

BOOK CLUB NEWS  
December 16, 2016  
RICHARD BASS, COORDINATOR  
Cell: 323-533-3550 [rbass9210@yahoo.com](mailto:rbass9210@yahoo.com)  
*Americanah*, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Discussion Leader: Evelyn Kain



Evelyn set the mood for our discussion by playing popular Nigerian music. For your pleasure, here's what greeted us as we arrived: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lahNmvmFOS4> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdJo8hBvKKI>. She began with a brief bio of the author. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in the university town of Nsukka, Nigeria. Her father, James Nwoye Adichie was professor of statistics at the University of Nigeria; her mother, Grace Ifeoma we the university's first female registrar. While studying medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria for a year and a half, Adichie edited the medical magazine *The Compass*. At the age of 19, she left Nigeria to study communications and political science at Drexel in Philadelphia. She soon transferred to Eastern Connecticut State University to be near her sister, who had a medical practice in Coventry. She received her bachelor's degree from Eastern with the distinction of summa cum laude in 2001. In 2003, she completed a master's degree in creative writing at The Johns Hopkins University. In 2008, she received a Master of Arts degree in African studies from Yale University. In 2016, she was conferred an honorary degree – Doctor of Humane Letters by The Johns Hopkins University.

Evelyn continued with a few general questions that easily encouraged discussion. What do we know of Nigeria? Has the book changed any pre-conceived notions? Identify the many levels on which the novel operates: love story, political story, autobiography, eye opening social commentary, immigrant issues. What level dominates? Considering the structure, one reader posited that Adichie is an essayist and that perhaps the love story was the glue that held the essays together. Another reader wondered what her blog would be like on our club discussing her book. Discuss the characters. Are they realistic? How did you react to the characters? It was generally agreed that the characters were distinctly feminine and that the women were multi-dimensional, while the men were not. Was she a feminist author? Adichie warns about the dangers of misunderstanding characterizing a person, a people, or a country with one story; our cultures and our lives are composed of many overlapping stories. Evelyn encouraged us to look up her talk on <http://www.ted.com/search?q=Chimamanda+Ngozi+Adichie>.

What is the meaning of the title? What role does food play in the story? Language of the immigrant? Humor? Discuss the style, the prose. What about the London part of the book? Discuss white privilege and Blacks in America. What is the distinction between an African-American and an American Black? What did you learn about the experience of a black African immigrant to the United States?

During the go-around, comments were decidedly glowing: informative, lovely book, impressed how educated the characters were, wonderful writing, loved the complexity of the characters. Peeking through the glow were some issues: one reader needed a roadmap for all the characters, another would have liked the book to be shorter, another wished the section in London be eliminated. Another thought the love story brutal. One reader observed that here were smart people doing stupid things.

Thank you, Elaine, for your expert leadership in discussing a fascinating and illuminating novel by a prominent voice for Africa, Nigeria in particular. Join us next month for a discussion on *Destiny Disrupted*, by Tamin Mann led by John Wachter. Happy reading!

