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The Afropolitanist Discourse and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*: A Reading

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Abstract:

*Consider now Taiye Selasi's 'Bye-Bye Babar' article in The Lip Magazine of March 3, 2005 and the emergence of what has been variously described as a movement, a critical theory, a label and even a cultural commodification. Afropolitanism represents for twenty-first century young Africans what Pan-Africanism represent for their fathers. Indeed, as it is with the emergence of a new art movement or philosophy, the controversy stirred by Afropolitanism is yet unresolved. This essay is not an attempt to fuel it. Instead, this paper places Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* within the context of Afropolitanist discourse. It tries to reveal how the novel befittingly fits into an afropolitanist mould, through a conscious juxtaposition of Afropolitanism's definitive article and *Americanah* in order to expose their points of overlap. This essay therefore is a reading of Adichie's *Americanah* through an Afropolitanist lens.*

Keywords: Afropolitanism, afropolitanist, discourse, *americanah*

1. Introduction

For the British-born Nigerian-Ghanaian Taiye Selasi(2005) who coined the term from Africa and cosmopolitan in her 2005 seminal article 'Bye-Bye Babar',afropolitan represents a progressive and afrooptimistic articulation and representation of modern-day Africans who are at home in several cosmopolitan cities of the world yet with a strong connection to Africa. She states:

They (red: we) are Afropolitans –new wave of African emigrants, coming soon or already collected... you'll know us through funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic achievements.... There is at least one location on the African continent to which we attach our sense of self [...] Then there is the city of the G8 or two that we know like the backs of our hands [...] we are Afropolitans: not citizens but Africans of the world (2).

She refers to Afropolitans as the newest generation of African emigrants readily recognized by their peculiar blend of fashion, their accent, their African morals and their academic successes and for whom there is a place in Africa they call home and also a place or places outside the African continent they feel quite at home. In fact, for her, Afropolitans are Africans of the world.

Amanda Fortier(2015) views it 'as a totally optimistic, modern concept of Africans living on and off the continent-who are at home in Dakar, Joburg, or Addis as they are in London, Paris or New York'(2). As a mélange of Africa and cosmopolitan, Selasi uses afropolitan to describe 'a class of people who have deep and meaningful-yet fluid, connections to Africa, while identifying more as citizens of the world than any particular nation state' (Ooko-Ombaka, 2).

Cameroonian Philosopher and social scientist, Achille Mbembe(2007) did much in popularizing the theory in his essay 'Afropolitanism' where he states that 'cultural mixing' or 'the interweaving of worlds' has been adopted since time immemorial as Africa's 'way of belonging to the world' (28) irrespective of where one lives-whether on or outside the continent. Mbembe is of the belief that afropolitanism is useful in the manner in which it offers an 'Africa-mediated vision of the world.'

However, in the midst of some celebratory essays are other voices of dissent in the afropolitanist discourse. Kenyan intellectual and writer Binyavanga Wainaina (2012) is vocal in his critique of afropolitanism, insisting that he is a pan-Africanist, not an afropolitan. Amanda Fortier submits that 'Wainaina, Kenya's literary darling and self-professed pan-Africanist, is a vocal critic of the concept calling it a 'marker of crude cultural commodification' (1). Stephanie Bosch Santana(2012) in her essay 'Exorcizing Afropholitanism' which itself is a response to Binyavanga Wainaina's lecture delivered in 2012 at AfricanStudies Association UK 2012 Conference, makes a similar statement to that of Fortier when she submits that 'Wainaina's address was a kind of exorcising in its own right, an attempt to rid African literary and cultural studies of the ghost of Afropolitanism' (1). She goes further to say that 'for Wainaina, Afropolitanism has become a marker of crude cultural commodification – a phenomenon increasingly 'product driven', design focused, and 'potentially

funded by the West" (2). Indeed, Wainaina's outright rejection of the term is evident in the title of the said address 'I am a Pan-Africanist, not an Afropolitan'.

Bosch Santana (2012) seems to take sides with Binyavanga Wainaina because for her, the term 'perhaps once held promise as a new theoretical lens and important counterweight to Afro-pessimism, but [...] has increasingly come to stand for empty style and culture commodification' (1). Her empty stylishness and culture commodification of Afropolitanism perhaps stems from Selasi's vivid painting of the image of stylish Africans who would be recognized by their 'funny blend of London fashion', their 'kente cloth worn over low-waisted Jeans' and their 'enormous afros'. She therefore finds it difficult to deal with the fact that Selasi started with a stylish description before infusing a 'substantive political consciousness'. Following the albeit wrong principle of 'first things first', that is, placing things in their order of importance, she concludes that Afropolitanism is 'a general brand of cosmopolitanism cloaked in African style as well as a literal 'coat hanger' for changing fashion' (3). Obviously, she fails to give pride of place to the 'substantive political consciousness' - 'the refusal to over simplify; the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa...' which 'most typifies the Afropolitan consciousness' (Selasi, 4).

Marta Tveit (2013) is unequivocal in expressing her anger and consequent rejection of the afropolitan discourse. She reveals that her 'second thought when reading Taiye Selasi's 'what is an Afropolitan?' was that this is the kind of sludge that pisses me off' (1). Notice her use of the word sludge to refer to Selasi's piece? One would not wonder why she entitled her dissension piece 'The Afropolitans must Go'. Her displeasure with the concept Selasi promotes has to do with identity construction or politics which she presents as a major shortcoming of afropolitanism. She opines:

I am not so much concerned with the commodification inherent in Afropolitanism as I am with the danger of reproducing a reductive narrative, one which implicitly licenses others to reproduce the same narrative because it has been confirmed by an 'Afropolitan' herself (1).

The 'reductive narrative' of afropolitan identity-the 'enormous Afros', 'tiny t-shirts', 'gaps in teeth', incredible torsos' that are 'unique to and common on African coastlines', kente cloth worn over low-waisted jeans, 'African lady' over Ludacris bass lines' - is in Tveit's view Selasi's construction of her (and her types) conceived identity; a narrative 'clearly addressing a westernized audience, explaining to them the strange ways and particulars of this tribe of Afropolitans' (2).

Indeed, Selasi(2005) constructed a group identity on behalf of the group at nobody's behest and Tveit questions the justification for grouping them under a particular identity in which some of them might not be interested and would rather prefer that such identity formation be left to the individual as their sole responsibility. But then, even as Selasi has constructed the group identity of Afropolitans, Tveit submits, that 'it is exclusive, elitists and self-aggrandizing' (3) and that:

Fronting a constructed group identity such as the 'Afropolitan' backs-up a (still) reductive narrative of Africa and the African which in turn continues to be an important part of neocolonial soft power structures (4).

She describes the same set of people as being like most people, all being global citizens with varied cultural influences from various backgrounds. She, therefore, concludes that the most equity-promoting, barrier-breaking, racism-fighting thing 'we' can do is see ourselves as just that - part of the noble and most ancient tribe... of Most People' (Tveit, 5).

Further, consumerism and commodification have also been identified by Emma Dabiri(2014) as part of the challenges of afropolitanism due to what he identified as 'the dominance of fashion and lifestyle in Afropolitanism' as well as 'the relationship between these industries, consumption and consumerism' (2). Responding to the stylish description of the Afropolitan; their voguish and hybridized fashion and lifestyle, Dabiri submits that:

That whole lifestyle of Sex and The City feminism, cocktails, designer clothes, hand bags and shoes is not particularly liberating..., so I see no reason why we should transfer such models to Africa and declare it progress (3).

He insists that our ability to create 'African flavoured versions' of such western lifestyle and fashion, 'convention and form' is not a determiner of our value. He advises that 'such an approach will surely only ever leave us playing catch-up in a game the rules of which we did not write' (3) and warns Africans to be careful about any movement that champions such approach.

Contrary to the critiques against afropolitanism, some people heap accolades on the concept, celebrating what they take to be its strength and advantages. The Sorbonne-trained Cameroonian philosopher and social scientist, professor Achille Mbembe is reported to have 'popularized this term in academic discourse with his 2006 essay entitled 'Afropolitanism' in which he attempts to reterritorialize afropolitanism, in part by drawing attention to the long history of migration for and within the African continent' (Santana, 2). He views afropolitanism as 'the way Africans create the world, manage the world and irrigate the world' (qtd in Ndiaye, 1) and his interpretation; that the 'promise of vacating the seduction of pernicious racialized thinking, [the] recognition of African identities as fluid, and the notion that the African past is characterised by mixing, blending and superimposing' (Dabiri, 2) as offered by afropolitanism is considered an 'enduring insight' by Emma Dabiri(2014) who highlights consumerism and commodification as major weaknesses of afropolitanism. Indeed Mbembe's contribution to the Afropolitan discourse is one of the strident supporting voices who are interested and insists on the socio-economic, political and analytical value of the ideology.

Kenyan national and joint degree candidate at Harvard, Amandla Ooko-Ombaka who is proud to identify herself as a citizen of the world is proudly an Afropolitan. She seems quite interested in Selasi's submission that 'it is high time the African stood up' (6) in order to contribute towards making Africa a better place. She pushes aside the 'physical markers of Afropolitans' which for most of the critics constitute a short-coming, and dwells more on the 'acute awareness among this brood [...] that there's work to be done' (Selasi, 7) at home. She tells us that:

[...] the term evokes for me a desire of our generation to articulate and make concrete the impact of our smörgåsbord of lived experiences across Africa and the rest of the world. Above giving voice to this experience, it demands a commitment to using this diversity of experience to make a difference on the continent (however defined), working together with like-minded compatriots in our home countries (2).

The making of a difference no matter the guise, represents for Ooko-Ombaka, the Afropolitan consciousness which means a lot to her hence her suggestion that 'young Afrians, Afropolitans, Pan-Africans' (Ooko-Ombaka, 5) should own the conversation of afropolitanism.

The Afropolitanist discourse receives a boost through the contribution of Senegal's former Minister of Women's, Children's and Family Affairs, Professor Ndioro Ndiaye (2015) who is also a former Deputy Director-General of the International Organization for Migration. In her article 'The Role of Women as Afropolitanists', she postulates that afropolitanism entails 'the emergence of the African continent', which for her would be achieved through a necessary '... breaking away from strong tendencies and adopting a voluntarist outlook based on the seeds of change' (1). Although Ndiaye's strong tendencies remain a matter for guessing, yet, adopting a voluntarist approach which seemingly entails and highlights the Afropolitans' 'acute awareness... that there's work to be done' and the call for commitment towards making a difference on the continent speaks more hence her call for the emergence of 'a new brand of feminism for today's Africa'. The role she ascribes to afropolitan women is embedded in her submission that:

The time has come for African women leaders to contribute to building states capable of delivering the services expected by their populations [...] only then can we make a new contribution to universal civilization, and foster a common conception and awareness of Africa as the source and birth-place of international development and lasting peace (6).

In fact, intellectual discourse is sustained by controversy. The field of literary study is not left out, it has had and will continue to have its fair dose of disagreements. No doubt, the coinage of the neologism known as afropolitanism by Taiye Selasi and the assents and dissents that followed are testaments of a thriving intellectual culture. Literary history is replete with theories, schools, movements and the consequent attraction and distraction they held. Hence, we are able to talk about Classicism, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Modernism, Post-modernism, etc., and their numerous subscribers both in the West where they originated from and in Africa.

Africans in diaspora and at home have tried to capture their experiences, consciousness and ideologies over the years. Following the abolition of slave Trade which saw the massive shipment of millions of Africans out of their ancestral homes, and their consequent settlement wherever they found themselves, pan-Africanism emerged as a rallying point for people of African descent. In the twenty-first century, when it seems as if pan-Africanism has lost its vitality, afropolitanism has emerged. To replace pan-Africanism? Or to stand on its own as a distinct school of thought? Is afropolitanism the modern or new form of pan-Africanism? It is now fifteen years since Selasi published her seminal essay in which the term first appeared. It has attracted a follower in some of Africa's brightest literary stars such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who has been described as 'one of the most respected young intellectual figures of the 21st century' (Onukaogu & Onyerionwu, 8).

2. Adichie as an Afropolitan

Adichie (2013) in her novel *Americanah* espouses the ethos and tenets of afropolitanism and even goes ahead to coin her home-grown version of it – 'Nigeropolitanism'. Is this surprising? Not at all! Recall Selasi's exemplification of Afropolitans in her essay? She tells us that:

Artists such as Keziah Jones, Trace, Trace founder and editor Claude Gruzintsky, architect David Adjaye, novelist Chimamanda Adichie all exemplify what Gruzintsky calls the '21st century African' (4).

For Selasi and for us, with evidence from autobiographical source, Adichie truly fits into an afropolitan mould. Firstly, Selasi's description of Afropolitans as captured at Medicine Bar in London reveal a set of 'beautiful, brown-skinned people' for whom home means 'many things: where their parents are from; where they go for vacation, where they went to school; where they see old friends; where they live (or live this year)' yet 'there is at least one place on The African Continent to which [they] tie (their) sense of self [...] then there's the G8 city or two (or three) we know like the backs of our hands and the various institutions that know us for our famed focus' (2).

Truly, for Adiche, home means a lot of places: Nsukka, Abba, or Umuunnachi. Although she is not a native of Nsukka, yet the University town features prominently in all her fiction. Allwell Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu tell us that:

Adichie's bond with Nsukka is totally convincing having lived there (and probably was born there) for the first nineteen years of her life; having had her nursery, primary, secondary and early parts of her university education there (347).

They also inform us that Adichie, once erroneously accused of writing only about her home town-Nsukka, said "Nsukka is a town I love. If you want me to write about your home town, then write me a formal letter" (347). Abba is the hometown of Chimamanda Adichie while Umuunnachi is her maternal home. These three places represent Adichie's home and this probably accounts for the unmistakable pride of place she accords them in her narratives.

Again, Adichie (2013) ties her sense of self to Nigeria – her country, whose ambassador she is. Indeed, in Nigeria, 'buildings fall down; pensions aren't paid, politicians are murdered, riots are in the air... and yet', Adichie loves Nigeria and is proud to be identified as a Nigerian. As for a G8 city or cities as postulated by Selasi, Adichie knows Princeton, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Brooklyn, etc., like the back of her hands. The dexterity with which she gives a detailed description of these places in her *Americanah* is noteworthy. In fact, Adichie divides her time shuttling between Nigeria

and the U.S. As for the 'various institutions that know them for their academic successes', Adichie's 'bag' is filled with various awards and fellowships and this speaks for itself.

Furthermore, concerning Afropolitans, Taiye Selasi opines that 'some of us were bred on African shores then shipped to the West for higher education' (3). This is particularly the case with Chimamanda Adichie: she was probably born, but certainly grew up, in Nsukka, Nigeria, where she spent the first nineteen of her formative years. She was then shipped to the West at age 19 'transforming her educational career from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to Drexel University Philadelphia, and then to Eastern Connecticut State University, both in the United States of America' (Onukaogu and Onyerionwu 344-5).

Selasi (2005) goes further to explain:

Where our parents pursued protection in conventional careers such as doctoral studies, lawyer, banking, engineering, we branched into fields such as media, politics, music, venture capital, design and are not shy about voicing our African influences (as they are) in our work (4).

This once more is also applicable to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who transferred from Medicine and Pharmacy she was studying at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and ventured into Communication and Political Science the moment she left Nigeria for the United States of America. She went ahead after graduation to obtain a master's degree in Creative Writing and African Studies. Adichie, in line with the ethos of afropolitanism does not shy away from expressing her African influences; her 'Igboness', in her works. From *Purple Hibiscus* to *Half of a Yellow Sun* and from *The Thing Around your Neck* to *Americanah*, there is a heavy presence of what Onukaogu and Onyerionwu call a 'well-rooted Africanist patriotism [and] significant cultural sensitivity' (269) – that unapologetic celebration of African cultural heritage by Adichie.

Perhaps what most typifies Adichie as an Afropolitan is 'a willingness to complicate Africa', namely: to engage with, critique and celebrate the parts of Africa that mean most to her as much as her 'effort to understand what is ailing in Africa' (Selasi, 4). This is actually true considering Adichie's profound social criticism through her narratives. In *Purple Hibiscus*, she probes the problem of military dictatorship especially when it was at its apogee during the late General Sani Abacha's regime. Abacha's 'serial pulverization of opposition and the total elimination of the freedom of speech, especially of the press' (Onukaogu & Onyerionwu, 121) are well documented in *Purple Hibiscus*. Religious intolerance between Muslims and Christians and the consequent riots and deaths (the Kano pogrom of 1966) is commented upon in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Even the perennial strike epidemic, government interference, unpaid salaries, dilapidated infrastructure etc., that bedevil the Nigerian university system receive an honourable mention in *Americanah*, perhaps as some of the causes of brain drain which has contributed in undermining Nigeria's development. Adichie's narrator in *Americanah* tells us that apart from travelling abroad to America or Britain,

The other choice [for fresh graduates] was to humble into a parched wasteland of joblessness. The nation was deprived of hope, cars stuck for days in long, sweaty petrol lines, pensioners raising wilting placards requesting their salaries, lecturers gathering to declare yet one more strike (60) Emphasis added.

Mention is also made of Ginika's father, a lecturer in one of Nigeria's universities who says:

We are not sheep. This regime is treating us like sheep and we are starting to behave as if we are sheep. I haven't been able to do any serious research in years because I organize protests and complain about unpaid wages everyday and there's no chalk in the classrooms (81).

Indeed, and from the foregoing, Chimamanda Adichie is one Afropolitan who uses her works to reveal her deep understanding, engage with and critique the deep-rooted social ills that ail Africa. Adichie divides her time shuttling between Nigeria, her country, where she teaches and organizes workshop on creative writing, and the US. Truly, she understands, that there is work to be done in Africa and that just like 'most Afropolitans' she could serve Africa better in Africa than at medicine bar on Thursdays' (Selasi, 6).

3. Afropolitanism in Adichie's *Americanah*

From Wole Soyinka to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, from Esiaba Irobi to Dennis Brutus, and from Ifeoma Okoye to Nawal El Saadawi, there is a significant expression of the author's ideological leaning that manifests in their works. The socio-political activism of Soyinka and Brutus, the Marxist Orientation of Ngugi and Irobi and the feminist inclination of Okoye and El Saadawi are all evident and could be gleaned through their works.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is not left out in this tendency to use one's work to express one's ideals. Allwell Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu in their discussion of Adichie's image of the diaspora in her stories opine that 'many of these stories project the ideals that Adichie has so tenaciously pursued, both in her creative writing and in her life as a person' (240-241). One of such ideals is her afropolitanist leaning which finds ample expression in her *Americanah*, the novel under study. Adichie being an Afropolitan goes ahead to create an Afropolitan in Ifemelu, the protagonist of the novel. It is imperative to mention that Ifemelu is a reflection of Chimamanda. They both transferred from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to Philadelphia, had a baby-sitting experience, got a fellowship at Princeton, are academically brilliant and share the same afropolitan ideal. In other words, *Americanah* could be read as an autobiographical novel.

Adichie in her *Americanah* brings the afropolitanist discourse home, to Nigeria. She creates a Nigerian Afropolitan in Ifemelu, the story's protagonist. She is one of the women who flaunt enormous afros and for whom home means many things: where their parents are from, where they grew up or even where they went to school. Ifemelu, we are told 'was from Umuunnachi' (78) a town in Anambra state, Nigeria. She grew up in Lagos 'in that old flat' where 'she spent weekends with her parents... happy simply to sit and look at the walls that had witnessed her childhood' (450), when she returned after her thirteen years of sojourn in America; and she attended the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, before transferring to the US. These places are all home as far as Ifemelu is concerned, and on the African continent, Nigeria is the nation-state to

which she ties here sense of self. She identifies herself as a Nigerian when Mariama asked her where she's from (pg 21) and even goes ahead to inform Aisha (both Mariama and Aisha are hair-stylists) that she is 'going back home to Nigeria' [...] 'to live in Nigeria' (28).

Just like Chimamanda, Ifemelu was born and bred on African shores and then is shipped to the West, America in particular, for higher education and instead of pursuing a career in a conventional/professional course, she majors in Communications and even gets 'the new Humanities fellowship at Princeton' (389) because as a famous blogger, she has pushed beyond the boundaries of traditional professions and has ventured into something new.

Adichie as a subscriber to the ethos of afropolitanism uses Ifemelu's return home to advance Selasi's thesis that:

It is high time the African stood up. There is nothing perfect in this formulation; [...] there is a brain drain back home. Most Afropolitans could serve Africa better in Africa than at Medicine Bar on Thursdays. To be fair, a fair number of African professionals are returning, and there is [...] an acute awareness among this brood [...] that there's work to be done (6-7).

Ifemelu, indeed, 'stood up' to the challenge and takes the decision to move to Nigeria despite the shock expressed by people such as Auntie Uju, Aisha, etc. she opts to serve Africa in Africa. Adichie uses her narrator to support Selasi's submission that a fair number of African professionals are returning home despite their varying degrees of success.

The narrator tells us that despite Ifemelu's success in the US – her blog being quite popular and fetching her good money, her fellowship at Princeton and a fulfilling relationship with Blaine, 'yet there was cement in her soul' which had crystallized into 'a bleakness and borderlessness' (17) and a nostalgia that pierced her soul. Because of this:

She went through Nigerian websites, Nigerian profiles on Facebook, Nigerian forums, and *every click brought yet another tale of a young man who had recently moved back home*, dressed in American or British degrees to start an investment business, a music production business, a fashion label,... They were living her life. Nigeria became where she was supposed to be... (16-17).

It is argued that the 'cement in her soul', the 'layer after layer of discontent' which 'had settled in her, and formed a mass that now propelled her' (18) is a product of her experiences in America which culminated into an afropolitan consciousness – the unequivocal refusal to let things remain the way they are and 'the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa... (Selasi, 4). And this burden is only lifted on her return home; that moment, 'sitting on the couch in Ranyinudo's small stylish living room, her feet sunk into the too-soft carpet, ...' she 'looked unbelievably at herself' (44) for being able to do it, to move back home and despite every other thing, 'she was at peace, to be home...' (536).

Ifemelu's unsuccessful romance with Zoe Magazine serves as a platform for discovering. She gets bored with the daily work routine and the uncomfortable manner in which they play it safe at Zoe and from there, the thought of blogging begins to sprout. She rediscovered herself and the need to use her blog to probe even the sacrosanct details about humanity. It is also while at Zoe that she is introduced to the Nigeropolitan Club by Doris, a co-worker at Zoe. Doris describes it as 'just a bunch of people who have recently moved back, some from England, but mostly from the US? Really low-key, just like sharing experiences and networking?' (459). Adichie's narrator, in like manner reveals that the Nigeropolitan Club is:

[...] a small cluster of people drinking champagne in paper cups, at the poolside of a home in Osborne Estate, chic people, all dripping with savoir fair, each nursing a self-styled quirkiness-a ginger-coloured Afro, a T-shirt with graphic of Thomas Sankara, oversize hand-made earrings that hung like pieces of modern art. Their voices burred with foreign accents (461).

And Ifemelu describes them as 'a group of young returnees who gather every week to moan about many ways that Lagos is not like New York as though Lagos had ever been close to being like New York' (477).

Adichie actually uses Ifemelu through this medium of *The small Redemption of Lagos* – her blog, to express the socio-political consciousness of Afropolitans. Despite the rather pejorative view of most people about afropolitanism, Ifemelu uses her piece about the Nigeropolitan club to advance its discourse, bringing it down home to Nigeria – 'a nation of people who eat beef and chicken and cow skin and intestines and dried fish in a single bowl of soup, and it is called assorted' (477). This is a metaphor for Nigerian cosmopolitanism.

She reminds her fellow Nigerropolitans that it is high time they stood up and stop complaining about the many ways Nigeria or Africa is not like the West. She urges them to go ahead and startup businesses that would help actualize their dreams and hunger to change Nigeria and Africa which in the first place was the force that propelled their return home. Instead of moaning and groaning idly by, Ifemelu urges her colleagues to get to work in order to change the situation. She tells them:

If your cook cannot make the perfect panini, it is not because he is dumb, it's because Nigeria isn't a sandwich-eating country and his last Oga didn't eat bread in the afternoon so he needs training and practice (477).

She therefore challenge her fellow Been-Tos to stand up to the challenge of helping to put the nation of Nigeria and the continent of Africa in order by becoming the drivers of the change and development of which they wish should be in Nigeria, particularly and Africa in general.

It could be argued also that Adichie, through Ifemelu and her piece on Nigeropolitanism which we are told drew the most number of comments, seems to present the fact that though the concept of afropolitanism has its shortcomings, yet its strength as a vehicle for change should be exploited. She seems to suggest that the afropolitan discourse should be steered towards the direction in which its promises of:

A willingness to complicate Africa- that is, to deal with, criticism, and celebrate [...] African [...], the refusal to oversimplify; the effort to understand what is suffering in Africa alongside the urge to [...] honor the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain [African] cultures (Selasi, 4)

would be actualised. She seems to suggest that members of the Nigerpolitan club could make a difference; they could actually do more in effecting change rather than complaining. In fact, their meetings (of complaints) can actually be turned into meetings in which they plan how to make their country and continent better, and committedly work towards actualising such plans.

4. Conclusion

It is now over a decade since Taiye Selasi came up with Afropolitanism coined from 'African cosmopolitanism'. Opinions are divided over what it means and its contribution to African development. Those who are in favour of it have seen strength in its promise as a counterbalance to Afropessimism while those on the other side of the divide have exploited its increasing connection to lifestyle and fashion to decry what they have called 'culture commodification' and have even gone ahead to warn that Africans be wary of such a theory, movement or even label that commodifies culture and promotes consumerism the way afropolitanism does.

Indeed, the tendency to reproduce western lifestyle in Africa by Afropolitans and in Nigeria by the Nigerpolitan club is evident. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, one of the Afropolitans (and Ifemelu, a member of the Nigerpolitan club), uses her novel *Americanah* to challenge her fellow 'Been-tos' to rise beyond parochial interests, beyond mere recreation of their Americanness or globalist character in Nigeria, and use their exotic experiences to make a difference however defined.

It is imperative to mention that the various concerns raised by critiques ought to be taken quite seriously and appraised holistically. The theory should be thoroughly refined so as to arrive at a compromise, where its tenets about driving and effecting change would translate to concrete reality in the African continent. And just as the Nigerian-Finnish writer, blogger and founder of *MsAfropolitan*, Minna Salami (2015) suggests, 'discussions should inquire if Afropolitanism offers a vocabulary which can help in creating a self-reliant Africa, which realises its economic, social and cultural potential simultaneously' (3), the afropolitan discourse should be steered towards helping and making the African continent a better place. Although it may not be easy, yet it should be seen as a challenge and a responsibility that should be collectively met by Africans themselves irrespective of where they live-whether on the continent or outside of it.

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