

**The American Dream  
in Chimamanda Ngozi  
Adichie's *Americanah*  
and Nicola Yoon's *The  
Sun Is Also A Star***

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## **Abstract**

The United States of America have recently succeeded in imposing their sovereignty over the world by promoting the American dream through all media, films, novels and short stories. In other words, America succeeded in implanting the idea in human minds that the United States of America is the land of many opportunities in which you can achieve everything you desire, regardless of your race, gender, religion, social class, etc. The trick is to present the American Dream as the ideal life you can achieve to have a better standard of living, a luxe villa, a fancy car and marry a blonde girl. Therefore, many critics wondered about what the American dream is, and is it possible for a person to emigrate by any means! Whether legal or not in order to achieve his desired goal. Therefore, the researcher decided to quote from the two contemporary novels that tackled this topic in particular. Moreover, both novelists discuss these dilemmas from different angles in *Americanah* and *The Sun is Also A Star*.

## **key words:**

The American dream, the ideal life, the land of opportunity.

## الحلم الأمريكي في روايتي "أمريكانا" لشيما مندا نجوزي أديتشي و"الشمس أيضا نجم" لنيكولا يوون

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### الملخص:

نحجت الولايات الأمريكية في فرض سيادتها على العالم مؤخرا من خلال الترويج للحلم الأمريكي بكافة الوسائل الاعلامية والافلام و الروايات والقصص القصيره. بعبارة أخرى، نجحت أمريكا في زرع الفكره في عقول البشر أن الولايات المتحدة الامريكه هي أرض الفرص العديده التي يمكنك أن تحقق بها كل شيء ترغب به، مهما كان عرقك، جنسك، ديانتك، درجتك الاجتماعيه أو غيرها. تكمن الخدعه في عرض الحلم الأمريكي على أنه الحياه المثاليه التي يمكنك تحقيقها للحصول على مستوى معيشه أفضل و فيلا فاخره وسيارة فارهه والزواج من فتاة شقراء.ولذلك تساءل العديد من النقاد عن ماهية الحلم الامريكى، وهل من الممكن أن يهاجر الانسان بأي وسيله! سواء أكانت شرعيه أم غير شرعيه من أجل تحقيق هدفه المرجو؟ .

### الكلمات المفتاحية:

الحلم الأمريكي ، الحياه المثاليه ، أرض الفرص .

### **Methods of Research:**

In this research paper, the researcher adhered to the descriptive, analytical, experimental and comparative methodology between characters in the two novels who faced compelling and tough circumstances in their home country and moved to America and England to chase the false American dream, and they all returned with great disappointment.

### **Research Problem:**

The research problem and the rationale behind this research lie in the fact that stereotypes have been thoroughly investigated throughout the ages, and the solution lies in the multiculturalism that heals identity crisis. Simply because it addresses the pain of separation from your homeland, culture and your identity for the sake of this false dream that has been erupted in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Finally, this topic presents itself as worthy of academic development.

### **Research Limits:**

The limits of the research lie in the context of the two novels *Americana* by Chimamenda Ngozi Adichie and *The Sun is also a Star* by Nicola Yoon. To illustrate, by quoting from each novel to support the researcher's standpoint, presenting both novelists' way of thinking and their views of the American society, as well as showing the treatment of the American society towards immigrants of African descent or black-skinned!

### **Research Aims:**

The main aims of the research are as follows:

- 1 - Definition and analysis of the American dream from critics' standpoint of the American literature.
- 2- How were the two authors able to portray the American dream in their works of art?

3- Shedding light on the negative images towards immigrants by the American society

4- Proving the researcher's point of view throughout the two novels that the American dream is nothing but a commodity that does not exist, or that it is a false dream.

### **Research Questions:**

This research includes many questions, including:

Is it possible for every immigrant to achieve his desired dream with hard work, persistence and striving?

How did the protagonists of the two novels suffer from the effects of racism in the American society in order to achieve their desired dream?

How did the American dream impact the personal characteristics of the main characters in the two novels, and what are the efforts they exerted to pursue this dream?

### **Research Results:**

After analyzing both novels and reading many books and articles, the researcher believes that the American dream is about selling an illusion to the peoples of the world that America is the land of dreams and opportunities. Therefore, the dream is called Funkoush (non-existed thing or item) in our Egyptian dialect. However, people were deceived by this false dream of obtaining a visa to the United States at any cost, then, getting American citizenship and being American. Finally, the researcher concluded that we can dismantle the word for another context and change the immigrant's way of thinking to the word "my command was mine" instead of being American (Americanly).

## The American Dream

The American dream is a controversial and dialectical theme that has greatly touched all immigrants in a way or another. It can also be seen even in both novelists and their protagonists. It is worthy to mention that many immigrants pursue the American Dream to fulfill their dreams by having luxe villa, luxury car, and gorgeous blonde lady. However, it is not easy to achieve these dreams or find an asphalt-paved path, but it is a rough, tough, bumpy and lengthy road.

Frederick Carpenter argues that the American dream is what makes American literature different from English literature. The Dream is “always vaguely present but never clearly defined” (5). He delineates the American Dream as “a motivating force of American civilization. Even if the Dream has been propagated willingly or unwillingly, if people have believed in its progressive force or attacked this dream as delusion” (5). Afterwards, the American Dream has since become an exclusively characterized tool for America.

In his book *The American Dream*, Jim Cullen defined the American Dream as: “A dream of personal fulfillment” (7). He described the term as it would have no drama or mystique if it were a self-evident falsehood or scientifically demonstrable principle. Therefore, “The American Dream” is one of the most familiar and resonant phrases in our literary lexicon, so familiar that we seldom pause to ask its origin, its history, or what actually means. The American dream does not refer to one thing but includes: “religious transformation, political reform, education attainment, sexual expression” (7).

In this fascinating short history, Cullen explores the meaning of the American dream, or rather the several American dreams that have both reflected and shaped American identity from the Pilgrims to the present through a religious point of view. He begins by

noting that the United States, unlike most other nations, defines itself not on the **basis** of blood, religion, language, geography, or shared history, but on a set of ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and consolidated in the constitution. At the core of these ideals lies the ambiguous but galvanizing concept of the American Dream, a concept, that for better and worse, has proven to be amazingly elastic and durable for hundreds of years and across racial, class, and other demographic lines.

According to Cullen, Puritan settlers were convinced that God leads them to North America where their New World was described as a promised land. **He** claims that: “the Puritans' sense of mission and their belief in New World was deemed significant by God has influenced the way modern Americans think about their country and themselves as a prototypical nation for moral guidance and economic prosperity”. (17-18) Finally, Cullen explains that the American Dream -by the eighteenth century- had become separated from religious discipline and had become a dream of individual freedom.

The American dream is shown to several people from all over the world as a source of prosperity and successfulness. Added to this, it can be seen to every immigrant especially in the USA rising through the ranks using the social ladder and mobility. Consequently, making enough money to pursue happiness.

Overall, the American dream is based on the American national ethos, which includes the possibility of freedom, prosperity, and success. The idea of the American dream has very deep roots. The term “American dream” was introduced and coined by James Truslow Adams in his book, *The Epics of America*, in 1931 defining it as the dream that “life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement”. (404)



Achieving this dream requires political and economic freedom, as well as the rule of law and property rights. Some believe that the more you work, the more well-being you can achieve your goals. For others, it is an opportunity which everyone wants, and if they got the chance, they could experience the joy of the American dream.

Adams added that the American dream, which has attracted tens of thousands of people from all nations to our shores in the last century, was not just a material dream, no matter how dubious it was. It was more than that. It was a dream for men and women to develop their full potential regardless the barriers of ancient civilizations that were gradually created, and without the help of social structures that evolved for the benefit of classes rather than the common man. In every classroom this dream comes true in real life, here more than anywhere else, although even here it is very imperfect. To sum up, “This is a great epic and a great dream”. (406)

In his book *The American Dream: A Cultural History* Samuel Lawrence starting with an epigraph to Thomas Wolfe: “So, then, to every man his chance—to every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunity—to every man the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him—this, seeker, is the promise of America”. (1) He also stated that: “The American Dream tells this story in the process shedding light on virtually every major dimension of American culture, past, present, and future”. (1-2)

In general terms, the American Dream is the idea that numerous opportunities are available to all immigrants regardless of their background, and that hard work will be well rewarded in America, a land founded upon democracy, liberty and equality. With this hopeful idea as motivation, America has grown from a primitive

land to a developed nation, and has become known as the country of opportunities. It continues to be the subject of scholarly study and also remains an incentive for immigration and internal migration.

The idea that the United States provides its citizens with the opportunity to seek a better life through hard work and persistence transcends American history. Thomas Jefferson vividly manifested this point in the Declaration of Independence in 1776: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness".(5)

Jefferson did not claim that America was a utopia, but he clearly articulates that the nation would allow its people to pursue happiness. God created all men equal; therefore, each man should have the right to control his own destiny and not be hindered by a tyrannical government. All men should rise as far as their talents and tenacity could take them.

Adams captured the sentiments of Declaration of Independence in the 1930s, as he popularized the term "American Dream" While it is unclear whether Adams was the first to use the idiom, Americans immediately latched onto the expression and have evoked it ever since.

Although the American dream remains difficult to define, citizens almost unanimously believe in its existence as the ideology that defines the nation. Most simply, the term expresses the idea that America is the land of opportunities. Citizens enjoy the freedom to pursue their individual goals. For many, the dream involves home ownership, while for others it is found in the pursuit of higher education.

Many Americans would define the term by saying it revolves around providing a better life for future generations. In addition, some would claim that the American dream is exemplified by the

mythic qualities of the west coast: citizens have the unique ability to move west in America and begin a new life because of the abundance of land. Despite the many variations and adaptations of the Dream, all definitions cling to the belief that an American's life can become progressively better through hard work, honesty, and dedication.

Samuel Lawrence claims that there is no better way to understand America than the cultural history of the American Dream. Rather than just a powerful philosophy or ideology, the Dream is thoroughly woven into the fabric of everyday life, playing a vital role in who we are, what we do, and why we do it. No other idea or mythology has as much influence on our individual and collective lives.

Tracing the history of the phrase in popular culture, Samuel gives readers a field guide to the evolution of the American national identity over the last eighty years. He tells the story chronologically, revealing that there have been six major eras of the mythology since the phrase was coined in 1931. Relying mainly on periodical magazines and newspapers as his primary source material, he demonstrates that journalists serving on the front lines of the scene represent our most valuable resource to recover unfiltered stories of the Dream. The problem, however, is that it does not exist, the Dream is just a product of our imagination.

Mark Robert Rank, Thomas A. Hirschl, and Kirk A. Foster assert that the United States has been epitomized as a land of opportunity, where hard work and skill can bring personal success and economic well-being. The American dream has captured the imagination of all immigrants from all walks of life, and to many, it represents the heart and soul of the country. But there is another, darker side to the bargain that America strikes with its people. It is the price individuals pay for their pursuit of the American Dream. That price can be found in the economic hardships millions of

people suffer from. In *Chasing the American Dream*, leading social scientists provide a new and innovative look into a curious dynamic, the tension between the promise of economic opportunities and rewards and the amount of turmoil that people encounter in their quest for those rewards.

The authors explored questions such as: What percentage of Americans achieves affluence, and how much income do we actually have? Are most Americans able to own a home, and at what age? How is it that nearly 80 percent of us will experience significant economic insecurity at some point between ages 25 and 60? How can access to the American dream be increased? The risk of economic vulnerability has increased substantially over the past four decades, and the American Dream is becoming harder to reach and harder to keep. Yet for most Americans, the Dream lies not in wealth, but in economic security, pursuing one's passions, and looking toward the future. *Chasing the American Dream* provides us with a new understanding into the dynamics that shape fortunes and a deeper insight into the importance of the American Dream for the future of the USA.

It is worthy to mention, Nicola Yoon always clarifies important scientific topics such as "Hair" (129) and "A History of Naming". (15) She has integrated various topics and knitted a wonderful novel, besides, these fabulous topics interwoven together in a clear and courteous way that readers can follow.

The American dream is traced in *The Sun is Also a Star* by Nicola Yoon in its early pages, in which she informed her readers about Daniel's parents (Dae Hyun and Min Soo) love that take them from South Korea to America. Despite being less privileged, Dae Hyun had a cousin in America who promised to help. To illustrate, Yoon talks about a *history of naming* Min Soo faced the dilemma of naming her lovely children.

Accordingly, for most Immigrants, moving from your own country to a new one is considered as an act of faith. On the one hand, it is considered a search for opportunity, safety, and prosperity. On the other hand, it is considered as a leap to isolate oneself from one's own people, language, identity, history, and country (15).

Therefore, the mother was perplexed by **giving** her children South Korean or American names. Nevertheless, names are powerful and they are considered as an act of identity marker. The name is a sort of map, locating you and your family in time and place. However, “In Korea, the family name came first and told the entire history of your ancestry. In America, the family name is called the last name. Dae Hyun said it showed that Americans think the individual is more important than the family”. (16)

In the meantime, Min Soo thinks about what name should her sons be called by their teachers and classmates? Or should she “stick” (16) to her own culture by selecting two Chinese characters to form a two-syllable personal name? Finally, she gave her sons American name followed by a Korean personal name followed by the family name. She named the first son Charles Jae Won Bae and the second son Daniel Jae Ho Bae.

I think that she **gave** her two sons Korean and American names because she knew where they were from and where they were going to live. In other words, this wise mom was trying to keep her identity and family traditions as well as helping her sons to adapt **to** the American society by making it easier for other Americans to call them.

In her first part of the history of her father, Natasha tells the story of her family when her father, Samuel Kingsley travelled to America to establish himself as a Broadway actor to pursue the American dream. It was planned to stay for one year but it became two or even three but her mother could not wait any longer

especially when she dialed Samuel. In the meanwhile, Natasha noticed that her father has already melted in the America society as his voice changed and was “lilt and twang than patois” (40).

By the same token, Kingsley has been Americanized. When Natasha, her brother and her mom arrived in the states, she found her father melted in the American society: “He smelled different, though, like American soap and American clothes and American food” (41).

As previously mentioned, Nicola Yoon is good at knitting its novel using extraordinary themes and topics that are related to her novel such as the American Dream, multiculturalism, immigration and so on. To be specific, she briefly talked about hair history through both African American and Korean American perspectives. In the novel, Daniel's father did not enter the black hair care business by coincidence. Earlier in the novel, Dae's cousin kept his promise to help him and gave him a loan, moreover, he advised him to open black hair store. Fortunately, the stores in Harlem were prosperous, successful and thriving.

Equally important, South Korean had been dominating the black hair businesses and industry to a great extent. Yoon stated that it did not happen by chance. It is worth noting, the wigs made of South Korean hair and retailed in the African American communities. This process was popular and widespread in 1960s. Therefore, the South Korean government banned the export of raw hair from its borders. For this reason, the wigs featuring South Korean hair would only be made inside South Korea. Subsequently, South Korea was boosted in the wigs market and moved up the ranks to enter the black hair business. (145)

According to Yoon, the U.S government banned the import of wigs that contained hair from China. Therefore, another element that contributed to the dominance of South Korea in hair care industry. It is measured that South Korean businesses controlled

around from 60% to 80% of the market! It is unreasonable that any other group **could** get a footing in the hair industry. South Korean effectively stiffened their dominance in distribution, retail, **and** manufacturing.

In other words, South Koreans blockaded and shut everyone else out the market. Meanwhile, Dae does not have any idea of this history, he is only knowing that America is the land of opportunity. Thus, his children will have more that he had and evolve her and live the American dream. (146)

In the same manner, Yoon addressed her readers about the hair throughout an African American history by stating that how significant is it! Hairstyles were markers of identity that indicated your tribe and family background to religion or social status. Hairstyle connoted power, wealth and spiritual importance. However, when Europeans captured Africans and put them on slave ships, these Africans were forcibly shaved in a complete act of dehumanization to eradicate them from their own identity and culture.

In *Americana*, Ifemelu comes to the United States without any perceptions of race. But she suffers there from the racial and the color discrimination. White American men see black women variously, in the world of whites, black men used to hide their own identity. While looking for a job, Ifemelu implied adopting the new style of a white consultant at the time of the interview as Ruth advised her to “Lose the braids and straighten your hair. Nobody says anything like that, but it's important. We want to get that job. Auntie Uju had said something similar in the past, and she had laughed then. Now, she knew enough not to laugh. ‘Thank you,’ she said to Ruth”. (250)

Kemi advised ifemelu to bring out her braids as “they will think you are unprofessional” (146). Afterwards, ifemelu asked Auntie Uju “so there are no doctors with braided hair in America? I have



told you what they told me. You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed” (146). In other words, in order to succeed in this country, you have to melt in the crucible.

Therefore, in order to get the job, she is suggested to unbend her hair hesitatingly because of her Nigerian identity crisis. Whereas, whites do not prefer the lady whose hair is braided. Identity is an issue of studying in the areas of ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality, and cultures. Identity gives life to individual and secures his or her life. Ifemelu is confused either to accept the American culture or not. Diasporic people face challenging situations and crises in everyday life which results in putting them at the bottom of race ladder in the American society.

The failure of the American dream can be traced easily in Yoon's novel. Kingsely failed to get audience. Hence, the American dream for him is a real flop as he said: “America done with me and I done with it. More than anything, that night remind me. In Jamaica I got standing ovation. In America I can't get an audience”. (288)

One of the worth noting themes attached to the American dream recently is undocumented immigration. It refers to indefinite residence of persons in the United States without U.S. authorization. In his book *Multicultural America: A Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Carlos E. Cortés presents all individuals who reside in the United States without proper authorization are known as undocumented immigrants, illegal immigrants, unauthorized immigrants or illegal aliens. (1139)

It is worthy to mention that, the population of undocumented immigrants in the United States ranges from 11 to 20 million. According to the 2010 Census, there are approximately 994,500 Americans of Jamaican origin, accounting for 0.3 percent of the total population of the United States. Nearly 61 percent of them



were born in Jamaica. There are significant communities of Jamaican Americans in New York City, Miami, Philadelphia, Boston, Orlando, Baltimore, Cleveland, Atlanta, and Washington D.C. The earliest Jamaican American Communities of note were established in the New York City metropolitan area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Jamaicans have contributed to increased political engagement and activism in the black community since before the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (1253-1254)

By the same token, it can be traced clearly while Natasha had a meeting with Lester Barnes at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), when he told her that her family's last appeal was rejected informing her that she and her family will have to leave the same night at 10 pm. (19)

In the same manner, Natasha does not want to fall in love with Daniel (Red Tie) because she will be deported today, besides, she does not like temporary, non provable things (75). Subsequently, she hung out with Daniel and at the same time she thinks about another chance to meet another attorney that helps her to stop deportation and began a new life in America. However, she had a meeting **with** an immigration attorney named Jeremy Fitzgerald and his office is twelve more blocks and she needs her mobile to get fixed, but she said that she won't need to get it fixed as she will get a new one in Jamaica! She cannot stop thinking about being deported tonight. (92)

Thereafter, Natasha went to Fitzgerald's office, but his paralegal, Hannah Winter, shocked Natasha with the bad news about Fitzgerald who had an accident informing the incredulous and uncharitable Natasha. Afterwards, Hannah informed Natasha that his wife said he is fine, just few bruises, but he won't be back until late afternoon and pushed a sheaf of forms at Natasha to fill. Surprisingly Natasha filled four forms asking her about her political background, being loyal to the United States of America, her

deportation process so far, finally, full accounting about her time in USA. (111)

Therefore, Natasha asks herself, why does Fitzgerald need to know about being deported? Or maybe he is looking for facts as the Kingsleys (family) stayed on a tourist visa that ended. She clarifies that they have committed no crimes except for her dad's Driving Under Influence (DUI). In my point of view, they actually have committed two crimes; Undocumented Immigration (UDI), and father's Driving Under Influence (DUI). (112)

Notably, Nicola Yoon discussed Undocumented Immigration differently by writing its terminology and the process stages. For example, she talked about the Master Calendar Hearing, which is the first formal stage of proceedings in immigration court. Briefly, you will meet the Immigration Judge (IJ) and government attorney to listen to your claims and defenses in detail, besides, figuring out how will your case proceed. Also, the Merits Hearing, stage in a removal proceeding at which the government and the foreign national present their substantive arguments for and against removal. It follows at least one Master Calendar Hearing, which is a procedural hearing that mostly involves scheduling issues. Moreover, the Voluntary Removal and Cancellation of Removal which are closely integrated. (230-231)

In the same way, Daniel was shocked that his interviewer of Yale is the immigration attorney of Natasha (Jeremy Fitzgerald) and asked him to stop her deportation but Fitzgerald let him down informing him that his Natasha is getting deported tonight after all. (293) Mr. Fitzgerald didn't tell the whole truth about what happened exactly. Here, we see that Nicola Yoon used the frame story technique by giving her readers insights about by integration of *A Fairy-Tale History, Part 1*(116) and she clarified that in part 2 by stating "the reason he missed he wasn't able to stop Natasha's deportation is that he missed the court appointment with the judge who could've reversed the Voluntary Removal. He missed because

he's in love with Hanna Winter and instead of going to see the judge, he spent the afternoon at a hotel with her". (297)

Later, a wonderous setting has been indicated which is the deportation ironically at the end of the novel, to illustrate, the sun has been used to symbolizes the deportation time for Natasha and her family "NOW THAT THE SUN HAS set" (300). Of equal importance, Daniel informed Natasha that his interviewer is her attorney and he couldn't get the order overturned. (301)

At the end of the novel, Natasha teaches her father a tough lesson and making mistakes, however, she encouraged him to achieve his dream in Jamaica and to try to be a better dad. "Go on auditions. And be a better dad to Mom. She's done everything, and she she's tried and you owe it to us. You don't get to live in your head anymore. My mom's crying now. Peter walks into her arms for a hug. My father goes to them both, and my mom accepts him. As one, they turn to look at me and gesture for me to join them". (328)

In the other novel, the winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is famous for its proficient and intelligent storytelling and compelling storylines. She sheds the light on the American dream throughout her novel as one of the influential themes which impacts many characters in the novel. According to Adichie, America creates opportunities to thrive.

In the same way, one of the main characters in *Americanah* encountered the same issue of undocumented immigration in Yoon's *The Sun Is Also A Star* like Kingsleys. Obinze traveled to England after America had rejected his visa but he had to use National Insurance number in order to work. His cousin Iloba helped him to find someone Nigerian named Vincent Obi to get his NI in return for some money as agreed. Finally, "Obinze became Vincent". (310)

On the other hand, we can clearly see the idea of the American dream and the states as a land of opportunities when Adichie talks about Ifemelu “She began to plan and to dream. She did not tell Blaine at first, because she wanted to finish her fellowship at Princeton”. (8) Here, Ifemelu looks for personal fulfilment but was not confident and needed more time to be sure before telling Blaine.

Another situation that presents the American dream when “Ifemelu joined the taxi line outside the station. She hoped her driver would not be a Nigerian, because he, once heard her accent would either be aggressively eager to tell her that he had a master’s degree, the taxi was a second job, and his daughter was on the dean’s list at Rutgers... Nigerian taxi drivers were all convinced that they really were not taxi drivers”. (10) Adichie’s eyes catches many tiny details and numerous situations both social and political messages through her accurate woven novel.

The researcher sees that the American dream was portrayed even to any man in any country to flee from poverty and find his way up in the social ladder to seize any opportunity. In Nigeria, the Chief needed somebody to finalize a business deal for him to buy seven properties from National Farm Support after government had privatized it. Obinze did not hesitate to seize that opportunity as he followed the directives of the Chief by registering his company and hiring a white man as his General Manager. Added to this, the Chief advised him that any friend posts a congratulatory in the newspaper before he goes to any bank walk into. The Chief added: “That is how Nigeria works. I’m telling you”. (33)

Consequently, Obinze was dazzled by the easy way he got 50 to 55 million loan from the bank. It is worthy to mention that “he had only to drive to a gate in his BMW and the gateman would salute and open it for him. Even the American embassy was different. He had been refused a visa years ago when he was newly graduate and

drunk with American ambitions but with his new bank statement. He easily got a visa”. (33)

One of the techniques used skillfully by Adichie is the flashback and the flash forward. Adichie portrays how Obinze was dreaming to travel to America when he at college. When Obinze’s mother scheduled her two-year sabbatical. Obinze was enthusiastic because he thought: “it would be in America, one of my friend’s dads had just gone to America and then she said it was Lagos and I asked her what was the point? We might as well just stay in Nsukka”. (71)

Adichie shows impressively that other characters got fueled and energized by the American Dream or dreaming to travel there to upgrade their standard of living. Ginika said to Ifemelu that her family and she are going to America next month. “When Ifemelu told her own parents that Ginika’s family was finally leaving, her father sighed and said ‘at least they have that option’ and her mother said they are blessed”. (78) Afterwards Ranyinudo said “She’ll come back and be a serious Americanah like Bisi”. (78)

It is worth noting that the United States of America gives the nationality to any baby who is born in its States. Significantly, the States offer and support any pregnant woman with numerous obstetrician and gynecologists for labor and delivery departments all over the US. In addition, the baby’s parents or legal guardians will receive birth certificate within a week after the delivery and enroll the baby directly to special supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC program).

Another situation proves that the American dream is the main motive in *Americanah*, Kayode said that “American passport is the coolest thing” (79), then he “would exchange his British passport tomorrow” (79). Even Obinze is looking for that American dream by saying: “I was eight months old when my parents took me to America. I keep telling my mom that she should have gone earlier and had me there!” (79).

It is worth noting that the United States of America gives the nationality to any baby who is born in its States. Significantly, the States offer and support any pregnant woman with numerous obstetrician and gynecologists for labor and delivery departments all over the US. In addition, the baby's parents or legal guardians will receive birth certificate within a week after the delivery and enroll the baby directly to special supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC program).

His friend Kayode said "Bad luck man" (79). Another friend named Ahmed said: "I don't have passport. Last time we traveled; I was on my mom's passport" (79). Then, Osahon said: "I was on my mom's until primary three, then my dad said we needed to get our own passports" (79). Finally, Emenike said: "I've never gone abroad but my father has promised that I will for university. I wish I could just apply for my visa now instead of waiting to finish school" (79).

In the following quotation, we can see clearly the comment of Adichie on Obinze:

to be here, among people who had gone abroad, was natural thing for him. He was fluent in the knowledge of foreign things, especially everybody watched America films and exchanged faded American magazine, but know details about American presidents from hundred years ago. Everybody watched American show, he knows about Lisa Bonet leaving The Cosby show to go to do Angel heart and Will Smith huge debt before he was signed to do the Fresh Prince of Bel Air. You look like black American was ultimate compliment which he told her she wore a nice dress or her hair was done in larger braids. (80)

Obinze still obsessed with the American dream and he is convinced of America as it is the future. When his mother belittled the American books he read by saying to him: "the American books

you read are light weights, she returned to Ifemelu, this boy is too besotted with America. I read American because America is the future mummy. And remember that your husband was educated there”. (84)

The American Dream has been depicting for both; positively, and negatively. In other words, the American dream sometimes is like a bubble that you dream to catch or attain. Therefore, the Dream is embittered and disenchanted. Ifemelu traveled from Nigeria to America to look for “personal fulfilment” (7), ambition, liberty, and better life. But, her ship of dreams hit or demolished against rocks of despair and disillusion. America was not the land of opportunities that she dreamed about. In the contrary, she was in the land of whites not the blacks despite *Juneteenth*. In other words, her dream failed because of racial discrimination and world full of stereotypes.

Her travel back to Nigeria connotes the collapse and deterioration of the American dream. However, America is well-known of being a lantern for democracy, liberty, equality and the most powerful country in the world! Contrariwise, America for immigrants like Ifemelu, was not the secure shelter or the last resort to fulfil the frailty of all peoples of the world were confronting. Subsequently, the American dream manipulated the whole world promising them for better future full of wealth, health, liberty and equality through media but it was the land of fantasy instead!

In *Americanah*, we see the insecurity and instability in postcolonial Nigeria similar to other African countries at that time. Consequently, its peoples suffered from adversity, and calamity and accountable to face such issues and get through many tough matters! So, African peoples started travelling to American and Europe to look for prosperous future filled with opportunities. Aunt Uju told Ifemelu that “Nigeria will not be like this forever, I’m sure



I will find part-time work find and it will be tough, yes but one day I will start my clinic” (56)

Ifemelu lived in poverty in Nigeria. Once upon a time, she opened the door, and saw the landlord standing there, a round man with red eyes and a glass of rough gin that he used to start his day with. He turned to her father and said that it is already three months and I'm still waiting for my rentals. “The landlord shouting at their door, and her father turning a steely, silent face to him, they had never owned rent before. They had lived in this flat all her life; it was cramped, the kitchen walls blackened by kerosene fumes, and she was embarrassed when her school friends come to visit, but they had never owned rent” (49).

Ifemelu and her parents encountered difficulties. Their life is not easy. They lived in a rented apartment. Nevertheless, the owner often asked her patents for money and late payment. She felt awkward and impudent among her friends because she did not have a home of her own like theirs. In addition, Ifemelu had a trouble getting into a good university without a scholarship. After Auntu Uju had an affair with the General, she talked with Auntu Uju, The General handled everything and Ifemelu joined Auntu Uju in Nsukka after school.

“My understanding is that Uju has sufficient help”, her father said. “It is a good idea” her mother said to her father, “she can study well there, at least there will be light every day, No need for her to study with kerosene lamps”. (75) Ifemelu's parents had not any dissatisfaction with Auntu Uju. Auntu helps Ifemelu in every difficult situation. In addition to this, some of the critics argue that the American Dream is just an irony. It never succeeds; it only fantasizes the innocent Africans!

Natasha's father admired America and the American dream especially when his daughter told him that every single student is assigned by a career counselor and she is going to meet her next



week. He was stung and said “America is an organized place, and job opportunities are rife there”

In their book, *Enlightened racism: The Cosby show, Audiences, and the myth of the American Dreams*, Sut Jhally, and Justin Lewis argue that:

the American Dream is just that, a fantasy that few can or will ever realize. It is a fantasy sustained by anecdotes and success stories that focus on exception, rather than the norm. “It is a mirage not only for immigrants but for other racial groups too. Those immigrants do not live in free societies. They are marginalized and treated as second class citizens. American Dream is sad irony Africans. Ifemelu comes to America believing that the Promised Land is full of opportunities and success, hoping to fulfill those dreams and expectations. Sadly, Ifemelu’s American dreams turn into a complete deception, making her argue that living in America is like being in prison. You are caged in. (108)

Ifemelu is enlightened and intelligent Nigerian that attaches her hope on the American dream which disappoints her afterwards. Ifemelu got his visa whereas her beloved, Obinze, got rejected. Once she arrived in her dreamland that there is a successful life that awaits her but she felt dwindled in the new land. After short time, she launched her blog in order to find her own identity and share everyday life situations in the US. After 15 years that she spent in America, she decided to go back to her country.

Ifemelu failed to pursue her American dream but, Aunty Uju is trying to change Ifemelu's mind about travelling back to Lagos as she says:

You are closing your blog and selling your condo to go back to Lagos and work for a magazine that doesn't pay that well. As though to make Ifemelu see the gravity of her own

foolishness. Only her old friend in Lagos, Ranyinudo, had made her return seem normal. 'Lagos is now full of American returnees, so you better come back and join them. Every day you see them carrying a bottle of water as if they will die of heat if they're not drinking water every minute,' Ranyinudo said. (17)

Another incident expressed the failure of the American dream but this time from England. When Obinze was newly back from England, he had been in Lagos for a week. "He began applying for jobs listed in newspaper, but nobody called him for an interview, and his friends from school, who were now working at banks and mobile phone companies, began to avoid him, worried that he would thrust yet another CV into their hands" (28).

Kathryn Schulz, argues that *Americanah* is a novel about identity, nationality, difference, loneliness, aspiration, and love not as distinct entities but in the complex combinational relation they possess in their real life. Ifemelu chooses to become an Americanah; an identity predicated on experience rather than nationality, trajectory rather than the place. (Schulz)

Maureen Corrigan, a book reviewer, notes that Nigeria experienced a sense of insecurity and instability which led Ifemelu to travel for her American dream. Adichie had written a big blow of a novel about immigrants, dreams, the power of first love, and the shifting meanings of skin color, Corrigan added

Americanah is a sweeping story that derives its power as much from witty and fluid writing styles as it does from keen social commentary. Americanah works in so many different genres coming of age novel, romance, comic novel of social manners, up-to-the-minute meditation on race, as well as the aforementioned immigrant saga- that I'm shortchanging its bounty by only mentioning some of the adventures of the main characters here. Like Ifemelu's

hairdo. Adichie's novel tightly braids together multiple ideas and storylines. It is a marvel of skilled construction and imagination. (17)

Ifemelu attempts her quality to assemble her identification in the united states. She announces identity would play a crucial function inside the lifestyles of human life. Adichie takes a critical look at American society and culture. She discovers that tribalism is very much alive in America. She also dramatizes long-standing color discrimination and displacement and identity crises and its effects on black-skinned immigrants.

Emily Raboteau views that Adichie's novel is "a ruthless honesty, about the ugly and beautiful sides of both nations" (Raboteau). It means pros and cons of Western countries particularly America and England versus non-western country (Nigeria) are obviously presented in the novel. Adichie reveals the latent ugly beauty of America which is maintained by the American mainstream discourse.

According to Mike Peed, "Americanah examines blackness in America, Nigeria, and Britain but it is also a steady-handed dissection of universal human experiences, a platitude made fresh by Adichie's observation" (Peed). It means Adichie's novel demonstrates the white superiority and norms in the western world whereby black people are rated second class human by their discourse.

Caroline Levine declares, "Adichie uses a time-honored defamiliarizing. strategy: the perspective of an outsider. She offers us the changing perspectives of her two migrant protagonists who move between countries and climb and fall in personal wealth" (Levine).

Hence, it means that Ifemelu and Obinze have a different social and geographical locations. Immigration allows an individual to experience many issues abroad and to learn about the different

societies that assign power according to the social hierarchical definition. These critics viewed the novel from various angles. However, to date no one has analyzed the issue of the failure of the American dream. This study therefore analyzes the text from the point of view of racism and the American dream. In these critical approaches, the emphasis has always been mainly on culture, feminism, colonialism and diversity. No one has systematically analyzed this text on the basis of the failure of the American dream.

Without a dream, a man has no motive. The American dream is a dream in which many have believed and still believe. Thus, the American dream has unique implications for different cultures. It allows anyone who has the desire to realize a personal dream or "fulfilment" (7). He knows no boundaries of caste, sex or religion. The true viability of the American dream has never been more clearly defined. The concept one usually follows is a perfectly ordered life with two children, a house with a white driver and a perfect wife. Despite this, the American dream is not the most obvious idea. Cullen states that "every version of the American dream is based on orientation and geographic location". (161) Ifemelu's journey can be discussed from the series of dreams that she wants to fulfill. Her fellow students who were previously in the United States had high expectations of making the American dream come true. Her influence is believed to be a force for enlightenment and success, but over time it is portrayed as increasingly problematic and limited to the African American.

Ifemelu travels to the United States in search of a job and money, as well as a better education. Her journey does not assess her development as she envisions it. Because of her hairstyle and clothing, she was often dehumanized and objectified in front of white people. Few weeks earlier, she had just graduated and all her classmates were talking about going overseas to take the American medicine exams or the British exams, because the other choice was to fall into a hopeless land of unemployment: "The

country was starved of hope; cars stuck for days in long, sweaty petrol lines, pensioners raising wilting placards demanding their pay, lecturers' gathering to announce yet one more strike" (46).

Ifemelu has great enthusiasm and interest in settling in America after obtaining a visa. First, he says, Nigeria ran out of hope with cars stuck for days in long, sweaty gas lines, and teachers gathered to announce yet another strike. Ifemelu's first and foremost priority is to travel to the America of dreams with other students. Even her lover Obinze reads American books because, he considered America as the destination of all immigrants and the promised land for fulfillment and success: "I read American books because America is the future, Mummy. And remember that your Husband was educated there". (84)

The protagonist's perception of America is very indisputable. She dreams of being in America, in her opinion, American universities have better criteria and higher standards than British ones. America is a symbol of opulence, hope, prosperity, and social mobility for Africans in general and Nigerians in particular.

So many young Nigerians have been influenced by the culture and luxury of the American lifestyle presented by Hollywood movies and daily talk shows. They read American books. But instead of shortening the strike days, it has increased by the day in Nigeria. Strikes were now the order of the day. In the newspapers, university professors recount their lawsuits, agreements trampled upon by government men whose own children went to school abroad.

The campuses have been emptied; the classrooms emptied. The students hoped for short strikes because they couldn't hope for a strike. "Everyone was talking about leaving. Even Emeka had left for England" (98). Likewise, not only younger generations, but also

all older people dream of happiness, choice and better chances to enrich life.

Ifemelu was very enthusiastic about travelling to America. She has had enough of the political turmoil and the current situation in Nigeria or Africa in general. She often talked about the state of Nigeria with his aunt who lived in the United States. Ifemelu is a young, energetic and excited Nigerian who wanted to live a happy and prosperous life in America.

In the meantime, immigrants and African Americans encountered greater obstacles. They are disadvantaged not only because of racial issues, but also because of existing class inequality in America. In their significant and felicitous essay, *The State of the American Dream: Racial and Ethnic Socioeconomic Inequality in the United States*, Charles Hirshman and K. Matthew Snipp discuss US immigrants and opportunities in the United States: "Despite the massive immigrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the image of American society as an extension of English society persisted throughout the first six decades of the twenty century", and because of that "the patterns in the first half of the century" was expecting "the exchange of cultural conformity for a chance at upward mobility," which made "the American Dream-seem obsolete". (90)

The American Dream began to create racial definitions and standards for the dream, that excluded races that did not conform to white Anglo-Saxon standards. This perspective torpedoes the idea that the American dream is available to everyone. Instead, the American dream, is largely at the turn of the century, excluded immigrants on racial grounds and required cultural assimilation in exchange for opportunity. For that reason, Hirschman and Snipp also confirm that "there remain wide socioeconomic gaps between minority populations and the majority". (90)

African Americans have been the most restrained from attaining the American dream. In 1903, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois underlined in *The Souls of Black Folks* that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, the relation of the darker to the higher races of men in Asia and Africa, America and the islands of the sea”. (372)

In fact, this novel proved the statement by Du Bois. Even in the twenty-first century many immigrants like young Nigerian is depressed, disappointed, and humiliated because of their race. Ifemelu departs America with the dream of success but her dream gets scattered because of inequality and racial discrimination. It shows **that** even today there is still the existence of a color problem which has influenced the African American community and other non- whites’ minorities in the United States.

Du Bois further said: “Let’s be fair tone and say that black people are racist too, because of course, we’re all prejudiced -I can’t even stand some of my blood relatives, grasping, selfish folks- but racism is about the power of a group and in America its white folks who have that power”. (327)

These lines interpret that we all are prejudiced but racism is the matter of power. Those who have the power vanquish and subdue the powerless. Immigrants are gripped and controlled by whites in America. Whites are large in number, due to which they have power.

Race is not a biological reality which diffuses, race is an empirical and political reality. Discussing race Adichie, the 2021 Hurston/Wright Foundation’s North Star Award winner, writes:

There is a ladder of racial hierarchy in America. White is always on the top, especially White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, otherwise known as WASP, and American Black is always on the bottom and what’s in the middle depends upon time and place or as that marvelous rhyme



goes: if you are white, you are all right; if you are brown, stick around; if you are black, get black! (187)

It shows that the novel robustly portrays the epochal behavior towards race. Hence, the race is built by society. Thus, the racial ambivalence between whites and blacks create the failure of the dream for Ifemelu. The protagonist believes that being acknowledged is a path to success, but her credulity creates failure. Race is a socially constructed antiquity that ranks people based on visual differences attributed to invisible differences.

Distinguishing someone is a matter of perception. African Americans are the most victims of discrimination. The protagonist of Adichie emigrates to the United States with great ambitions. This part of the country is a guaranteed land for African Americans. Racial affairs moved from place to place “I did not think of myself as black and I only become black when I came to America”. (290)

To put in a different way, in Nigeria “Race doesn't really work here. I feel like I got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black” (447). It means Ifemelu feels like a black and disadvantaged in America. She becomes depressed in America, later she decided to travel **back to** Nigeria. After arriving in Lagos, she feels safe from apartheid. Therefore, It shows how as **an** African American, **she** couldn't withstand the stigmatized life in the US. Ifemelu experienced racism during her stay in America, something that she was never aware **of** in Nigeria.

Alan Read in *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, clearly states that “I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the mindset of other objects”.(402)

Unlike the most diasporic stories, Ifemelu chooses to return to Nigeria. Her return to Nigeria proves that she is disappointed with



life in America. The dream of wealth and happiness is a real flop and complete failure. The term Americana is used by Nigerians for Ifemelu which has absorbed some aspects of American culture. Her experience as a foreigner in America helps her understand how difficult it is to accept a new identity imposed by society and the country's understanding of such a category as race, and how depressed a person she is. Race is certainly seen as a visceral reality that affects the lives of many African Americans.

Keith M. Verna states that: “Assumptions linked to physical difference stem from the widespread belief during slavery times that dark skin and African features were a sign of lack of intelligence, ugliness, and evil, whereas light skin represented purity, civilization, and beauty” (27).

Adichie shows that there is a weighty matter in the American employment system towards immigrants. Ifemelu's education qualifies her for better job opportunities, however, she is compelled to hide her level of education to be accepted by American employers, as they tend to hire staff with little education. When ifemelu applied for a waitress, one of the employees said: “delete the three years of university in Nigeria: American employers did not like lower-level employees to be too educated” (171).

Since low-level jobs such as “a waitress position in a little restaurant that didn't pay a salary, only tips” (325). A job that pays unstable payment, immigrants are obliged to work in more than one job. Being in very low-paying jobs makes it difficult for immigrants to progress financially, “you can see I am working three jobs and yet it's not easy” (230).

“Nigerians are the most educated immigrant group in this country” (207). This shows clearly how much whites underestimate Africans or Blacks. Ifemelu receives a rude response from the employee. His belief in the American dream

was undermined by the challenges of an unequal society. Nigerian qualifications have been tarnished by the Americans. The truth is that African Americans were discriminated against and did not have the same opportunities as whites.

However, Ifemelu did not lose hope. It is important to understand that ifemelu is not a poor, lazy and irresponsible person. On the contrary, she is strong, honest, happy, educated and hardworking. Ifemelu is ready to make a significant contribution to the growth and development to the US. Due to Ifemelu's ethnicity, she is oppressed, marginalized and related to subnormal work.

Adichie the holder of Master's Degree in Creative Writing from Johns Hopkins University, indicates that African American rarely get respect or decent jobs because white Americans commonly denied blacks their humanity, dignity, and value to achieve anything, the especially American dream, was hard for them.

Ifemelu is searching for a job but highly dissatisfied with the Whites who used to recruit for the job. No doubt Ifemelu is a diligent and devoted lady. Her Certificates are all fine and fabulous. Along with splendid certificates she is a very decent girl. Always she attained in an interview with full preparation, but she is not selected because she is a black lady. Somewhere she is urged to do disrespectful job as well as the job of the lower level. One of the employees said: "So here's the deal. There are two positions, one for office work and others for help relaxing. The official position has already been filled. Now what I need is a help to relax. If you want the job you have it. I'd pay you a hundred dollars a day, with the possibility of a raise, and you'd work as needed, no set schedule. (177).

Afterwards, Ifemelu walked into his house as Adichie involved in the scene narratively

“She should leave. She stood up. ‘I can't have sex,’ she said. Her voice felt as sputter, unsure of itself. ‘I can't have sex with you,’ she repeated. Oh no, don't expect you to, he said, too quickly. She moved slowly towards the door, wondering if he had a gun. ‘Just come here and lie down,’ he said. ‘Keep me warm,’. I will touch you a little bit, nothing you'll be uncomfortable with. I just need some human contact to relax” (189).

This quotation shows the moment when ifemelu slept with a white man and sold her body, which turns out to be a very sorrowful situation. She did this because of the financial crisis. Ifemelu has to share the bed with the man to pay the rent and tuition. She thinks a lot, but after not finding a job, she has no choice but to make a decision and sleep with a man. When Ifemelu got there, she seemed disappointed. Her dream of becoming a successful student is smashed when she cannot find a job and is forced to work. Blacks were hated and despised by the American society.

Ifemelu's dissatisfaction with American dream, culture, color discrimination for issues that many immigrants experienced. Despite their desire to come to America, live in America, raise their children in America, and pursue American dreams, **they** do not substantially want to melt in the American culture. Ifemelu doesn't find the American lifestyle coercive or high-caliber or superior enough in a way or another to fit into. She **believes** that their own way of life in their home country is far superior to the American values they live by.

She becomes nostalgic and determines to return to Nigeria leaving the American dream behind because of racial injustice in the US. She could not find inner satisfaction with anything except her return to **her** homeland as an indictment of the failure of the American Dream. After completing fifteen long years pursuing the American dream, ifemelu feels lost in America.

In fact, this is not only the situation of Ifemelu, but the situation of all diasporic people. Ifemelu somehow adapts to American culture earlier, starts a blog herself and collects what black people have experienced from America. But nothing satisfied her. She could not resist the nostalgic feeling with her homeland in any competition. Even the smallest things can hurt any immigrant's heart. That is why Ifemelu decided to return to her country.

This research shows African American lady Ifemelu's wistful and painful journey in search of the American dream and happiness. She was dreaming of living a thriving and felicitous life, fails to achieve her goal after surrendering to the life of the American and suffers a lot and returns home after fifteen years. In addition to her struggles and distressing situation, she faces the challenges of living in equality and peace of mind. Here, the dream of happiness and prosperity has completely failed. Inner contentment never comes when there is no sense of equal opportunity. For this reason, immigrants are obliged to feel like foreigners. Abuse and racial discrimination make Ifemelu feel humiliated and disappointed.

Immigrants are looking for successful opportunities to enhance and improve their standard of living. They are always in pursuit of name, fame, power, fortune and their better life. *Americanah*'s protagonist, Ifemelu, does follow this path. America is indeed a promised land for Ifemelu. No one likes to be ruled by others, nor wants to be a slave. Everyone has the right to live their life in their own way and to be respected and appreciated

In such auspicious land, Ifemelu faces color discrimination and inequality in different ways. She even tries to escape discrimination, oppression and injustice. But from time to time it is tamed in various ways, sometimes visibly and invisibly, into the loop of discrimination. After many years of struggle and a certain level of hard work, Ifemelu achieves some sort of success and

comfort by her blog. However, she won't be cheerful because of racial prejudice. Hence, the only option Ifemelu finds is being in her homeland and surrounded with her people. She becomes nostalgic and decides to return to Nigeria without her best material of success and personal fulfilment. Therefore, the researcher concludes that the American dream is just disillusioned, disenchanted, unfulfilled and far-fetched.

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