

America Observed

With Nigerian Eyes



Nigerian commentary about American life, and Nigerians' own encounters with it, go back a long way.

We should understand the contemporary mobility of Nigerian Afropolitans between their West African home country and America in its wider historical and transnational context. John F. Kennedy, not yet president, himself of noted Irish ancestry, wrote a book in which he described his country as *A Nation of Immigrants* (1958). Despite its recurrent conflicts and divides, that nation has been quite successful in forming itself as an “imagined community.”

A great many parts of the world consequently have their own stories of America-bound migrants, in literature as well as in personal biographies. One of the best-known literary works in twentieth-century Sweden, for example, was a quartet of historical novels about the nineteenth-century transfer of one modest Swedish farming family to a new home in Minnesota, and their settling in.¹ In the twentieth century again, Sweden has had its own been-tos. For some of the returnees to the old country, the American sojourn became a parenthesis; for others it was central to their future lives and careers.

Conditions on the early migrant ships from Europe to America could be dismal. But they were not slave ships. What was of course unusual about the West African migration to America in the twentieth and twenty-first century was that there had been those centuries of massive, dramatically involuntary transfer of people preceding them. A large part went to South America. We already encountered the traces of that in chapter 2, with “Mariana’s story” of an Afro-Brazilian family in its back-and-forth moves between continents. Others came to the Caribbean islands and to North America. One important symbolic

figure of that era is an Igbo, Olaudah Equiano (also called Gustavus Wassa as his slave name for a period, somehow drawn from the name of the sixteenth-century Swedish aristocrat-turned-monarch who had a major part in turning one part of Scandinavia into a country). Equiano's story may not be entirely clear; his own narrative covering much of the latter half of the eighteenth century includes his capture, a moment in domestic slavery not so far from home, then the traumatic journey on a slave ship across the Atlantic, a fairly brief stay in the southeastern parts of what had yet to become the United States, many years as a sailor under varied circumstances, and time in Britain as an anti-slavery advocate.²

Among the migrants to the United States have also been those from the islands of the Caribbean, such as Jamaica, with their own slave trade and plantation slavery past, and their own intricate relationships to the United States. (It was one Jamaican immigrant, Marcus Garvey, who led an early twentieth-century movement advocating a return to Africa.) They, and their descendants, are also now a part of the American social scene where African newcomers find themselves.

As Taiye Selasi came around to coining the twenty-first-century term "Afropolitans," her own personal connections were Ghanaian and Nigerian, but insofar as its reference is continent-wide "Afro-," we should also bear in mind that Africa-rooted literature is by now represented in North America by a wider range of writers. Ngugi wa Thiongo, celebrated Kenyan nationalist author, has continued to tell his stories about Kenya from a professorship at a university in California; and Alain Mabanckou, originally from Congo-Brazzaville, now has a similar academic base for his literary returns to Pointe-a-Pitre, his harbor hometown on the South Atlantic.

But Nigeria is a very large country, by African or any other standards, and so that is one reason it has so many commentators on life in America. And they go back in time. There was indeed Olaudah Equiano. In the introduction of this book we shared Nnamdi Azikiwe's memories of finding an overnight sleeping place in the New York subway. Then in the period of Nigerian independence, there was soon the pioneering volume of a new era in John Pepper Clark's *America, Their America* (1964).³ This was nonfiction, combining personal memoir with critical commentary.

Born in that part of southern Nigeria identified as the Midwest, to an Ijaw father and an Urhobo mother, Clark gained an academic degree at Ibadan in 1960, the year of independence; he was then a research fellow there, working also for the Ministry of Information and doing

journalism for a daily paper while gaining a reputation as a playwright and poet.⁴

All that gained him an invitation to a one-year fellowship in the United States. Primarily he was to be based at Princeton University—at the time still showing the double face once personified by its president (and later American president) Woodrow Wilson: internationalist in the world out there, Southern white with aristocratic leanings at home. In large part, this was a finishing school for young Southern upper-class men in a period when the universities in their own region were not quite trusted with the job.

So here John Pepper Clark arrives, with his cultural and political sensitivities, trained in the late-colonial/postcolonial atmosphere of academic Ibadan and the Mbari Club (see chapter 6), and with a dash of youthful arrogance. There will be course work to attend to, but he will have opportunities to tour other parts of the country as well, relevant to his interests. Group visits are arranged to Washington, to the Congress and to the Supreme Court, with dignitaries present. And he has his own friendly contact with Langston Hughes, leading African American writer, whom he has already met at a Mbari Club event. There is some talk of a performance of *Song of a Goat*, Clark's play, as yet only shown in Nigeria (and published by Mbari), although that comes to nothing.

But then there is the more general question of how Americans relate to Africa. This is the time of the Cold War, and it is the wish of the United States to win allies in newly independent countries by what would later come to be described as “soft power,” not least through varieties of cultural influence—such as making friends with people like Clark: “The constant concern of every American I came in contact with,” he wrote, “from the professor to the professional hostess and even the publican, was to convert me, an unbelieving foreigner and African. Indeed the shock seemed to be that this was necessary at all; the gospel really ought to have reached and sunk into me already” (Clark 1964: 118–119). So the visitors are taught, or learn for themselves, about American history, and America's own North-South divide, and the advantages of free enterprise. And they see the toll highways, and experience the marvels of American kitchens—a topic of Cold War triumph in the “kitchen debate” that then vice president Richard Nixon had had, not so much earlier, with Nikita Khrushchev.

Yet Americans are too often woefully unprepared for well-informed dialogue with African interlocutors, as in this excerpt from a conversation at a Rotary Club meeting, with Clark as a guest:

“Now Ghana is your capital city, isn’t it?”

“No!” I said. “Ghana and Nigeria are two separate states entirely.”

“No!” he fixed me with his fork. “Now that really is news. And is Nigeria north of the other then? Excuse my asking, but these new countries in Africa, they are creations of the British and the French, aren’t they?” (Clark 1964: 134)

And from another conversation, with a young Black actress, who wonders why Clark wants to see the zoo:

“Why to see the inmates there,” I explained. “I’m dying to see those lions, elephants, tigers and all my other wild cousins in there.”

“You miss them?” Marlene looked real scared.

“Haven’t seen any of them before in all my life,” I disclosed.

“No, are you kidding? Don’t those creatures crawl your village like automobiles here?” (Clark 1964: 136)

It is true that some Americans turn out also to have a somewhat hazy idea of the geography of their own country—“really a continent,” as Clark also reluctantly has to admit.

Gaining some overview of educational exchange arrangements between the United States and Africa, he becomes increasingly critical. Too many young Nigerians are at American campuses who are actually needed at Ibadan, Nsukka, and Zaria, and who would be better off there. They might continue on in the United States to advanced degrees with academic topics for which there would be little use in Nigeria. More generally, Clark is invited to diverse gatherings with Americans, white or Black, but often exchanges at these become quite heated. He often voices criticisms of what the prominent sociologist Franklin Frazier (1957) had recently described as the “Black bourgeoisie.” Then, in one such sociable setting, he overhears a comment evidently about himself: “Of course the young man may be a genius. But how can I possibly ask friends over to meet him when he shows such a penchant for making enemies?” (Clark 1964: 75). He has in mind going on a trip of his own to the Deep South to witness segregation and the civil rights struggle for himself, but is advised against it. If he were really to insist, he should at least wear one of these Nigerian robes, to show that he is not a Black American. But then that is a style he never uses, in Nigeria or anywhere.

His hosts at Princeton indeed find him difficult to deal with. He does not attend classes for his assigned courses very regularly either; so, as the end of the academic year approaches, it is made clear that he risks overstaying his official welcome. He plays with the idea of ending his American year with an extended journey around the country by Greyhound bus, in this era offering especially cheap travel to foreign visitors (99 dollars for a month's unlimited travel). But he decides against that, and so friends see him off at New York's Idlewild Airport—to be renamed, before his book comes out, after the president who is assassinated some months after Clark's departure. His friends hope they will soon see him again.

So Clark returned to Nigeria for a prominent academic career at the University of Lagos. *America, Their America* was published in London. But, perhaps by then mellowed, he came back much later for visiting professorial appointments at leading American universities. He died in 2020, at age 85.

Understandings of Africa in the outside world continue to be spotty and uneven. In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's collection of short stories, *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009; a number of them previously published in the *New Yorker* and *Granta*), many dwell on Afropolitan themes. One describes the commotion at the visa section of the American Embassy in Lagos.⁵ Another is about Ujunwa, a woman writer representing Nigeria in a workshop for African writers in Cape Town—to be more exact, at a conference center at “Jumping Monkey Hill.” She does not enjoy the company of the other writers very much, and gets irritated at the rather condescending manners of the ever-so-helpful white South African host couple. The wife suggests that with such exquisite bone structure, Ujunwa must be from Nigerian royal stock. Ujunwa just cannot resist such a provocation, so she confirms that she is indeed a princess—“one of her forebears had captured a Portuguese trader in the seventeenth century and kept him, pampered and oiled, in a royal cage.”

The title story in the collection, however, is about a young Nigerian woman who finds herself working as a waitress in a cheap restaurant in Connecticut. A young male customer seeks her out, of xenophile sentiments, again and again, finds out that she is Nigerian, asks if she is Yoruba or Igbo, as she does not have a Fulani face. Who is he—a professor of anthropology at the state university? (No, it turns out.) She tries to avoid him but finally gives in. He tells her that he has traveled in Ghana and Uganda and Tanzania, and loves the poetry of Okot P'Bitek and the novels of Amos Tutuola. After he has taken her

shopping at an African store to buy groceries, she prepares Nigerian dishes in her kitchen, and he ends up vomiting in her kitchen sink.

But most of the people she encounters at the restaurant have no idea about Nigeria. Since she is Black and speaks with a foreign accent, many assume she is Jamaican. Guessing that she is African, other customers tell her they love elephants and want to go on a safari.

Okey Ndibe arrives in the United States just over a quarter century after John Pepper Clark, but by the time his memoir *Never Look an American in the Eye* (2016) appears, he has already been established in the country for a long time, and has also just published two novels: *Foreign Gods, Inc.* (2014) and *Arrows of Rain* (2015)—more about the former in the next chapter. “Never look an American in the eye” is the advice he got from his uncle Ochendo before his first departure. The uncle explained, “Americans can’t stand any stranger looking them in the face. They take it as an insult. It’s something they don’t forgive. And every American carries a gun. If they catch you, a stranger, looking them in the face, they will shoot” (Ndibe 2016: 33). Perhaps uncle Ochendo had the idea from American movies, since to the best of his nephew’s knowledge, he had never met an American face to face.

Before Ndibe gets that far, however, his memoir sketches some of his early life and his family background. The book takes a somewhat zigzagging path through his biography, but let us reorganize it into a more straight chronology, even going back a couple of generations, to get a sense of the store of experiences and horizons already accumulated. His paternal grandfather had been a great wrestler and had worked as an artisan with British merchants at Warri, in the Niger Delta—what remained from this were a couple of Igboized loanwords: *nimucumupoo* from “nincompoop,” *sukaliwagu* from “scallywag.” His father had been a World War II soldier with the Royal West African Frontier Force in Burma (we have seen more about that as a Nigerian experience in chapter 14). Just as the war ended, this quite outspoken lance corporal had made friends with a British lieutenant, who became a pen pal forever after, through good and hard times (the lieutenant returned home and became a reverend), and he also gained the chance to be trained in the postal services. So as postmaster and elementary school headmistress, Ndibe’s parents were respected middle-class people in the town where he grew up. His father was a long-serving secretary of the town union, and in the late 1960s became a loyal Biafra patriot; but as he voiced his opposition to some of the activities of the Biafra regime, he was once placed in detention for several weeks (returning home with a new beard).

Okey Ndibe himself was born in 1960, a few months before Nigerian Independence. He grew up learning of Britain, Obodo Oyibo, the land of white people—and of white magic, mystery, and power. Then a little later in his school years, there was talk of another important distant country, the Soviet Union. That was a place where according to *comanizim*, people owned everything in common. A remote white man named Kalu Mazi, with a big beard, had thought this up. The boy Ndibe was attracted by this as well.

To begin with, consequently, “America” came in only third place. Yet its influence would keep growing. There were those movies. Later in his youth he could buy copies of *Time* and *Newsweek* from street vendors. For more education he moved on to a college in Lagos to be trained in business administration. By then, however, he had found that he enjoyed writing, and soon enough he was working for a Lagos newspaper, the *African Concord*. He browsed in a bookstall in a local market place, too, and found books by John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, James Baldwin, and others.

What made his life take another turn was a series of encounters with Chinua Achebe. A first fleeting contact had been when the famous author had happened to pass through Ndibe’s boyhood home area. It certainly mattered more that later, as a journalist, he managed to arrange an interview with Achebe, then maintaining a home in Nsukka between his frequent stays in the United States. In a way, the interview was a disaster, as it turned out Ndibe’s tape recorder had not worked. However, Achebe gracefully allowed a second attempt, and that probably made him remember that articulate young interviewer yet more clearly afterward.

And so, suddenly, while working away in Lagos, Ndibe receives an invitation from Achebe, American-based again, to come over as founding editor for a new journalistic enterprise, the *African Commentary*, conceived as a voice from the continent, a mouthpiece for the growing African community in North America. A first attempt to get an American visa is rejected; the second attempt succeeds through the brokerage of an American acquaintance in Lagos. Ndibe gets on a Nigeria Airways direct flight across the Atlantic.

He learns quickly that the New York winter is not like *harmattan*, the dry, cold wind that blows in over West Africa from the Sahara—it is much colder. He makes his way to the Massachusetts college town where he has his contacts, as mediated by Achebe. Among his first experiences is to be arrested as he waits at a bus stop—suspected of bank robbery, as his appearance matches the available description

of the culprit. Apart from rather fleeting contacts with American life, however, he seems soon to become somewhat encapsulated in a network of Nigerian expatriates. Gate crashing at parties with other bachelors, he gets to one where he finds a well-known, somewhat more elderly Nigerian academic visiting, and engages in an extended conversation with him. But it turns out that this gentleman's daughter, a local resident too, is also present, and has Ndibe join her on the dance floor. They begin dating, and eventually they marry. The only problem is that she is Yoruba, and Ndibe worries that his parents will not approve. But it works out, and so these two Nigerian Americans find themselves in an interethnic marriage.

The *African Commentary* project does not work out equally well. It is very underfunded. The American-based Nigerian academics behind it are better at offering intellectual capital than coming up with financial capital: Ndibe and contributors are badly paid if at all, and it is difficult to find outside investors. (Bill Cosby, the entertainer, shows some interest but then declines.) Chinua Achebe's interest is uneven, and he eventually withdraws. The publication fails, and Ndibe turns to make his living as a teacher and journalist (writing for both American and Nigerian publications), but remains in the United States. In 1996, he takes the oath as a new citizen—"so help me God."

Does that mean that he has to become any less Igbo, any less Nigerian? Not in Ndibe's mind—"naturalization is not a loss-gain dialectic but a gain-gain proposition," he writes. True, he does not suddenly take everything American for granted, but can observe and comment. He is struck, for one thing, by a notion of "personal space." You do not just show up at even a good friend's home, for example, but you make an appointment. With that goes the special relationship Americans have with their dogs, "a man's best friend." Nigerian dogs are not treated like that.

He volunteers to tell African folk tales to classes in his children's school. Igbo trickster stories about the Tortoise, stories he had heard as a child, turn out to be very popular, as are his storytelling techniques. At the University of Massachusetts, he makes his way into the Master of Fine Arts program, where John Edgar Wideman, established African American writer, and one Hungarian exile are among his teachers, both very encouraging. The early manuscript of *Arrows of Rain* keeps being reworked and reworked. When Wole Soyinka, in exile in the United States at the time, comes through as a visiting speaker, he, too, gets a copy of the manuscript, which he promises to read. Ndibe waits for those comments, and, finally, when he comes back with his family from a half-successful Christmas party with friends (he has sorely

missed Nigerian chicken-and-rice on the table), there is Soyinka's voice on the telephone answering machine, saying that he had found the manuscript "highly evocative."⁶ (Set in a fictive country resembling Nigeria, *Arrows of Rain* features a hero assumed to be a madman, of no fixed address but spending life on a beach, allegedly with a *mamiwata* lover, and becoming a witness of the serial murder of prostitutes. And a general has just proclaimed himself president for life.)

Life goes on, with large and small matters. Ndibe is irritated at the bad reputation Nigerians are getting globally, in part because of those "419" Internet banking scams.⁷ There is also the way his first name has a capacity to cause recurrent confusion, wherever Ndibe goes in the world. The full form is actually Okechukwu Ndibe, but it is common among the Igbo to use abbreviated forms—Chinua for Chinualumogu, for example—and Okey is a rather common version in Nigeria. But whenever someone whom he has not previously met is supposed to pick him up, and tries to identify him with the question "Are you Okey?" any stranger might hear "Are you OK?" and respond affirmatively. This happens at the airport in Trondheim, Norway, where a Ghanaian scholar going to the same Nordic Africa Institute conference on African literature gets the Ndibe treatment until the reception desk at the hotel points out that the real Okey Ndibe has already checked in.

All this time he makes regular home visits to Nigeria, to see his aging parents. At one point, he arranges a conference call so that his father can actually speak to his British pen pal, now an Anglican prelate, with whom he has corresponded since they met in Burma a half century earlier. The conversation is brief but cordial.

Then, not very much later, the day comes when there is an overseas call from his brother, telling him that his father has died. Okey Ndibe informs the reverend, and also arranges a journey to England for himself, to visit this family friend. He stays with him and his wife at their country home for a couple of days, reconstructing their interconnecting family pasts. The minister, it turns out, in those days when he was a young lieutenant, had actually not gone straight home from Burma, but had accompanied Northern Nigerian soldiers back to their home areas. And when he and his wife married in the mid-1960s, Ndibe's father had sent them a Hausa leather bag. Now they show it to him.

In sum, what have these American experiences of Nigerians been—and what have been the American experiences of the Nigerians arriving among them? A common theme is the striking lack of knowledge, and perhaps just as often ignorance taken for knowledge, of Africa

and African life, probably especially among white Americans. Such experiences are sometimes amusing; at other times, simply irritating. John Pepper Clark's examples may be the most notable, although things did not necessarily get so much better with time. One could point out that there is some reciprocity of misunderstandings here: Okey Ndibe's uncle's premonition of what would happen if you look an American in the eye is a case in point. (American commentators have indeed been somewhat concerned about the ambiguities of soft power by way of Hollywood movies and other entertainment media.) Apart from such bumps and clashes, there are also those more subtle observations of the peculiarities of American everyday life, such as Ndibe's about "personal space," and personal relationships to dogs—here we get varieties of ethnography.

For Nigerians spending some of their life in the United States, handling identity distinctions can clearly be a very complicated matter, situationally as well as over time.⁸ There is the question of what to do with the label "African." Perhaps one senses that this, as understood by many less-informed and prejudiced Americans, may even now carry overtones of "primitive." But there can also be an irritation over the fact that many evidently more well-intentioned Americans lack the knowledge of all finer distinctions, using the term as a kind of nationality label. Consequently one feels deprived of a recognized identity as "Nigerian," or even "Igbo" or "Yoruba." These may still become significant, of course, on occasions when Nigerians come together in the United States.

There is, too, the problem of being a Black newcomer, in a country where other Black people have had centuries of a difficult past. No doubt much of the time the difference between the African migrants and African Americans is clear, and understood as important; but then the reaction to being categorized as a generalized "Black" may lead at other times to a kind or degree of identification with them. John Pepper Clark seems a little ambivalent on this point, critical of the "Black bourgeoisie" and yet wanting to travel in the Deep South. He rejects the advice to don an African robe for such travel, to advertise that he is not a Black American. We may remember from chapter 3 that Victor Uchendu, at about the same time, employed that trick of identity management doing field research among Navajo Indians.

Perhaps at times Africans in America believe that their hosts' lack of any real knowledge of Africa is of a special kind, having to do with old and enduring prejudices. There may be something to this, but other visitors to the great country have more or less parallel experiences. It seems to be one implication of being immersed in such greatness that

you may not stumble into much knowledge about other parts of the world, or seek it out either.

Move to another part of the world, and consider the view of a prominent Singaporean.⁹ Being from a quite small country, Singaporeans cannot so easily turn mostly inward—perhaps one could say that they will almost inevitably become “Singapolitans.” By the time Simon Tay wrote *Alien Asian* (1997) in his thirties, he already had a growing public reputation at home. (Possibly one could compare him to the young John Pepper Clark several decades earlier.) The book drew on his columns “Fax from America,” published regularly in the *Straits Times*, the leading Singapore newspaper, during a period when he studied for a law degree at Harvard University. But before that he had already been in a writer’s program at the University of Iowa (the same one Amos Tutuola visited late in his life). Tay noted that his Asian and Asian American friends in the United States were where they wanted to be, but that many of them felt that Americans were keeping a distance from them. People he met, whose notion of Asia was hazy, could not quite figure out how Tay could be a Christian, rather than a Buddhist or something. And out of that feeling of otherness came the title for his book. “Aliens” was not only the official categorization for people who are neither citizens nor permanent residents; the term also suggested people who were “wholly different and perhaps dangerous.” So the American mainstream had turned them into an opposite. In a later book, *Asia Alone* (2010), Simon Tay engages with future scenarios for the world. In a refashioned interdependency, he argues, globalization must read as “global-as-Asian,” with the United States adapting to a new world situation. “Global-as-Asian” must penetrate Main Street, must reach those Americans who still do not take their shoes off when visiting an Asian home, and think sushi tastes better cooked.

While Nigerian eyes have been observing America, the eyes of Americans may occasionally have been observing the Nigerians arriving in their midst.¹⁰ Finally, we may attend to one such observer, of a certain prominence. This happens to be an American of Asian background: Amy Chua, now a law professor at Yale University, is American-born, the daughter of a young Philippine-Chinese couple who had recently arrived in the United States in pursuit of higher education. Like Simon Tay, she has written on scenarios for the global future, although what has contributed most to her public visibility is her book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011), a memoir sardonically describing her tough-minded childrearing practices—an international bestseller placing her on *Time* magazine’s list of one hundred most influential people in the world.¹¹

Chua, however, has also continually engaged with issues of ethnicity, in America and elsewhere. *The Triple Package* (2014), with her husband and fellow Yale University law professor Jed Rubenfeld as coauthor, is another rather controversial book about how three personal characteristics—a superiority complex, insecurity, and impulse control—have made members of some ethnic groups more successful than others in American society. These are Jews, Mormons, Cuban exiles, Indian Americans (not to be confused with American Indians, “Native Americans”), Chinese immigrants, and Nigerian Americans.

With slightly finer distinctions, Chua identifies the Yoruba—boasting “an illustrious royal lineage and a once great empire”—and the Igbo, and notes Chinua Achebe’s warning to his people of “dangers of hubris.” Indeed, it could seem that the portrayals by Victor Uchendu of the Igbo at home, in his anthropological case study (see chapter 3), and by Cyprian Ekwensi of the Igbo migrants in the North, in his novel *Iska* (see chapter 5), have now taken the flight across the Atlantic.¹²

Notes

1. Vilhelm Moberg’s four novels about the Swedish migrant family were published in the 1940s and 1950s. Later, in the 1990s, a musical was also inspired by them.
2. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* was first published in England in 1789. It has been republished in various forms and editions since then. Possibly the most readily accessible edition recently has been a selection in a series of Penguin classics (Equiano 2016). One might wonder what would have been a more likely Igbo spelling of the surname at the present time: Ekwianu?
3. Again, twenty years earlier Nwafor Orizu had also offered some comments on the United States, based on his student experience, in *Without Bitterness* (1944). See the introduction, note 21.
4. At times he also used the name form John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo.
5. There are parallels here to Charles Piot’s (2010; Piot with Batema 2019) studies of the fixation on the American visa lottery among Togolese, who have become increasingly pessimistic about the future of their own country. By 2017, “visa lottery” had become another xenophobic scare concept broadcast from Donald Trump’s White House, not least when linked to African immigration.
6. Evidently, *Arrows of Rain* had the longest history in manuscript, although it was not the first to be published. When *Foreign Gods, Inc.* appeared in print, it had blurbs by both Soyinka and Wideman on the front cover. Soho Press, which took on all the books, is a New York publisher with fairly cosmopolitan tastes.
7. The “419” scams are also referred to in chapter 9; for a reference to an academic source, see note 5 in that chapter.

8. In his book *Stigma and Culture*, on the complexity of Black cultural identities in the United States, Lorand Matory (2015: 370–446), himself an African American anthropologist with extensive research experience in Nigeria (see, for example, chapter 2) and with a Yoruba spouse, devotes a long chapter to these intricacies. A recent acclaimed novel, Tope Folarin's *A Particular Kind of Black Man* (2019), offers an intriguing view. The protagonist is born in Utah, of Nigerian parents, without much contact with their country of origin outside his immediate family; his mother, suffering from mental illness, returns to Nigeria when he and his brother are young children. After some time, a stepmother appears, a young Nigerian widow bringing her own children. Moving around Utah and Texas with the family, the boy gradually becomes more familiar with Black Americans, but it is clear that his struggling father is not enthusiastic about identifying with them. Yet, as a successful college student at a famous Black institution in the South and at a prosperous college in New England, he comes to move in Black American circles. He finds a girlfriend in these, and she finally convinces him that he should visit Nigeria and seek out his ailing mother. So there he goes: Lagos, and a reunion with her and with the extended kin group.
9. In a book on global future scenarios (Hannerz 2016), I discuss the writings of Simon Tay and Amy Chua, among others, more extensively.
10. On my shelf I find another book that also contributes to the network of American-Nigerian perspectives, while involving yet another passage: Marita Golden's autobiographical *Migrations of the Heart* (1983). Golden grew up in Washington, DC, became a 1960s Black American student activist there at a largely white university, moved on to New York for journalist training and practice, met the young Nigerian Tunde and married him, and went with him to Lagos to begin married life. But that did not work out, as it seems Tunde expected her to fit into the scene as a Yoruba-style wife and mother. So Golden returned to the United States.
11. Apart from *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* and *The Triple Package*, Chua's books include several others on globalization and ethnicity (2003, 2007, 2018).
12. One could discern similarities between Chua's and Rubinfeld's view and the much earlier comparative study of achievement motivation among Nigerian ethnic groups by the psychological anthropologist Robert LeVine (1966). More recently, the Nigerian American sociologist Onoso Imoagene (2017) has also provided a positive view of the successes of second-generation Nigerians in the United States.

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