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Racism In Adichie's Americanah

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Abstract

Racism is a premise of racial hierarchy and inequality. Racism has associated and even encouraged colonialism. In the society, people are identified by their name, culture, gender, class, country and religion but if an individual is unable to survive within the country or culture and faces struggles in the domestic life, racism and the issue of self-identity emerges. Racism is a basic evil which is the primary cause for problems like migration, identity and psychological issues. In the novel*Americanah*,Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie gives a wide approach on the complex relation between whites and blacks. She also portrays the relationship of the blacks with people at large all over the world.

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Key words: Racism, Self-Identity and discrimination.

Racism is a premise of racial hierarchy and inequality. Racism has associated and even encouraged colonialism. Racism and self-identity has emerged as on outlet of Post-Colonialism. The word Post-colonialism is defined as the study of cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism which focuses on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized people and their lands. It interprets the European vision of postcolonial nations with the purpose of exposing the discrimination. In comparison to other countries, Africa was extremely affected by racism. Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka were most notable African authors, who inspired the new generation writers like Phoebe Robinson, Mat Johnson and Roxane Gay.

In the society, people are identified by their name, culture, gender, class, country and religion but when an individual is unable to survive within the country or culture and faces struggles in the domestic life, racism and the issueof self-identity emerges.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, writer of the novel *Americanah* has a strong existence in contemporary African literature and all her works were praised in western literary circles. Adichie's stories were delivered in a traditional western literary style and the language of colonizers. *Americanah* was her last novel which deals with the issues related to the racism and negotiation of identities. Her main characters in the novel exposes about race, ethnicity and culture in Nigeria, the United States and England. Adichie has experienced a different African reality than the one existing in the Western imagination.

In the novel*Americanah*, Adichie gives a wide approach on the complex relation between whites and blacks. She also portrays the relationship of the blacks with the other people all over the world. Ifemelu, the protagonist of the novel *Americanah*, is an effective

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character who was affected and influenced by her race. Ifemelu and Obinze experiences their first love relationship in their teenage in Africa. Ifemelu, a Nigerian middle class student moves to the United States for her higher studies. There, she encounters racism for the first time, and the burdens she faces as an immigrant woman is innumerable. After ten years, Ifemelu became a successful blogger in the United States, but her steady life abroad neither weakens her attachment towards her motherland Nigeria. When Ifemelu came back to Nigeria after a while, she found a different country than the one she had left.

Ifemelu succeeded in the United States through her blog about race in America, entitled "Raceteenth or Various Observations about American Blacks". The novel begins with a flashback, as Ifemelu braids her hair in New Jersey salon in preparation for going back to Nigeria after 15 years from USA. The end of the novel deals with Ifemelu's return to Nigeria and her reunion with Obinze who is married to someone else.

Ifemelu's struggle with her self-identityin the American society knew no bounds. When she lived in Nigeria, she did not have the feel of racism since everyone is like her, 'black'. But as soon as she settled in America, the whites surrogate her because of her skin colour. Adichie voices out the anguish of Ifemelu through these words in the novel *Americanah:*

> When your black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. But we don't talk about it. We don't even tell our white partners the small things that piss us off and the things we wish they understood better, because we're worried they will say we're overreacting, or we're being too sensitive. (89-90)

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In the course of Ifemelu's association in America, she overcomes sexual abuse, colour discrimination, and culture diversity which made her strong thereby shapingher identity. In probing deep into the novel, it could be analysed under three different points of view: Firstly,It is crucial to analyse Ifemelu's and Obinze's relationship in terms with the African ancestors. Secondly, Ifemelu's and Curt's relationship examines and permits us to know the complicated and tortuous world of black and white relations in America. Lastly, in examining Ifemelu's affair with Blaine, an American professor who loves Ifemelu, the reader delves into the world of African American culture and the incompatibility that exist regarding racism.

The reader encounters several situations when the protagonist comes under different types of discrimination such as cultural background, gender, ethnicity or racial group and economic position.The significance of these diverse discriminatory layers is profoundly harming and unjust to black women as they are dragged to the bottom of the social ladder.

As an African woman, Adichie has openly represented herself in the novels, since the author has not seen the blacks represented fairly. Americanah explores the deconstruction of European vision of African countries and the history of numerous countries and cultures under racism.

Racism is a basic evil which is the primary cause for problems like migration, identity and psychological issues. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has clearly explained the effects of racism and self-identity in Americanah.

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