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The African Woman in America: Identity and Transformation in Novels of Chimamanda, Bulawayo and Baingana

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Abstract : *This paper investigates immigration and women's self-identity in Adichie's Americanah, Bulawayo's We Need New Names, and Baingana's Tropical Fish to establish how their immigration to the USA affects their self-identity in a post-colonial set up. By use of postcolonial concept of hybridity the paper entails textual analysis of the three novels by the African women novelists. The trio represents women characters who emigrate from Africa to the USA and whose movements and experiences oscillate between the two spaces. There is a remarkable difference between the representation of the African women characters' self-identity before and after immigration to the USA.*

Keywords: *Immigration, Homeland, Host land, Self-identity, Transformation .*

I. Introduction

Emigrants from post-independence African countries are attracted to developed countries such as those found in North America and Europe because of the prospects for better socio-economic opportunities. African women immigrants form part of this diaspora community. They face various unique challenges in the new location and these spaces affect the way they relate with both their host-land and homeland. Of significance in this discussion are the dynamics of identity- for both self and the others- while an African woman immigrant is in the USA.

African women immigrants undergo remarkable transformation in their self-identity, which does not necessarily imply assimilation into the new society. As Hall posits, "The time for 'assimilating' minorities to holistic and organic notions of cultural value has passed"(219). Demands placed on the diasporic subject by the American society push her into the 'third space' which is a place of hybridity as opposed to assimilation. In this position of liminality, the new identity formed is ambiguous, and contains several layers from which she chooses depending on her environment.

Hall's position on identity formation is seen throughout lives of many women characters presented in the three novels under discussion. As he argues, in the formation of an individual's identity is "a 'production', which is never complete, always in process" (Rutherford 222). Notably, the process of self-identity takes place as socialization between the African woman and those around her. In line with this argument, Irina Gomzina further observes that "The formation of identity takes place in socialization, which involves comparisons of others, through similarity and difference" (22). The process of construction of identity by the African post-immigration woman in the USA continuously takes place as she associates with others. She ends up picking elements that make her different from others and keeping those that make her similar to them. Consequently, the new diasporic woman's self-identity becomes a layer built on a core — a core which is the identity before immigration. This core can be retained throughout her life within a multilayered identity. An individual African woman picks from the multilayer an identity from the environment in which she finds herself.

II. Language and Identity

Language is not only a means of expression but also a way by which engagement in politics, trade, and cultural activities is made possible. In addition to possessing numerous native languages, many members of the African societies also speak a foreign language which is mostly deemed official language in their countries. Due

to British colonization, English is one of the favoured official languages in Africa. It is taught as a second language in some schools. Mary Mederios Kent notes that majority of African immigrants in the USA are articulate in English since "Many studied English in school and come from countries where English is the language of government" (11). The demand to teach and learn English in African schools is evident in *Tropical Fish*, where children in school speak in English for fear of being punished. Other women like Marie in *Americanah* have halting English; while Darling in *We Need New Names* demonstrates mastery and fluency of the English language before immigration. Darling's fluency in English during a telephone conversation with a White woman caller, when she and her friends enter a white man's house after the locals break into it following political unrest in Zimbabwe, is outstanding. She begins, "Hallo, how are you, how can I help you this afternoon?" (127). She exhibits proficiency in English language that many African women possess even before relocating to the USA.

Social interactions before immigration provide many African women with opportunities to interact with their native language and foreign languages like English. Adichie portrays African woman's mastery of her native language through Ifemulu who actively participates in an Igbo proverbs trade session with Obinze. She is also exposed to the American English language through reading American books recommended to her by her boyfriend.

The language that an individual African woman immigrant in the USA uses reveals her status as a foreigner, making her susceptible to discrimination. As Hall argues, it is through this process of othering that identity is constructed. Further, Fumilayo Showers in her article "Being black, foreign and woman: African immigrant identities in the United States" records that while in America, African immigrant women's accent is "an undeniable marker of their foreign status" (1822). Though the African woman immigrant is fluent in English even before moving to the USA, she faces major communication challenge in the host-land because of her accent and dialect. Ifemulu in *Americanah* fears that her Nigerian accent would give her away to the taxi driver and trigger unwanted conversation between them. Further, Bulawayo in *We Need New Names* informs us that immigrants find it difficult to communicate with the American English speakers because they pay attention to the accent instead of what one is saying. As a result, communication becomes tedious as one is made to repeat what they have said.

The exigency to overcome the incomprehensible communication between the African woman immigrant and the hosts is fueled by her desire to access education, services, find employment and gain promotion in her work places with ease. Naphtali M. W. Makora in his thesis "Foreign Accents: Accented English Speech among Kisii-Kenyans in the USA" observes, African immigrants, "Get enrolled in basic courses for development of proficiency and comprehensibility" (29). The basic courses that the woman immigrant enrolls in are not limited to professional training only. They also include linguistic training. The acquisition and development of proficiency and comprehensibility in linguistic skills can be acquired in schools, or through other means such as the internet, daily interaction with the American English speakers and media.

During coverage of a disastrous Tsunami that hits Zimbabwe, media reporters use the word 'fucking' whose meaning is unknown to the young girls like Darling in *We Need New Names* and derogatory and hypnotizing to Christine when her father uses it in *Tropical Fish.* The African woman would later learn that the word is frequently used in the USA and even uses it later. Concurring with Mukora, when radio and TV broadcasts are done in American English, they serve as a model for those seeking to reduce non-native foreign accents. In the USA, Ifemulu learns American English from newscasters while Darling listens and imitates the accents of actors in programmes like *That's So Raven, Glee, Golden Girls* and *Scoopy- Doo* and acquires a repertoire of American words that she keeps under the tongue like talismans; ready to use . At the comfort of her home, radio and television offer both entertainment and linguistic tutorials to the African woman. As observed in *Americanah* once the African woman has learnt, mastered and can confidently use the American English like Ifemulu, she seemingly becomes integrated into the society and can interact with the hosts with more ease.

In the USA, communication is a lengthy process that requires the speaker to make conscious effort in order to be understood. Catherine Nyawira Mwai in her thesis "Immigration and Women's Self-Identity in Selected Novels of Adichie, Bulawayo and Baingana" observes, even with the knowledge of English that the post-immigration African woman possesses, in the USA, the process of communicating successfully is wearisome but must be endured in order to survive. As described in *We Need New Names:*

> The problem with English is this: You usually can't open your
> mouth and it comes out just like that- first you have to think
> what you have to say. Then you find the words. Then you have

> to carefully arrange those words in your head. Then you have to
> say the words quietly to yourself, to make sure you got them okay.
> And finally, the last step, which is to say the words out loud and
> have them sound just right. (193)

In order to define her self-identity, the speaker must choose the right vocabulary, style, spelling and pronunciation of words to communicate effectively. Ifemulu, just like Christine in *Tropical Fish* asserts that she knows English. During registration at the University, Ifemulu's accent betrays her as a non-American. Her knowledge of English is doubted. She is henceforth treated as ignorant and this annoys her. She thereafter resolves to undertake the tedious journey of practising the American accent (134). A similar frustration is experienced by aunt Fostalina in *We Need New Names* when she's ordering things online and has to spell words in order to be understood by the seller. In order to identify herself as part of those that she finds in the USA, the African woman adopts the slangy Americanism as Adichie portrays in *Americanah* where a lot of women that Ifemulu interacts with in the hair salon have adopted an American slang.

Social interactions with friends in the USA are crucial in acquiring American English. While Darling in *We Need New Names* learns a lot from her friend Marina, Ifemulu in *Americanah* learns by watching friends talk. Ginika also teaches Ifemulu on the use of vocabularies like "big" instead of "fat". At her place of work, Christine in *Tropical Fish* learns that "Are you done?" is American way of asking "Are you finished?" (102). Learning the appropriate vocabulary to use in the USA makes communication easier.

Internet complements what is learnt during interactions with the speakers of American English. The advanced technology in the USA makes it possible to access internet sites like Google and Yahoo where meaning of strange words is elaborated. Darling turns to Google and learns the meaning of the word 'freak' which is used on her new classmate to ridicule him. She is able to empathize with Tom and understands the distress he must have endured before committing suicide a week later. Through various platforms provided by the internet, the African woman finds a voice. Through her blogs, Ifemulu portrays a bold and assertive post-immigration African woman who is able to communicate openly appreciating and criticizing different issues based on lifestyle, parenting, education, racism, hair, among others. Platforms provided on the internet are alternative stages on which an African woman in the USA may express herself without suffering intimidation and silencing that Christine in *Tropical Fish* experiences. She (Christine) narrates that she chooses to remain silent as any attempt to talk leaves her voice dry, feeling strange and invokes pity and impatience among those around her. Elsewhere at L.A. Café, she dares not talk in attempt to conceal her identity. Internet becomes an avenue through which the African post-immigration woman redefines herself as assertive and confident in addressing issues that bother her in the new society.

With years of wearisome American English drills, a lot of African women immigrants undergo a noteworthy transformation in their language. As noted in *We Need New Names* during a telephone conversation with her family and friends, Darling's transformed accent and dialect are easily noticeable. Her mother and her friend Chipo comment negatively about her American accent. Her text chat with her friend Marina shows her mastery of the American informal English. She texts, "nuthin. trynna study stupid bio" (275) which is American for "Nothing. I'm trying to study stupid Biology." These changes in language signify that after interacting with the American society for a long time, the immigrants consciously adopt new elements in their language and eventually appear transformed.

Mastery of the new language does not imply assimilation. In *We Need New Names* Bulawayo, who is an immigrant in the USA, writes, "It was only when we were by ourselves that we spoke in our real voices" (240). This statement reveals an immigrants' vulnerability to slip back to their core identity even after exhibiting a remarkable transformation. In *Tropical Fish*, a conversation between Christine and her cousin Kema who has lived in the USA for a longer period portrays a slide back into the core identity. Kema addresses her cousin in a Ugandan accent but immediately switches to an American one. Correspondingly, in *Americanah*, women in the hair salon that Ifemulu visits use English in business transactions while other languages are preferred in informal interactions during braiding. The temptation to slip back into the pre-immigration language is so much that the African woman has to be cautious and keep reminding herself of her new self-identity, to avoid a lapse. Darling in *We Need New Names* says, "I have to remember to slow down because when I get excited I start to sound like myself, and my American accent goes away" (221). The American accent is thus picked and used for convenience but as Baingana writes, it is hard to erase the African lilt in it.

Notably, the language of the diasporic African woman keeps shifting. As Michel Bruneau in his chapter "Diasporas, transnational spaces and communities" included in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts,*

Theories and Method argues, this nomadic identity is "partial and short-lived hybridization" (46). Consistent with this argument, the African woman as seen in the three novels is never stable in her language. Depending on her environment, she uses her mother tongue, sometimes her pre-immigration accent in English and others an American accent. This is seen in *Americanah* when Ifemulu resolves to drop her American accent and goes back to using her Nigerian one and Fostalina in *We Need New Names* speaks in her mother tongue regardless of the fact that she has stayed in America for a long time. Others like Ginika in *Americanah* sticks to the American accent.

III. Identity and Appearances

The African woman's physical appearance is important to her. As Dina Yerima argues, "Skin color or hue, hair, and body size, issues that are tied to notions of beauty and femininity, all combine to make up her self-expression" (642).

The knowledge of pre-immigration African woman on how to enhance her physical appearance is demonstrated by Mother of Bone in *We Need New Names*. Even though limited by poverty she does not neglect her appearance. She buys simple cosmetics like petroleum jelly and restricts its use to special days like Sunday. On such a day, she allows Darling (her foster daughter) to use her Vaseline but with strict instructions. Darling is young but she displays her know-how on application of Vaseline to enhance her physical appearance before getting dressed (22). On special occasions like voting days, women use more complex enhancive make-ups. They paint their lips to look even more stunning. Homemade beauty enhancers such as avocado beauty cream used by Aunt Uju in *Americanah* are among other creative options available for the pre-immigration African woman. Clearly, the pre-immigration African woman, who though sometimes limited by the availability of a variety of body appearance enhancers, is not ignorant of their use.

Maama in *Tropical Fish*, who is frequently gifted with a variety of jewelry by her well-travelled husband, uses different creams, perfumes, nail polish and lipstick on special days like her husband's homecoming. Unlike, Mother of Bones, Maama is similar to the rich women who attend Chief's party in *Americanah*. The two latter cases belong to a higher and more exposed class in the society who can afford expensive cosmetics. Maama complements her special dress with bolder lipstick (7) while her daughters Patti and Christine use eye pencil and deep crimson lip paint to complement their look as they attend a party they attend (32). Heavy foundation make-ups to conceal pimples are available among rich, well-travelled, experienced and widely exposed African women as observed in *Americanah*. Through such women, it is evident that the class in which the pre-immigration African woman belongs, as well as her exposure and interaction with the expertise in cosmetics have great influence on the knowledge that she possesses on the same.

Other women like the long distance truck drivers' girlfriends in *Tropical Fish* go for skin bleaching to look 'beautiful' for their men. Ignorant of the side effects of the cream, a woman receives a gift of "ten tubes of Ambi [a skin lightening cream that contains hydroquinone and banned in some countries because of its adverse effects] to keep her face as bright yellow as a ripe banana" (70). The African man influences the African woman's use of make-ups, either by providing her with them, or by her need to please him with a modified appearance.

The fact that the pre-immigration African woman uses makeup on different occasions enhances her quest for elevating her self-esteem, which comes from her definition of her herself (self-identity) in relation to those around her. It also demonstrates that she possesses impressive knowledge on how to enhance her physical appearance even before moving abroad.

Apart from wearing makeup, the African woman is also concerned about her body shape. At home, big bodies among African women are more applauded than small ones. Uncle Kojo in *We Need New Names* affirms this when in his disapproval for Aunt Fostalina's craze for small body, tells her, "There is nothing African about a woman with no thighs, no hips, no belly, no behind" (151). This perspective also finds expression in *Tropical Fish*, where Christine's friend Betty, who is a victim of teenage pregnancy and abortion, is bigger in size and appears older as compared to her friends but as the narrator says, "That was considered graceful among the village Banyankore" (33). Betty's case which echoes Uncle Kojo's sentiments, together with Ranyinudo's (whose full and curvy body is revealed by the tight jeans she wears in *Americanah*) are indicators of the acceptable body size of an African woman.

Despite the size of an African woman, emphasis is laid on the shape of the body. In *We Need New Names*, Darling compares the enviable African fatness to detestable American obesity. African fatness indicates that one is well fed. Body features must be well defined and the shape must not be interfered with. Darling remembers the kind of fatness that was envied at home "It was fatness that did not interfere with the body; a neck was still a neck, a stomach a stomach, an arm an arm, a buttock a buttock" (171). To enhance her shape, the African woman wears body shape enhancers. As Bulawayo demonstrates, during voting, women wear thick figure belt to contour their bodies and look more beautiful (59).

African woman prefers a big body while the immigrant African woman, in line with popular American culture, prefers a small body. African women immigrants like Fostalina in *We Need New Names* and Ginika in *Americanah* are obsessed with having a small body. They starve themselves almost to anorexia to become thin. Others like Ifemulu who had attempted to lose weight but failed are proud of their big bodies but cautious about their shapes. Thus, during a party attended by Christine while in the USA, women wrap brightly coloured *kitenge*—a loose cloth tied around the waist— around their hips and sway them to catch the male guests' attention. Women like Christine in *Tropical Fish* who confesses that "my hips aren't big enough" (106) are not noticeable and therefore struck off from the men's list of beautiful women. African men's attitude is a major influence to the size and shape of the body that women would want to maintain.

Once in USA, the African woman acquires a static and fluid identity, whereby she chooses to preserve some elements of her pre-immigration self-identity as well as embrace change and dynamism in others. Gomzina notes, "The combination of two opposite approaches creates a possible third space" (6) which Hall argues allows other positions [of self-identity] to emerge. The African woman is confronted by a feeling of in-betweeness. Her self-identity is not totally diasporic one but is greatly influenced by the new culture and the culture of her country of origin. Though there is a variety of makeup available in the USA, the African woman immigrant sometimes embraces their use while rejecting them at other times. It is a matter of an individual's choice and taste. While some women like Darling and Fostalina in *We Need New Names* (165) embrace the use of makeup, others like Christine in *Tropical Fish* avoid it. Christine, for instance, says, "I don't wear lipstick or makeup" (14). Clearly, whatever one embraces forms part of her identity. Darling's use of cosmetics is influenced by her amateur beautician, Aunt Fostalina. She possesses cosmetics kit and uses it skillfully to suit diverse milieus and occasions. In preparation for a wedding for instance, she and her Aunt enhance their appearance with complicated makeups. Just like during her pre-immigration days, the makeup is even more elaborate during what she deems special occasions such as weddings. Darling is excited to receive a facial makeover. On her own, she comfortably does a touch up with lip gloss.

Once African women immigrate to the USA, they seek more permanent ways of dealing with their pre-immigration complexion and body shapes and sizes. Undoubtedly, the use of such gears as figure belt can only offer a temporary solution to issues of body shape. There is therefore need to look for more permanent solutions to an individual's desired shape and size which may include weight loss through dieting, exercise and plastic surgery. A woman like Aunt Fostalina who is already too thin is too obsessed with losing weight through dieting, fasting and exercising. However, as noted by Darling, among the options of dealing with body shape and size challenges available in America, plastic surgery is the most effective for those who are dissatisfied with their general body appearance as well as the appearance of specific body parts like breasts, nose and lips (239).

Similar to the pre-immigration African women, those who have interacted with American culture either by living in the USA or remotely through internet, media and American stories told by returnees, go to any length to alter their dark complexion. Aunty Onenu and Aunty Uju in *Americanah* apply bleaching creams which have negative effects on them. While Aunty Onenu's knuckles and skin folds defy bleaching, Aunty Uju has to avoid the sun in order to protect her bleached shin.

The depressive life in USA that the African woman sometimes experiences represses her. Aunty Uju experiences this severally. In USA, she has to put up with a dry skin and no jewelry, an appearance that she would not have tolerated back at home. As mentioned earlier, an African woman's class in the society, whether at home or in the USA, determines the extent to which she uses physical appearance enhancers.

IV. Dressing, Hair and Hairstyles

Ilse Berkhout, in his thesis "Women and Wardrobes: An Ethnographic Study of Women and their Clothes" argues, "What lies beneath the whole exercise of getting dressed is the way identities are formed and performed" (44). In dressing up, a woman defines who she is in relation to the others around her, and communicates this self-identity during social interactions. Thus, the wearer of the dress is the performer, while the society is the audience. Berkhout's argument is echoed by Maya Parmar, who in his thesis, "Reading the

Double Diaspora: Cultural Representations of Gujarati East Africans in Britain" submitted in March 2013 at the University of Leeds asserts that "The attire in which the body moves also performs identity" (145). The manner in which an African woman dresses carries a message about her self- identity which the society at home and abroad decodes.

Varied statements are made through women's attire before and after immigration. As Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne Eicher in their study 'Dress and Identity' posit, "The list of possible meanings communicated by type of dress is seemingly endless" (4). Among the meanings communicated are one's age, gender, religion, school affiliation and social class. While at home in Africa, a woman defines her age to the others by what she wears. In *Tropical Fish*, Maama's long flowing skirt (14), communicates her maturity, as opposed to what her daughters wear. To a young people's party that the girls attend, Christine wears borrowed red high heels and a pair of tight and undersized corduroy pants that her aunt had bought her a year before. She later wears tight jeans skirt and the shoes to a date. Her dressing fits her age and enhances definition of her identity as a young woman, who should thus be accepted in the interactions with other young people in the two occasions.

In *Tropical Fish* women's clothes, like a brassiere, are important markers of a transition from girlhood into a mature woman. Christine is anxious about wearing one and considers it an adult thing (28). It communicates not only one's gender as a female but her identity in terms of age. Wearing a bra is a sign of physical maturity and a sign that she has become a young adult. Other types of clothes like the skirts and blouses, the brightly coloured dresses and starched cotton belt worn in Higher and Gayaza schools respectively (46) communicate affiliation to the schools that the girls attend.

Dressing is used to define religious orientations. Certain modes of dressing are disapproved as they go against religion. Sister Ibinabo in *Americanah* rebukes one of the young girls in church for wearing tight trousers. She sternly warns, "Any girl that wears tight trousers wants to commit the sin of temptation. It is best to avoid it" (50). The mode in which an African woman dresses is sometimes used as a means of defining her as religious.

In *We Need New Names*, the two black girls' dressing of skinny jeans, weaves and heels send a group of men into stupor as they stare at them. Similarly, Darling's Sunday dress sends a message to her friends. The meaning of her dressing is decoded by the audience - her peers, and helps to keep them off. A good yellow dress that Darling rarely wears (21) elevates her to higher position as compared to her playmates. They only wave at her from a distance. This is unlike other times when she is dressed like them and they therefore play together. A similar scenario is witnessed during Chief's party in *Americanah.* During the party, guests use their dressing to communicate their social class. An expensive sequined dress that one of the women guest wears immediately communicates her high social class (28) creating ease in her communication with other women.

In the USA, Christine in *Tropical Fish* is concerned about her dressing and the effects it has on her interaction with the hosts. She is concerned that the length, colour and fitting of her skirts and blouses may be the cause of her alienation in America. To fit in the society, Christine changes her dressing and disregards brightly coloured clothes embraced at home since according to her, "Bright colours look gaudy, cheap, and tasteless" (14). In *We Need New Names*, Darling also expresses her contempt for African clothes in the way she describes Marina's African attire. She says of her "She wears all these colourful traditional outfits, never mind they are ugly and make her look like an old woman" (199). The African woman not only changes her manner of dressing but also her attitude towards her pre-immigration outfit.

In *Tropical Fish* during a walk that Christine joins, everyone in the group is clad in blue jeans, T-shirts with catchy slogan, and huge white sneakers like boats (96) but Christine is still adorned in her pre-immigration wide skirts, that would have marked her identity as a mature woman before immigration but which in the USA alienates her from the others. In other occasions in a Pasadena club and L.A. Café, she feels foolish for being overdressed. For instance, while everyone else in the Pasadena club is wearing T-shirts and baggy pants in ugly grey and brown colours, Christine is in tight green velvet trousers and frilly white blouse (109). What would have made a woman socially acceptable at home ironically creates a conflict between her and the others in the group in the new society. Upon arrival in America, Darling too faces rejection as she is teased about her dressing. Dressing in pre-immigration attire in the two cases portrays the women as odd, ignorant and misplaced resulting in them being openly avoided by the others in the group.

Several African diasporic women in the three texts invest in wearing appropriate clothes to different events as this creates a sense of being part of ongoing social interactions. At the club in Pasadena, Christine in *Tropical Fish* resolves to wear shabby clothes like the hosts even though she holds reservations about it. Her transformation attracts the audience of Raab. Wearing appropriate clothes to events also drives away fear of

rejection, and gives the immigrants confidence to interact with others. This confidence is displayed during Africans' gatherings on weekends. The women mingle with their big hips swaying heavily with each move, as purposeful and confident as the huge swathes of bright- coloured *kitenge* wrapped around them. The African attire worn by the women creates in them confidence and makes their interactions easy.
Both Ginika in *Americanah* and Aunty Fostalina in *We Need New Names* are keen on what they wear to different occasions. While the former buys a new dress for a dinner party, the latter buys from JCPenney a long strapless cream dress that clings to her body to wear to her friend's wedding. She intends to stand out in the crowd and look romantic to the bridegroom who is her ex. Her dressing is meant to bring her out as sexier than the bride and cause people to envy her. Other African immigrant women wear short flimsy clothes in *Americanah* in order to fit in the society.

In reference to Yerima's article, 'Regimentation or Hybridity ? Western Beauty Practices by Black Women in Adichie's *Americanah',* hybridity involves "beauty practices such as care of hair, skin, dress, and so forth and social and financial status" (641-642). The post-immigration African woman is a hybrid subject who retains or discards her former dressing depending on the class in which she finds herself. According to Yerima, there are those immigrants who have a better life after initial struggle, and those who remain unlucky. Regardless of the class that the African woman in the USA finally falls into, the initial economic struggle affects her dressing. Aunty Uju and Ifemulu in *Americanah* cannot afford trendy wear as they are struggling financially. Aunt Uju wears very cheap and shaggy clothes, worse than she could have worn back at home (110) while Ifemulu is rescued by her friend Ginika who offers to buy her clothes since she is broke (125).

V. Conclusion

The discussions in this paper are in line with contemporary diasporic discourse which traces how immigration to the USA influences people's self-identity. This paper has discussed the presentation of the African woman in terms of identity and immigration in three novels. The pre-immigration woman possesses a home accent and wears African dresses like *kitenge* and portrays physical appearances that display her identity as an Africa. Once she immigrates to the USA, the hybrid diasporic subject possesses a multi-layered identity from which she picks what she wants to display depending on her environment. For instance, she picks an American accent, diets and exercises to have a thin body, wears American dresses, eats American food, behaves like an American and straightens her hair. While the multi-layered identity keeps on changing, the core is retained all through her life.

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