

Migration and the Development of African Diasporic Literature & Film

AMIRIKPA OYEBBENU

Introduction

The history of mankind has been the history of migration. W.M. Spellman poses the conundrum as to, “Why do people remove themselves, and often their entire families, great distances to unfamiliar lands and uncertain futures?” (1). The above question is germane to our discourse, especially as it directs the theme of this conference, “African Diasporic Literature and Film.” In the same corollary, the answer to this question will seek to slice up and expose the factors that precipitate the development and direction of African literature and film in the diaspora.

The very nature of humans is inherent in mobility, travels and adventure. All these are determined by myriads of factors. In his natal state Man was originally food gatherer who moved from one location to the other in search for food. From gathering of food, Man graduated to food cultivation, using stone implements. This was long before the discovery of iron and the use of fire for cooking. At this level Man was wrapped up in the state of nature. With the ‘discovery’ of iron and the use of fire Man developed the desire for hunting of animals for food. This engagement inevitably propelled him to stray out of the immediate environment.

As the human family grew in size and number, it became imperative for movement and change of locational habitations. The capriciousness of weather and hostility arising from competition for fertile land also provided justification for such movements. Over time human societies grew more and more in size, thereby becoming more sophisticated and complex in nature and dynamic. Attitudes formed character and interests which more often than not developed into crises of interests among and between community members.

The sophistication of human communities, interests, and growing civilisation informed the need for governance and participation in the affairs that concern members. This had to be achieved through representative democracy and rules of engagement called the constitution which regulates the conduct of members of a given community. Representative governance, as it were, has always been dictated by both personal and group interests. Often times, some of these interests

collide, thereby resulting in disagreements, conflicts and dissension which create unfavourable conditions.

These disagreements, conflicts, and dissension as cited above could cause aggrieved members to move to what they may consider as more convenient and conducive environments. Other factors that may necessitate migration of people include unfavourable conditions such as war, famine, insecurity and natural disasters, political and religious persecutions, unfavourable economic conditions, the ravages of climate change and the desire for better life outside the homeland, among but not limited to the above factors.

In Nigeria, over the past decades, and in Africa generally, bad, inept and corrupt leadership, weak institutions, constitutional breaches, monumental and hydra headed corruption in high places, religious intolerance and terrorism, banditry and kidnapping for ransom have provided justifications for African migration to Europe, North America, the Middle East and Asia.

This paper seeks to delve into a robust discussion on the nature of migration out of Africa, what constitutes diaspora, the composition of and the development and direction of diaspora literature and film over the ages. In literature there is an organic relationship between fiction and reality in form and content. The content of literature could draw from imaginative creation, fictional history or social context. In this light, therefore, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre* (1993) contends that, "Literature, more than all the fleeting images brought about by the screen or newsprint, is one of the more enduring multinational cultural processes which have been building the basis of a shared common tradition" (13).

Early Migration Out of Africa

I. The Trans-Sahara Slave Trade

Migration is referred to as a movement of a person or persons from one place to another; the one place is familiar while the other is often not familiar. We will recast the question that W.M. Spellman posed in the opening statement of the introduction to this paper: "Why do people remove themselves, and often their entire families, great distances to unfamiliar lands and uncertain future?" Answer(s) to this question have been provided in sketches above. By the very implication of the nature and size of migration, there are two categories of migration—the voluntary and the involuntary. This section is concerned primarily with the involuntary migration that was precipitated by both the trans-Sahara slave trade and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

These two trades in humans constituted the most harrowing, brutal and

colossal movement of people that were involuntarily uprooted from their homes and carted away to what Spellman refers to as, “unfamiliar lands and uncertain future”(1). The first of these was the trans-Sahara trade. The relationship or contact between the ancient empires of West Africa (Ghana, Mali and Songhai) predated the contact between the coastal regions of West Africa and the European slave traders. This contact was not originally conceived to be a trade in human traffic because it began as purely an economic engagement between the Arabs and the Western Sudanese kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. It was essentially trade by barter where the main items of trade were gold from West Africa and slaves, and salt as well as variety of manufactured goods and luxuries from North Africa. West Africa slaves along with camels were used to transport the gold across the desert to North Africa and the Arab world. Other notable items of trade included copper, spices, ivory and ebony, among others.

The trade flourished unabatedly over several centuries that witnessed the rise and fall of three important West African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, respectively. Unarguably, however, the most profound commodity of trade was the slaves who had great social and economic benefits to the Arabs on the one hand and the Islamic religion and culture on the other. Ronald Segal underscores this benefit as, “Slaves in Islam were directed at the service sector—concubines and cooks, porters and soldiers—with slavery itself primarily a form of consumption rather than a factor of production” (4). What this translates to is the fact that while female slaves served as concubines and cooks in the homesteads, the male slaves provided services as security guards, porters and soldiers.

As a result of this trade that spanned several centuries that engendered a flourishing miscegenation through concubinage system, we have a prevalence of what is described as a black Arab population in the Arab world. But sadly, though, this minority population suffers discrimination as a result of the dark skin colour.

ii. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Because of its very nature the trans-Atlantic slave trade has often been cited as the most brutal and noxious human trade in history. In the entire human history, there has never been such a huge movement of humans of the same racial group who were transported systematically and deliberately across the Atlantic Ocean over a period of more than three centuries as this.

West African communities readily became the centres of this trade in human beings. This trade was organised in a systematic manner where the local chiefs and their warring agents regularly raided communities, plundered, and captured victims who were sold as slaves to the European slave merchants at the coasts. The trade

gained notoriety because it was organised as an economic enterprise that provided free labour for the European industrial machine. The vultures of economic exploitation and slavery carried on this heinous trade because, according to Anthony Esler, “It had always been a profitable business for the intruders and a deeply destructive experience for the African society” (466). It was deeply destructive for the African society because it plundered not only the natural resources of Africa, but depopulated Africa of her able bodied young men and women.

Indeed, the debilitating and excruciating experiences of the slaves could best be imagined as they became commodities of exchange that were sold as chattels to the highest bidder. Once again, Esler provides a glimpse of this harrowing experience as, “Seized in their inland villages by slave-raiding warriors, they had been roped in long lines and led sometimes hundreds of miles to the coast. After weeks or months in dank dungeons or open pens, they had been crammed into the holds of European slave ships for the westward journey. Broken by disease, filth, brutal treatment, and the shock of the experience, between a tenth and a quarter of the two hundred Africans crowded into a typical slave ship die” (466).

It is to be noted that both the trans-Sahara trade and the trans-Atlantic trade were involuntary (or forced migration) in nature. The point of departure between the two trades largely lies in the manner of treatment of the slaves. While the trans-Sahara trade was to a large extent driven by consumer motive, the European slave trade was, exploitative, purely and brutally economic in nature. Capitalism and imperialism determined the brutal nature of this trade in humans. Be that as it may, both trades were guilty of the same crime; i.e., commoditisation of human beings and the subjugation of humans to subhuman level.

Africans in this category that were uprooted from the homeland have nowhere to refer to as home because of their tragic physical dislocation. They have no contact, no families or friends to relate with back home in Africa. Their attachment with Africa is merely sentimental and emotional. Consequently, they are culturally dislocated so much so that they adopt the names, religion, and identity of their conquerors.

Modern Migration Out of Africa

Modern migration can be classified into two categories—the regular and irregular migration. Whether regular or irregular, both of these are voluntary in nature because the individuals or group of individuals involved set out on their own volition to migrate. There are several factors that engender such movements across trans-national boundaries. Some of these reasons have been stated in the earlier section of this paper to include, among others, the desire for better living condition abroad,

insecurity at home, political victimisation at home, search for the Golden Fleece, etc. The individuals in this category leave behind them families, locational contacts, acquaintances and friends. They often visit their homes periodically as well as sending home money to family members and friends. In addition, they more often than not get involved in their community development engagements even while abroad.

Contemporary or modern migration out of Africa has largely been informed by intractable political leadership crises, ineptitude leadership, underdevelopment and corruption. These factors have impeded development efforts of most African nations, leaving in its wake a frustrated, demoralised and asphyxiated citizenry. As citizens scamper for new life overseas, most of them tend to adopt the citizenship of their adopted countries which invariably grants them the right to basic necessities such as employment, political recognition and democratic participation, among others.

The Diaspora and Diasporic

The known modern historical reference to the term **Diaspora** was the Jewish dispersion across the world, especially in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Eastern Europe, Germany, and France. According to W.M. Spellman, “The ancient Jewish diaspora is without much question the best known of the involuntary migrations within the Western context”(188). Spellman’s assertion holds sway only as stated, “within the Western context”, which preceded the global trade in African slaves between the 16th -18th centuries. However, within the world context, the best known involuntary migrations have been the wholesale displacement and dislocation of millions of black Africans across the Atlantic Ocean and the Sahara desert as commodities of exchange. This position is corroborated by John Mack Faragher, *et al* who argue that “The movement of Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas was the largest forced migration in world history” (83). These are victims of displacement and dislocation from the original homeland into unfamiliar and uncertain lands, cultures and civilisations.

In conceptualising ‘Diaspora’, John Urry contends that, “Diasporas entail the notion that ‘the old country’ where one is no longer living, exerts some claim upon one’s loyalties, emotions and identity. Such an old country can be defined in terms of language, religion, customs or folklore. All diasporic communities are thus in part cultural” in nature and design (154-55). There emerges the contestation of citizenship, loyalty, identity and cultural hybridisation. In effect, even a new personality develops if the diaspora must fit into the new environment and survive. This movement into a new dwelling and the determination for survival poses the

terse question of 'belongingness'.

The challenges faced by the diaspora are myriad and complex, to say the least. The diaspora are not only considered to be strangers in the adopted home, they are culturally displaced, psychologically 'homeless' and occasionally traumatised, and often times discriminated against. Often times also, they find themselves living on the fringes of the mainstream cultures. This situation informs Amirikpa Oyigbenu's argument that, "Diasporic citizenship is, therefore, contested in spaces which constitute a political and legal claim between the perceived autochthonous and the diasporic; or aliens whose contested citizenship and identity face the problematic of acceptability and recognition"(75). In this study and from the foregoing presentation so far we have come to the conclusion that the sum total of these Africans that domicile abroad either through deliberate, in-deliberate, whether involuntary or voluntary migrations are referred to as Diaspora or the Diasporic—a slice but visible population of black Africans that are living in countries and continents outside Africa south of the Sahara.

Overview of African Diasporic Literature

In a simple context, African diasporic literature is that gamut of literature that has been written by Africans in the diaspora or foreign lands, as distinct from the literature that is written by Africans in the homeland. It is expected that the themes, styles, and language will be different as informed by their diasporic experiences in foreign lands. In fact, these experiences can be said to constitute the soul and heart of the content of literature and film that are produced by Africans in the diaspora. This position is further re-enforced by John Urry in the postulation that, "The cultures that get produced are a curious hybrids, constructed and reconstructed through heterogeneity, difference and diverse mobilities" (155).

This section establishes the contrast in the production and the treatment of themes and styles between the two categories of African diaspora that we have identified and discussed in this paper—literature as produced by descendants of slaves in the Americas and Europe, and modern day diaspora of voluntary migration.

We could as well ask the question: what is literature? In a pedestrian understanding, 'Literature' could be said to be any imaginative /creative composition (prose, poetry, or drama) that inform, entertain and amuse the reader. Literature invokes feelings, the appreciation of beauty and encapsulates experiences that are both material and abstract. This aspect of literature derives from the writer's creative imagination. There are also literatures that are non-fictional in nature. These include inspirational, motivational, scientific or subject-based academic writings that are intended to instruct the reader. According to Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter and Kelly J.

Mays (2006), the boundary of literature has shifted from merely artistic writing to include both oral and visual forms. Broadly speaking, we could adduce that literature includes all works that are written, orally presented and animated like movies and stage performances. The concern in this paper, therefore, is the literature that is written to invoke emotion, beauty, pleasure and amusement. Although creative and imaginative in nature, it possesses the shared experiences of individuals or a group of individuals and communities.

In the forced or slave diaspora category, we choose to treat selected works of Phyllis Wheatley (poetry), Toni Morrison (fiction), and Ossie Davis (drama) as representative literature. These choices are despite the fact that the first published literary works by the black diaspora of the slave ancestry were the works of Phyllis Wheatley. By every standard, Wheatley was a pioneer in the literary trail that conveyed the experiences, feelings, pains, alienation, hopes and dreams of the slave diaspora community.

Phyllis Wheatley's "On Being Brought from Africa to America"

Phyllis Wheatley (1753?-1784) was a slave girl of between six and eight years old when she was captured and sold to John and Susannah Wheatley at the Boston slave market in America. Her native African name is not known. Her African name not known, but was deduced to have been captured from Gambia or Senegal in West Africa. Phyllis Wheatley was shaped by the environment that produced her; i.e., the social and Puritan religious background of the Wheatley family of Boston. Phyllis eulogised her mistress, Mrs Susannah Wheatley nobly in the following encomium: "I was treated by her more like her child than her servant" (224). Not surprising, however, without formal education she was taught by Mary Wheatley, the daughter of the Wheatleys to read and write in the English language of the time. Her exposure and childhood upbringing in the New England environment and tradition was able to shape her instincts, philosophy and spirituality as reflected in the themes of her poems.

Among the numerous poems to her credit, we shall focus more on one that elucidates her social and religious environmental influences the most: "On Being Brought from Africa to America." This is a very short poem of eight lines and one stanza. According to her, " 'T was mercy that brought me from my *Pagan* land,/ Taught my benighted soul to understand/That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:/Once I freedom neither sought nor knew/Some view our sable race with scornful eye,/"Their colour is a diabolic die."/Remember, *Christians*, *Negroes*, black as *Cain*, /May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train" (culled from *The American Tradition in Literature*, 1999). The title of this poem is suggestive of its theme which alludes to

her leaving Africa to America to be a blessing through God's unrequited mercy. Phyllis' allusion to Africa in negative narrative derives essentially from deliberate indoctrination and the tutelage of her Puritan Christian environment. This explains why she refers to her African homeland as, "*Pagan* land", in addition to her belief that God's mercy brought her out of Africa to be redeemed from damnation. As such, her slave status was a blessing and gratifying.

From her own personal account, she neither sought nor knew of God's redemption but obtained it gratuitously. Again, emanating from the slave master's narrative about the primitivism and debased status of the African, Christianity provides the needed hope of eternal salvation. So far, the only apparent reference to the negative racial stereotype is her allusion to what white people say about her race: "Some view our race with scornful eye". Another line states that, "Their colour is a diabolic die". Despite these negative narratives, Phyllis provides what could be described as hope for the salvation of *Christians* and *Negroes*, although "black as Cain/ May be refin'd and join th' angelic train".

The thematic account of this poem and others point to the fact that Phyllis was never subjected to the vagaries and the dehumanising conditions of slavery on the plantations. Therefore, she could not have experienced racial segregation, deprivation, torture and the bitterness of separation. Simply put, Phyllis was an exceptionally privileged slave girl.

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

On a cultural level, the ravages of both the trans-Sahara and the trans-Atlantic slave trades took debilitating tolls on the personality, culture and traditions of the enslaved African people. As if these were not enough calamities for black Africans, the subsequent activities of missionaries which were preceded by colonial conquest of the African continent, the entire black African worldview became distorted, twisted and destroyed with the concomitant consequences for Africans on the homeland and in the diaspora. Toni Morrison's novel establishes the nexus between the historical reality and the literary composition of the extent to which the innocuous and innocent protagonist is exposed to construct an image other than her natural self. The narrative represents the extent of the destruction of the psyche and personality of the average African-American female folks as a result of the stereotypes that formed as a result of slave culture.

The main character or protagonist in *The Bluest Eye* is a young girl by the name Pecola Breedlove who is sexually, emotionally, socially and psychologically brutalised and traumatised by her family and the society. Ashley Montagu argues that, "The one thing clear concerning racial hostility and prejudice is the ease with

which persons are led to exhibit it” (225). The exhibition of racial prejudice and hostility overflow from the victim’s psyche which invariably might have been deliberately twisted to suit such a purpose. It is a manifestation of the contestation of superior and inferior binary as dictated by the assumed superior racial group. Against such a warped background, therefore, the wounded victim becomes psychologically and emotionally traumatised with the dire consequence of seeking for the expurgation of such feeling in whatever possible way. We then tend to identify with the internal conflict and agony of the victim, and sometimes even ask questions as to why the victim decides on the course of action taken.

The novel introduces a ‘normal’ family structure consisting of a father, mother and two daughters, all living harmoniously together under the protection of the father. Paradoxically, however, the family is sadly fractured because Pecola lives with Frieda-Claudia family, her mother lives with the woman she works for, Sammy lives elsewhere, while the father is thrown into jail. The two-room apartment where the family lived was desolate, cramped and incommensurate, painting a graphic picture of poverty and denying them of comfort and privacy. What is more, the habitual drunkenness of Cholly Breedlove, the father/husband often degenerates into violent squabbles with his wife, thereby compounding the already bad situation in the family. Discipline, love, care, respect and parental authority are lacking in the family. This unfortunate situation, therefore, breeds psychological and emotional self-hate, lack of self-esteem and alienation which make some of the family members, especially Pecola, to perceive them as being ‘ugly’.

This seething feeling of being ‘ugly’ pervades the atmosphere in the home as a looming shadow that casts a spell on the family. Most affected is Pecola who literally condemns herself as irredeemably ‘ugly’. Her deep-seated feeling of ‘ugliness’ and alienation that ensues is exacerbated by the torturous feeling of “Long hours she sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike” (*The Bluest Eye*. 45). Pecola’s state of ugliness is further reinforced by her mother in the following words, “*But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly*” (126).

Pecola sees herself as ugly and wishes to be beautiful, lovable and acceptable by possessing the blue eyes of the white Caucasian race. The story is told of Claudia, Frieda’s younger sister who presents herself as a direct opposite of Pecola. While Pecola is desirous of the blue eyes, Claudia detests anything white; especially the white doll. She hates it even as Christmas gifts. Claudia’s dislike for the white baby dolls is transferred to white girls. According to her, “I destroyed white baby dolls”. As if this was not enough expression of horror and disgust, she confesses that, “The

truly horrifying thing was the transference of the same impulse to little white girls” (22). Claudia was practically revolted by what she calls the round moronic eyes, the pancake face, and orange worm hair, the starched gauze or lace on the cotton dress of the baby dolls which were palpably artificial and irritated her with one longing desire; to dismember the white baby doll into shred.

Pecola’s obsession for beauty leads her to a spiritualist by the name Soaphead Church who promises to meet her need. He is a fake spiritualist, a charlatan and a swindler. His real name is Elihu Whitecomb, a brown-skin West Indian of mixed blood who is proud of his mixed racial background. Pecola’s case was the most challenging that has ever been brought to him, changing black eyes to blue eyes. He confesses that “Here was an ugly little girl asking for beauty.... A little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes”. He admits his incapacitation and goes spiritual by confessing that, “He sometimes uses me to help people. All I can do is to offer myself to Him as the instrument through which he works”. His spiritual limitation makes him to admit his powerlessness as he confesses that, “I can do nothing for you, my child. I am not a magician. I work only through the Lord. Soaphead’s subterfuge for a divine link with God for miraculous healing power led him to a despicable act of poisoning Bob, the old dog, as the only means by which Pecola could have her desire fulfilled. As a victim of Soaphead’s deceit, she goes away satisfied and happily fulfilled that she now has her black eyes transformed to blue eyes of her wish.

Although Pecola’s anxiety about having blue eyes constitutes the main thematic thrust of the novel there are other neatly knitted subthemes that weave together the general picture of desolation, frustration, denial, anguish and rejection. The mood in the novel is generally despondent and tragic not only for Pecola as a protagonist, but also affective of all other characters who are victims of the system. She perceives her apparent societal rejection, hardship and cruelty to result from her ugliness which she attributes to black eyes. She, along with other characters such as Cholly, her mother, her brother Sammy are lumped up as incorrigible failures. They are all products of a broken family who inexorably become victims of alcoholism, rape, separation, frustration and general feeling of inferiority as constructed by the mainstream culture.

Toni Morrison’s novel raises quite a number of fundamental topical existential questions, some of which she herself puts forward in the **Afterword** to the current edition. Some of these pertinent questions include the following: i. *who* told Pecola, a twelve year old black teenage girl that she is ugly? ii. Who made her feel that it was better to be a freak than what she was? iii. Who had looked at her and found her so wanting, so small a weight on the beauty scale? In an essay titled, “The

American Dream and the American Negro”, James Baldwin can be assumed to have answered all the questions posited above in the assertion that,

In the case of the American Negro, from the moment you are born every stick and stone, every face, is white. Since you have not seen a mirror, you suppose you are, too. It comes as a great shock around the age of 5,6, or 7 to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you. (1-5)

Pecola’s fate and the fate of other family members as chronicled by Morrison are a woven tragic narrative of the fabled myth of white racial superiority which evolved directly and deliberately from slave culture, colonialism and racism. The breakdown of the black family structure was constructed on the slave plantations where family members were decimated and scattered over distant plantations never to be reunited.

The psychological dislocations of black personality, black culture and black identity have remained ingrained in the psyche of the black African which constitutes the most dangerous form of slavery. As a result of these psychic disorientation there are on the African homeland millions of Pecola, in the Americas and in the entire diasporic world; as much as there are also millions of Cholly, and millions of African diaspora families that are deliberately disintegrated to justify the myth of the absence of the father figure among the African American families.

Ossie Davis’ *Purlie Victorious*

Ossie Davis was one of the most celebrated African-American dramatists who was an icon of the Civil Rights Movement, along with the venerated Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Jesse Jackson, Rosa Parks, Stokeley Carmichael, among others. On the literary and cultural front were James Baldwin, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Lorraine Hansberry, Adrienne Kennedy, Douglas Turner Ward, and many others.

Purlie Victorious is a play that derives exclusively from the slave-master relationship on the Southern plantations of the Deep South which was intricately paternalistic in nature. This paternalistic social structure congealed into a tightly bonded social institution that sought to perpetuate slavery as a divine covenant between the slave and the master. Expectedly, therefore, the responses of the African-American towards this instituted paternalism has been resentment, protests and occasional revolts as witnessed in the past and recent history of white-black relationship.

What the white Southern planters sought to achieve from this structure arrangement was the total subjugation, unfettered legal ownership and control of the

slaves to a position of eternal bondage and dependence. In order to actualise this desire, according to Franklin E. Frazier, the Deep South had to institute legal instruments that provided relevant legislative backing and support. This was the socio-political environment that dictated and facilitated the construction of Ossie Davis' play, *Purlie Victorious*. It was written during the explosive racial unrest under the aegis of the Black Civil Rights Movement, whose cardinal objective was the furtherance of the black struggle for the actualisation of freedom, liberty, and full citizenship of the African-American.

We need to understand the play story within the context of this slave-master-paternalistic relationship that is skewed in favour of the white planter. The play is set in a Southern Georgia Cotton Plantation known as the Cotchipee Hill, being the property of the white supremacist by the name Ol' Cap'n Cotchipee. This plantation doubles as the home to a community of Ol' Cap'n Cotchipee's black slave workers. The play revolves around the late Cousin Bee's inheritance of five hundred dollars which the black community members, led by the protagonist, Purlie Victorious, seek to recover from Ol' Cap'n Cotchipee, the owner of the plantation. The intention of the black community members is to use the money to buy over the Big Bethel Church. Their problem is how to secure the release of the inheritance cheque from the bigoted white plantation owner and master.

Purlie Judson Victorious, a professor of Negro philosophy, but now a preacher, devises a subterfuge to recover the money by presenting what he considers to be a suitable look-alike of Cousin Bee in the person of Lutiebelle Gussie Mae Jenkins because, according to him, "White folks can't tell one of us from another by the head!" (*Purlie Victorious*, 132). Unfortunately, however, even though Lutiebelle is equally as beautiful as the late Cousin Bee, she is not as educated. But to enable him to accomplish his personality swap, Purlie puts Lutiebelle, the 'resurrected Cousin Bee', through a theatrical rehearsal of what to say and how to say to Ol' Cap'n Cotchipee. The rehearsal and role playing go on quite successfully, preparatory to a face-to-face meeting with the old Captain that would consequently achieve the payment of the money. Unfortunately, for the black community, when Lutiebelle finally confronts Ol' Cap'n, she develops fright, flounders and fumbles at the first attempt, then summons courage to render the prepared dramatic script that was prepared by Purlie. But noting her initial inadequacies, Purlie quickly takes over by flattering Ol' Cap'n. In his satiric rendition, Purlie refers to Ol' Cap'n as the "Great White Father of the Year" (61).

Having been impressed by the satiric honour and accolade displayed by Purlie, Ol' Cap'n gets motivated to pay the money for which a receipt must be signed as required for record purpose. Rather than allow Purlie to sign the receipt Lutiebelle

offers to do it, thereby signing her actual name in place of Cousin Bee's for which Ol' Cap'n orders the sheriff to arrest her. In the ensuing confusion, Purlie and Lutiebelle escape. However, as a preacher, Purlie threatens revenge come-back by preaching violence against the white plantation establishment.

Presumably aware and concerned by the envisaged negative consequences of such violence on the economic fortunes of the plantation economy and their owners, especially his own father, Charlie the son of Ol' Cap'n Cotchipee presents himself as being sympathetic to the cause for desegregation and freedom for the black people decides to break into his father's commissary and removes the contentious five hundred dollars and hands it over to Purlie Victorious. In addition to this brave act of courage, Charlie also secures the title deed to the Big Bethel in the name of Purlie Judson Victorious and hands it over to him. Charlie's act also ensures full ownership of both the inheritance and the Church for the black community. Seeing that Charlie's action betrays the white supremacist core values of racial superiority and non-compromise, Ol' Cap'n decides to die standing without stooping low and without compromising his avowed principles.

The unnatural form of Ol' Cap'n's death vis-a-his son, Charlie's identification and presumed sympathy with and for the black plantation work2ers are symbolic of wider relationships. These two personalities represent generational constructs of the old and the new order in race relationship; the need for the old order giving way to the new. Against this background, therefore, the three forced diaspora writers (Phyllis Wheatley, Toni Morrison and Ossie Davis) that we have discussed are equally representational of the mood and responses of the general slave era and the struggles for freedom, liberty and citizenship in the post abolition era which culminated in the black civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s through the 1980s.

Literature of the Modern (voluntary) African Diaspora

We now veer into the diaspora literature of the voluntary or modern diaspora community outside Africa. As earlier stated these are a community of Africans with possibilities and capacities to turn around the fortunes of their individual countries, their communities and their immediate families, but because of circumstances and conditions they consider as unfavourable and hostile, they chose to leave their own nations on their own volition, not forced, not coerced, but voluntary. While some of these migrants are termed regular migrants, others are termed irregular migrants. The regular migrants are those who go through the legitimate procedure of securing passports and visas at designated embassies. The irregular are those that try to short-change the system through illegitimate means.

Many African writers belong to the category of those seeking for improved material life- style and global visibility abroad. Some of them are frustrated by the policies and actions of their national governments; like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nuruddin Farah, *et al*, while others are driven by personal dreams and hopes for better future, like Ngozi Adichie, Femi Oj-Ade, *et al* . Central to the dominant theme in most literatures of this category of diasporas is the contestation and negotiation of citizenship, participation and rights. There are also the nagging dilemma of alienation, estrangement, and not belonging that define and intrigue these African diasporas. The prevailing determiner has always been the skin colour, or race. The individual and collective experiences (the pull and push factors) in the diaspora world provide the much needed nexus and platforms for the thematic construction of these literatures.

Femi Ojo-Ade's *Home, Sweet, Sweet Home*

Whether in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Western Europe or the South American nations, the relational responses of the immigrant revolve around citizenship, belonging, and alienation, and the crushing dilemma of return to the homeland. It, therefore, becomes imperative to open this dialogue with a long excerpt from Femi Ojo-Ade's **Epilogue** in the novel, *Home, Sweet, Sweet Home* because it encapsulates the emotional, psychological, spiritual and material conflicts of the modern day diaspora. The **Epilogue** reads in part:

Ade came and left and some might say he was a fool, a self-opinionated hybrid, a coward, and he was indeed all of these things and more. He was and remains a symbol of the times, the quintessence of a whole universe, the epitome of a great nation. He came and left and his hypocritical hosts abroad might smile and say, 'we told you so'. But let them not rejoice; for, his departure from home was not a flight from sadness to happiness. They knew as well as he does, that he would never find happiness till the day he dies. *And he's not alone, was never alone, will never be alone.*(122) (emphasis mine)

Indeed, Ade is not alone, and could never be alone in this paradox of living as a split personality; neither properly fitted abroad nor back home.

In the opening chapter of the novel is a very short letter written to Ade by his father, urging him to come back home. The letter reads:

Dear Son,

*You have been away for too long. Your sisters, brothers and myself need you. Other relatives, too,
Since you left, life has been going from bad to worse. Come back home. We all love you.
Your father*

This letter which does not mention Ade's mother suggests that the mother is no more alive. The tone of his father in the short letter is loaded with layers of feelings and expectations. It is deducible that Ade is the emotional, psychological and material pillar of the family. His long absence has created a vacuum in the family life which no one could fill. Having spent twelve year of sojourn in America, Ade returns home in obedience to his father's prompting, but finds things completely changed, chaotic and order-less. Confusion, frustration and alienation dominate his life. However, can the love of his girlfriend be his salvation in this dilemma?

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*

Adichie's novel can be described as a travelogue and semi-autobiographical depending on the interpretive view of the reader or critic. The novel has three settings that are continental and connected by the Atlantic Ocean; connecting Nigeria on the African continent, Britain and the United States of America. Anyone that is conversant with Adichie's transoceanic movement vis-à-vis the major character, Ifemelu will support the assertion that the novel is semiautobiographical as it chronicles the trajectory of Ngozi Adichie in the United States. But this is not the concern in this paper.

The story in the novel revolves around Ifemelu and her boyfriend, Obinze who started together as students at a Nigerian university, but she decides to leave for the U.S. to continue her education. Living in Princeton, New Jersey, Ifemelu is faced with challenges of survival which led her to become a blogger under the blog name: *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*. The fact that it is a blog by a non-American Black about American Blacks definitely attracted attention of the Black public and a cross-section of the white community as well. This became a source of income for her while it lasted.

The novel is episodic, changing settings and scenes forward and backward, using the flash back technique to connect the stories, incidents, characters and landscapes. The plot is, therefore, not linear in structure. For instance, the novel is constructed in Seven Parts, with each part subdivided into chapters of unequal length but neatly woven in a way that tells the story/adventures of Ifemelu in the U.S. and

the pull for a return to Nigeria to reconnect with her childhood love, Obinze.

Ifemelu's student visa does not qualify her for a paying job, but she needs a job that would fetch her some income. As a student on scholarship, she needed to pay her tuition and apartment rent. Things became hard for her, in fact, much harder than she expects. She tries possibilities in a restaurant or an office, but got rebuffed on account of her skin colour. But she desperately needed to pay her rent, so she accepts a 'job' offer of an amorous and coquettish tennis coach where he gives her one hundred dollars to have sex with him. Painfully she accepts, but realising that she compromised her sexuality and race, she quickly opts out of the 'job'. Ifemelu feels guilty, dirty, cheap and psychologically devastated.

Ifemelu, however, gets a job as a nanny to Kimberly's two children; Morgan and Taylor. She likes the job as much as she also loves the kids. While in the employment of Kimberly, Ifemelu falls in love with Curtin, Kimberley's cousin who is white and wealthy. Curt uses his connections and gets Ifemelu a job with a public relations organisation in Baltimore. At the Baltimore train station she was picked up by an Ethiopian taxi driver who thought she's "from Trinidad or one of those places" (240). He warns her, "You have to be very careful or America will corrupt you" (240). Nothing could be more truthful than this.

But as an African black lady, she cannot appear at the interview without straightening her hair. The chemical in the hair relaxant at the hair salon cause her hair to fall soon after she gets the job. Her hair began to fall off because, "She drenched it in rich, creamy conditioners, and sat under steamers until water droplets ran down her neck. Still, her hairline shifted further backwards each day" (242). Wambui warns her, "Do you know what's in a relaxer? That stuff can kill you. You need to cut your hair and go natural" (242).

Ifemelu breaks up her relationship with Curt because he does not understand her as a non-American black lady. In her confession to Ginika, Ifemelu states that, "There was a feeling I wanted to feel that I did not feel." (131). But the truth is that she cheated on Curt with a younger man by the name Rob who lived in her apartment in Charles Village. Certainly, however, between her and Curt, something was missing; there was a disconnect.

Obinze is another character that is closely connected with Ifemelu. As stated earlier, they started together as undergraduates in a Nigerian university before Ifemelu left for the United States to continue her education. His mother is a professor at Nsukka University but proceeded to Lagos on a two-year sabbatical. It was in Lagos that Obinze struck a romantic relationship with Ifemelu. Obimze desired to study at the University of Ibadan but because of his mother's accident in a library, he changed his mind and enrolled at the Nsukka University where he could be close to

her.

Obinze finds himself in London as an illegal immigrant without requisite travel documents and non-citizen. He adopts a pseudo-name, Vincent, in order to secure a job. He uses the English man's national insurance number on the agreement that Obinze will pay him 30% of the earning which will enable Obinze save enough money for a sham wedding that should afford him citizenship status and then guarantee him legitimate job opportunity. This contractual arrangement failed when Vincent demanded higher cut from Obinze who refuses. As a result, Obinze is turned over to immigration officials who arrested and deported him back to Nigeria. Fortune smiles on Obinze while back home in Lagos as he becomes a very successful business man.

Aside from Ifemelu's botched love affair with Curt, she also falls in love with Blaine, an African-American professor, although this relationship too was brief. Something indefinable is missing in Ifemelu's life which needs to be realised. The unfulfilled but brief romance that connected her with the sham opportunistic tennis coach, the chance meeting with Curt, and equally brief acquaintanceship of Blaine all fail to fill the vacuous space in her life. Not even the blogging, the baby-sitting at Kimberly's or the public relation job in Baltimore provided fulfilment for her. To say the least, Ifemelu is deeply lonely. She is a victim of her own self, a soul seeking for the fulfilment of a dream, like most youths. After ten years in the United States, that dream for self-accomplishment, self-realisation, and self-fulfilment collapses like Langston Hughes' "A Dream Deferred".

Ifemelu is hooked on to the 'pull' for a return home to Nigeria where she belongs as a citizen where she cannot go underground but be visible. Back in Lgos, Ifemelu reconnects with her childhood lover, Obinze, the successful business man and happily married family man with a child. Ifemelu becomes 'Americanised' in mannerism and etiquette that adjusting to the home environment becomes difficult, but she must adjust nonetheless. In the long run she did adjust; after all, she started from this environment before straying abroad, to strange land, before the return HOME. It was this observed Americanisation that earned her the sobriquet, *Americanah*, at the same time the title of the novel.

While Ifemelu has been able to rediscover herself and connects with the missing link which restores her peace and happiness, it is not without a price for Kosi, Obinze's wife and Buchi, the daughter. The hour of decision comes when after seven months since last the two met, Obinze puts up appearance at Ifemelu's Ikoyi apartment, ready to take the plunge of his life. Standing at the door of her house, he tells Ifemelu: "Kosi is a good woman and my marriage was a kind of floating-along contentment but I should never have married her. I always knew that something was

missing.... “Ifem, I’m chasing you. I’m going to chase you until you give this a chance” “ (538). At last, having heard what she longed to hear, she calls him by the pet name, ‘Ceiling’, and beckons him in, “Come in”, and the story ends, but the resonance and ripples are kept alive in the minds and hearts of its critics.

Black Diaspora Films as Literature

The film is a very effective and graphic electronic medium of storytelling. It preserves and promotes the experiences, dreams, aspirations and hopes of a community of people. It is a story that deploys the use of sound and motion pictures. Such stories could be imaginative creation intended for entertainment; sometimes they represent actual stories of events as they occur to communicate messages. Films are shown on television and the cinema houses to entertain, inform and communicate messages. As entertainment or leisure, the film eases tension and stress after a long hard day’s work. Thomas Alemoh posits that, “Communication facilitates social interaction” where “people get to understand one another by establishing interpersonal relationships, keeping in touch with others and are able to predict the reactions and responses of others in any given situation” (14).

The emergence of the internet technology has made the production and deployment of film instantaneous and urgent. Events taking place anywhere around the globe are immediately captured and instantly passed across to viewers through the smart phones or other instant electronic devices, thereby eliciting immediate reactions and responses from viewers. This explains Maya Angelou’s position that, “Without the film, we might not have been able to deny our own bestiality, but seeing it allowed us to face our barbarism and ran from it; to seek shelter in the horror we felt viewing that scene; to come closer to our own humanity” (99). This statement is a direct reference to the 1991 Rodney King brutal killing in Los Angeles, USA. It is also reminiscent of the not too long murder of George Floyd by a white American police wherein Floyd gasped, “I can’t breathe”, before finally died. Angelou describes the young man who covered this event on video as, “an embryonic historian”. The same could be said of the young school girl who covered the George Floyd murder on video.

Rodney King, George Floyd, and many others who paid the supreme price for being black are martyrs because theirs was/is the story of a race of a people, the black race who were/are daily being brutalised, maimed and murdered because they are Black people in America. Again, Maya Angelou says, “Rodney King’s isn’t a story of an individual American being denied basic human rights but the story of America. It is the story of black and white and Asian and native American” (101).

The contemporary power of the film is that it brings to limelight and make

visible that which had been invisible. The inhumanity and executive recklessness of politicians and leaders are publicly exposed through the video. The looting and starching of currency in sceptic tanks, in soak away pits, and other ridiculous means are daily being filmed and shown across the world. Police brutality, human rights violations, gender and sexual inequalities are equally being made public through the video films.

Apart from written history, music and songs, drama, prose fiction and poetry, African-Americans have deployed the use of the film to tell their stories and experiences in slavery, of racism, denial of basic human rights, the civil rights struggles of the 1960s through the 1970s, and still writing and narrating the ugly side of life in America as native black Americans who are still discriminated against by the mainstream community of white Caucasians.

African-American films are often referred to as urban cinemas whose locations are New York's Harlem and Brooklyn, South Side, Chicago and the South Central and Watts' Los Angeles neighbourhood. According to Paula J. Massood. The great southern migration of rural blacks to the industrial North bolstered the growth of the film audiences in the urban centres of Chicago's South Side, New York, Pennsylvania, among others. It is recorded that African-American film production dates back to 1912 but the African-American subject matter can be traced to the evolution of American film making in the 1890s. The early projection of African-American images and motifs in films developed from the caricature slave-master Jim Crow and Uncle Tom pejoratives of supine and peevish black man submitting to a white master's whims. The treatment of black stories and images were deliberately distorted to suit the racial interest of the mainstream community.

Paula J. Massood avers that, "Born of social protest and a desire to provide an antidote to already inscribed stereotypes, African American filmmaking has roots in a comparative discourse often determined by an anxiety over the images manufactured by mainstream filmmaking" (46). This development paved way for the emergence of what is often called 'race films'; which are intended to satisfy the demand and desires of the black community. It also represents what she, Massood describes as, "films intended for all-black audiences, starring all-black casts and featuring black subject matter" (47). There were black film companies whose sole preoccupation was to reverse and reinvent the negative caricature and stereotypes portrayal of blacks by white film makers, a re-enactment of the plantation culture.

African-American films also concerned themselves with the duty not only to entertain, but more importantly providing alternatives as, "a tool of protest and education for urban audiences that were increasingly populated by relocated migrants from the rural South" (Massood 48). Black films of this era were in all

intents and purposes intended to be pedagogical and politically inclined for the conscientisation of the uneducated and marginalised black people. There are other films whose motive is to galvanise the audiences towards hard work and social advancement. We now examine a few of the films that project period and thematic subject matters and their shifting paradigms.

Oscar Micheaux's *Within Our Gates* (1920)

Oscar Micheaux was a successful film maker who was in full control of the production, distribution, funding and exhibition of his films without recourse to financial assistance from white financiers. He was a bourgeoisie of a different proclivity with high business acumen who believed in the capacity of the individual to uplift himself through hard work. His financial self-independence and success made him controversial along the two racial divide of white and black middle classes. Micheaux was perceived as leaning uneasily towards the promotion of the theme of lynching in his films; thereby setting black audiences against white audiences. The wound and scar of lynching which was common place in the South becomes the central theme in the film, *Within Our Gates*.

Lynching of blacks in the American Deep South was a historical reality that was carried out with brazen audacity by the white supremacists and their apologists, the Klu Klux Klan, (KKK). This was among the major factors that necessitated the great migration of rural blacks to the industrial North for safety. The heroine of the film is Sylvia Landry who sets out to save an all-black southern boarding school from insolvency. To achieve her mission, she needed the intervention of a kind-hearted philanthropist. This search led her to Boston in the New England state of Massachusetts. While in Boston, Sylvia confronts the good and the ugly sides of urban city life—a young black man who attempts to snatch her purse, and a young white doctor and member of the “Blue Vein Aristocrats”, who recovers her purse and eventually they fall in love.

On the contrary, it is not the young white doctor that donates the needed money, but a northern suffragette and patron who provided the money to the school. It is to be discovered by Sylvia's boyfriend, Dr. Vivian, that, “members of Sylvia's adopted family were the victims of a lynching in the South and that Sylvia herself is the product of an interracial relationship—which might have been a legitimate marriage” (50). This scenario is a backstory coming towards the end of the film that provides a background to the central message. Micheaux inserts images of a crowd of men, women, and even children who plan and execute the lynching. More worrisome is what Massood describes as, “In addition to the political impact of the lynching itself, the inclusion of all genders and generations as part of the lynch mob throws

doubt on the purity of the southern white womanhood in particular” (50).

The act of lynching in the American South was/is racially motivated and economically driven with the blacks as victims. These incidents were not peculiar to the South alone, but also prevalent in the Chicago South Side, a community that was daily receiving new migrants from the South. Consequent upon this social dynamics, there emerged competition for the available facilities and economic opportunities between white and black people. In the decades of the 1920s, Chicago became notorious for the crime of lynching, murder and arson that were racially targeted against the African-American population.

In addition to these sordid and gory images of the lynching act in the film, there is also a despicable scene in which Sylvia almost got raped by a man that turns out to be her biological father. How does one explain or justify the action of a father attempting to rape his daughter whom he is expected to protect? Could this act be traced to lust or some warped and twisted psyche, or frustration or self-denial? This could be adduced to result from the growing frustration in the unequal racial relationship between the whites and blacks which tends to place the black people in a perpetual subordinate social, political and economic status.

Within Our Gates also makes commentary on the role of the urban city space. The movement of Southern rural migrants to northern cities represents salvation and freedom from bondage, but it also represents damnation for them because of the socio-political and economic consequences associated with new life in the northern city. For example, we see the scene in Boston where Sylvia is threatened by a young black man who should protect her from city vagaries, but he turns out to be a gangster. Paradoxically, it turns out that this same Boston does not only provide her the needed funding to save Piney Woods boarding school, but it is Boston that provides her a suitable husband.

Micheaux's film explores the relationship between actual reality of the living conditions in the city with the narrative spaces in the film. This film undoubtedly speaks directly to the establishment in Chicago, the Deep South, Los Angeles, and other urban American urban centres. According to Paula J. Massood, “The fact that Micheaux's film spoke to the contemporary moment in Chicago (1919-1920) and this was considered enough of a threat that even the black bourgeoisie would call for censorship is an important early example of the connections between African American film's representations of urban spaces and contemporary social protest, connections that endure today” (52). It is a historical reality that remains a recurring decimal in black-white relationship.

Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989)

Born Shelton Jackson Lee, Spike Lee is a prolific African-American film producer, director, screen writer, actor and author. His personality in the film industry has been phenomenal, iconic and stupefying. With over four decades in the film industry, Lee's works explore the race relations and unfolding ripples and responses within the black communities of Brooklyn and Harlem in particular, but other black communities of Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, among others. Among his many films, this paper selects *Do The Right Thing* (1989) for analysis.

The film is set in one block of building in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a Brooklyn neighbourhood which is populated by African-America's high and low, depicting their conflicts and tragedies on a steaming summer day. Lee brings to fore the heteroglossia of racial, economic, generational and gendered forces at play in the heterogeneous Brooklyn community, all playing out in a space of one hot summer day. The architectonics of the film represents an avant-garde innovation in cinematic creation, production, promotion and salesmanship that stands out Lee among other film makers of his time. In the context of the film setting, Paula Massod observes that, "Set in a single block in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant area, it details twenty four hours in the life of a neighbourhood on the hottest day of the year. Rather than exploring the causes and effects leading to the conditions of this particular black, Lee lets the block, its residents, and the day's events reveal the conditions and pressures of the inner city". (131). Lee uses this single block of apartment with its heterogeneous population to make a general commentary on the larger urban racial, economic, generational and gendered commentary. Most of the characters in the film are victims of economic displacement, surveillance and police brutality that characterise the American urban neighbourhoods; whether in Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, etc.

The stories in the film are minimal with minimal staging styles, while the characters are ordinary street people struggling to eke out a living. Each character is representative, embodying peculiar condition within the neighbourhood in particular and the larger society in general. For example, Mookie (Spike Lee) in the film faces a moral dilemma wherein he is confronted with the reality that "just getting paid" does not isolate nor preclude him of a responsibility to the neighbourhood. He is a member of the community, so with a paid job in an environment of jobless youths, he cannot be seen to be secured.

Stories are told minimally through the use of coded graffiti, signs and fashion; what Paula refers to as, "specific referents of contemporary urban black culture to provide the narrative with elements of realism and immediacy" (134). These are symbols that are culturally recognised and associated with urban black

culture. Costumes or clothing styles speak volumes to the audience that espouse the environment and attributes of characters. This is further illustrated graphically in the following words:

For instance, homeboy Radio Raheem's colourful T-shirt, reading simply "Bed-Stuy," encodes him as a part of the neighbourhood....DJ Senor Daddy's hats change according to the situation and mood. Mookie's ambiguous and often compromised position is suggested more by his Jackie Robinson baseball shirt than through his words and actions. Buggin' Out's kente-patterned T-shirt and shorts signify his "Afro-Nationalist" political agenda. And the embodiment of neighbourhood gentrification is Clifton, the white owner of a brownstone, who is outfitted in a Larry Bird Celtic's shirt, iconography bespeaking the ultimate white boys' basketball hero. (134)

The presence of Clifton in a black neighbourhood makes a commentary on the infiltration of upwardly mobile professionals into hitherto underdeveloped areas of the community who are seen to be tired of suburban living. This emerging seething social demography brews racial disharmony between white and black residents of the neighbourhood. The prevalent images of the T-shirt and the hat are signifiers of the African-American urban culture.

Aside the deployment of clothing symbols as narratives, there is also effective use of aural accompaniment that are signifiers of contemporary African-American political culture. The soundtrack mixture of language and dialogue as well as music that are often times rendered in patois by Mookie and Buggin' Out set them apart from the speech pattern of Da Mayor and Mother Sister whose speech (voice/sound) pattern is reminiscent of the South, as well as the history of migration from the South to the industrial North. Coconut Sid's speech pattern/accent also references the history of Caribbean migration and displacement into the mainland America. There are also the distinct speech cadences of Puerto Rican Spanish-English, American-Italian and Korean, among others, thus presenting the neighbourhood as a metaphorical image of the melting pot of racial diversity and multicultural urban landscape.

In addition to the ethnically identified speech patterns of characters, there is also the use of rap and jazz as musical motifs in *Do The Right Thing*. More often than not, Radio Raheem, the big and silent black character, communicates through his music than in words. He exemplifies the African-American male subculture that is perceived as a threat by the white middle-class. The significance of music in defining

characters, identities and relationships in *Do The Right Thing* cannot be ignored because music plays a dominant role in shaping the dynamics of characters in the film. Some of the music serves as rallying points for political action against the white middle-class members of the community.

Economic emasculation which breeds joblessness with the black community members as victims, as well as institutional racism are the thrust of the conflict in this film. This scenario re-enforces Paula's position that, "The chronic economic displacement of young African American men is explored via the experiences of the film's characters" (136). This debilitating condition is further exacerbated by unsolicited police surveillance of predominantly black neighbourhood and the concomitant brutality, often lead to murder and riot in the urban neighbourhoods across the nation.

Mookie is Sal's pizza sales boy. Always donning the Jackie Robinson-type baseball shirt, he faces verbal abuse and animosity from Sal's older son, Pino, while Vito, the younger son is overtly friendly with Mookie. Pino is obviously the most racist in the film. His Sal's Famous employment places Mookie in a precarious position in the neighbourhood as the black members suspect him of being allegiant to Sal who represents the oppressive and exploitative white members of the community. This perception places Mookie in a dilemma. However, repulsed by the murder of Radio Raheem, his position is finally defined in the scene where he throws a trashcan through Sal's pizzeria window that smashes it, thereby precipitating the looting and burning of the storefront that followed.

Unfortunately, it could be argued that by act of omission or commission, Sal invited Mookie's action upon himself by his act of dedicating what he calls "Wall of Fame" at the corner of his pizzeria that will be donned with celebrities that will be determined by him, and decide whether music will be played in the pizzeria or not. While Sal sees this as his "inalienable right", Radio Raheem and Buggin' Out see it as an audacious display of racism in the community which excludes black celebrities. The white-black suspicious relationship, the economic dominance by the white, the presence of the police in the community and their surveillance build up tension and pressure within the black community; thereby resulting in riots and violence that is seen in the movie, *Do The Right Thing* which culminates in the murder of Radio Raheem.

It is necessary that we identify the three ideological/ generational blocks of black people in the film: the accommodationist/integrationist, the post-civil right/Black Power, and the contemporary nihilist generation of the 1980s/1990s. These ideological block characters are shaped by the vicissitudes of their time and age. Mother Sister and Da Mayor represent the older generation that

migrated from the South, while DJ Mister Senor Love Daddy and the three Cornermen represent post-civil rights age. Mookie, Radio Raheem and Buggin' Out personify the restless youth in the neighbourhood. These groups collectively personify the history of African-American experiences from poverty in rural South to the great migration to the industrial North. A signifying motif that is associated with this third group of youth is Radio Raheem's music. The title of the music is instructively metaphorical, "Fight the Power" This music does not only introduce the film, it is present and alive throughout the film, serving as the motivator for the violence that takes place close to the end of the film.

Conclusion

We have so far established the nexus between migration, the diaspora and the wide gamut of experiences in the diasporic world as expressed in literature and film. Wherever and whenever an individual or group relocate from their homeland they are physically dislocated as strangers in strange land. They are confronted with the reality of a new life and new experiences, cultivating new relationships while trying to adapt to the new environment. Paramount among the new challenges is that of citizenship. Whether the victim is a forced diaspora or a voluntary diaspora, the experiences are not diametrically different. The difference is the reality that the voluntary diaspora still has a home to return to in the long run, while the forced diaspora has no such privilege of a home on the homeland.

The Diasporas, therefore, are victims of social, psychological and emotional disconnect who suffers the pains and agonies of loss of citizenship and acceptance, discrimination, alienation and frustration. Diasporas are physically, emotionally, and verbally brutalised. Economically, they are skewed and subjected to menial employment, or shadow employment. Collectively, Diasporas are victims of institutional racism where they are regarded as inferior human beings, often viewed as criminals undeserving of freedom and rights.

Whether in drama, prose fiction, poetry, music and the film, most of these experiences are constructed as narrative themes. The only exception to the rule in the titles that we have treated is the poem of Phyllis Wheatley which eulogises her slave condition as salutary and redemptive. Her attitude as expressed in the poem is not unexpected because of the favourable treatment that she received in the Wheatleys' household. She was a privileged slave girl who was not only taught how to read and write, she was sent to England where she socialised with the nobles who praised her ingenuity. Ojo-Ade's *Home, Sweet, Sweet Home* and Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (voluntary Diasporas) narrate similar stories of dream, reality, frustration, and return to the homeland. On the other hand, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Ossie Davis'

Purlie Victorious (forced Diasporas) paint a gory narrative canvass of racism, economic strangulation, frustration and struggle for freedom and rights. Oscar Micheaux film, *Within Our Gates* and Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing* (forced Diasporas) graphically capture the reality of racism, economic emasculation of African-Americans and their daily struggle for survival in racially segregated American urban cities, in addition to recurring police brutality and murder.

Works Cited

- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Americanah*. Lagos: Kachifo, 2014.
- Alemoh, Thomas Anomoaphe. *Studies in Indigenous Communication*. Keffi: NIRPRI Publishers, 2023.
- Angelou, Maya. "The Arch of the Moral Universe Is Long, but It Bends Toward Justice" in Vesterman, William and Josh Ozersky. *Readings for the 21st Century: Tomorrow's Issues for Today's Students*. 3rd Edition. Allyn and Bacon, 1997.
- Booth, Alison, J. Paul Hunter and Kelly J. Mays. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. Shorter Ninth Edition, New York/London: W. W. Norton, 2006.
- Esler, Anthony. *The Human Venture: From Prehistory to the Present*. Fifth Edition. New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2004.
- Faragher, John Mack, et al. *Out of Many: A History of the American People*. Third Edition. Volume 11, Since 1865. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 2000.
- Frazier, E. Franklin. *Race and Culture Contacts in the Modern World*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957.
- Montagu, Ashley. *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*. Walnut Creek/CA: Altamira Press, 1997.
- Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1993.
- Oyigbenu, Amirikpa. *Racism, Citizenship and Identity Politics in African-American Drama*. Enugu: Rossen Publications, 2012.
- Massood, Paula A. *Black City Cinema: African American Experiences in Film*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2003.
- Segal, Ronald. *Islam's Black Slaves: A History of Africa's Other Black Diaspora*. London: Atlantic Books, 2001.
- Spellman, W.M. *The Global Community: Migration and the Making of the Modern World*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2002.
- Urry, John. *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-first Century*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000.