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A STUDY OF RESISTANCE AGAINST RACIAL SEGREGATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN AMERICANAH BY ADICHIE

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Abstract

The study explores resistance against racial segregation of African Americans in Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The novel reveals how racial segregation functions as a self-constructed concept of white society, attributing undesirable traits to Black people to justify their marginalization. African Americans face racial discrimination in various aspects of life, reflecting the systemic racism entrenched in white-dominated social structures. This study applies Critical Race Theory to examine the resistance strategies adopted by Black individuals against white hegemonic power. Adichie portrays race as an ingrained element of American society, where Black individuals experience stigmatization, exclusion, and denial of basic rights such as equal citizenship. The white community dehumanizes them, reducing their social and moral worth. In response, African Americans employ different forms of resistance to confront these injustices and reclaim equality and recognition. The novel depicts this through Dike's suicide, which exposes the psychological pain of racial rejection, and Ifemelu's rejection of white norms, which asserts her identity and self-respect. It also highlights unequal opportunities in education and employment, emphasizing the persistent struggle for justice and dignity. The study concludes that Americanah challenges systemic racism and celebrates the resilience and agency of Black identity.

Key Words: Racism, Segregation, Oppressed, Phenotype, Genotype, ancestry, Americanah

Introduction

This research aims to analyze the racial segregation among African Americans and their ways of resistance against this segregation. A century ago, African Americans were oppressed as rural peasantry. The share-cropping agricultural system exploited them, and they were not better paid in jobs where they were brutally segregated. They were stripped off from their



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legal rights, and they had limited access to quality education; in this way, they were not allowed to express their grievances to the high command.

African Americans continued their struggle against racial segregation in the form of the civil rights movement, Non-Violent Direct Action; the Brown V Board of Education decision, the Rose Park decision, and Black Panther Party were used as tools against this racial segregation. The Black Panther Party, which is the mouthpiece of black people, started to motivate the black community about the cruel violence of police, and the party also suggested that black people should defend themselves against all this violence in 1966. It was the time of revolution. The police are the agents of the government, and they treat Blacks as the higher authority instructs them. "The agents of government speak the language of pure force" (Fanon, 1966, p. 31). It was said that the policemen are "the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the blacks" (Fanon, 1966, p. 35). Two memorable events, like slavery and Colonization, have a lot of importance in the lives of African Americans. These events played a traumatic and indelible role, and these two situations have been clearly reflected in African American Literature.

In the lives of Africans, there is no grief like slavery, which traumatizes them and leads them to change their identity (Opata, 2000, p. 84). The narrative of African Americans works like a mirror of reality and tells their conditions in this racist society, so African Americans are considered as disillusioned and brutalized, and they are often considered as domestic pets like parrots and dogs; however, it is due to slavery, Whites classed the Blacks and ox together. Slavery and colonization left devastating consequences for the colonized Blacks, and still, they are not granted the status of human beings.

Research Questions

These are some guiding research questions for our analysis.

1. How does White society segregate the Afro-American blacks in Americanah?
2. How do Afro-American Blacks resist this racial segregation in Americanah?

Significance of the Study

This study aims to understand the situation of African American Blacks in present-day America and how they are disturbed due to racism. Racial segregation makes them feel alien in society. They do not find a respectable place in society, and the treatment of white people makes them aggressive. This study helps to understand how White people exploit Blacks and how Blacks resist against this racial segregation. In the white society of America, people are divided into privileged and non-privileged people, in which Blacks are always non-privileged. "One side of the pairing is more valued and rightly belongs in the social world, while the other side of the pairing, less valued by comparison" (Hart, 2013, p.135).



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This study aims to fill the gap in other research that has been conducted in the relevant area of this research.

Literature Review

This chapter examines a wide range of pertinent material related to the topic of research. Hook (1992) said about resistance against racial segregation that black should love blackness, it is the way of resistance. Santos (2017) analyzed the “Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry” by Mildred Taylor. This study leads to the disclosure of the story of an African protagonist, Logan David’s struggle to confront white supremacy. Angela Davis (1971) describes the labeling of negative stereotyping of the African American mothers by the white society. Neuberger (1990), through “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” of Maya Angelou, tells the different ways of racial segregation and the resistance of black people against that discrimination. Fanon (1952) also writes about the double consciousness of blacks. Gooden (2004) asserts different strategies of resistance against racial segregation. Smith McCoy (2001) says that black fiction is a danger for whites because it guarantees to incite social change. Carmichael (1967) writes about the unity of the Third World to combat a common enemy, racist white Westerners. Morrison (1995) said in “Myths and Realities” that African Americans should develop strategies for the recognition of their enemy. Putnam (2011) asserted that the racially exploited, violated, and oppressed women characters in Toni Morrison's novels take violent actions to resist against violence of white people. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2014), in an interview, tells that education as a sign of hope for blacks to get rid of racism. Berger (1996) writes about racial atrocities in *Beloved* of Toni Morrison and shows several ways of resistance in the form of violation, violence, and displacement against Whites. CluadeMckay (1922) writes about the different behavior of blacks towards whites. William (1992) states the effects of racial segregation. Irving and Hudley (2005) write that racism is the core element of white society. Okuyade (2009) tells the un-belonging and the status of otherness of blacks in the white community. According to Ogene (2013) basic purpose of African American literature, which is a sub-genre form of literature, is to convert the negative image of the black people and their culture into a positive one. In “The Sport of the Gods” by Dunbar, Ogene (2013) described the different, worse situations of black people in which black people are used as the tools of sports in front of the white people (gods). Araujao and Schneider (2016) asserted that the same situation of black’s oppression in “Our Nig” written by Harriet E. Wilson, describes the story of the oppressions of the main character, Frado, who suffers when she lives in a family house of a white, and she undergoes violence and condemnation. As Fanon (1952) says that Black men should answer against those definitions that defined him as ugly and a hateful person, “any attempt from white people which defined black people must receive a strict rejection.”(p.23). Sharma (2014) describes the state of african Americans in white society just like a prison through Walter Mosley's “The Man in My Basement” and Jonathan Lethem in “The Fortress of Solitude.”



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Zaho (2015) used “Their Eyes Were Watching God” to differentiate between reality and imitation. Kumari and Singh (2016) talk about Rita Dove’s poems about resistance against racial segregation. Reed (1993) writes about the part social media plays in the destruction of blacks. Njubi (2001) writes how African American use fast internet resources and in a way, they can change their image in the world from negative to positive. Simpson (2009) writes about Chester Himes' unrestrained pessimism among blacks due to racial segregation.

Hook (1992) narrates that racism is a system of promoting discrimination and subjugation. He says that “Collectively black people and our allies in struggle are empowered when we practice self-love as a revolutionary intervention that undermines the practices of domination. Loving blackness as a resistance transforms our ways of looking and being, thus creating the conditions necessary for us to move against the forces of domination and death and reclaim black life” (Hook, 1992, p.20). It is also the form of struggle when black people recognized themselves and work for their unity. This is recognition of their worth, the worth of their blackness and their culture. It is the way to resist white domination by loving blackness.

Santos (2017) analyzed the “Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry” by Mildred Taylor. This study leads to the disclosure of the plot of an African American protagonist, Logan David’s struggle to confront white supremacy. Santos (2017) describes David and his resistance against the racial segregation of white society. He is the representative of the culture and the saviour of his people . Black people have an unconquerable will for equality and freedom in a white society that does not show any dignity for this nation.

Angela Davis (1971) says that White society labeled African American mothers as aggressive and violent. African American culture provides a stable kinship form of structures in which the mother plays the role of decisive authority. White society ignores the cruel phenomenon and the profound trauma that a black woman experienced when she had to surrender her children to alien master interests (p.3). Babamiri (2015) explains that in *Beloved*, Toni Morrison narrates that dehumanized slavery does not allow black mothers to perform their duties as mothers and train their children. In that time, other black women treated them like mothers. Motherhood works like a tool of empowerment for black women (p.26). The black women must accept this legacy of Afro American people because they also have the same blood as their mothers in chains. They say that their fight against racial segregation identical in spirit now they are applying various forms of struggle. Black people should follow the traditions of their brave forefathers, they should do struggle to attain their place in society.

In “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing” Maya Angelou shows through the character of Momma how she rescued the girl from the harsh racial environment and how she replied to the doctor’s comment that he prefers to cure dogs than Negros. Momma's superhuman power is an ideal used to show the undiminished strength of blacks against white racism. Neuberger (1990) said that Momma was compensating for the racial displacement of the child's



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experiences. So blacks bear different kinds of racial segregation that whites do not want to cure; they do not want to talk with them. They understand them as inferior to the earth under the deep ocean. Blacks resist this racial segregation and also respond to the Whites' discrimination and adopt a verbal form of resistance.

Gooden (2004) described different resistance strategies that are adopted by the African American women to cope with racial segregation. They rely on faith, keep silent, and continue prayers. They also gain strength from their past, and they visualize themselves. They try to create a positive self-image in response to negative stereotyping. They also rely on public and social support. They alter their external behavior or appearance avoiding retreating communication with specific individuals and circumstances, and foot up and fight back, and they directly address the root of the problem.

McCoky (2001) highlights the information that white mobs burned black printing presses in the 19th and early 20th centuries because these printing presses endangering to incite social change. She claims that the fiction of black and specifically black historical fiction that is the only medium for blacks to resist the invisibility of white riot. Black fiction provides a historical explanation of racial discrimination from the black viewpoint. McCoky (2001) said that blacks can resist by writing about the racial segregation of white society. Through this, they can convey their message as a demand for human equality. In black fiction, Black writers write about their daily experiences, and they describe the hostile and negative attitudes of White society against them. Black fiction shows a clear and cruel white society.

Morrison (1995) said in "Myths and Realities: African Americans and the Measurement of Human Abilities," she said there is also a final solution of every problem. Still, being black, they should start from the first solution sequence to combat with racism. First, think about the internal enemy and develop verbal and other strategies to avoid and fight the enemy. Then, enlist all sources that can help in this process of reinforcement—but maintained silence during this all process that is more profitable for blacks. Blacks can compete with their enemies by adopting polite policies of conversation. So, Toni Morrison suggested different strategies to fight racism. Blacks should focus on their enemy and their policies of racial segregation that were designed against them, and then black should face those challenges with courage and wisdom.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2014) said in an interview that it is utmost necessary for Africans to speak for themselves and for their rights. Chimamanda says that education is a vital tool to fight racial segregation. A deep vision that Chimamanda (2005) keeps for Africans, Africans should need to return to their roots. African American people combat racial segregation by arming themselves with education. All African American writers suggest to the Afro American people that education and the dignity of their culture are necessary to get rid of this racial segregation. They considered that their educated daughter



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would change the fate of colored people in this white supremacist society. Education is the chance of good fortune and the tool to fight against racism (p. 16).

Fanon (1963) says that he does not want to revive an unjust civilization; he does not want to become a man of the past, an oppressed person under the white master. He says, being black, he wants to liberate himself from all the racial segregation and cruelties. He says that blacks have always been discriminated from the white society, and racism has brought a burden to their lives, and blacks faced a burden of hate in the eyes of the white man (p. 12). Wald (1996) says that the effect of racial ideology is to create a minority with fewer abilities. White society imposed the lines of race on the minorities. Wald (1996) says that James Weldon Johnson wrote in his “An Autobiography of an Ex Colored Man”(1912) White men always take privileges in American society due to the color of their skin. American society divides people on the basis of color complexion and places blacks at the bottom of the human hierarchy.

Kumari and Singh (2016) asserted that Rita Dove wrote about inequalities in her poems “On the Bus with Rosa Park” “these verses focused on Rosa Park woman who voiced black’s inequalities in buses and other transport facilities. She gave voice to injustice and racial segregation. The volume of poems by Rita gives expression to the oppression of black women and their fight against the cruelties of White people during the era of Civil Rights movement.

Neubauer (1990) discussed the main themes of Maya Angelou poetry, theme of racial segregation and displacement and identity regain. In Caged Bird, Angelou tells many shocking instances of the racial discrimination that she faced in her childhood. The era of her suffering and repeated denunciation not only comes from the displacement itself, but perhaps more evidently from the child's sensitive grasp of white society's discrimination. from the child's sensitive understanding of prejudice of the white society. A soft, clean razor would be sufficient for threat, but an oxidized, rough one leaves no space for doubt in the sufferer’s mind. In “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” (1970) Maya Angelo describes the behavior of the doctors as they feel better to cure dogs than a Negros. Racial environment tormented the children; they every time felt a razor was cutting their throats in form of racial segregation.

According to Irving and Hudly (2008) societal and cognitive developmental theory, the major activities of the youth are to participate in identity recognition socially, politically and economically. But the youth of African American people is struggling with the subsidiary task of nurturing a racial recognition within the social setting of America. There are many unfavorable racial stereotypes and racial polarization among Americans. African American identities are shaped by White Americans, who called them apes, and African Americans were marginalized and oppressed people among the white society of America since 1600s.



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For instance White people rationalized the slavery of the black people by saying that different bad traits like laziness, aggression and less competency are present in their genes. African Americans may therefore see these images as a continual aspect of a broader oppressive system that the dominant White culture is enforcing.

At the advent of the 17th century they linked Africans with apes and savagery and were attributed such features as lack of intellect and civility. Africans were taken as totally opposite to the white Americans in the ideal of beauty and superiority. Due to association with apes and dark skin color African were considered at the lowest point of mankind. (Omi and Winant, 2014). Thurman Wallace (2008) writes that Blacks can never achieve complete freedom from racial ties. Racial prejudice has occupied their identities within the borders of race and prohibits them from being completely free in their process of self-rebuilding. They seem to fail in achieving one thing: being treated by white society as human beings first and only black incidentally.

The people construct race; it is not a biological phenomenon (Stefanic & Delgado, 2003, p. 43). Race is constructed by the people; it is not a biological phenomenon, but criteria which is used for racial classification mostly based on biological traits, although the treatment with these traits is called racism and it is the definition given by society not by the biological point of view. So racism treated in different ages in different ways. Ellis (2006) narrates that many blacks left the South to flee from the legal apartheid of Jim Crow laws. Many black occupant farmers and share croppers accepted the idea of living in the South in spite of economic hardships, huge numbers of blacks went to the industrializing North for economic independence and political liberation. As the nineteenth century was nearing its end, at that time, white crowd violence and extralegal hanging increased, and blacks were moving more and more north to save their lives.

Irving and Hudley (2005) asserted that African Americans believe that racism leftovers as a core element in the American overall culture (p.12). Blacks expected that all institutions would have racist behavior towards them; all these institutions are controlled by whites, so there is no place for them. Therefore, they do not treat them in a fair manner. Racial identity and participation in the institutes are defined by physical particular characteristics. Cultural environmental theory identifies African Americans they are caste like minority group that was unwillingly and permanently included into a society through the process of slavery or takeover (Ogbu, 1991, p. 32). Those African Americans whose descendants are Africans brought to this state as slaves fit this definition. These people who have a caste like marginal minority status, these people develop several forms of adaptation to this oppression and subjugation that they neither can control nor deserve (Ogbu, 1991, p. 20). They adopt different beliefs and behaviors to fight against these hostile attitudes and actions that they received from the governing culture.



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American society has confined, defined, and controlled African American Blacks through the institution of slavery, ghetto culture, and Jim Crow laws, and nowadays through prison by giving them the status of criminals. “Throughout the urban justice system, the formula Young + Black Male is now openly equated with the probable cause justifying the arrest, questioning, bodily search, and detention of millions of African Americans every year (Wacquant 2001, p. 104). He says that the most excellent institution for suggesting and enforcing blackness was slavery; it is the same today as it was in the first three centuries. Walter Mosley, “The Man in my Basement,” and Jonathan Lethem in “The Fortress of Solitude,” observe the ways of racial segregation and race configuration in today’s American Society. They named this racial segregation and imprisonment of blacks in their facial color as neo slavery. Black men consider their skin color as it is for them a prison of segregation where they are treated badly and brutally.

Arabian and Rahiminezhad (2015) commented on Americanah (2013) and presented their views about the racism and discriminatory treatment of the white society toward Black people. They narrated how these Black people leave their mother countries and try to settle in American society, where they have to face different forms of racial segregation, and how this white society converts them from the most active and hardworking persons to the passive and weak. Black people feel a sense of detachment from the outer world and get lost in the world of disappointment. Such treatments compelled them to take the final decision to return back to their countries, where they have worth not dependent upon their complexion but on humanity bases. (p. 536).

A situation created by racism is a major concern of Black Literature throughout time. African Americans developed their literature by writing about their experiences of racial segregation. Ogene (2013) narrated that the main purpose of African Literature is to create a positive image of the Afro American people among society. Ogene (2013) focused on “The Sport of God by Dunbar.” The Sport of God writer creates a very sad situation where all the blacks have become sports in the hands of White society. Through the character of Berry Hamilton, the writer shows the oppressive conditions of blacks and how they face different atrocities at the hands of white masters. Fundamentally, violence, racial discrimination, oppression, atrocities, cruelties, and stigmatized behavior of inhumanity are expressed openly in this novel, showing how blacks are taken and treated as distrusted persons in white society. Ogene (2013) said that African American literature is the reality of their lives and experiences. How does society misunderstand them due to the color of their bodies?

Berger (1996) reported on Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. She said that even in a free condition and after slavery, the previous owners, under the support of law and science, still regarded the African American as a thing and property. Morrison reinforces this statement in many ways throughout *The Beloved*. There is a continuing series of violence, violations, and dispossessions that is still present today in white society. They segregated the people of color



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in a number of ways. These ways are dehumanizing ways and richly pathetic. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison showed tormented characters of African Americans who are the victims of the White masters. White masters segregated them in an inhuman way they could not help themselves to free themselves from all these cruelties. Araujo and Schneider (2016) asserted the situation of black's oppression. In *Our Nig* written by Harriet E. Wilson who tells the story of the oppressions of Frado, who suffers when she lives in a family house of a white she undergoes violence and condemnation. Blackness is a thing of superiority, and it is the identity of the black people. As Fanon (1952) says that Black men should answer against those definitions that defined him as ugly and a hateful person, "black man must say no to those who attempt to build a definition of him" (p.23). In blackness, African Americans can find satisfaction because it is their identity without identity; a person is nothing. So, Black people should love each other and give value to their blackness to gain respect in white dominant society. White people can never regard black people with dignity. "He looks for appeasement for the permission in the white man's eyes for him there is, the other" (Fanon, 1952, p.55). Fanon (1952) said that black Negroes are given status by White society as they are taken as bad, mean, and ugly. They are the most misunderstood people in the world, this status given to them due to their skin color." I am forgetting, forgiving and wanting only to have love, my message was flung back in my face like a slap" (Fanon 1952, p. 86).

Research Methodology

This study examines the resistance to racial segregation of African Americans in the novel *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is employed as the theoretical framework for this study. Brooks (2015) defined critical race theory as "a collection of critical stances against the existing legal order from a race-based point of view," and says "it focuses on the various ways in which the legal tradition adversely affects people of color not as individuals but as a group (pp.149-150). Critical race theory focuses on the unity of Black people to combat the segregation that persists in American society (Delgado & Stefania, 2001).

Derrick Bell is taken as the theorist of this study. Derrick Bell (1992) says that "Racism is a permanent component of American life" (p.13). Race relations continue to shape the lives of blacks in the new century, and they set the stage for new tragedies and new hopes. Critical Race Theory is a crucial tool for making sense of it all. Critical race theory has an activist aspect. It not only tries to understand the social situation of blacks and minorities, but also tries to change them, and it sets out not only to determine how society organises itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better.

"Critical Race Theory is a track to give power to the African American blacks and the name of group empowerment" (Delgado & Stefania, 2001, p.5).



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Delgado and Stefanic (2001) assert that “rights are not a snare and delusion, rather they can bring gains, while the struggle to obtain them unifies the group” (p.57).

African American blacks always swallow the pills of fake promises of white people; there is no extraordinary change in the behavior of white people. The American government pays attention to the problems of segregation when it needs to show foreign countries that America is not a racist country and that it treats minorities on an equal basis. However, this equality remains only for a short period. Bell (1992) says that “Everything must change at once, otherwise the system merely swallows up the small improvement that has been made and everything remains the same. Derrick Bell says that Blacks should not try to fit into a flawed economic and political system, but try to transform it. (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001, p. 62). According to Derrick Bell (1992), “our career, even our lives are threatened because of our color” (p.3). Some blacks who are police officers, teachers, or humble social workers demand to show their papers, green cards, and passports. A large number of Black men are in jail or prison compared to the students attending college (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001, p. 113). According to Derrick Bell (1992), Black should work for their identity; they can get their rights, it happens when they show resistance against their white crucial policies. Derrick Bell (1992) says that “harass White folks,” Black people can get their rights in a white supremacist country through struggle and resistance. Racial segregation at the workplace is pronounced; everywhere on the place of vacancy a sign is posted “no Niger need to apply” (Derrick, 1992, p.5). Blacks are segregated in every place in every matter. Derrick Bell says that “Black people will never gain full equality in this racist country. “Even herculean efforts we hailed as successful will produce no more than temporary peaks of progress” (Derrick, 1992, p. 12).

Data Analysis

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2013) writes in *Americanah*, “You can’t write an honest novel about race in this country. If you write about how people are really affected by race, it’ll be too *obvious*” (p.335). *Americanah* is full of commentary on racial segregation and resistance against this racial segregation. Adichie tells through this novel how the lives of African Americans are affected by this racial segregation. In response to this racial segregation, African Americans adopt different ways to resist. The protagonist in this novel, Ifemelu, constantly points out this racial segregation. The focus of the *Americanah* novel is basically on racial discrimination. The *Americanah* novel tells the circumstances of African American blacks in America, where they face different forms of racial segregation and resist it in various ways. It is the tale of black people, how they are traumatized due to racial segregation, face a daily identity crisis, and are abused due to their skin color. The protagonist of this novel, Ifemelu, tries to settle in this country and but she faces deep racism and finds herself and other blacks the victims of racial segregation. She uses migration as a



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window to show the behavior of a white racist society toward blacks. By analyzing the different experiences of the African Americans, she exposes how their being black affects them throughout their lives racially, economically, and culturally.

According to Critical Race Theory, race is the central element of the US society. Racism seems normal to white people. It is normal and personal for American whites. "American society as we know it exists only because racial discrimination continues" (Bell 1992, p.10). So, racism is included in the lives of whites like their daily routine. In the *Americanah* novel, Adichie also describes racism as the central fact of American society. "In America, tribalism is still alive and well. There are four kinds: class, ideology, region, and race. There is a ladder of racial hierarchies in America. White is always on the top, specifically White Anglo Saxon Protestant, otherwise known as WASP, and American black is always on the bottom; what is in the middle depends on time and space" (p. 138). American white society has developed a system of racial segregation in which African Americans are always at the bottom of that system of classification. Racism is the central component of the American white society; it looks to them ordinary.

In *Americanah*, Ngozi writes that racism is the central focus of White society. They look down upon the African American, and they gave them a new and segregated identity, Black, a thing of hate, "I became black when I came to America" (*Americanah* 290). Race is the main element of American society, Ifemelu says, as she passes through a series of racial segregation being an African American black woman. She is the black woman who struggles hard to settle in this white society. White people are prejudiced about their whiteness; they do not allow African Americans to enter their circle of privileges. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes in *Americanah* (2013) that.

Dear non-American Blacks, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing, stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghananian. America does not care. So what if you were not black in your country? You are in America now (p. 220).

The status of Blacks does not depend on them; it depends on the perception of Whites. They give them a new identity, an identity that is related to their skin color. They recognized them as blacks, not human beings. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says that African Americans Blacks they know this reality through the language of Whites. Adichie writes in her novel *Americanah* that "But race is not biology, race is sociology. Race is not a genotype; race is a phenotype. Race matters because of racism. And race is absurd because it's about how you look. Not about the blood you have. It is about the shade of your skin and the shape of your nose and the kink of your hair" (p.337). White people collectively develop an opinion about blacks they recognizing them as inferior and degraded. Race is a socially constructed concept by the white society. White society recognizes Blacks according to its own perception and



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thinking. "Race and races are products of social thought and relations" (Delagado & Stefanic, 2001, p. 7).

In the past, Blacks were segregated openly. Laws were passed against them, and they were segregated as separate but never equal according to the Jim Crow laws. In every field of life, they were segregated, lynched, and deprived of their lives. Nowadays, they do not show their segregation in explicit forms. Derrick Bell (1992) says that "more effectively really, because discrimination today is covert, harder to prove, its ill effects easier to blame on its black victims" (p.56). "In America, race is class. It did not matter how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked" (Adichie, 2013, p.125). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says that American Whites take African Americans as slaves, and they think that they can never be the owners of the big houses. Whites, if they see blacks in big houses, they do not say to them that they are not the rightful owners of the grand house, but their facial expressions and behaviour show that they are surprised by it. In the past, racial segregation was apparent, but today it is covered in the form of an implicit bias. Vandijika (1988) says that the present situation of racism refuses to recognise that it is racism, it is the covert form of racism compared to the racism in the past. In the past, racism was evident in the form of slavery, segregation, execution, and methodical discrimination. According to him, current racism denies that it is racial segregation. Ifemelu writes in her blog about racism today.

"In America, racism exists, but racists are all gone. Racism belongs to the past. Here is the thing: the manifestation of racism has changed, but the language has not. So if you have not lynched somebody, then you cannot be called a racist. If you are a bloodsucking monster, then you cannot be called a racist" (p.229).

In today's racism, minorities are not physically inferior, but dissimilar. They have diverse cultures. Racial segregation is still present, but it isn't easy to uncover it.

Ifemelu says that being African, she was happy she was enjoying the status of being privileged in her back country, Nigeria. However, now in America, she is considered black, not privileged. "I came from a country where race was not an issue. I did not think of myself as black, and I only became black when I came to America." (Adichie, 2013, p.290) Chimamnda Ngozi Adiche says that for African Americans, their physical appearance is a problem; they have to go through a complex treatment to braid their hair before appearing in a job interview.

"So I will be a family physician in America she said, almost in a whisper. She opened a can and left it un-drunk. Later, she said, I have to take my braids out for my interviews and relax my hair. Kemi told me that I should not wear braids to the interview, If you have braids. They will think you are unprofessional (Adchie., 2013, p.90). My only advice? Lose the braids and



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straighten your hair. Nobody says this kind of thing, but it matters. We want you to get that job” (Adichie, 2013, p.202).

Ifemelu explains that the appearance of black people is considered a problem. They are considered problematic personalities with their facial features; their intelligence does not matter. The only thing to hate is their appearance.

African Americans were treated as savages and ignorant people. White society offers them jobs that have no honour and are regarded as in the Americanah novel, protagonist Ifemelu was in search of a job, but she could not find a job to pay the rent for her room. A white businessman offered her a job. This job was full of disrespect and disregard as he says to her, “Look, you are not a kid, he said I work so hard, I cannot sleep. I cannot relax . I do not do drugs, so I figured I need help to relax” (p.109). In this way, Afro-Americans are treated in White Society; they are not considered worth living. They consider that they can do anything for their survival. The curse of slavery is still attached to them in other senses; they are still regarded as slaves; they want to use them sexually and mentally.

White society does not like blacks. They do not want to hire them in their institutes. They do not want to see them in their colleges and on transport. They do not give them the right to live but only just endure them. Emenike told the story of racial segregation.

He says that the taxi he hailed one night on the upper street had its cab light on, but as the cab approached him, the light went off he assumed that the driver was not on duty. After the cab passed by him, he looked back idly and saw that the cab's light was back on and that a little way up the street, it stopped for two white women. He was shaking. His hands were trembling for a long time, a little frightened by his own feelings (Adichie, 2013, p. 213).

White people do not offer their services to blacks even though they pay them more than whites. They refuse them slightly, and it makes blacks worried and psychologically disturbed. In Americanah, when Ifemelu goes to the parlour for waxing her eyebrows, the white lady of the parlour refuses to wax her eyebrows.

“Hi . I would like to get my eyebrows waxed . We do not do curly the woman said. You do not do curly. No, sorry.” But when Whites say to them the same task, they do it efficiently. I’m sorry, it was a misunderstanding . She said Yes, they could do the eyebrows” (Adichie, 2013, p.213).

In Americanah, the character of Dike clearly presents the racial segregation of black students in racist America. These black students cannot pay proper attention to their studies, and they show this depression in different forms.

Has Dike told you about the computer incident at school? AntyUju asked? No, what happened? The principal called me on Monday to say that Dike had hacked into the school’s



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computer network on Saturday. This is the boy who was with me all day on Saturday. We went to Hartford to visit Ozavisa. we were there the whole day, the boy did not go near the computer. When I asked why they thought it was him, they said that they got information. Imagine you just woke up and blamed my son, the boy who is not even good at computers (Adchie, 2013, p.254).

Blacks are considered criminals without any proof. Adichie describes that the skin color of blacks is their crime. White society associates all evil things with blacks without judgment. African Americans are thieves because their ancestors were slaves, and slaves can never be owners of anything. “Why would they do this sort of rubbish? Ifemelu asked. You have to blame the black kid first. Dike said and laughed. (Adchie, 2013, p.254). It means being black is the guilt; this guilt affects the lives of black people in unimaginable ways.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s third novel, *Americanah*, mainly focuses on the African Blacks and racial problems. People of color adopt different modes of resistance against this racial segregation. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes in *Americanah* that Blacks are also human beings, they have rights to be treated equally in this white society. In *Americanah*, African American people resist this racial segregation. Ifemelu creates an internet blog and invites all African Americans to share their daily experiences about racial segregation state and expose the hypocrisy of this white state, as it is now color blind. Chimamanda says that this society is not color blind but blind to the atrocities that it applies to African Americans. Through her novel, *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie creates awareness in African Americans that they should take action against this racial segregation and discrimination. Through this novel, she shows the self-respect in blacks and their unity is a big form of resistance against the inhuman behavior of white society. She uses different characters and their way of resistance against this discrimination.

Ifemelu, being an African American student in America and an observer and victim of racial segregation, generates an internet blog, and she invites African Americans to share their racial experiences. African American Blacks who are not allowed to speak against racial segregation speak through their blog and show their resistance against this racism. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu invites African Americans to show their rage and resistance through her blog as

“This is for the zipped-up Negros, the upwardly mobile American and non-American Blacks who do not talk about life experiences that have to do exclusively with being black . They want to keep everyone comfortable. Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is the safe space” (Adchie, 2013, p. 223).

Laura, a white woman, said, “In graduate school, I knew a woman from Africa who was just like this doctor. I think she was from Uganda. She was wonderful, and she did not get along



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with these African Americans in our class at all. She did not have all those issues. May I think it is a simplistic comparison to make you need to understand more history? Ifemelu said” (p.126). In this way, Ifemelu defends her African American people; she says to Laura, who always tries to make fun of African people and their culture. Ifemelu gets enraged in her conversation about the disunity among Afro American people. She says to Laura that she needs to know the history of African Americans who remain united to face the challenges of white society. In the analysis of the novel, the protagonist, Ifemelu, came to voice her observation of race and racial segregation through her blog. Adichie writes in Americanah that consciousness awareness is a form of resistance against this supremacist society. Ifemelu does not want to straighten her hair; she keeps it in its natural state, as in the African style. Hook (1991) says that the process of becoming subjects tells about the world of the dominant society and how the dominant society works. Blacks should develop critical consciousness and invent new alternative methods of resistance from that marginal place where white people place blacks (P. 15).

Ifemelu reveals her wish to return to Nigeria to her family, they are all surprised and find her decision absurd, and Aunt Uju said to her,

“You are closing your blog and selling your condo to go back to Lagos and work for a magazine that doesn’t pay that well. Aunt Uju had said and then repeated herself, as though to make Ifemelu see the gravity of her own foolishness” (p. 13-14).

She remains stuck to her decision despite the adverse reactions, standing valiantly alone. Ifemelu rejects the life standard of America and gives preference to her mother country, Nigeria. She wants to live according to her values and culture; besides coming back to Nigeria, she takes further independent decisions. The opening of her new blog “The Small Redemptions of Lagos” (p. 418). It shows her last step to reject the American and keep her Nigerian accent and to liberate her voice through her blog. In Nigeria, Ifemelu finds herself relaxed and feels at home again. This homesickness made him crazy in America, where she has to perform like an artist, not a normal person. “Later Ranyinudo told her you are no longer behaving like Americanah, and despite herself, Ifemelu felt pleased to hear this”(p.284). Hook (1992) says that “a person without ancestors is likely a tree without roots” (p.180). So, African Americans love their roots and try to cope with white society by loving themselves. Through this research study, the Adchie tells the different forms of layered discrimination in the white society and also describes the various ways of resistance of black people against this segregation. This study shows that these challenges are a result of interconnected forms of racism and resistance against racial segregation.

In this novel, Americanha Adchie shows through the protagonist Ifemelu, how African Americans have deep and dire connections with their mother country, Africa, as in this novel,



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the protagonist returns to her motherland, Nigeria. Although she was fully settle in America, she had a good house, a job, and a famous blog, but she decided to go back to her country. In this novel, by using different characters as the mouthpiece of African Americans, she shows the deep desires to liberate the Black people from the oppressive chains of racial segregation.

Conclusion

This study reveals the racial segregation of African American people in white society, and the use of resistance from the side of African American people is discussed. In this novel, *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie clearly shows the racist white society of America. In this community, African Americans are treated as aliens, and they are disregarded as means. In this novel, the writer observed different sorts of racial segregation. She uses protagonist, Ifemelu, as her mouthpiece and through her, she visualises the real conditions of African Americans. Blacks have to listen to these sentences nearly every place, as “Go back to your country. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says that white patients do not want to receive their treatment from black doctors. In school, black students face a depressing situation, and they show this depression by committing suicide. Suicide rate is greater in African American blacks compared to whites. White people suspect blacks as they are less intelligent. Blacks are lazy, and whites are efficient workers. Black bodies are the sources of fear for whites. In American white society, as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes in *Americanah*, it isn't very easy for African Americans to settle on a good place financially. African Americans are granted lower jobs. Even African American women are offered disrespectful jobs that are very humiliating for them. When an African black came into America, he received a new status that he is black, but in his mother country, he was a human being, but now he is black and at the bottom of the humanity ladder. Adichie writes in this novel, *Americanah*, that white society has divided human beings into hierarchies in which, at the lowest level, are black people, and they are facing harsh forms of racial segregation. They are resisting against this segregation in many ways. African Americans, in response to this racial segregation, show resistance in different ways, as in this novel, *Americanah*. Ifemelu's friend Blaine gathers black people to defend Mr White. Aunt Uju in Dike school replies to the teacher's comment that her son is aggressive, saying that their environment makes him aggressive. Dike's suicide attempt in itself is a resistance against racial segregation. Ifemelu does not adopt an American accent and does not want to straighten her hair like American white women. At the end of the novel, when Ifemelu decides to return to Nigeria, it is also a way of rejecting the dominance of white society. Ifemelu, after coming to her motherland, Nigeria, finds herself different with new, enthusiastic ways of thinking because she spent a long time among a society whose structure was built on superiority. Due to this environment, she has found new ways of thinking and consciousness. She started to love her black skin and hair, and she started to give them more importance. The *Americanah* novel is full of commentary



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on race and racial segregation. In this novel, African American characters are the presenters of racial segregation and resistance. Americanah examines how race is the most grueling problem that African Americans suffer in America. As an African, Ifemelu has never thought of herself as black, but it is American society that gave her the status of black, not of a human being. Although Ifemelu is not ashamed of herself as a black woman, she defends each other against this racial discrimination. Sometimes African Americans become severely depressed by the racial discrimination they show resistance by committing suicide and adopting negative behaviour. Resistance is the answer to discrimination. Ifemelu makes a blog on the internet, and she says to African Americans, Come and express themselves about the racial experiences that are offered to them due to their skin color. She writes in her blog that African Americans are free to describe themselves and their bad experiences that are offered to them due to their skin color. Derrick Bell, being the theorist of Critical Race Theory, informs about the struggle of the African Americans (black people) for their rights, which is ongoing as long as this nation. Different supporters and leaders of the Black community came out on the roads to help their community, and they gave confidence and feelings of empowerment to their nation. The leaders helped them to achieve racial equality in this racist country. They know that Black people can sustain their position in this society by attaining their rights from the judiciary and courts in legal ways. Sometimes, due to the long struggle for racial equality, it seems an unachievable goal and leaves frustration. Still, leaders of the Black People helped them to retain their confidence and continue their struggle. Blacks are facing continuous self-defeating in every area of life; they are rejected from jobs, promotions, education, and good health facilities. So such rejections bring frustrations and deep despair among Black people. They did a long struggle to achieve the status of African Americans, but still, they are not on that stage where they want to be. Blacks are still facing the status of the other. Adichie describes the conditions of Black people in her novel Americanah, as they can never call whites they are racist because if they call them racist, then they have to listen to the actual racism against black people. Blacks do not matter; their skin color matters. This behavior of the White people compelled Black people to adopt different ways of resistance against racism.

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