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MIGRATION AND DIASPORIC COMPLEXITIES: IFEOMA ODINYE'S *PAIN IN THE NECK* AS A PARADIGM

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Abstract

Neo-colonialism, in its wake, left in the tongues of many colonized nations the nerve-stretching bitter taste of inferiority complex. This malady is heightened by the unbridled rate of corruption and other anomalies that have dominated the leadership space in Africa nay Nigeria since independence. Hence, many Nigerians desire to seek refuge across international borders under the impression that whatever happens in the Western world must be better than what obtains in Nigeria. But then, diasporic literature focuses on demonstrating that things are not always what they seem on the other side. Many migrants find themselves plunged into deplorable situations of cultural alienation, racial discrimination, nostalgia, scam, drugs, prostitution, etc, all of which eventually culminate in the cankerworm of identity crisis and/or multiple consciousness. These are the plights well captured by Ifeoma Odinye in her debut novel, *Pain in the Neck.* Using this text, this present work, thus, exposes the many complexities that beset Nigerian migrants in the diaspora, which ably reveal that things are not always as they seem at face value as far as migration in pursuit of the 'Golden Fleece' is concerned. And so, by means of a textual analysis of this selected text under the post-colonial theoretical framework, this study demonstrates that many Nigerians abroad are always stuck with an erosion of their cultural and personal identities, all in their quest for greener pastures. In other words, they usually end up in the ignoble fate of being neither here nor there, having been alienated as the 'other' in the foreign land and also denigrated by their own people, who consider them as 'never-do-wells', assuming they return home 'empty-handed'.

Keywords: Migration, Diaspora, Complexity, Crisis.

Introduction

The concepts of "migration" and "diaspora" are the two major focal points of this study. While the term, "diaspora" refers to "the mass, often involuntary, dispersal of a population from a center (or homeland) to multiple areas, and the creation of communities and identities based on the histories and consequences of dispersal" (Tashmin, 3); the concept of "migration" can be traced back to the history of humanity. According to Kok (1), "migration is defined as the movement of people over some distance (or at least from one "migration-defining area" to another) and from one "usual place of residence" to another". Such movements are usually made with the intention of settling at a new location on permanent or temporary basis. This movement from one place to another is usually over long distances and can be either internal or external. Internal migration occurs when one moves from one location inside a country to another location inside the same country. Indeed, this is the dominant form of migration that is usually seen globally whereby people always move from one part of the country to the other for various reasons. External migration, on the other hand, occurs when one leaves the shores of one's country to another entirely different country. It is actually this second type of migration – external migration – that we are particularly concerned with in this study.

The Nigerian diasporic experience is one that goes back even to the pre-colonial era. It cannot be validly denied that prior to colonization and subsequent independence, Nigerians have always had various causes to migrate both internally and externally. Such migrations, whether internal or external, could also either be voluntary or involuntary. Chinua Achebe perfectly captures this idea of migration (in the internal context) during the Colonial era through his description of Okonkwo's seven-year exile in Mbanta as a result of the female-ochu (manslaughter) he committed by mistakenly shooting the son of Ogbuefi Ezeugo during the latter's burial/funeral. That was a perfect case of involuntary migration. Some elites in the country also had the rare privilege of engaging in external migration during the Colonial era as well, in the quest for education. For example, the former Biafran warlord, Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu was sent to Epsom College and Lincoln

College, Oxford University, both in the United Kingdom, as at the year 1946. That was a case of voluntary migration.

As seen in the Ojukwu example above, many Nigerians during the pre-colonial and pre-independence era, who travelled abroad then did not do so as a result of any institutionalized tension in the Nigerian polity. It was more of a privileged quest for exploration and adventure in a foreign land. But quite unfortunately, when Nigerians migrate or at least, yearn to migrate abroad nowadays, they do so in reaction to the unwholesome atmosphere of tension that has dominantly prevailed in the Nigerian state for many years. The embers of such ambition are usually fanned by the erroneous but pervading impression that once one travels abroad, success and abundant wealth are sure to be accessed. As already mentioned elsewhere, the wake of neo-colonialism and the unbridled spate of successive political maladministration in the Nigerian leadership space ever since independence, have continued to amplify the current massive drive to seek greener pastures abroad; This trend has today been colloquially dubbed as "japa syndrome".

Hence, such issues as "brain-drain" or "brain transfer", as some have chosen to call it, have become topical issues in Nigeria today. What remains to be seen is whether the hopes, aspirations and expectations of all those who do travel out with such intentions to make it big, are all usually met. In this study therefore, Ifeoma Odinye's novel, titled, *Pain in the Neck* is interrogated as diasporic literature based on thematic and characteristic features.

Synopsis of *Pain in the Neck*

The work, *Pain in the Neck,* is a literary work written by a female Nigerian author, Ifeoma Odinye. It skilfully appraises the diasporic experiences of Africans, especially the female folk, in foreign lands. The novel is set in China as the 'juicy' destination which later turns out to be the worst nightmare for the characters in focus. Quite ironically, it was only on their return back home that they were able to get the respite they had longed for while in

the foreign land. What China could not do for them, Nigeria turned out to do through the great instrumentality of a reputable man of God. The story is about two young women: Ada and Chika, who unfortunately found themselves in the despicable conditions of slavery and forced prostitution as against the treasures they hoped to savour from China. The story becomes more intriguing when it is seen that their ugly experiences were predominantly orchestrated by their fellows in both colours and gender: Madam Louis of "Madam Louis Restaurant" in Guangzhou and Ngozi, the highly mischievous drug baroness are both women and Africans nay Nigerians, like Ada and Chika. This perfectly depicts the ugly postcolonial scenario of women-women subjugation whereby a group of women oppress their fellow women whom they (the former) consider as inferior or the "other".

The novel begins by telling the story about what happened after the entire diasporic experiences of Ada and Chika. In fact, Ada's diasporic experiences are narrated by Chika from the first person's point of view as an explanation of the calumny levied against her (Chika) by Ngozi at the point of her marriage to Emeka. And so, the story develops through a flashback from Chapter three of the work in order to acquaint the reader with the details of what led to the events that are unfolding. From Chika's narrative, we see how the hopes of many are usually dashed after their sojourn abroad based on lived experiences and actual reality. In Chika's own case, her mum demands a promise from her to stay above board and remain positively focused, thus, Mrs. Ugah: a promise to remain "the good girl I raised you to be!" ;a promise "to face your studies squarely!"; a promise "to avoid evil association and illegal activities!". Her confident response is: "I will make you proud! *Nnem,* I will make you proud" (Odinye 11). The events that followed after her travel showed how this promise could not be fulfilled due to realities of existence in the destination country.

Chika and Ada's paths crossed at Madam Louisa's Restaurant in Guangzhou while the former was on one of her vacation trips with her lover, Chinedu. It was in Chika's bid to assist Ada, who had already been turned into a sex- slave under the command of Madam Louisa, that she fell into Ngozi's trap. Ngozi is Chinedu's vindictive former girlfriend. What, therefore, began with glamour and lots of beautiful promises ended up becoming a

damnable venture. No wonder, Chika had to lament towards the end thus: "I have indeed betrayed my family. I am so ashamed of myself. I can't boast of anything now. I am a huge disgrace" (Odinye 175). Such is usually the lament of depression that usually comes when everything begins to go haywire in the lives of many diasporic victims.

At the denouement of the novel, Ada and Chika 's pathetic stories came to an end through the humanitarian efforts of a religious centre known as SCOAN, whose "representatives had been consistently donating money to support inmates who had been discharged and acquitted to return to their countries without much difficulties" (Odinye 183). The height of the shame they feel within themselves is well articulated in the lines that say, "Most of the deportees frowned because they thought that the timing of their arrival was wrong and very inconsiderate. They preferred it to be night so that ***they could hide their faces in the darkness***" (Odinye 185; Emphasis mine). Such was the height of the shame and disappointment they felt about their deportee -identity that "Anxiety, sadness, anger and disillusionment were written on the faces of the deportees as they alighted from the airport bus" (185). This is a typical reflection of what the modern poet, T.S. Eliot, describes in his poems as: "Waste Land" and "Hollow Men".

The twist in their stories, is that the good life they sought for abroad, was later found within the shores of Nigeria. Aside their release, which was facilitated by the SCOAN man of God, Prophet T. B. Joshua, they also received from him the whooping sums of five hundred thousand naira, given to Chika and One million naira, given to Adanna. Of course, they never received any such benevolence from anybody while abroad. Even their career dreams were then achieved locally through a Nigerian University and through the art of sewing. At last, what was lost abroad in terms of self-image and identity were seen to have been regained as Adanna herself declared, "Now, I have a lot more confidence in myself" (Odinye 206). This is how almost every diasporic literature usually ends. Therefore, we can say that *Pain in the Neck* is a success story ably couched and weaved satirically to berate the spate of the delusive belief that all is gold out there.

Shades of Migration and Diasporic Complexities in Odinye's *Pain in the Neck*

Cultural Hybridity/Multiculturalism

Culture, here, simply denotes a people's way of life or their norms of existence, as against spontaneous actions that may not have been premeditated. Many of the works on diaspora discuss some sort of double allegiance or double loyalty experienced by those in diaspora in the sense that the individual finds himself or herself attached to the culture of their native land as well as still "feel the urge to belong in the settled land" (Lau 241). This breeds what Lau considers as "hybrid existence", whereby they struggle to be here and there as they try to identify with each of the cultures, sometimes without success. They end up becoming as multicultural as they are multilingual, even while not fully or proficiently belonging to any of the conflicting cultures. The entanglements of both cultures tend to draw them poles apart from themselves on account of the conflicting demands they sometimes make of them, in terms of ways of speaking, believing and living in general. Hence, they suffer a sense of crisis arising from their condition of cultural hybridity or multiculturalism.

The highpoint of the crises occasioned by cultural hybridity comes from the fact that transition from the demands of one's own culture to the demands of the new culture is usually not an easy one. After all, change in itself is most times an arduous phenomenon. No wonder "Chika grumbled as she ate the half-cooked rice and sugary stew" (Odinye 32). She had to abruptly abandon the first food she ate when she entered her school canteen in China for the first time. She could not understand the alien culture of cooking food with sugar. According to her, "In my place, this is not done at all. This country is funny. Sugar and tomatoes *kwa?*" (Odinye 32 – 33). For her, this was simply ridiculous and outrageous. She simply could not understand such culture of cooking stew with sugar. In this particular instance, her own culture was better and 'superior'. No wonder she did not mince words in simply concluding that "they have terrible cooks here." (Odinye 33)

Going by the preceding instance, back home was better and worthy of emulation. But then, shortly before she got served, she had observed another culture that heavily contradicted what obtains in her country, Nigeria, though with that of China considered better this time. As presented by the author,

> It took Chika and Jessica just five minutes to collect their food. The queue was long but the students were well-mannered and organized unlike in most Nigerian universities where students continuously jumped the queue, fought and engaged in verbal attacks. In most cases, constant pushing and elbowing became a *norm*" (Odinye 32: Emphasis mine).

Here, we see a "norm" that very well places the Chinese culture on a positive and even superior light as against what obtains in our preceding analysis. On this kind of note, one could be put on edge about choosing which of these two cultures to then align or identify with: the native or the alien culture? For just few minutes after extoling the grandeur of Chinese students' wonderful comportment, their cooks were berated as "terrible". In that case, should Chika align more with China or with Nigeria? Such is the sort of impasse that comes with being immersed in between two cultures that tend to clash and conflict each other among migrants in diaspora.

Nostalgia and Displacement

Nostalgia and displacement are other common thematic features that appear prominently in diasporic literature. As Rushdie puts it, "exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt" (Rushdie 76). Once in the foreign land, the diasporic individuals are usually firstly haunted by a sense of displacement and loss. Several factors contribute to such sense of displacement. These factors can be broadly divided into two: voluntary and non-voluntary. The voluntary movements are usually occasioned by two major factors: educational and economic needs. The involuntary movements on the other hand come

about as a result of political and national exigencies or natural disasters, and sometimes, in the case of women, marriage (Onuh 67).

In the case of Chika, it was largely voluntary as occasioned by her need to study the Chinese language in China as a means of getting an economic boost. For her, "Learning the language seemed an ideal avenue for assisting most Igbo rich people, who patronised the Chinese people. She believed that her role as an interpreter would fetch her more money and eventually help her secure a good job" (Odinye 41). But in Ada's own case, it is seen to be involuntary. She was forced abroad as a result of the avalanche of domestic misfortunes she was facing beginning from her home front – a situation, which involved the death of her mother, the incarceration of her father for abusing her sexually and the countless sexual molestations she faced at the hands of those who were supposed to be her guardians, viz: Chinwe's husband and even his house boys. All these culminated in her unwitting grab of the opportunity presented by Auntie White and Michael (Odinye 122).

Nevertheless, the feelings of nostalgia and displacement are seen to be true whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary. For although Chika voluntarily opted to jet out of the country, she could not help but still feel that "There was a vacuum in her life, an absolute emptiness without family, friends and home" (Odinye 29). As a matter of fact, "Her coming to China marked the beginning of a new life of struggle without her family or relatives" (Odinye 28). One can't then imagine how nostalgic she must have been, especially at those early beginnings. At some point, "she felt so dejected, inferior and alone in the world" (Odinye 35).

In the face of all these, we see that the themes of nostalgia and displacement always go hand in hand with the feelings of a sense of loss, loneliness, alienation and even depression. All these culminate to a deep-seated crisis of identity, which usually haunts almost every member of the diasporic community. And this holds true whether the emigrant migrated voluntarily or involuntarily. In some cases, it degenerates to the point that the emigrant completely loses his or her self-worth, as he or she becomes subsumed in the web of the

happenings around him or her. This explains why Adanna responded to Chika's question about her happiness in such a very despondent manner thus:

> Who is talking of happiness in a cruel world? Happiness has developed wings and had since vanished into the thin air. My happiness does not count anymore. My madam's happiness is my ultimate goal now. The fear of my madam is the beginning of wisdom. Her word is final! Her decisions are binding dear! (Odinye 114)

This clearly depicts the height of the loss of self being experienced by Adanna in diaspora. Her story may not be entirely peculiar to her as it spreads across many divides of the diasporic community. In the preceding quote, we see that she no longer bears her own unique identity. She now bears a displaced identity – the identity of her madam; thereby, perfectly demonstrating how displacement could lead to a sense of identity -crisis among emigrants in the diaspora.

Racial Discrimination or Colour Consciousness

If there is any element or factor that usually fans the embers of mental crises among Nigerians in diaspora, it is the element of racial discrimination or colour consciousness. As Wieviorka puts it, when a diasporic community is

> constantly rejected or inferiorised while only wanting to be included, either socially or culturally, or when this group or this individual is racially discriminated, and dominised (sic) under the argument of a supposed cultural difference, then the individual or the group is embarrassed and this eventually leads to a self-definition and behaviours based on this culture and, eventually, racial distinction. (72)

In Odinye's *Pain in the Neck,* racial discrimination stands out prominently as a factor that promotes identity crises as a major complexity experienced by Nigerians in diaspora. It begins from the discrimination that comes from the colour of the skin, to that of language, and other elements of the African nay Nigerian culture that usually put the diasporic

individual(s) such as Chika and Ada, in racial disadvantage. Racial profiling appears to be mostly directed at black skinned persons. Chika's experiences are cases in point. Expressions of *'Hei ren!* Black Person'. '*Ni kan zhe ge hei ren!*' (See this black person), (Odinye 33) were often used to qualify her at social outings and public places, making Chika to feel very insecure. A typical situation is captured in this narrative, thus:

> a tiny ringing voice rose from one of the girls who clustered around the wooden table. She walked towards Chika touching her dark skin to ascertain the extent it had been covered with dirt. The other girls threw their heads back and roared with laughter. Tears clustered in their eyes leaving traces of wetness on their cheeks. (Odinye 34)

People caught-up in such situations of racial insensitivity, very often fell disoriented, just like Chika, who deduced from the kind of treatment she received, that "she was going to have a serious problem with the Chinese people and their derogatory words" (Odinye 35). There is no doubt though, that Chika liked the experiences of her new life in China. In fact, "She liked her new freedom, her life of affluent ease, someone whose study expenses had been taken care of by the Chinese government." However, "she did not like that she was the only dark-complexioned girl in the school." Typical of a racially charged environment, the author makes readers to understand that

> No Chinese wanted dark complexioned babies. They believed that blackness signalled two things (sic): poverty and dirtiness. Oftentimes, blackness was associated with foul odour which explained why some Chinese who covered their noses on meeting Chika expressed a deep sense of awe at the sweet Rasp-Berry fragrance emanating from her body. (Odinye 38 – 39)

In the preceding lines, the author very aptly captures the vastness of the Chinese community's racist attitude towards the diasporic community. Such situations are likely to push one to slide into the oddity of inferiority complex that may engender an identity cum mental crisis.

In the novel, the reader is made to understand that Chika's first months in China were replete with such nasty racist experiences that always struck her with awe. Whenever she entered a bus or took the subway, Chika " was struck by how mostly ugly Chinese ladies would point at her and would shout *hei ren* (black person). They would gather around her giggling and touching her skin to check if she indeed coated herself with black paint or charcoal" (Odinye 39). At some other times, "they would point at her and laugh. Others who had the boldness to confront her, would touch her braids pulling it to know if it was a wig" (Odinye 40).

As would be expected, such experiences as these, always dampened the spirit of diasporic individuals. In effect, as Chika had to admit to herself, "Studying in China must be a harrowing experience for many black people" (Odinye 47). One can therefore imagine the kind of depression such migrants may be led to. Chika's soliloquy succinctly captures the bad feeling and taste that comes with such discrimination thus:

> We didn't create ourselves! We are Africans. We cannot run away from our identity. We are mocked everywhere! We live daily with a strong stench of stereotype which has weakened our self-worth. Chinese people can at least be reasonable in their acts. They should stop embarrassing black people by moping and pointing at them everywhere. I think they should be reoriented to change this unfair tradition. (Odinye 47)

In these words, the author cautions the Chinese community, as well as other foreign communities against acts of racial discrimination. She calls for a thorough reorientation of mind-set for such racist actors, admonishing people to cast-off racial stereotyping and strive for goodwill and racial tolerance.

Inordinate Quest for Survival

Another major theme that features prominently in diasporic literature with a major link to the sort of complexities experienced by the diasporic community, is the theme of the quest for survival. In fact, at the bedrock of the urge to jet out of the country, is the fact that many

Africans nay Nigerians have lost hope in the successive governments of the day. Many believe that promises made by incoming governments are often simply lofty and fake. Hence, it has become paramount in the mind-set of many youths that nothing good can ever come out of Africa. And so, majority seek to find refuge outside the African shores where they feel some level of assurance of wellbeing and greener pastures. Unfortunately, many of such people end up discovering that they had been on a wild goose chase since they eventually learn through the hard way that all that glitters is not indeed gold.

Chika and Ada's cases in the novel *Pain in the Neck* are not different. For Chika, she felt that learning the Chinese Language would be an escape route from poverty and her avenue to economic security. She reckoned that when she must have learnt the Chinese language, she would become an interpreter "for most rich Igbo people who engaged in business transactions with Chinese companies and industries. She believed that her role as an interpreter would fetch her more money and eventually help her secure a good job" (Odinye 41). Much of the pressure on migrants come from this kind of expectation where family and friends back home place their hope and confidence on the migrant giving the impression that travelling to a foreign country is synonymous with acquiring wealth. After all, for Chika's mother in *Pain in the Neck*, "China is becoming very powerful", and as such, once anyone gets over there, the person will automatically get 'powerful' as well. The events that follow in Chika's life turn out to show how erroneous such a belief can be. Ada's own case was not any different. Her initial thinking that leaving the shores of the country would be an escape route from her many ugly domestic experiences turned out to be the contrary, so much so that returning back to Nigeria eventually became her saviour. Such a dramatic irony of the situation!

The author equally and elaborately explores this survival motif using a minor character in the plot, named Nonso, "an energetic 29 year-old guy from Imo State", who "arrived in China very desperate to become rich" (115). As the author observes, "He taught (sic) his life was going to change only to be trapped in a tight web of disillusionment and poverty" (Odinye 116). The author further notes that Nonso's case is not just peculiar to

him; "The Eastern region of Nigeria had been losing many of their sons and daughters to migration mostly to Europe and some parts of Asia". But as with many of such desperate migrants, "Nonso's new life didn't turn out the way he imagined" (Odinye, 116). A vivid description drives the point home, thus:

> Nonso's experiences in China as a migrant depicted a hard life with no hope for survival. Nonso and other migrants lived in cramped apartments where they had to take turns to sleep because there were not enough beds. They spent their days hiding inside their apartments, afraid of being caught by the police with expired visas. They struggled to get enough water and food in order to survive. (Odinye, 117)

Odinye may have opted to paint this ugly picture using a minor character in order to demonstrate that Chika and Ada's cases were not just peculiar to them as women, since Nonso, a male character, was not also spared in the entire malady. Unfortunately, those left back home do not seem to care about how the migrant survives, if indeed he or she actually even survives in the first place. And because the migrants know this, they are ready to do even the unthinkable just to make sure they do not disappoint. No wonder Nonso had to resort to male prostitution with older married women as his own means of making fast money that will "enable him maintain his prestige at home" (Odinye 118). Where such desperate antics boomerang or do not work out as intended, the migrant either opts to remain perpetually abroad until fortune smiles at him or her, or the person ends up eventually coming back 'empty handed', as in the cases of Chika and Ada.

Violence and Sexual Abuse

Violence and sexual abuse are two intertwined themes which seen to follow closely from the theme of inordinate quest for survival. As already observed, sometimes, the migrants are ready to do whatever it takes to make it big, even if it entails losing their self-dignity and worth or shedding blood to do so. Most times, they themselves end up becoming victims of violence, either at the hands of their fellow migrants, who are also desperate to survive at all costs or at the hands of the host community, especially racist fanatics and the

armed forces. It is within the context of violence that sexual abuses subsist. For as against the many fake promises the migrants receive before they travel, they end up becoming victims of violent sexual abuses and coercion that sometimes even threaten their very existence.

Pain in the Neck is indeed fraught with such scenes of violence and sexual abuses that are so aptly described in such a way that one feels the pains of the victims as if they are happening first hand to the reader. Ada seems to be at the centre of the violent sexual abuses that are presented in the novel. She became so used to her situation that she admitted thus:

> I was just there like a piece of furniture owned by everybody. What happened to me that day was nothing! Worst things had happened to me there, but I'm not bothered anymore! I've resigned to fate! I am simply waiting for the future to unleash more hardship and thorns of pains into my life! This world is indeed cruel. (Odinye 114)

In the author's articulation, it is the air of indifference with which she said these things than carries the weight and thus leaves Chika speechless. And to crown it all, she goes on:

> Who is talking about happiness in a cruel world? Happiness has developed wings and had since vanished into thin air. My happiness does not count anymore. My madam's happiness is my ultimate goal now. The fear of my madam is the beginning of wisdom. Her word is final! Her decisions are binding dear. (Odinye 114)

In these lines, we read a note of complete resignation to fate and total loss of identity whereby her own identity, feelings and emotions have become totally subsumed into those of her madam. What better description than this can the complexity of identity crisis really take? In fact, in Adanna's personality, there appears to be a dichotomy between what she wants in life and what she can get. In her own words, "I don't like what I do, but I think I have the right to enjoy what I cannot change. I have enjoyed them for three years now...." (Odinye 154). Diasporic writers describe this sort of resignation to fate as an irony of

situation or situational irony in many ways. In one way, it is ironical that the 'abroad' that is usually expected to be *uhuru* turns out to be as devastating as already described. One would expect that Ada's China ticket would be a ticket out of all the violence and sexual abuses she had always faced back home, beginning from her incestuous father. But that was not to be! In another sense, it is ironical that such an ugly predicament that should actually evoke pity and/or sympathy from people is taken very lightly by the victim as in Ada's case, who ironically says of her sexual molestation instances that she has "enjoyed them for three years now". This, indeed, is a gross situational irony! Bear in mind that the perpetrator of her own violence in China was her fellow woman – Madam Louis – and her fellow African. It was purely a case of women-on-women subjugation!

Ada was not alone in such experiences of violence. Chika too also had her fair share of violence and sexual molestation at the hands of another woman as well. Nevertheless, while Madam Louis' own motif for subjecting Ada and her colleagues to sexual abuse and violence was survival, Ngozi's own reason was revenge against Chika, who purportedly snatched away her boyfriend, Chinedu. Incidentally and unfortunately too, Ada got caught in the mix, thereby opening up another web of violence that seemed to be the climax of all the violent scenes described in the work. What more could be more violent than the fact that "Chika got pregnant during the three months she was under house arrest. The guys punched her until she miscarried the pregnancy. Every day was pure torture and pain. They thought they were going to die, but grace kept them pushing through the difficult times" (Odinye 165). However, Chinedu was not fortunate as he died in the whole mess.

In the face of all these, Chika, just like Ada, is also seen to completely lose her self-worth and indeed overall dignity. In Ngozi's own vicious words to her, "You have no say in any matter concerning your life in China. I am now fully in charge of your life.... You have nothing to say! My decision is final" (Odinye 167). Obviously, nothing can be more devastating and demeaning than being placed in a condition whereby one can be said to only be in existence without actually living, since one has become completely divested of any say in matters pertaining to his or her own life. At this point, the only thing that would

matter will no longer be financial breakthrough but the mere desire to have a second chance at life. For Chika, all she wanted was simply to have her freedom back. As the author puts it in *Pain in the Neck*, "Chika's current predicament had squashed her dream of studying the Chinese language" (Odinye 168). Life became all that mattered; no longer wealth. The same can as well be said of many diasporic individuals in the face of the overwhelming vicissitudes that usually besiege them in the wrongly perceived land of 'milk and honey'.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Looking at the picture painted by Odinye in the novel *Pain in the Neck*, one would be tempted to come to the hasty conclusion that everything about the experience of diaspora is simply and entirely negative. In fact, the experiences so described could be seen to be utterly reminiscent of the Transatlantic Slave Trade of the 17th and 18th centuries, whereby Africans were subjected to all forms of oppression and denigration following their kidnap from their homelands. Yet, it is obvious that the era of such slavery is long gone with the official Slave Trade Act of March 25, 1807 that finally abolished slavery. One is left then to wonder whether Africans have become submerged in a new form of slavery, originating this time, from the particular individuals in question and no longer as a result of kidnap and forceful faring across the Atlantic. Odinye's *Pain in the Neck* aptly reveals that much of the malady suffered by migrants in diaspora nowadays do not come from the hands of the nationals or the natives of the foreign lands where they migrate to, even though such natives may not be very accommodating and helpful. It therefore, requires more studies to decipher whether the oddities of diasporic experiences are usually championed by natives of the destination country or indeed by fellow migrants, as Odinye has painted. The need to discover how widely spread or peculiar the experiences afore analysed are across genders, classes, countries and continents is also very paramount. The root causes of such diasporic crises will also need to be traced in view of knowing how best they could be precluded, since migration has become an ineluctable human phenomenon,

even if only as a means of spreading one's overall tentacles in the face of a world that has indeed become a global village.

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