilt of the Encounter stage and accepts herself as a black person without romanticizing Blackness or hating Whiteness. This can be read in the light of Cross's Immersion/Emersion stage.

Bret McCabe, writing to HUB, notes that through her blog, Ifemelu is allowed "an authorial agency that captures the indulgence of online confidence, the self-righteousness of anonymity, and the self-actualization that comes from telling yourself you're writing what you really think while secretly hoping somebody reads it and agrees with you in posts that include "Not All Dreadlocked White Guys Are Down," "Badly Dressed White Middle Managers from Ohio Are Not Always What You Think," "Why Dark-Skinned Black Women—Both American and Non-American—Love Barack Obama," "Understanding America for the Non-American Black: What Do WASPs Aspire To?," "What Academics Mean by White Privilege, or Yes It Sucks to Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White." Ifemelu uses this blog as an outlet in order to share her experience of blackness and race in the US, which eventually results in self-discovery and a reshaping of her identity. Cross states that the individual in this stage, "seeks to stabilize their emotions" (Mtose & Bayaga 507). A sense of pride replaces the guilt feelings of the encounter stage. She manages to overcome the stereotypes and to *emerge* a successful writer by attacking racial issues. The longer she spends time in America, the better she becomes in behavior and manner, that typical American she imagined to be. Years later, Ifemelu starts asking herself why she takes the American accent as a compliment that she passes as US-American. Her attempts to "belong" in America cause her emotional as well as physical pain. We can say that Ifemelu's choice to give up the American accent and speak her Nigerian accent regardless

the opinion of people like Cristina Tomas indicates Ifemelu's first step to become her own self.

Ifemelu's continual attempts to share ideas about what it means to be black in the US, especially in her blog posts, corresponds to Cross's final stage Internalization and Commitment. According to Cross, people who have achieved internalization-commitment "have incorporated racial pride into their self-concept and are deeply committed to trying actively to improve the conditions of the Black masses" (Sullivan and Cross 18). Ifemelu, at this point, "becomes the 'resisting subject' as she articulates the challenges of being black in America, and thereby empowers her many readers who identify with her experience" (Emenyonu 236). She writes a post in order to offer Non-American Blacks full understanding, an acknowledgment of her blackness in American society. She writes,

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. Mine was in a class in undergrad when I was asked to give the black perspective, only I had no idea what that was. So I just made something up. And admit it--you say 'I'm not black' only because you know black is at the bottom of America's race ladder...You must nod back when a black person nods at you in a heavily white area. It is called the black nod. It is a way for black people to say 'You are not alone, I am here too.'(55)

Ifemelu's words indicate the beginning of her racial identity awareness which helps her to take the final decision to return back to her homeland.

When her relationship with Curt inevitably ends, Ifemelu begins a love affair with Blaine, an African-American academic. She is charmed by Blaine's sophistication and fascinated by his humour, but mocks him for thinking they share a cultural background just because of their skin colour: "His use of 'they' suggested an 'us', which would be the both of them" (Adichie 177). With Blaine, Ifemelu plays the role of an intellectual, social-activist girlfriend. Augustine Uka Nwanyanwu, in his "Transculturalism, Otherness, Exile, and Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*", proposes that Ifemelu's moment of recovery of identity coincides with her relationship with Blaine, "a descendant of the black men and women who had been in America for hundreds of years" (207). He tries to change her from a passive observer into an activist. Her relationship with him helps her overcome cultural boundaries in her social and private life and to widen the scope of her knowledge of the world: "this was no coincidence; there was significance to meeting this man on the day that she returned her voice to herself" (Nwanyanwu 393). As time passes, it becomes apparent that Ifemelu does not fit in with Blaine. Despite their racial similarities, both Ifemelu and Blaine have different histories which have shaped different consciousness. Sămi Ludwig, in "American Multiculturalism in Context: Views from at Home and Abroad", draws a comparison between Blaine and Curt in relation to Ifemelu, saying:

She fails to sympathize with {Blaine's} aggressive stance towards the slightest racial slurs that he or his ilk might face ... Whereas Curt seeks to gloss over Ifemelu's blackness accusing her overreaction whenever she points out myriad instances of discrimination and insult, Blaine tries to co-opt Ifemelu into his causes, treating her as a future Black American. Ifemelu rebels against his reductionist attitude. (124)

To sum up Ifemelu's relationship with Blaine and Curt, it is important to emphasize that fact her love for Blaine is described as a complicated love because while respecting and

understanding from him the sense race in America, she also resented him. Eventually, she “accepts that his anger has originated from the fact that he is not a true African and he cannot relate to her as a Nigerian immigrant born outside the U.S.” (Hidalgo 14). Her relationships with both of them are “doomed to fail...because of those ‘chasms’ of difference and misunderstanding that are inherent when individuals from different worlds come together” (Emenyonu 236).

After spending 13 years in America and developing a successful blog, she gradually starts to perceive Nigeria from a distant shore and compare it to America. Discrimination and racial issues alienate her as a “black” and this brings her a sense of unbelonging toward America; thus, she returns to her homeland and reveals her sense of belonging toward Nigeria. Ifemelu’s returning back to Nigeria is not the final stage of her identity formation but “just a new phase in her quest for a coherent identity – an identity which includes her years in America, her disillusionment and her hope” (241). The most important moment of Ifemelu’s return is her reunion with her Nigerian boyfriend, Obinze with whom she finds a deep connection with their shared past and is free of politics and race.

Cross’s (1971) model provides this study with an understanding of the psychological significance of Black identity construction in an encounter with both Whiteness and racism. It proves its applicability for acknowledging Ifemelu’s case as a representative of many people of color, moving from negative images to a more adopted and integrated sense of self with positive views of her race or ethnic background. *Americanah*’s achievement lies in presenting the relation between race, discrimination and the identity formation of the Africans living in America. Although Ifemelu has a strong character, yet Adichie skillfully shows how racism works to weaken her sense of confidence with all the tediousness of everyday comments and gazes about her hair, skin color, and language. Moreover, Ifemelu’s intimate relationships with Curt and Blaine bring her the opportunity to grow as a woman while

at the same time allows her to discover the many complexities existing within different cultures and ethnic groups.

According to Cross's racial identity development model, Ifemelu's journey can be described as a journey from unexamined racial identity (pre-encounter), in which the individual is totally unaware of racial conflicts, through a crisis (encounter), where he or she gets aware of otherness. These two phases are followed by search and exploration of racial identity (immersion-emersion), where discovery of one's own cultural roots leads to self-realization and "emersion" as a confident human being. The individual, as the life of the protagonist reveals, finally internalizes and feels committed to his or her racial origin and cultural identity. Hence, Cross's final phase of internalization-commitment. As a committed writer herself, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has dramatized in *Americanah* her protagonist's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors as she moves from a White frame of reference to a positive Black one.

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ملخص البحث

"نيجريسنس" هو مصطلح يشير الي تحول في الهوية لدى الشخص الأسود في صراعه مع الثقافة الغربية والتمييز العرقي الي هوية ايجابية .. ويتناول هذا البحث أشكالية الاحساس بالذات لدى الاشخاص من الاصول الأفريقية المقيمين أو المهاجرين في أوروبا و أمريكا على وجه الخصوص.. فكون الشخص الأفريقي ذو بشرة سوداء فان هذا يجعله يعاني جسديا ، ونفسيا، وعاطفيا ، واجتماعيا نتيجة للتمييز العنصري..

وقد تميزت بداية القرن الحادي والعشرين بظهور الجيل الثالث من الكتاب النيجيريين أمثال كريس أباني وشيما مندا أديتشي والذين استطاعوا من خلال كتاباتهم الروائية أن يستكشفوا الاشكاليات الثقافية والاجتماعية في بلدهم الأصلي ، بالاضافة الي تناول موضوعات مثل الهجرة الي أوروبا وأمريكا وما يتبعها من احساس بالغربة والحنين للوطن والتمييز العرقي من الجانب الغربي .. وبناءا عليه فان الغرض من الدراسة هو تحليل رواية الكاتبة النيجيرية شيما مندا أديتشي "أمريكانا"، استنادا الي نموذج تطوير الهوية السوداء لويليام كروس مع التركيز على

بعض المواقف العنصرية التي تعرضت لها البطلة ومراحل تطور هويتها، وذلك خلال رحلتها من نيجيريا الي الولايات المتحدة الامريكية والعودة مرة أخرى الى أرض الوطن..