

## **An Evaluation of the Insightful Exploration of the Multifaceted Nature of Nigerian Immigrants to Ascertain the Misconception of the American Dream**

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**Abstract.** *The study evaluates the complex Nigerian immigrant experiences as depicted in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah, employing Paul Gilroy's post-colonial concept of Melancholia. It contrasts the initial aspirations that led many Nigerians to seek a life in the West against the harsh realities encountered in countries like the United States and those in Europe. The investigation explores the motivations behind the rising phenomenon known as the 'Japa' syndrome, characterised by a desperate desire to leave Nigeria for better opportunities amid ongoing systemic issues, including poor governance, economic instability and social unrest. Through a close reading of Adichie's narratives, this study uncovers the intricate interplay of race, gender, and class that poses significant challenges for African immigrants. These narratives vividly illustrate the disillusionment experienced by individuals who often confront racism, stereotyping and economic pressure, revealing how these complexities hinder assimilation and success. Consequently, many immigrants grapple with profound feelings of isolation and diminished self-worth. By linking melancholia with the immigrant experience, this study argues that the emotional burdens stemming from cultural dislocation and identity crises, severely impact immigrants psychological well-being. When these challenges are viewed merely as migration side effects rather than fundamental issues, they can inflict lasting harm on cultural identities and self-perception. This reinforces the notion that the American dream remains elusive for many, obstructed by structural racism, economic barriers, and societal stereotypes. The study concludes that the harsh realities faced by Nigerian immigrants require a critical re-evaluation of the American Dream, revealing it as a potentially misleading narrative that overlooks the unique complexities of the immigrant experience.*

**Key words:** *Melancholia, Disillusionment, Cultural dislocation, Identity, American Dream, Japa' syndrome.*

### **Introduction**

The human nature is dynamic and receptive to change, which could be voluntary or involuntary. Therefore, in its quest to ensure that basic needs such as food, shelter and security are guaranteed, all efforts are deployed towards the achievement of these set goals. Human beings move to the extreme to ensure that their survival is achieved even if it means giving up certain uncomfortable locations for another, one which they perceived as comfortable. No wonder, it is not surprising to find people moving from one geographical location to another in order to fulfil the needs. This movement is what is referred to as migration.

Migration in Latin 'migare' means to 'change residence. Amin, S (1997) defined migration as:

A spatial residential relocation over a relatively long period of time, as an aspect of population movement. It includes international migration which is movement across national boundaries and internal migration which refers to the internal more or less permanent (on long-term) change of residence (p34)

With the definition above, one can simply define migration as the movement of people from one place to another with the intent to settle or migrate after one achieved what he wants to achieve. Migration may also be seen as moving from one country, region or place of residence to settle in another. The duration of this new settlement may vary, but for the purpose of this study, the focus is on individuals who relocate either temporary or permanently to another country. Africans migrate because they believe the myth that the West, (Europe and America) is a wonderland and according to Onukuogu and Onyerionwu (2010), be it “in terms of near parasitic, environmental, sophistication, curious behavior/traits, strange cultural ethos” (p.22).

For Michael et al (1994) “migration is the process by which immigrants forge and sustains multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement (p12). This means that migration involves complex processes where immigrants build and sustain diverse social connections between their home countries and new locations. These ties include family relations, cultural networks, and economic exchanges, helping individuals navigate dual identities and foster belonging in both environments. Through communication, such as technology, remittances, and cultural practices, migrants maintain links to their heritage while adapting to new contexts. This dynamic interplay enriches both home and host societies by facilitating cultural exchanges and shared experiences, ultimately transforming migration into a journey that aligns personal aspirations with the legacies of both origins and new homes.

The migratory characters in Adichie’s narratives flee their homeland because they anticipate a bleak future and when they arrive in the west, they are disillusioned. According to Lohrentz (2004) “these migrants like many other migrant communities are victims of circumstances and events quite beyond their control that have many instances caused untold and unimaginable misery, pain and trauma.” (p.73). Migrant communities often face circumstances and events beyond their control, such as economic instability, political unrest, and social discrimination. These factors result in profound suffering, trauma, and pain, as individuals are forced to leave their homes in search of a better life, enduring significant challenges in their new environments.

However, across the continent year after year, Nigerians are leaving in droves to the western worlds with the hope of a better life because according to Taiye Selasi (2013) their “countries hurt them” (p.14). The post-colonial situation in many African countries according to Maximilian Feldner (2019) is “driving African migration movement which albeit is often caused by constrained circumstances, highly voluntary as many Africans leave homes to seek work and better opportunities elsewhere, particularly in the United States and Europe (p. 15). Many African countries face challenges due to their post-colonial history, which pushes people to migrate. Even though some might think that moving away is an easy choice, many Africans leave their homes seeking better jobs and opportunities in the west. This migration is often driven by a lack of resources and options at home, As a result, people embark on journeys to find a better life, hoping for improved living conditions and futures.

In Nigeria for instance, migration occurs because migrants believe they will be more satisfied in their needs and desires. They therefore migrate to the western hemisphere in search of greener pastures. After colonization, the west was assumed to be the commercial and cultural hub of the world. The immigrants believe that the center signifies realms of possibility, fantasy, wish fulfillment, where identities and futures might be transformed. But the immigrants did not know that the center was also a place of banishment, unlawful practices, oppression, social disgrace and frustrations. Thus when they arrive at their adopted countries, they become disillusioned.

Those who have migrated to Europe and America to seek for greener pastures are referred to as people living in the diaspora. James Clifford (1997) views “diaspora relations primarily as different response in the form of boundary fixing and identification in a context of deterritorialization and deterritorialism.”

(P.18) He believes that communities deal with their experiences by creating boundaries and defining their identities. This often happens as a response to losing their original territory and adapting to new ones. This situation shows how global migration changes cultural connections, resulting in complicated ways of belonging and expressing culture as people move to different places.

Cohen (1997) suggests that immigrants often carry 'a memory, a vision or a myth relating to their original homeland, often end up with traumatic experiences to two or more unfamiliar regions. The individual believe that he cannot be fully accepted by the countries in which they reside" (p.23). These connections can lead to pain experiences in new places. When immigrants arrive in a different country, they may feel like they do not truly belong there and face challenges in fitting in. As a result, they can experience disappointment and sadness, realizing that the life they expected to find may not be as wonderful as they had hoped. This feeling of not being fully accepted in both their new country and their homeland can create a deep sense of confusion and struggle.

Nilofa Akhtar (2008) posits that the "diaspora is a physical emotional and psychological state (a) strutting between two geographical and cultural states (b) it is also a struggle between regression and progression, dislocation . . ." (p.6). This phenomenon represents a tension between longing for one's roots and the pursuit of new horizons, oscillating between a sense of regression and the aspiration for progress. Ultimately, it encapsulates a profound dislocation that underscores the challenges faced by individuals as they navigate their identities in a fragmented world. Russel King (2013) argues that:

...the diaspora is very synonymous with migration. It has evolved from capital D (a dispersion that was attributed to the Hellenic and Jewish people) and today, the term is varied and extended in its application and interpretation from political, cultural and economic fields (n.page)

Today the term diaspora encompasses a broad spectrum of interpretations across political, cultural, and economic domains, reflecting its dynamic nature. This evolution signifies a shift from a singular narrative of displacement to a multifaceted understanding of how varied communities experience and influence their environments.

The diaspora is generally considered as a force. Migrants in the diaspora may face difficulties while living in their host nations. A valid and active sense of self may be eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration. According to Maxwell (1999) "the immigrant is alienated of vision, from the society, he struggles hard to fit in, discovers self and belonging" (p.56). Diaspora often makes people feel disconnected from their surroundings and the culture they find themselves in. They work hard to fit in and often encounter challenges that lead them to explore their own identity and the concept of belonging. Through this journey, they seek to understand where they truly belong, balancing their original cultures with the new influences around them.

Appadura (1996) noted that "the diaspora individual often has a double consciousness, a privileged knowledge and perspective that is consonant with post modernity" (78). Appadura's notion of 'double consciousness' in diaspora individuals refers to the simultaneous awareness and experience of multiple cultural identities, enabling them to navigate and interpret the complexities of their existence within different societal contexts. This dual perspective fosters a privileged understanding that aligns with postmodernity, as it allows for critical engagement with diverse cultural narratives and challenges conventional notions of identity and belonging.

Boehmer (1995) argues that the immigrant living in the diaspora "experiences a dynamic tension, everything between living 'here' and remembering 'there' i.e., between memories of place of origin and entanglement with places of residence and between the metaphorical physical home " (p16). He suggest that immigrants in a new country feel constant pull between their old home and their new life. They have memories of where they came from, which can make it hard to fully settle into their new surroundings. This creates a mix of nostalgia and belonging, leaving them to navigate their feelings about both places.

Maxwell (1999) avers that "a valid and active sense of self may be eroded by dislocation resulting in migration, the experiences of enslavement transportation and voluntary removal for indentured labour" (p.36). Thus suggests that when people move away from their homes, whether because they

are forced to, like during slavery, or if they choose to look for better opportunities, they can lose a strong sense of who they are. This happens because dislocation, or being taken away from one's familiar surroundings, can disrupt personal identity. This feeling of being lost or disconnected can lead to a sense of disappointment of disillusionment.

Edelwich and Brioosky (1980) sees disillusionment "as a series of stages that involve initial enthusiasm stagnation, frustration and apathy" (p.24). It is a process that starts with excitement and hope. After some time, this feelings fades, leading to a sense of being stuck and frustrated. Eventually, people may feel indifferent or uncaring about their situation.

Burke (1991), Stets and Tsushima (2001) cited in Bubolz and Simi (2015) aver that it is "the situation where unmet expectations produce psychological state of discontent" p. (19). They go further to state that "the state of discontent described here overlaps with the stage of apathy. But the final stage is not apathy but a stage of exit as the individual seeks a way out of apathy" (p.54). When people do not achieve what they hoped for, it can lead to feelings of unhappiness. This feeling of being let down can mix with a feeling of indifference, where they start to care less about things. Essentially, unmet dreams can create a cycle of dissatisfaction and a lack of motivation.

In this study, disillusionment will be situated in the unique context of the Nigerian diaspora in America and Europe, its causes and its processes in *Americanah* narrating the lives and experiences of Nigerians (African) in the United States and Europe. This paper therefore examines the illusion that is birthing the flight to the west by many Nigerians and the disillusionment these immigrants experience as they navigate their place in the host country. The host country is not usually how they perceived it to be and that is the root cause of disillusionment that many migrants have experienced in the diaspora. Chinua Achebe (2000), succinctly puts it this way "the dreamy Africa migrant discovers that Europe has made no real provision for the black man (p.98)

Adichie writes about opportunities and pitfalls of life in the diaspora. This paper has portrayed disillusionment that stems from the assumption that Nigerians who migrate are often more successful and contented than those that are home. Nonetheless, the study tries to enlighten the potential migrant on the socio-cultural and political sensibilities that going abroad might guarantee stability. But it can also isolate outsiders. Therefore the migrants' belief of the diaspora as a failed land of milk and honey where they can easily realize the American dream requires hard work, in addition to accepting otherness or second class citizenship.

In Adichie's, *Americanah* the manner and complexities of the immigrant experience are brought to the forefront. It offers a poignant exploration of the challenges, disillusionment, and profound personal transformations experienced by the Nigerian protagonists as they navigate the unfamiliar landscape of the west. The study aims to analyze Adichie's literary representation of the immigrant experience, drawing upon the theoretical framework developed by cultural theorist, Paul Gilroy. Gilroy's concept of 'Melancholia' provides a nuanced lens through which to examine the responses, both individual and societal, to the presence of the 'Other' in post-colonial and globalized contexts. By employing Gilroy's theories, this paper will delve into the ways in which Adichie's narratives capture the profound sense of disillusionment and the multifaceted challenges that confront her immigrant characters as they grapple with issues of identity, belonging, and the lasting impact of colonialism.

Furthermore, this study will investigate the phenomenon of 'Japa' syndrome - the desire among Nigerians to leave the African continent for the perceived greener pastures of the west. Adichie's *Americanah* serves as a powerful literary exploration of the various regrets and disappointment that have attended this quest for greener pastures, shedding light on the gap between the initial promises and the harsh realities encountered by Nigerian immigrants in their new environment. Thus the study is a comprehensive examination of Adichie's literary representation of the migrant experience, underscoring the significance of her work in illuminating the complexities, disillusionment, and transformative potential inherent in the journeys of those who leave their homelands in search of better life.

Besides, while existing scholarship has explored the themes of migration, disillusionment, and the complexities of the immigrant experience in Adichie's works, there is need to further examine how the narratives engage with and expand upon theoretical frameworks such as Paul Gilroy's concepts of "melancholia. The gap in current scholarship lies in the need to provide a more nuanced understanding of how Adichie's representations of Nigerian immigrants in the diaspora illuminate the intricate interplay between the host society's responses to diversity and the migrants' own struggles with issue of identity, belonging and the lasting legacy of colonialism. This study aims to fill this gap by conducting critical analysis of Adichie's narratives through the lens of Gilroy's concept, By employing Gilroy's theoretical framework of "melancholia" the study tends to shed light on the ways in which the host societies' responses to diversity and otherness contributes to the disillusionment and struggles faced by the immigrant characters . The study ultimately seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in the migrant experience, as depicted in Aditee's insightful and thought-provoking narratives.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Paul Gilroy's Postcolonial Concept of Melancholia.**

Paul Gilroy's (2004) post-colonial framework of Melancholia offers a compelling lens through which to analyze the complexities of the Nigerian immigrant experience, particularly in Adichie's *Americanah*. Gilroy conceptualizes melancholia as a responsive emotional state that arises from the historical and cultural displacements characteristic of colonialism and its aftermath. He posits that melancholia is more than mere sadness, it is a profound sense of loss that is intertwined with identity and belonging.

According to Gilroy (2004), melancholia can be understood as a disposition that reflects the experience of people who are caught between two worlds suggesting a persistent longing for a past that remains unattainable while simultaneously grappling with the challenges of a new identity in a foreign land. Gilroy's melancholia reflects the dislocation felt by individuals navigating multiple cultural frameworks; immigrants often oscillate between their native culture and the adopted culture, leading to a sense of alienation. In *Americanah*, Ifenelu, Aunty Uju, Obinze and other immigrant characters embody this dislocation as they struggle to reconcile their Nigerian identity with their lives in America and Europe. Their observation about race, stereotyping and identity highlights their yearning for belonging which is laden with nostalgia for their homeland.

Central to Gilroy's concept is the notion of nostalgia associated with dislocation. The immigrants often experience a profound emotional sense of loss for their homeland, which is portrayed as both a cherished memory and a source of pain. As Gilroy (2004) states "The Melancholic condition is characterized by a sense of – not a lack of, the other, by an awareness of a history of loss and absence" (p.35). This resonate with the Nigerian immigrant experience as they articulate their longing for Nigeria, while also feeling the weight of their experiences in the US.

Gilroy's approach also emphasizes the intersection of ethnicity and race, particularly as they pertain to the immigrant experience. The Nigerian characters encounter systemic racism and macroaggression that complicate their quest for identity and belonging in America. Their profound realization that race functions differently in America than it does in Nigeria evokes a melancholic awareness of their otherness, creating additional layers of complexities in their experiences.

Through Gilroy's lens of Melancholia, *Americanah* critically challenges the misconception surrounding the American Dream. The narrative sharpens the focus on the emotional toll that accompanies the pursuit of the dream, something that is often romanticised in popular discourse. Gilroy asserts that " to mourn is to recognize that the past is real and to give up the phantasm of a fixed harmonious culture" (p.17). The Nigerian characters' journeys epitomize this recognition as they realize that the American Dream is not readily accessible to them; it is marked with barriers, identity struggles, systemic racism, stereotyping and a history of loss.

The American Dream, often depicted as an attainable reality through hard work, is deconstructed in *Americanah* as characters are confront systemic obstacles that illuminate the illusion of equal

opportunity. The Nigerian characters experience reveal that the intersectionality of race, class, and cultural background complicates the pursuit of success, making it clear that the American Dream is not a panacea for all.

Using Gilroy's concept of Melancholia provides an enriched understanding of the multifaceted expressions of Nigerian immigrants in Adichie's *Americanah*. The framework sheds light on the emotional landscapes of nostalgia, loss and identity crisis that characterize the immigrant journey, challenging the simplistic misconception of the American Dream. As the characters navigate their lives in American, Gilroy's insight help articulate the deeper, often painful realities of cultural dislocation and the complexities that emerge from it. This reinforces the notion that the immigrant experience is as much about what is lost as it is about aspirations and dreams. Thus Gilroy's melancholia serves as a crucial theoretical lens for interrogating the nuanced realities that define Nigerian immigrant narratives.

### **An Evaluation of the Complexities of Nigerian Immigrants in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*: Exploring the Misconceptions of the American Dream**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has long been captivated by the complexities of the African diaspora, a theme that resonates through her body of work. However, *Americanah* offers a more expansive and nuanced depiction of the immigrant experience compared to her other works, delving deeper into the multifaceted realities faced by Nigerian immigrants and challenging misconceptions surrounding the American Dream.. Pius Adesunmi and Chris Dunton (2005), contends that Adichie is part of a contemporary generation of Nigerian writers deeply engage with themes of nomadism, displacement, exile and deracination" (p.6). This suggests that Adichie's works reflect s the complex experiences of individuals who navigate the challenges of migration, cultural dislocation, and the quest for identity in a globalized world. Adichie's narratives often explore the emotional and psychological impacts of leaving one's homeland, highlighting the struggles and transformations that accompany such journeys. Her stories resonate with the realities faced by many in the diaspora, underscoring the intricate relationship between home, identity, and belonging. Some of the experiences captured in *Americanah* are drawn from her personal experiences during migration.

In *Americanah*, Adichie poignantly explores the challenges faced by Nigerians who migrate abroad for academic and economic opportunities, crafting characters that embody hardships, diversity, struggles, alienation, disillusionment, and the complexities of return migration, thus revealing the multifaceted nature of their experiences and the misconceptions surrounding the American Dream. Tyrone Beason (2013) observes that " *Americanah* offers a profound and immersive exploration of the immigrant experiences in unfamiliar environments. Beason emphasises that *Americanah* is both intellectually expansive and urgently intimate, a story about the crushing experiences of finding your way in a new land and the physical and emotional lengths one goes to feel whole again" (p.2). Beason emphasises that the narrative is both intellectually engaging and deeply personal, capturing the challenging realities of navigating a new country. Through the story readers encounter the intense struggles and emotional efforts that individuals undertake in their quest for belonging and identity, illuminating the complexities of feeling whole again amidst the dislocation and pressures of migration.

From the beginning of *Americanah*, Ifemelu, the protagonist confronts the reality of racism, which starkly contrasts her experiences in Nigeria. In her home country, she had been largely unaware of her racial identity: it was only upon arrival in America that she became aware of her 'blackness'. She reflects:

I came from a country where race was not an issue. I did not think of myself as black and I only became back when I came to America" (*Americanah*: p.292)

This insight not only highlights the pervasive influence of race in American society but also underscores a profound sense of loss and dislocation inherent in Ifemelu's experience, aligning with Gilroy's concept of Melancholia, which refers to the unresolved feelings of loss and dislocation that come from migrating between cultures. For Ifemelu, acknowledging her black identity in America creates a sense of loss for the carefree self-conception she had in Nigeria. This shift triggers feelings

of alienation, as she must navigates a society that defines her through a racial lens, leading to a melancholic grappling with her identity that was previously untroubled by such concerns back home.

Reilly et al (2003), says that “race is intended as a category to be used in distinguishing different human groups on the basis of physical appearance” (p.56). It adds that skin colour and facial features such as eyes, hair, and nose define race, leading Ifemelu to perceive being seen as white as normal, while being black is often shunned and can lead to exclusion.

In her immigrant experience of disillusionment, Ifemelu faces her share of racial segregation in America. One day, her white boyfriend, Curt, who helped her secure her green card, takes her to a small spa. When Ifemelu walks in and smiles at the Asian woman behind the counter, she simply requests to have her eyebrows shaped just like any other customer. However, the woman curtly replies:

“We don’t do curly”

“You don’t do curly”

“No sorry” (*Americanah*: p.294)

Here, curly is a euphemism for being black or African, indicating her refusal to provide service based on Ifemelu’s race. Surprisingly, when Curt hears about this discriminatory statement, he insists on speaking to the manager, threatening to have the spa’s license revoked unless they serve Ifemelu. In an instant, the Asian woman “transformed into a smiling, solicitous coquette. I am sorry, it was a misunderstanding. She said “yes they could do the eyebrows” (*Americanah*: p.294). This incident closely relates to Gilroy’s concept of Melancholia. Ifemelu’s encounter illustrates the emotional weight and cultural dislocation that come with being black in America. .

Additionally, Ifemelu’s relationship with Curt attracts a lot of attention, especially from white people. They cannot understand why Curt, a wealthy young white man, would date an ordinary black immigrant student like Ifemelu. At a party when Curt introduces Ifemelu as his girlfriend, many white girls looked surprised and according to the narrator:

a surprise that some of them shielded and some of them did not, and in their expressions was the question “why her”? it amused stranger on the streets who would see her hand clasped in Curt’s and instantly cloud their faces with confronting a great tribal loss. It was not merely because Curt was white, untamed golden hair, and handsome face, the athletic body, the sunny charm and the smell, around him of money” (*Americanah*: p.294).

Probably, the surprise or the look of the anguish on people’s faces might not be much if Curt was “fat, older, poor, plain, and eccentric or dreadlocked” (*Americanah*: p.295). This highlights the tensions and complexities surrounding race and relationships in a racially stratified society. This is intricately related to Gilroy’s concept of melancholia as it encapsulates the emotional weight and identity struggles faced by Ifemelu in her interracial relationship with Curt. The surprise and scrutiny from the predominantly white social circle not only highlights social biases against interracial unions but also amplify Ifemelu’s sense of loss, as she grapples with being perceived as an outsider in a racially stratified society. The melancholic state arises from the unresolved tension between her desire for acceptance and the harsh realities of cultural dislocation and judgement. This also underscores that the pursuit of personal connection comes entwined with a profound sense of longing for both belonging and recognition in a society that marginalizes her experiences. In this way Adichie echoes Gilroy’s notion that the immigrant experience is often marked by emotional complexities, as individuals navigate the duality of connection and disconnection in this relationship.

Furthermore, the feelings and reactions that Ifemelu receives from white people deeply traumatizes her. As the narrator observes, “The looks had began to pierce her skin. She was tired even of Curt’s protection, tired of needing protection” (*Americanah*: p.295). Ifemelus experience symbolizes the emotional toll of living in a racially charged environment. The metaphor of glances piercing her skin illustrates not only the discomfort and alienation she feels but also the profound impact of racial scrutiny on her sense of self. The repetitive exposure to judgement and prejudice creates a

psychological burden that weighs heavily on her. Her sense of weariness reflects a sense of melancholia whereby she experiences emotional distress from her interactions with white individuals. This sense of constantly scrutinized leads to feelings of isolation and alienation. The trauma of needing protection indicates the vulnerability experienced by many immigrants when faced with systemic racism. The exhaustion from needing Curt's protection highlights her dislocation from a sense of belonging. While she should feel safe and supported in her relationship, she instead feels burdened and constrained. This embodies a deeper longing for acceptance and connection, which constitutes a central aspect of melancholia- an emotional response to the loss of a cohesive cultural identity.

Furthermore, Ifemelu's experiences poignantly illustrates the disillusionment many Nigerian immigrants face in the diaspora as she navigates the harsh realities of racial scrutiny and alienation which starkly contrasts the idealized notion of belonging in America. The fatigue she endures from the constant need to protect herself highlights the disparity between her expectations of safety and acceptance and the painful truth of systemic racism and social isolation. This emotional turmoil reflects a broader disillusionment experienced by countless immigrants, where their aspirations for a better life collide with barriers that undermine their sense of identity and belonging. Ultimately, these challenges underscore the misconception of the American Dream, revealing that what is often portrayed as a pathway to opportunity and fulfilment can instead lead to profound feelings of loss and a yearning for a community where one can exist free from fear and stigma

Aunty Uju and her son Dike, also endure the harsh realities of racism as Black immigrants in America, with Aunty Uju's life marked by a relentless flow of complaints and challenges, emphasizing that nothing appears to be going well for her in this unfamiliar environment. According to the narrator "she complained about the patients who thought they were doing her a favour by seeing her" (*Americanah*: p.174). Despite the challenges she faced in obtaining her medical certificate in America, her skin colour continually serves as a barrier particularly when interacting with white patients.

Similarly, Dike her son confronts racial prejudice at school where his white group leader assumes, based on his darker complexion, that he does not require sunscreen when she remarked "I didn't need it" (*Americanah*: p.185). This underscores Dike's growing awareness that he is perceived as different- yet in a negative light. This realization begins to take a toll on his mental well-being, as he is far too young to grasp the complexities of race in America.

What Aunty Uju and Dike experience illustrates the post-colonial concept of melancholia by depicting the emotional toll of racial discrimination on both characters. For Uju, the medical doctor, her struggle to gain acceptance despite her qualifications highlights the internalised sorrow that comes with being marginalized in a society that values whiteness over competence. Dike's experience where he is reminded of his "otherness" at such a young age contributes to his confusion and sorrow about his identity in a racially charged environment.

Furthermore, the idea that hard work and determination should lead to success is challenged by the stark reality that racial biases can undermine these aspirations. Aunty Uju's extensive efforts to attain her medical license are overshadowed by discrimination while Dike's innocent interactions at school reveal an unsettling truth: that the American promise of equality and acceptance is not universally accessible, especially to those who are racially marginalized. This scenario reflects the misconception of the American Dream by showcasing how the dream is often viewed as a straightforward path to success. Instead, the lived realities of Aunty Uju and Dike demonstrate that the American Dream is riddled with systemic barriers and prejudiced perceptions, casting a shadow on what was once seen as an attainable ideal. Rather than a tale of unimpeded progress, their experiences reveal the complexities faced by immigrants and people of color in America, highlighting an often overlooked narrative of struggle beneath the surface of the dream.

We are told that Aunty Uju who moves to America to pursue her studies and medical career becomes increasingly disenchanted after four years. She struggles to pass her exams and navigate life, leading

to a decline in her spirit and energy. This change is reflected in the narrative as Ifemelu notes that Aunty Uju no longer calls often. She says:

In the past, she would call Ranyinudo's house when Ifemelu was in Lagos or Obinze's house when Ifemelu was at school. But her calls had dried up. She was working three jobs, not yet qualified to practice medicine in America" (*Americanah*: p1.88).

Ifemelu observes that Aunty Uju has become increasingly distant, no longer reaching out as she used to. Uju's calls have dwindled. She is now toggling three jobs, still unlicensed to practice medicine in the US. Ironically, Ifemelu's mother along with others in their community, believes that four years is ample time for Aunty Uju to find success and begin sending back items like multivitamins and shoes from America- the so-called land of opportunity.

This shifting dynamics illustrates the complexities of the immigrant experience, where the reality often contrasts with preconceived notions of prosperity. Aunty Uju's struggles highlight the disillusionment that many face when confronted with the harsh truths of life in a new country. While the hope of achieving the American Dream remains an alluring prospect, the gritty reality reveals a different narrative filled with challenges and unmet expectations. This situation aligns with Gilroy's concept of melancholia. Aunty Uju's diminished communication reflects a deeper emotional loss, not just of familiar connection but also of the dreams she once held. The sight of unfulfilled aspirations looms large, resulting in a sense of longing and sorrow. The optimism surrounding migration often masks these struggles, underlining the misconception that America is a guaranteed route to success.

For Ifemelu, on her arrival in America, she was confronted with a wave of disillusionment. Despite the common barriers imposed on Nigerian visas, she had unexpectedly secured one, primarily due to the ongoing strikes affecting universities back home then. When she reached her Aunt Uju's home, she was taken aback to find that her sleeping arrangement consisted of a spot on the floor. Ifemelu tries to rationalise the situation as the narrator puts it:

There was nothing wrong with the arrangement. She had after all slept on mats when she visited her grandmother in the village –but this was America at last, glorious America at last, and she had not expected to bed on the floor" (*Americanah*: p107).

Ifemelu has always linked sleeping on the floor to her grandmothers' village, a place devoid of comfort and luxury. Finding herself on the hard ground in America is a surprising jolt, far removed from her expectations of the opulence and sophistication she believed the country held. This stark reality clashes with her preconceived notions about life in America, leaving her disoriented. Ifemelu's initial excitement about arriving in America quickly gives way to disappointment, exemplifying the disillusionment that many Nigerian immigrants encounter upon entering a new land.

Suffice to say that Ifemelu's experience reflects the common immigrant narrative- the hopeful anticipation of success and prosperity is often met with unexpected challenges. Her realization that she is sleeping on the floor, a stark contrast to her expectations of comfort and hospitality, highlights the disillusionment that comes with confronting the realities of life in a foreign country. The notion that America is a place where dreams come true is deeply ingrained in the minds of many immigrants. Ifemelu's initial excitement about achieving her dreams is contrasted with the reality that she is still subject to situations far removed from the ideal of American prosperity. This disconnect underscores the misconception that arrival in America guarantees immediate success and comfort.

Ifemelu's rationalisation of her situation speaks to the resilience and adaptability of immigrants. Many come from backgrounds that enquire them to be resourceful and pragmatic. The memory of sleeping on mats brings a sense of familiarity, yet it also emphasises how immigrants often find themselves navigating the delicate balance between their cultural past and the new world they wish to embrace. This experience further highlights Gilroy's concept of melancholia, which encompasses feelings of loss, disappointment and unsettled longing that often accompany post-colonial migration. Her sleeping on the floor highlights the gap between her aspirations and the actual experience of life in America. This cultural dislocation is further emphasised by her struggle to reconcile her Nigerian

identity with her new circumstances, symbolised by her transition from sleeping on mats in Nigeria to the uncomfortable reality of America.

On the same night that Ifemelu found herself sleeping on the floor in America, she encountered something surprising; cockroaches in the kitchen, just like the ones she remembered from Lagos Nigeria. The narrator says: 'a fat cockroach was perched on the wall near the cabinets moving slightly up and down as though breathing heavily (*Americanah*: p107). Instead of feeling ready to get rid of the cockroach like she would have in Lagos, Ifemelu feels disappointed and empty. The moment clearly shows that she was starting to feel disillusioned.

Furthermore, Ifemelu is taken aback when Aunty Uju tells her that she has to use someone else's identity - a social security card, to get a job with better pay than the one she can get through her school's work-study programme. Ifemelu struggles to understand this illegal act feeling confined and troubled that survival in America might require such deception. According to the narrator:

"How? I'll use her name?", Ifemelu asked

"Of course you will use her name" Aunty Uju said. Eyebrows raised as though she had barely stopped herself from asking if Ifemelu was stupid" (*Americanah*: p.108)

The situation above from the novel highlights the tough realities that many Nigerian immigrants face when trying to make a better life in a new country. It reflects their struggles and disillusionment as they confront a system that often seems stacked against them. The need to resort to using someone else's identity shows how desperate and vulnerable they become in trying to achieve what they were promised by the American Dream.

Gilroy's concept of Melancholia helps us understand Ifemelu's feelings in this situation. Melancholia refers to a deep sense of sadness and mourning, especially for loss of identity and cultural roots. In this context, Ifemelu may feel a sense of loss- not just for her identity but also for her hopes of achieving success through honest means. Instead of finding a straightforward path, she realizes that the American Dream is fraught with moral compromises and difficult choices. It reflects a longing for a better life that feels increasingly out of reach and a disillusionment with the realities the immigrants encounter. The struggling between wanting to succeed and the need to navigate complex and sometimes unethical systems creates a heavy emotional burden, underscoring the painful complexities involved in chasing the American Dream.

As Ifemelu settles to life in America, she notices that Aunty Uju only buys cheap grocery items that taste bland. This is because she is struggling financially and cannot afford the foods she and her son, Dike really want. Ifemelu begins to understand that it is possible to live in America and still face poverty. She observes many changes in Aunty Uju. The narrator reflects:

And she thought, watching her, how the old Autnty Uju would never have worn her hair in such scruffy braids. She would never, have tolerated the ingrown hair that grew like raisins on her chin or worn trousers that gathered bulkily between her legs, Amerca had subdued her. (*Americanah*: p111).

Ifemelu's observations of Aunty Uju's struggles highlights how immigrants can arrive America with great expectations, only to find it is not the land of unlimited opportunity they imagined. The stark contrast between their dreams and actual living leads to a sense of disappointment. The changes in Aunty Uju reflects a deeper sadness and loss of identity, as she becomes worn down by her circumstances. Ifemelu's recognition of Aunty Uju's decline serves as a poignant reminder of the emotional toll that comes with trying to adapt while grappling with financial hardship and cultural dislocation. Ultimately, the stark realities faced by characters like Uju dispels the myth of the American Dream as a guarantee for success and happiness. Thier struggles illustrates how poverty can persist even in a country that is often portrayed as the land of opportunity. This reveals the complexities and challenges that many Nigerian immigrants encounter in the new world.

Adichie further highlights the shared feelings of unease and discontent among the black immigrants through Ifemelu's conversation with her neighbours, the Grenada couple. Jane, one of the neighbours expresses that even after ten years in the US, she still feels and struggles like she is still trying to

adapt. She shares her struggles with raising her children, feeling uncertain about how they will turn out. Unlike her home country, where parents have complete authority over how to raise their kids, sometimes even resorting to spanking, Jane worries about the laws in the US that protect children's rights. This creates fear that her children might not align with her expectations or values. The narrator says:

You know, this is my tenth year here and I feel as if I'm still settling in", Jane said. "The hardest thing is raising my kids" (*Americanah*: p113)

The extract above from the novel reflects disillusionment experienced by immigrants showcasing how the American dream is not as straightforward or fulfilling as they had hoped. Although Jane has been in America for a decade, she still feels like an outsider, struggling to navigate a new culture that significantly differs from her own. This sense of not truly belonging, despite years of effort, illustrates the emotional turmoil many Nigerian immigrants face.

Gilroy's concept of melancholia is evident in Jane's experiences. Her feeling of discontent and anxiety are rooted in a sense of loss, not just the loss of home but also the loss of familiar cultural practices and parental authority. This longing for the past and the struggle to adapt to a new environment creates a melancholic state, where Jane feels caught between two worlds and unable to fully settle into either.

Additionally, this scenario critiques the unsettling promises of the American Dream. Many Nigerian immigrants arrive in the USA with the hope of achieving a better life, but the reality often involves complications that challenge their ideals. The idea that the US is a land of opportunity fails to account for the emotional and cultural hurdles the immigrants face, such as navigating laws that feel foreign to them and raising children in an environment that seems hostile to their traditional values. Through Jane's story Adichie effectively highlights the gap between expectation and reality that characterizes immigrant experience.

Ifemelu encounters significant challenges in finding suitable housing in Philadelphia, where she is studying. With her limited student's savings, she struggles to secure a decent place to live. Alongside her friend, Ginika, they stumble upon a rundown house for rent, complete with decaying furniture and rodents scurrying through vacant bathrooms. Given her tight budget and meagre income she "opts for the available and affordable" (*Americanah*: p127). Ifemelu settles for this subpar accommodation. This experience reflects the harsh realities faced by many Nigerian immigrants who often arrive in their new countries with high hopes yet find themselves grappling with disillusionment. The expectations that America would provide immediate opportunities clashes dramatically with the stark reality of inadequate living conditions and limited means. Such moments highlights the misconceptions surrounding the American Dream that hard work alone guarantees a comfortable life.

Stereotyping plays a significant role in the disillusionment experienced by the Nigerian characters in *Americanah*. The black characters encounter harmful stereotypes, largely stemming from their skin colour. Stereotypes are prejudicial because they involve generalization and when fed to prejudicial attitudes, stereotypes create a number of behaviours ranging from avoidance to violence. These harmful generalizations not only shape the perception of others but also influence the experiences of the individuals targeted by these stereotypes. As Nigerian immigrant characters navigate their lives in America, they find themselves confronted with preconceived notions that dehumanize them and reduce their identities to simplistic caricatures based on race. This systemic bias can provoke fear, alienation, and sometimes even aggressive behavior from those who hold these prejudiced views, thereby exacerbating the challenges faced by immigrants.

In *Americanah*, Adichie paints a picture of the stereotypes that white characters impose on Nigerian immigrants through the character of Christina Tomas, a receptionist in the International Students' Office at Ifemelu's university. During a routine interaction, Tomas speaks to Ifemelu as if she were a child pausing exaggeratedly between words, reflecting a misguided belief that foreign students struggle with understanding English solely based on their accents. For example, she instructs Ifemelu saying "I Need You to Fill Out A Couple of Forms. Do You Understand How To Fill These Out" (*Americanah*: p134). This condescending approach leaves Ifemelu feeling belittled, as if she were a

small child. “she felt for a moment like a small child- lazy limp bed and drooling” (*Americanah*: p134). Although this situation carries an element of humour, the irony lies in the fact that Ifemelu is proficient in English and is more than capable of understanding Tomas’ instructions. When Ifemelu attempts to assert her fluency, Tomas dismissively replies “I bet you do . . I just don’t know how well” (*Americanah*: p134)

Such humiliating encounters serve to underscore the pervasive American stereotypes about Africa and its people. Tomas’ attitude not only undermines Ifemelu’s self-esteem but also compels her to adapt her speech, practicing an American accent in an attempt to demonstrate that she is not “backward” and does not deserve to be marginalized. This pressure to conform can be traumatic for immigrants who must navigate a landscape filled with prejudice and assumptions. Ifemelu’s experiences encapsulates the theme of disillusionment. She arrives in America with expectations of freedom and opportunity, only to confront the harsh reality of being judged and stereotyped base on her accent and perceived foreignness. This encounter with Tomas serves as a rude awakening that the American Dream, often painted as a universal promise, is fraught with challenges shaped by entrenched biases.

Gilroy’s concept of melancholia is also evident in Ifemelu’s response to the encounter. Her feelings of inadequacy and humiliation reflect a deeper sense of loss- not just of her home culture, but also of the idealized self she had hoped to inhabit in America. This melancholic state highlights the emotional struggles many immigrants face as they grapple with the dissonance between their and the realities they encounter.

In *Americanah*, we continue to encounter the troubling realties of racial stereotyping that Nigerian immigrants face in America. After Ifemelu ends her relationship with Curt, her African-American boyfriend, Blaine, shares a story about a close friend of his named Mr. White, who works as a security guard at the library. Recently Mr. White encountered a deeply unjust situation. According to the narrator:

Mr. White’s friend, a black man came by yesterday evening and the two stood outside the library. Mr. White gave his friend his car keys, because the friend wanted to borrow his car and the friend gave Mr. White some money, which Mr. White had lent him earlier. A white library employee, watching them, assumed that the two black men were dealing drugs and called the supervisor. The supervisor called the police. The police came and led Mr. White away to be questioned’ (*Americanah*: pp.343/44)

After a thorough investigation, the authorities determined that Mr. White was innocent, allowing him to return to his duties. However, the university administration took no action to offer Mr. White any form of compensation for the ordeal he had just endured. Interestingly, Mr. White regarded the incident as just another day in his life and chose to move forward without much ado. In stark contrast, Blaine felt that this incident highlighted a severe problem and decided to organize a protest, arguing that the ongoing suspicion and discrimination toward black individuals should not be tolerated.

This incident underscores the nuanced and often painful experiences of Nigerian immigrants in America, revealing how systemic stereotyping can lead to disillusionment regarding the American Dream. For many immigrants the hope of creating a better life is overshadowed by the harsh reality of being perceived through a lens of suspicion and prejudice. The false assumptions about Mr. White illustrates the stereotype that black men are often viewed as criminals, an idea rooted in historical racism and reinforced by contemporary social attitude. Such encounters can lead to a sense of alienation and frustration for immigrants: what was once viewed as a land of opportunity becomes a place where their humanity is constantly questioned. Ultimately, this incident highlights the misconception of the American Dream. Instead of the promise of equality and opportunity, many Nigerian immigrants find themselves navigating a landscape rife with bias and injustice. This complex interplay of hope and disillusionment reveals how deeply entrenched stereotypes can shape the immigrant experience in America, compacting their pursuit of a better life

Furthermore, Aunty Uju's son Dike faces a troubling situation at school as the only Black boy in his class. His teacher mistakenly labelled him as "aggressive" and even suggests that he should consult a psychiatrist. This characterization deeply frustrates and alarms Aunty Uju, who remarks:

just look at him! He behaves like any other boy, yet because he looks different, his actions are interpreted as aggression. (*Americanah*: p174).

The teacher's assumption reflects a common stereotype that unfairly associate Blackness with hostility. This incident illustrates the multifaceted experiences of Nigerian immigrants, particularly how they grapple with stereotypes and biases in their new environments. Dike's experience serves as a microcosm of broader themes related to disillusionment and melancholia among immigrants facing the American Dream.

The incident further reveals how the Nigerian immigrants often navigate the complexities of identity in a new cultural landscape. For Dike being the only Black child not only sets him apart, but also subjects him to the weight of societal expectations and prejudices. This experience can evoke feelings of isolation and challenges his sense of belonging, which many immigrants face as they attempt to integrate into a society that often views them through a lens of stereotype. The teacher's perception serves as a harsh reminder of the disillusionment many immigrants encounter when they arrive in a new country. They often envision a land of equality and opportunity, yet face systemic biases that undermine their aspirations. Dike's character is misjudged, highlighting a cruel irony where the American promise of acceptance is compromised by entrenched prejudices.

Aunty Uju's alarm and frustration reflect a deeper sense of melancholia, a profound yearning for understanding and acceptance in a place that should offer safety and opportunity. Watching her child being unfairly labelled based on a stereotype evokes sadness and a sense of loss- not just for the innocence of childhood but to the dreams that she held when coming to America. This melancholic state is often a companion to the immigrant experience, emphasizing a longing for belonging and recognition that feels just out of reach.

Finally, this incident underscores the misconception of the American Dream. Many immigrants arrive with hopes of a better life filled with equal opportunities. However, Dike's experience with the teacher illustrates that the inherent biases in American society can obstruct that dream, leading to misinterpretation and preconceived notions. The expectations that America is a land free of prejudice is starkly contrasted by the reality of systemic discrimination faced by the Nigerian immigrants.

At the African Students Association (ASA), Ifemelu and fellow African students gather to share their experiences and support one another as they navigate life in a foreign land. The narrator notes that:

Many of the internationals understand the trauma of trying to get an American visa and that is a good place to start a friendship (*Americanah*: p142)

Membership in the ASA does not shield Ifemelu from the feelings of isolation that envelop her when the only job offer she receives leads her to a compromising situation with an unscrupulous white man. She requests some time to think it over as she returns home, both empty-handed and emotionally drained. The narrator says:

The crisp air fragrant and dry reminded her of Nsukka during the harmattan season and brought with it a sudden stab of homesickness, so sharp and so abrupt that it filled her eyes with tears (*Americanah*: p146)

Throughout Ifemelu's job search, she faces numerous instances of sexual harassment. For example, at a gas station on Chesnutt Street, a burly Mexican man leers at her and says: "You're here for the attendant position? I'm sure you could be of service to me in another way" (*Americanah*: p.). This suggests that America has reduced African women to mere sexual commodities. The incidents described above paint a vivid picture of the complex realities faced by Nigerian immigrants like Ifemelu. On one level, her participation in organizations such as the ASA, does not alleviate her feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Like many immigrants, she enters the US with dreams of opportunities yet quickly encounters the harsh reality of exploitation and discrimination. Ifemelu's

experience reflects the disillusionment that accompanies the immigrant journey – a stark contrast between the anticipated American Dream and the social and economic difficulties in reality.

The Nigerian immigrants often find themselves trapped in precarious situations, navigating stereotypes that reduce them to simple caricatures defined by their race and gender. Ifemelu's encounter with sexual harassment illustrates how societal perceptions can turn aspirational identities into depersonalized roles. The lack of job opportunities and the desperate measures to find employment not only highlight economic challenges but also expose the psychological burdens of navigating an unfamiliar sociocultural landscape.

Gilroy's concept of melancholia is pertinent to understanding Ifemelu's experiences. The sharp pangs of homesickness she feels while being reminded of Nsukka signify the deep emotional loss and dislocation the Nigerian immigrants undergo. This melancholic state embodies the unresolved sorrow of leaving one's homeland while wrestling with feelings of not belonging in a new environment. Ifemelu's yearning for home is accentuated by her unpleasant experience in America, where she finds herself objectified and marginalized. This also highlights the misconceptions surrounding the American Dream. The narrative promises opportunity and prosperity but is countered with the grim realities of exploitations. Instead of finding a fulfilling job that respects her dignity, Ifemelu is faced with unwanted sexual advances, leading her to question not just her sense of self-worth, but also the very ideals that lured her to America.

In America, Ifemelu finds herself trapped in a cycle of poverty despite her relentless job search efforts. Desperate to cover her rent and faced with the incessant demands of her white roommates for her share of the bills, Ifemelu feels increasingly isolated with no one willing to help her or even provide a loan. Her circumstances drive her into a harrowing decision to offer sexual services to a white man for a mere hundred dollars. This act of desperation leaves her deeply traumatized, plunging her into a profound emotional crisis. She withdraws from everyone around her- her roommates, her friend Ginika, her relatives back in Nigeria, and most painfully, Obinze, her beloved back homer. Ashamed of her actions, she cuts off communication with Obinze, feeling unable to share the burden of her experience. The narrator poignantly captures her turmoil thus:

Sometimes she wakes up failing and helpless and she saw in front of her and behind her and all around her, an utter hopelessness. She knew there was no point in being here, in being alive but she had no energy to think concretely of how she could kill herself (*Americanah*: p158)

Ifemelu spends days in tears, neglects her studies, and struggles to eat the sparse meals of rice and beans that are only sustenance. She longs for a different reality, one where her actions would not haunt her. Unfortunately, the immigrant experience in America – and the urgency to secure her place there forces many to engage in acts they would never consider if they had supportive networks around them. The isolation they endure foster a sense of disillusionment.

Ifemelu's initial dreams of a better life in America becomes overshadowed by the harsh realities of survival. The expectations she had upon arriving transform into despair as she struggles with poverty and alienation, showcasing how the promise of the American Dream can become a mirage for many immigrants. The trauma of Ifemelu's situation induces a state of melancholia, marked by feelings of helplessness and isolation. Her withdrawal from social connections highlights the emotional toll that immigration can take, reinforcing the notion that immigrants often bear the weight of unfulfilled aspirations and cultural dislocation. Ifemelu's experience underscores the misconception that America guarantees success through hard work. Instead, her narrative reveals how systemic barriers, lack of community support and societal pressures can lead individuals to make desperate choices that undermine their dignity and well-being.

The truth is that in America, people are expected to pay their bills without anyone prying into how they do it. Aunty Uju of all people, does not even ask her young cousin how she manages to make a hundred dollars from just one job. Aunty Uju is too caught up in her own struggles to survive in America with her son Dike .This is very different from the communal spirit that is common in Africa. At work Aunty Uju faces difficulties due to racial discrimination. She expresses her frustration, saying:

I don't even know why I came to this place. The other day the pharmacist said my accent was incomprehensible. A patient, a useless layabout told me to go back to where I came from. All because I knew he was lying about being in pain and refused to give him pain medicine. Why do I have to take this rubbish? I blame Buhari, and Babangida, and Abacha because they destroyed Nigeria (*Americanah*: p220)

Aunty Uju's life is filled with regrets and sadness, yet she does not try to return home. Like many immigrants she chooses to endure the trauma of living in a foreign land instead of going back home. Aunty Uju's experiences illustrates the harsh realities many immigrants face, including cultural isolation, racial discrimination and personal regrets. While they often migrate seeking a better life, the struggles and emotional burdens can lead to a sense of loss and longing for home. The misconception of the American Dream is evident in Uju's experience, as she grapples with the gap between her aspirations and the harsh realities of life in America. Her reluctance to return home signifies the difficult choices many immigrants face, often feeling trapped between their former lives and the challenges of their new reality.

Furthermore, Obinze's experiences in London was steeped in disillusionment and melancholia. Upon arriving in London on a three-year visa as his mother's research assistant, he held onto the hope of eventually moving to America, his dream destination, once he had established his situation. Ironically, the son of Nigerian university professor found himself in a position far beneath his aspirations-clearing public toilets in London. This downgrade in status starkly highlights the limited job opportunities available to Black immigrants. The narrator notes that Obinze: "was indeed abroad cleaning toilets, wearing rubber gloves and carrying a pail" (*Americanah*: p238). This vividly illustrates the pervasive racism inherent in labour assignments, where Black individuals are relegated to menial tasks, while their white counterparts occupy more prestigious positions. Obinze's experiences reflects a profound disillusionment faced by the Nigerian immigrants, particularly in the context of their expectations versus reality. Obinze arrives in London with aspirations of success, only to encounter an unwelcoming labour market that strips him of his dignity and identity. The irony of this situation emphasises the crushing reality of systemic racism that limits opportunities and relegates him to menial jobs.

Moreover, Obinze's experience encapsulates the misconception surrounding the American Dream. Many immigrants believe that moving to a western country will automatically lead to success and a better quality life. However as seen through Obonze's experience, the promise of opportunity can quickly dissolve into a grim reality characterized by exploitation and marginalisation. His journey highlights the divide between the idealized visions of success and systemic barriers that often hinder progress for individuals from marginalised backgrounds. This reveals that the pursuit of the American Dream can lead to unexpected and humbling realities, urging a reevaluation of what that dream truly entails for those who dare chose it.

Similarly, Obinze's cousin Nicholas, who he stays with when he arrives in London, is filled with discontent and anxiety throughout his time there. Even though he is married to his college sweetheart, Ojiugo, and has two children, he seems consistently unhappy compared to when he lived in Nigeria. Ojiugo tries to explain her husband's lack of joy:

...for so long he was working under other people's names. That thing can do wonders to your head, eziokwu. It has not been easy at all for him. This job he has now is very good but he is on contract. He never knows if they will renew (*Americanah*: p242)

Because of this uncertainty about the future, Nicholas feels trapped and disillusioned. His experiences reflect a deep sense of disillusionment with the idea of the American Dream. He initially sought a better life in London, yet he finds himself living in anxiety and uncertainty, unable to enjoy the stability he hoped for. His mental state illustrates how the pursuit of success in a foreign land and can be fraught with difficulties. Instead of fulfilment, he encounters struggles such as fear and instability, undermining his aspirations for a brighter future.

Nicholas' situation critiques the notion that moving to a developed country automatically leads to prosperity and happiness. His relentless worries about job security and feelings of disconnection from

his former life highlights the emotional toll of migration. It challenges the common belief that hard work guarantees a prosperous life, showing instead how systemic issues and personal sacrifices often complicate the immigrant experience. Thus, Adichie portrays the darker side of the American Dream where hope for a better life can lead to disappointment and unrelenting anxiety.

Again, Obinze, disheartened by the incident of someone soiling the toilet floor, makes the decision to quit his job cleaning restrooms. He then finds himself grappling with the anxiety of job hunting, a process that unfolds for more slowly than he had anticipated. The narrator notes that Obinze finds himself constantly hoping for a call from his employment agency; whenever the phone ring, a surge of anxiety grips him, prompting Ojiugo to reassure him with ' 'don't worry things will work out for you''. According to the narrator:

Obinze was all the time waiting a call from his job agency each time the phone did ring, a mild panic would seize his chest, and Ojiugo would say "Don't worry, the Zed things will work out for you (*Americanah*: p242)

While Obinze anxiously awaits job opportunities under an assumed identity, he helps care for Ojiugo's children. This encapsulates Obinze's disillusionment and the realities that often accompany the pursuit of the American Dream. Initially, he holds on to the hope that moving to America will provide him with immediate opportunities and stability. However, the difficulty in securing employment illustrates a contrast to his expectations, instead of the promising life he envisioned, Obinze confronts the harsh realities of unemployment and instability.

Obinze in his quest to obtain legal papers in London, resorts to a sham marriage that demands substantial financial commitment. To gather the necessary funds for his charade, he requires a National Insurance Number, which involves assuming another person's identity and compensating the original owner with a portion of his earnings.

Ironically, despite being the son of a prominent Nigerian university professor, Obinze finds himself employed as a labourer in a delivery company. There, he works alongside a white driver who looks down on him, clearly signaling his disdain rooted in racial prejudice. After one unfortunate incident where Obinze trips and injures his knee, the driver scoffs at him, declaring to his colleagues; "His knee is bad because he is a Knee-grow" (*Americanah*: p ), eliciting laughter from the group. This experience of derision lingers painfully with Obinze.

Obinze's use of a false identity subjects him to the constant fear of encountering law enforcement, amplifying his feelings of isolation and disillusionment. One day while engrossed in a book at a café, a young boy, accompanied by his mother, innocently asks Obinze if he lives in London. "Yes", he responds, but that affirmation does not reflect the reality of his existence he resides in London, yet remains invisible. His life feels like a "a faded pencil sketch, each time he saw a policeman, or anyone with the faintest scent of authority he would fight the urge to run" (*Americanah*: p.259) This intense sensation of alienation deepens as he contemplates his life. He has never felt so alone, a stark contrast to the nurturing family he grew up in and the idyllic romantic relationship he enjoyed with Ifemelu back in Nigeria. The disparity between the future he once envisioned and his current state—a life tarnished by uncertainty, hard labour and a persistent sense of dread overwhelms him. He finds himself reflecting on his mother. According to the narrator:

..he thought of his mother and Ifemelu, and the life he had imagined for himself and the life he now had lacquered as it was by work and reading, by panic and hope. He had never felt so lonely (*Americanah*: p261)

Obinze's struggles in London epitomises the 'japa' syndrome- a contemporary phenomenon where many Nigerian youths aspire to leave the country in search of better opportunities abroad. This drive to migrate reflects a longing for a more prosperous life, inspired by the allure of the west. However, like Obinze, many face the reality that the path to this dream is fraught with daunting challenges, isolation, and a sense of surrender to disillusionment. Obinze's experiences illuminates the multifaceted realities faced by Nigerian immigrants, simultaneously revealing aspirations alongside harsh truths. His journey underscores the emotional toll of leaving behind one's roots and family, as

he grapples with feelings of melancholia – a profound sadness rooted in the loss of identity, belonging, and the dreams he once cherished.

Furthermore, Obinze's narrative highlights a misunderstanding of the American Dream. The pursuit of a better life often becomes an illusion, as the challenges of discrimination, unpaid labour, and fear of authority overshadow initial hopes. This realisation fosters disillusionment as the gap between ambition and reality widens, revealing that the prospects of success in the west are not guaranteed, and the immigrant experience is marked by struggles that challenge the very essence of dreams once held dear.

Emenike, Obinze's former classmate from secondary school, shares in the experience of disillusionment commonly felt by Africans and Nigerian immigrants in London. Despite being married to a British woman who works as a solicitor, Emenike cannot escape the reality of racial discrimination. One evening, he recounts an incident that vividly illustrates this:

He told the story of the taxi driver that he had hailed one night on Upper Street. From afar the cab light was on, but as the cab approached him, the light went off, and he assumed the driver was not on duty. After the cab passed him, he looked back idly and saw that the cab light was back on and that, a little way up the street, it stopped for two white women (*Americanah*: p.277)

Reflecting on this encounter described above, Emenike confesses to Obinze the anger, trauma and profound disillusionment he felt in the face of such blatant discrimination in London. Emenike's narrative encapsulates the intricate and often painful reality of immigrant life in a western city. His encounter represents a broader sense of disillusionment among Nigerian immigrants who arrive with dreams of opportunity only to confront harsh realities. The taxi incident highlights that despite his educational background and personal achievements, he is still subject to the pervasive impact of racism, undermining the idealised notion of the American Dream (or in this case the British equivalent).

The emotions that Emenike expresses reflect Gilroy's concept of melancholia. His feelings reveal an underlying sorrow tied to the fracturing of identity and the loss of the hope that shaped his decision to migrate. This sense of melancholia is further deepened by the realization that his racial identity will always be a significant factor in how he is perceived, regardless of his achievements. Emenike's dual identity as both an immigrant and a member of a racially marginalized group adds another layer to his experience while he has established a life in London, including a marriage to a British woman, this does not shield him from encountering prejudice. His story serves as a reminder that immigrant experiences are often multifaceted, encompassing both aspirations for success and the struggle for acceptance. Emenike's disillusionment challenges the misconception that hard work and commitment invariably leads to success and belonging in western societies. His experience underlines the reality that even highly skilled immigrants face systemic barriers that can thwart their aspirations, highlighting the disconnect between the perceived opportunities of the west and the lived experiences of many immigrants.

Also, Dike, Aunty Uju's son faces severe challenges at school primarily because of his skin colour. He is subjected to racism, where being black automatically makes him a suspect in wrongful activities. When the school's computer system is hacked, Dike is accused without any evidence simply because he is black. This is a clear example of how racial stereotypes link Blackness to wrongdoing in the eyes of some white individuals. Despite being innocent – out with his mom that day and not skilled in computers, the school officials rushed to judgement. They only cleared him from suspicion after the fact, which fails to acknowledge the wrongdoing of accusing him. Instead of addressing the racism, Aunty Uju chooses not to file a formal complaint, showing how many immigrants feel helpless or unsure about how to confront systemic injustices. After this incident, Dike relays to Ifemelu his experiences as a black kid in a white environment.

He told her how his friends would say “Hey, Dike got some weed and how funny it was. He told her about the pastor at church, a white woman who had said hello to all other kids, but when she came to him she said “what's up bro?”. I feel like I have vegetables instead of ears large broccoli sticking out

of my head”, he said laughing. “so of course it had to be me that hacked into the school network (*Americanah*: p350)

This constant teasing and alienation reflect how Dike struggles to fit into a predominantly white environment. The culmination of these traumas leads to Dike’s attempted suicide, as it becomes too much for him to bear. His overdose of pills highlights the emotional toll that racism and discrimination can take on an individual. Aunty Uju is left shocked, realizing just how severe Dike’s mental anguish has become because of societal perceptions related to his race.

Dike’s story also captures the misconception of the American Dream. Many believe that crossing borders will lead to immediate success and acceptance, but the reality can be starkly different. For Dike, the skin colour becomes a barrier that prevents him from fully realizing his potential and being treated fairly. Instead of opportunity he faces judgment and suspicion, revealing how the American Dream can be elusive or even unattainable for those from marginalised backgrounds.

Furthermore, Dike’s situation captures the multifaceted experiences of Nigerian immigrants, where aspirations for a better life are tempered by harsh realities. While Ifemelu tries to bridge this gap by connecting Dike to his heritage and offering support, the underlying issues of racism and cultural dislocation remain challenging. This complexity reveals how immigrants navigate a landscape filled with both the desire for success and the struggle against societal prejudices.

## Findings

The above exploration of the multifaceted nature of Nigerian immigrants in Adichie’s *Americanah* reveals several critical findings about the misconceptions surrounding the American Dream. One prominent finding is that the “Japa” syndrome which refers to the trend of Nigerians seeking to leave the country for better opportunities abroad, is depicted as a rational response to systemic failures in Nigeria. The characters of Aunty Uju, Ifemelu, Obinze, Emenike, Dike, etc. represent those Nigerians who dream of escaping their circumstances leading to a heightened awareness of socio economic challenges that drive migration. This reflects the broader cultural phenomenon where leaving is seen as a solution to inadequacies at home.

The study reveals that the immigrant experience is often characterized by profound emotional struggles, particularly feelings of loss and alienation. Characters like Ifemelu, Aunty Uju, embody this melancholia as they try to grapple with the dislocation from their homeland and the challenges of adapting to a new culture. The inherent sense of nostalgia, longing for family, tradition, and cultural roots, highlights the realities faced by Nigerian immigrants, questioning the simplistic notion that moving to a new country ensures a better life

The study also shows that racism and systemic barriers significantly complicate the immigrant experience, countering the idealization of the American Dream. Ifemelu’s, Aunty Uju, Obinze, and Dike, encounters with racial prejudice starkly contrast with her pre-immigration expectations and illustrate how the promise of freedom and opportunity is often shadowed by discrimination and marginalization. This teaches readers that hard work and ambition alone may not suffice in overcoming the obstacles posed by entrenched social hierarchies, challenging the myth that success in America is guaranteed for all immigrants.

Moreover, the study reveals how the immigrant journey can lead to crisis of identity. Characters frequently navigate between their Nigerian heritage and the realities of life in America. This duality creates an internal conflict that often leaves them feeling disconnected from both their past and present. Adichie deftly captures the complex emotions involved in this negotiation, illustrating that the quest for belonging is fraught with challenges and confusion.

Ultimately, the study reveals that the American Dream is a complex and often elusive ideal for Nigerian immigrants. Adichie’s narratives challenge the notion that migration is a straightforward pathway to success, instead portraying it as a nuanced journey that encompasses both struggles and triumphs. By weaving together themes of loss, identity, resilience, and community. *Americanah* encourages readers to reassess the simplistic understanding of what it means to chase the American

Dream – an endeavor that may be as much about navigating personal and cultural complexities as it is about achieving external goals

## Conclusion

Adichie's *Americanah* intricately explores the disillusionment of Nigerian immigrant characters like Ifemelu, Aunty Uju, Obinze, Dike and Emenike, revealing the profound melancholia that defines their experiences in pursuit of the American Dream. It illustrates the complex interplay between aspirations and reality in the context of the American Dream. The notion of 'Japa' syndrome- a contemporary phenomenon where young Nigerians seek to migrate for better opportunities, highlights a growing disillusionment with the conditions in Nigeria, driven by factors such as corruption, economic instability and bad leadership. This urgency to escape often masks the harsh truths that await many immigrants, as they encounter systemic barriers and cultural dislocation in their host countries.

Adichie's exploration reveals that the journey of migration is not merely one of physical relocation but also an emotional odyssey fraught with feelings of loss, identity crisis, and longing. Drawing from Paul Gilroy's concept of melancholia, we see how the Nigerian immigrants grapple with unresolved connections to their home and cultivating a sense of nostalgia even in pursuit of what they believe will be greater fulfillment abroad. This melancholic state resonates deeply within the contemporary Nigerian reality where the dreams of a better life often clash with the sobering complexities of racial dynamics and the actual constraints of the American Dream.

Moreover, the intricate layers of the immigrant experience in Adichie's *Americanah* reflect not only personal struggles but also broader societal implications. The disillusionment faced by Nigerian immigrants resonates with the aspirations of those caught in the thrall of "Japa" syndrome, revealing a cycle of hope and despair, where the quest for belonging and success may remain unfulfilled. Each character embodies the complexities and challenges inherent in migration, grappling with a multifaceted sense of loss- whether related to identity, cultural heritage, or the elusive promise of success in a foreign land. Ifemelu navigates the harsh realities of racial discrimination, often feeling out of place despite her aspirations. Aunty Uju embodies the sacrifices made to better life, only to confront the limitations of her new environment. Obinze's journey exposes the stark contrasts between expectation and reality, as he faces bureaucratic hurdles that thwart his dreams. Dike's struggle with identity highlights the generational divides that exacerbate feelings of melancholia. Emenike's plight reflects the harsh economic realities that challenge the notion of meritocracy.

Together, these characters illustrate the disillusionment surrounding the American Dream, which many Nigerian immigrants initially perceive as a beacon of hope,. Instead, they encounter systemic barriers and social alienation, leading to a painful realization that success is not guaranteed. Adichie captures this nuanced understanding of the immigrant experience, ultimately reframing the conversation around the American Dream to include the weight of melancholia, the complexities of identity, and the unfulfilled aspirations that haunt these characters. In doing so, she invites readers to reconsider the narrative of success and belonging that often accompanies discussions about immigration, illuminating the deeper emotional struggles that accompany the quest for a better life.

Ultimately, *Americanah* serves as a poignant commentary on the contemporary Nigerian reality, urging us to question the misconceptions surrounding the American Dream while acknowledging the profound emotional landscape that accompany the drive for a better life. It underscores the need for nuanced conversations about migration, identity, and the lived experiences of those who carry their dreams across borders, illuminating the rich tapestry of their journeys and the intricate realities of aspirations and belonging.

## Recommendations

Addressing the challenges faced by Nigerian immigrants in the diaspora requires a multifaceted approach that takes into account their unique experiences and backgrounds. One effective strategy is to establish immigrants support networks that provide culturally sensitive services, including mental

health support, legal advice and employment counseling specifically tailored to the needs of Nigerian immigrants. Many individuals face emotional and psychological challenges related to cultural dislocation, and access to counselors and advisors who understand their cultural context can significantly help them navigate these difficulties.

Furthermore, fostering community building initiatives is essential. Encouraging the formation of community organizations or cultural centers can promote socialization, cultural exchange, and support among Nigerian immigrants. Building a sense of community can reduce feelings of isolation and help individuals maintain connections to their heritage while also fostering new relationships in their new environment.

Another crucial aspect involves enhancing employability through skills development and education programmes. Offering language classes, vocational training, and accreditation programmes that recognize foreign qualifications can empower Nigerian immigrants who struggle to find suitable employment due to language barriers or the non-recognition of their qualifications. By improving their skills, these individuals can secure better job opportunities and contribute more meaningfully to their communities.

Advocacy for fair employment practices is also vital. Promoting policies that protect immigrant workers from discrimination in hiring and workplaces can combat exploitation and ensure that they have equal opportunities in the job market. Understanding and promoting the rights of immigrant workers can create a more equitable landscape for all

Moreover, implementing cultural awareness and diversity training in schools and workplaces can foster understanding of the immigrant experience. Such initiative can improve social integration and reduce racial and cultural prejudices, creating a more inclusive environment for Nigerian immigrants, making it easier for them to thrive in their new homes.

Finally, providing access to financial resources is essential for stability. Offering financial literacy programmes, small business grants, and low-interest loans can help immigrants establish businesses or stabilize their financial situations. Many immigrants face significant economic hardships due to the costs and setting in anew country. Financial support and education can empower individuals and families to achieve greater stability and improve their quality of life.

By taking these proactive steps, the suffering Nigerian immigrants in the diaspora can be alleviated, enabling them to navigate their new environments more effectively. These recommendations aim to foster community, enhance professional opportunities, and support emotional well-being, thereby addressing both the challenges and potential of the immigrant experiences.

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