

Gender inequality and class privileges in americanah



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The great Abraham Lincoln once said “ Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” This is an extremely powerful quote that states all men are created equal and is relatable to many issues in modern society. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie author of critically acclaimed novel *Americanah* exhibits many issues of gender inequality and class privileges. Many characters of the novel face many difficulties in their life but none no matter the odds allows it to define them. In this essay I will connect issues of class and gender to the novel *Americanah* and to everyday life.

Throughout history, many individuals have faced several difficulties regarding one's gender. In the novel *Americanah* many characters face great hardships because of their gender. The protagonist, Ifemelu, faces difficulties because she is a women everyday. Ifemelu faces difficulty when she gets her hair braided. The braider, Aisha begins to quarrel Ifemelu about her life and context. When Ifemelu discusses her great success in America and her plan to move back to Nigeria, Aisha is immediately surprised because she is a women. Gender inequality is prevalent all around the world. Obinze's mother, a very intelligent professor was victimized by a male coworker. Obinze explained to Ifemelu what happened that day ““ She was on a committee and they discovered that this professor had misused funds and my mother accused him publicly and he got angry and slapped her and said he could not take a women talking to him like that. So my mother got up and locked the door of the conference room and put the key in her bra.”” (Adichie 71) Obinze's mother was assaulted because she was a women and called out

her coworker. This was a horrific event happened to Obinze's mother but she did not let it define her. She stuck to her guns and made she the man apologized for him appalling actions. This event is a prime example of how in society has made it acceptable for men to take advantage of woman in Nigeria. Women in all around the world face difficulties everyday due to their gender. Recently, in a NBA game Chris Paul received a technical foul for his gesture to a female referee. After the game Chris Paul said according to The Washington Post " If that's the case, then this might not be for her." which raised many concerns of Chris Paul being considered a sexist. Whether the call was right or wrong the referee was just doing her job. It is unacceptable for someone to call her out of her skill. This just shows that women fight everyday to gain equality in sports, workplace and in everyday life.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie shows in his novel *Americanah* the way the world has become extremely materialistic. The social class a person belongs to is very important in todays society. In *Americanah*, issues of class privileges is prevalent throughout the novel . The protagonist, Ifemelu shows class privileges when she visited Aunty Ujus new house in Dolphin Estate when she says " She wanted to live there. It would impress her friends; she imagined them sitting in the small room just off the living room, which Aunty Uju called the TV room, watching program on satellite." (Adichie 90) This shows how in Nigeria what you have is important for your social status. Ifemelu is a young girl and she finds herself embarrassed to show her friends her small home. Throughout the novel class issues become more and more evident. People around the world face class privileges everyday especially in America because of their inability to prosper due to their class. In a later

time in Ifemelu's life in America she encountered class issues when she took a taxi to get her hair braided. " She hoped her driver would not be Nigerian, because he, once he heard her accent, would either be aggressively eager to tell her that he had a master's degree, the taxi was a second job, and his daughter was on the dean's list at Rutgers" (Adichie 10) This quote is very powerful and shows inequality not only in America but in Nigeria as well. In Nigeria many people obtain degrees at universities and then venture to America to pursue a better life. These Nigerian degrees are not worth the same amount in America. This causes Nigerians to be put into a lower social class because they do not receive the same opportunities in America. Everyone may have been created equal but sadly not everyone receives equal opportunities. In modern society every person has goals and aspiration but due to issues of gender and class inequality it may be more difficult for some people to achieve such goals.

Throughout history, all men and women have not been treated equally. Even today many people continue to fight for equality. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie exhibits many issues of gender and class throughout the novel that millions of people everyday are trying to overcome. These people do not let these things define them, they use these event to drive them and propel themselves past the nay sayers. Every man, woman and child should be able to do what they aspire to do no matter what circumstances they are born in to.