

## Diasporic Perspectives in Nicola Yoon's *The Sun Is Also a Star* (2016) and Ibi Zoboi's *American Street* (2017)

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**Abstract:** The challenges faced by Caribbean immigrants in America constitute a great perspective in Caribbean literary expression. This work seeks to explore the representation of Caribbean immigrants' realities in Nicola Yoon's *The Sun Is Also a Star* and Ibi Zoboi's *American Street*. The question on which this research is anchored is: how do Nicola Yoon and Ibi Zoboi project the situation of Caribbean immigrants in *The Sun Is Also a Star* and *American Street* respectively? It is hypothesized that the authors present the conditions of Caribbean immigrants as desperate; despite the surviving strategies and successes that some have. Using Sociocritical and Postcolonial theories postulated by Edmond Cros and Edward Said respectively, this study, reveals that Caribbean citizens migrate to America for better opportunities; but face very difficult conditions in their host country which make very few of them to succeed under hard conditions. The paper highlights the challenges faced by young adult Caribbean immigrants in America and the role of specific cultural dynamics, historical underpinnings, family bonds and other adaptation strategies in their resilience.

**Keywords:** Caribbean, Diaspora, Marginalization, Sociocritical theory, Postcolonial theory.

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### Introduction

Diaspora, people living far from their homeland, is a phenomenon created as a result of migration. Baumann historically situates the concept of diaspora by stating that: "The history of the experience of being a diaspora dates back to eighth century BCE with the Jewish, for their being exiled into many countries owing to the invasions and they used the term diaspora to have the feeling of connectedness" (Baumann 2010: 20). He also declares that: "Since the 1960s, with increasing transnational and global migrant movements, "diaspora" was employed to denote a national, cultural or religious group living in a foreign land" (Baumann 2010: 21). People from different parts of the world, races and cultures, including the Caribbean, always move from one place to another; thereby forming diaspora groups. In reference to the Caribbean and diaspora dynamics, Hall asserts that: "Everybody in the Caribbean comes from somewhere else. [...] Their true cultures, the places they really come from, the traditions that really formed them are somewhere else. The Caribbean is [...] the purest diaspora" (Hall 2001: 27-28). However, this is not the scope of Caribbean diaspora as employed in this work. The Caribbean diaspora in this research is in line with the views of Stitt (2020) who perceives the Caribbean diaspora as those who migrate from the Caribbean to other parts of the world. Stitt (2020) postulates that migration patterns changed across the Caribbean during the 20<sup>th</sup> century for multiple reasons, including neoliberal financial policies and US military and intelligence operations in the region which forced many to migrate. Stretching the point further, Cartey (1991) affirms that a lot of West Indians emigrated from the region in the

1950s and 1960s hoping for a better life in the North, at a time when large-scale immigration to the West was still encouraged.

Caribbean people who immigrate legally and illegally to other parts of the world in general and the United States of America in particular, like many other groups of migrants, face challenges adapting to their new environment, accessing opportunities and achieving the success they dreamt of. The question that guides this work is: how do Nicola Yoon and Ibi Zoboi represent the conditions of Caribbean migrants in America in *The Sun Is Also a Star* and *American Street* respectively? It is hypothesized that the authors project the situation of Caribbean immigrants in America as difficult; despite the adaptation strategies and successes that some have. In order to explore the representation of Caribbean immigrants' dynamics in the selected novels, the Sociocritical and Postcolonial theories as postulated by Edmond Cros and Edward Said respectively are used. Edmond Cros (1988) opines that Sociocritical theory aims to prove that the encounter with "ideological traces" and with antagonistic tensions between social classes is central to any reading of texts. Cros affirms that "Sociocriticism is a reading practice that seeks to understand the literary text as a social production, as a reflection of the social context in which it was written" (Cros 1988: 12). He adds that: "Sociocriticism is not just a matter of applying sociological concepts to literary texts, but rather of developing a new way of reading that takes into account the social and historical context of the text" (Cros 1988: 42) This is relevant in this work as it provides a platform for examining Caribbean immigrant

experience within broader social, cultural and economic visions; and also gives room for an analysis of power dynamics in the context of Caribbean diasporic experience in America. Given that Sociocritical theory cannot be used to appropriately analyze the strategies used by the characters to resist the dominant discourses and marginalization, this research therefore proposes a second theory which is Postcolonial theory. Referring to the Postcolonial theory, Bhabha asserts that: "Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of the Third World countries and the discourse of "minorities" within geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, race, communities, and peoples" (Bhabha 1994: 717). Similarly, Ashcroft et al. (2007) posit that the process of "Othering" in Postcolonial theory refers to the colonized others who are "marginalized by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the center and, perhaps significantly, become the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial ego". Said stretches the point further by affirming that: "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the orient' and most of the time 'the occident'" (Said 1978: 2). He further states that: "Orientalism is a form of cultural imperialism, which has been used to justify Western domination over the Orient and to perpetuate negative stereotypes about Oriental cultures" (Said 1978: 216). This perspective is significant in this study not just because the stereotyped Caribbean immigrants in America are marginalized, but also because cultural dynamics are significant in their resistance and resilience.

## Motives for Immigration and Conditions in the Diaspora

This section is divided into two parts; and each of them focuses on a particular aspect of the migration experience. The first part analyzes the situations that lead the characters to migrate to America; and the second examines the conditions of the migrants in the host country.

### Reasons for Immigration

In Yoon's *The Sun Is Also a Star* and Zobi's *American Street* characters are motivated to move to America for various reasons. Characters leave for economic, educational, professional opportunities; family reunion; and political instability.

### Economic, Educational and Professional Motives

In *The Sun Is Also a Star*, Yoon projects multiple reasons which lead to the migration of her Jamaican and South Korean characters. Economic opportunity is one of the reasons that pushes the South Korean Dae Hyun family to move to America. Yoon states that: "When Min Soo fell in love with Dae Hyun, she did not expect that love to take them from South Korea to America. But Dae Hyun had been poor all his life. He had a cousin in America who'd been doing well for himself in New York City. He promised to help" (Yoon 2016: 11). This shows that Dae Hyun and his family migrate to New York City because of poverty in their home country. Thus, the stories of opportunity and prosperity in America drive him to move. This confirms the view that the search for identity, freedom, opportunities and prosperity are the key reasons for migration (Pal, 2004).

Another reason for Dae Hyun's family immigration is to enable his son to pursue education and career in America. The narrator highlights that: "I'd give anything to really want the life my parents want for me. Life would be easier if I were passionate about wanting to be a doctor. Being a doctor seems like one of those things you're supposed to be passionate about" (Yoon 2016: 37). So, Dae Hyun wants his son Daniel to attend a best school and become a doctor so they do not have to worry about money. Later, the narrator adds that: "[...] I'm going to Yale. I'm going to be a doctor" (Yoon 2016: 73). Dae Hyun's son is highly motivated to move to America as this can permit him to pursue his education in a prestigious university and gain necessary skills and experiences to lay the ground for his professional life. Also, Dae Hyun and his family move to America for greener pastures as the narrator puts it: "My parents are immigrants. They moved to this country for a better life. They work all the time so my brother and I can have the American Dream [...]" (Yoon 2016: 225). This unveils the motive for Dae Hyun's family immigration as they seek a better life for themselves in the foreign land. For Dae Hyun and his sons, their financial success and prosperity can be achieved through hard work and education.

Similarly, Samuel Kingsley, a Jamaican character, moves to America for professional opportunity (artistic pursuit) and celebrity. His first dream is to establish an acting career. The novel reads that: "Natasha's father, Samuel, moved to America a full two years before the rest of his family did. The plan was that Samuel would go first and establish himself as a Broadway actor" (Yoon 2016: 30). Like Dae Hyun, Samuel Kingsley leaves his homeland Jamaica to the United States in search for job opportunity in order to help him afford for his family. Also, his second dream is to gain fame and prosperity. The protagonist narrator says thus: "I've had them since right after we moved to America. When my father bought them for me, he was still hopeful for all he would accomplish here. He was still trying to convince my mom that the move away from the country of our birth, away from all our friends and family, would be worth it in the end. He was going to hit it big. He was going to get the American Dream [...]" (Yoon 2016: 49). This brings out Samuel Kingsley's dream of celebrity and success in America when he succeeds to establish his acting career. Thus, the idiomatic expression "hit it big" shows how he will greatly succeed abroad.

Parallel to Yoon, Zobi in *American Street* presents economic and educational opportunities as factors that drive the characters to immigrate to America. Fabiola's mother, Manman also called Valerie Toussaint, leaves her home country Haiti because of economic hardship and hopes to search a better life in Detroit, America. The novel begins thus: "she will come to this side of the glass, where there is good work that will make her hold her head up with dignity, where she will be proud to send me to school for free, and where we will build a good, brand-new life. Une belle vie, as she always promises, hoping that here she would be free to take her sister's hand and touch the moon" (Zobi 2017: 3-4). This illustrates how Fabiola's mother is motivated by the desire to have good job with higher wages that can enable her to live a decent life and send her daughter to free school.

Moreover, Phillip François' migration to America is motivated by the search for jobs as Zobi states that: "He came here for the cars and car factories" (Zobi 2017: 35). Like other characters, Phillip François escapes poverty in Haiti and moves to Detroit to seek a job in car factories. Motives for migration of

Zoboi's characters are the same as Verbruggen reports in his analysis that: "The reasons that the young protagonists and their families immigrate to the United States are many but fall into four general categories: to find wealth or adventure, to escape poverty, to seek opportunities for education, jobs, and so on, as well as to escape oppression, violence or war in the home country" (Verbruggen 2018: 80). For him, the search for opportunities is always followed by another reason. Also, Poornima & Unnikrishnan argue that: "The reasons behind migration are marriage, education and an escape from the legal problems and family issues" (Poornima & Unnikrishnan 2016: 5). They illustrate that in Willie's case, education is the motive for his migration to London but for him the migration also ensures a freedom from his family and homeland.

Equally, Fabiola migrates to America with the hope to have a good education. She affirms that: "I am just a peasant who only wants a good education, opportunity for a good future, and my mother. This is what she hopes for me, too" (Zoboi 2017: 32). This shows that education motivates Fabiola to go abroad with her mother. Like others immigrants, Chantal's mother, Matant Jo also called Marjorie, wants her daughter to go to a good college in the United States. She states that: "Ma wanted me to go to a big university [...]" (Zoboi 2017: 73). For her, education is the key to success and her daughter needs to benefit from American school in order to achieve her dream of becoming a doctor.

#### Family Reunion and Political Instability

Reuniting with family members and escape from political unrest are also factors that prompt other characters to move abroad. In *American Street*, the novelist Zoboi projects those reasons through her Haitian characters. This is seen through the character of Manman (Valerie Toussaint) who leaves her homeland to reunite with her elder sister Matant Jo and her children already living in Detroit. Zoboi states thus: "She wanted to come here to be with you. She knew you were sick. All that coughing, and you were complaining that the twins were out of control. She was coming to help" (Zoboi 2017: 104). So, Manman does not only go to Detroit for the sake of joining her loved sister, but also to support and assist her sister who is sick as well as to take care of children.

Equally, migration is due to political instability. This is represented through the characters of Manman and Matant Jo when both migrate together from Haiti to America for the first time as they flee their home country because of war. The novel discloses that:

Our world opened up because a long-time dictator was thrown out of Haiti. This dictator was the heavy boot on our skinny necks. Our dear parents in heaven never knew a world without Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier and his father, François Duvalier. We thought there would be freedom and democracy, and that money would start flowing into the country like a long-awaited rainstorm.

But when the dictator and his fancy wife left, everything broke. There was no order, no peace. [...] We wanted to leave the whole country" (Zoboi 2017: 105).

This throws light on political trouble that influences Manman and Matant Jo's decision to leave the country and seek safety in America. Here, Zoboi brings to light violence which occurs when Jean-Claude Duvalier ("Baby Doc") is thrown out of

Haiti. Therefore, many Haitians move to America in the aftermath of that political instability.

From all this, it can be perceived that in both texts, characters migrate to America for several reasons. Some of these include the search for economic opportunities, educational pursuits, professional development, political instability and family reunion. These therefore include both push and pull factors.

#### Conditions in the Diaspora

This section examines the conditions of immigrants' lives in America. It analyzes exclusion as form of marginalization through social exclusion and spatial isolation.

#### Social Exclusion

Social exclusion refers to the process through which individuals are socially excluded from full participation in key domains of the society in which they reside. Razer et al. (2013) highlight this when they assert that to be socially excluded is to be marginalized from that society. There are instances where the immigrants are excluded in education, government institution, and profession. *The Sun Is Also a Star* projects the exclusion of a South Korean immigrant's child from school at the very beginning of the story through the character of Charlie: "Now he's been kicked out of *Best School*, and all summer my mom frowns and doesn't quite believe and doesn't quite understand" (Yoon 2016: 1). This shows the exclusion of Charlie from Harvard University. His mother finds it difficult to understand why her son is kicked out of a prestigious school. In the story of exclusion from education, Charlie's younger brother, Daniel, is also dismissed from Harvard University.

Later on, Daniel applies to Yale College but unfortunately he faces embargo during the admission interview. The narrator states thus: "And now he's banned from applying to any college at all, and his future is ruined" (Yoon 2016: 231). From Cros's concepts of societal structures and power dynamics, one understands that the exclusion of immigrants from educational institutions is done on the basis of societal structures and power dynamics present in America. Through Charlie and Daniel, Yoon points out how immigrants are marginalized in the "best school" of the United States. Thus immigrants are not fully accepted in the mainstream American society, precisely in educational institutions.

Regarding state institutions, there are instances of discrimination seen through the character of Natasha when she goes to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for her appointment. Upon her arrival at USCIS, Natasha is looked upon as the foreigner by the receptionist, Mary. Yoon states that: "She glances up at me again but shows no sign that she recognizes me, even though I've been here every day for the last week. To her I'm just another anonymous face, another applicant, another someone who wants something from America" (Yoon 2016: 5). Thus Natasha is the marginalized "other". Mary tells Natasha that: "Ms. Whitney is already with another applicant" (Yoon 2016: 13). This emphasizes how immigrants encounter discrimination because of their color and status. Though the identity of the applicant inside the office is not clear, the receptionist serves him/her before Natasha, despite the fact that Ms. Whitney is the one who tells Natasha to come back for her appointment. In addition, the receptionist tells Natasha to make a new appointment: "You'll have to call the main USCIS line and make a new appointment" (Yoon 2016: 13). The receptionist wants Natasha to fail her appointment which in turn leads to the failure of

her documents procedure. This makes Natasha feel dismissed as she says: "I am dismissed" (Yoon 2016: 13). This depicts the unfair treatment of immigrants at USCIS regarding appointment for documents. Immigrants have to look for required papers in order to avoid deportation, yet they do not have easy access to the building.

Another instance of exclusion is projected through Samuel Kingsley's rejection to fully enjoy professional life. Samuel's dream to be an actor is not accepted by American acting community because his skin was never thick enough: "[...] To be an actor you're supposed to have thick skin, but Samuel's skin was never thick enough. Rejection was like sandpaper" (Yoon 2016: 31). This quotation elucidates the way immigrants are refused to embrace a liberal life of acting due to skin criterion. It is on that basis that Samuel Kingsley is excluded from participating in the cultural life of society in which he lives. Looking at the linguistic element in the quotation, Yoon uses the simile "Rejection was like sandpaper" to describe how Samuel Kingsley feels rejected repeatedly in the acting community. This also shows that for an immigrant to get involved in acting, his/her skin must correspond to the American acting standards. In addition, the underlying message behind this rejection may be perceived as implying that Samuel Kingsley is not qualified for that profession and this skin standard may be only applied to the immigrants to prevent them from acting. From Cros's sociocritical view, there is inequality in job offer regardless of the fact that America is considered as a land of numerous equal opportunities.

Similarly, Mitra points out that "Nicholas, a Macedonian laborer who works on the construction of the Bloor Street Viaduct, is excluded from the construction site because of his ethnic identity and his refusal to conform to the dominant culture" (Mitra 2023: 109). Also, Mitra sheds light on the exclusion of women from public life through the character of Clara, "a photographer who is dismissed from the male-dominated world of photography". In the same perspective, Gonde (2019) says that the characters like Buddy, a well-known jazz musician and Bellocq, a famous photographer, are marginalized in the Canadian society as well as other characters like Nora and Bridget; while Yan-qiong (2017) reveals that Mrs. Lee's (Marilyn) dream to be a female doctor is not accepted by American mainstream society.

The novel *American Street* also represents cases of marginalization. The characters of the novel witness discriminatory behavior in the American society. Chantal, a Haitian immigrant, is regarded as the other/foreigner when the detectives come into their house. She faces a threat of exclusion when the detectives check her belonging. This is apparent in the passage in which Chantal reports: "According to my papers, I'm not even supposed to be here. I'm not a citizen. I'm a resident alien" (Zoboi 2017: 73). This demonstrates the process of exclusion that the immigrants encounter on the basis of American citizenship and belonging. Despite having papers, Chantal is not fully accepted in the mainstream society as an American citizen. So, having one's own documents in America is one thing and being fully accepted as its citizen for inclusion or integration is another.

At the level of education, the protagonist of Zoboi's *American Street*, Fabiola, is treated differently in school by Mr. Nolan, her English teacher. He disregards her assignment despite his appreciation of it. He tells Fabiola thus: "Fabiola, your writing is good, but I have to give you a low grade because you didn't back up any of your claims [...]. There are some interesting ideas here,

but they're unsubstantiated. You need to gather some sources, use quotes, and add a 'Works Cited' page. Use textual evidence" (Zoboi 2017: 74). Fabiola's teacher considers her work as unsubstantiated or irrational thereby giving her a low grade though he says that her writing is good.

From Said's *Orientalism*, the discourse of the Western views on the Orient as ignorant, irrational, and not intelligent is present in American school setting in which immigrant students from the East are looked upon as unknowledgeable or not rational. Reacting to her teacher's discriminatory manner, Fabiola declares that: "I've been writing essays and poems in English my entire life. I went to an English school in Haiti. It doesn't make sense that my paper isn't perfect [...]. Please. I don't understand what Mr. Nolan wants. He says I'm a good writer, but I'm still doing something wrong" (Zoboi 2017: 74-75). For Fabiola, it is absurd to understand the way Mr. Nolan treats her differently and declaring her less intelligent.

### Spatial Isolation

The marginalization of immigrants is also reflected in physical spaces. Spatial isolation also referred as geographical or residential isolation is about physical space and distance far from centre of development, lying at the edge of poor or uncomfortable neighborhoods of mainstream society. In this regard, Sibley (1995) opines that power is expressed in the monopolization of space and the relegation of weaker groups to less desirable environments. For him, based on the structures of power, some people are pushed to inhabit the margins of society. As such, in addition to excluding the immigrants from various arenas of American society, the residential isolation is another form of marginalization that the immigrants encounter as represented in the novels under study.

In *The Sun Is Also a Star*, Yoon presents Samuel Kingsley and his family, inhabiting a suburban quarter of Brooklyn: "He found them a one-bedroom apartment for rent in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn" (Yoon 2016: 31). This highlights immigrants' isolation from the centre. Thus, the immigrants are pushed to the periphery or remote neighborhoods as they do not get access to good housing in urban areas. Like other immigrants, Samuel Kingsley and his family avoid places that do not want them. He rents a house in a location where they can adapt as much as their condition obliges. Flatbush is symbolic in Yoon's narrative. Flatbush is a neighborhood in New York City considered as a hub of the Afro-Caribbean immigrants. This supports Mitra's (2023) analysis that the immigrants and working-class communities are marginalized and excluded from mainstream Canadian society. This exclusion is reflected in the physical space of the city, which is divided into distinct neighborhoods that are defined by social class and ethnicity.

Moreover, after having a walk in Midtown Manhattan, a wealthy urban place far from her section, Natasha is disappointed when she realizes that her section is a poverty-stricken location. "After the relative wealth of Midtown Manhattan, my section of Brooklyn feels even poorer" (Yoon 2016: 244). The comparative explains the extent to which Natasha's section is not decent. From Cros's sociocritical perspective, these power relations of the binary division of centre/periphery are present in America as Yoon represents it in her narrative. Thus, Yoon criticizes New York's housing policy which creates residential patterns that advocates racial and ethnic groups to settle in specific areas of the city. Neighborhoods such as Flatbush-East have a concentration of

Caribbean immigrants whose access to apartments in the centre is denied due to their skin color and immigrant status.

Zoboi's *American Street* also shows an immigrant family living in Detroit where American Street and Joy Road intersect. Their house is not only in a remote quarter but also an unsafe area. This is seen when Fabiola's aunt, Matant Jo François, reveals their apartment to Fabiola that: "This is your home now, Fabiola. This is Phillip's house- the house he bought with the last bit of money he had from Haiti. [...] When he saw this house for sale, on the corner of American Street and Joy Road" (Zoboi 2017: 35). The metaphor of the corner of American Street and Joy Road represents not only Phillip's family inhabiting a distant neighborhood but also a dangerous place as the apartment is located on the intersection.

Later, Fabiola realizes that the house is not only located far from the centre, but it is also uncomfortable. She says that: "This house that stands here at the corner, with its doorway almost like a smile, with its windows almost like eyes making fun of everything it sees, seems different" (Zoboi 2017: 137). Here, Zoboi projects Fabiola making use of a simile to describe the kind of the house where she is hosted. She draws resemblance by describing that the house "with its doorway almost like a smile, with its windows almost like eyes making fun of everything it sees" to mean that the house is not decent, its doorway and windows are not well fixed. In short, this might also show that the house is in a state to decay with its peeling paint, leaking roof, and cramped living conditions.

Zoboi portrays Detroit in her novel as a black or immigrant neighborhood with poor living conditions and where drugs, gangs, and gun violence are commonplace. Many black immigrants namely Lester Charles Walker, Lester Junior, and Phillip François are killed in that neighborhood. Zoboi states that: "Father of two, Alabama native, and son of a sharecropper, Lester Charles Walker was one of American Street's very first black residents in 1947. He was shot and killed by his white neighbor just as he stepped out of 8800" (Zoboi 2017: 138). Thus black immigrants endure murder at the hands of white Americans in isolated locations and unsafe neighborhoods they have to dwell in.

In addition, Lester Junior and Phillip François are shot to death: "Death had moved away from 8800 American Street and traveled to the many broken parts of the city. So during the 12th Street riot in July 1967, Lester Junior was struck by a single bullet to the head. [...] Death woke from its long sleep to claim the life of Haitian immigrant and father of three Jean-Phillip François with a single bullet to the head outside the Chrysler plant" (Zoboi 2017: 139). All those shootings of the black immigrants bring to light the insecurity that they go through in remote areas of Detroit.

Discussing the issue of immigrant characters living far from the mainstream society in her analysis, Gasztold postulates that: "While Kimberly strives to carve her niche in American society, her mother continues to live outside of the mainstream, in an ethnic ghetto- the only familiar place that enables her to find employment and support her family" (Gasztold 2021: 84). Like Phillip's family, Kimberly's mother is isolated from the urban area and finds herself in a ghetto dominated by people who share the same ethnic background with her.

### Verbal and Racial Microaggressions

Caribbean immigrants in the US face verbal and racial microaggressions. This entails the verbal and racial assaults that the immigrants encounter. Microassaults towards immigrants are

expressed in the novel *The Sun Is Also a Star* wherein Lester Barnes, the case officer at the USCIS building, asks Natasha Kingsley a hurtful question concerning the reason for her presence at USCIS building. Knowing that Natasha is an immigrant in search for her family's document, he rhetorically asks her: "Why are you here?" (Yoon 2016: 14). The tone of this question seems to be high and consciously intended to discriminate Natasha. Thus, for Natasha, it is a negative experience at USCIS building.

Also, Lester Barnes humiliates Natasha as he says: "You're still here illegally" (Yoon 2016: 15). Barnes qualifies Natasha and her family as deviant immigrants. Yoon shows that there is a bias of categorization towards immigrants from the Caribbean, especially those from Jamaica who are most closely described as illegal immigrants. As it is not enough, Lester Barnes goes on to embarrass her when he questions her: "Do you have any idea what it's like not to fit in anywhere?" (Yoon 2016: 17). The hidden idea behind this interrogation is to let Natasha know that she is a foreigner in America. Barnes says it as he does not want to see Natasha any more in America. This also shows Barnes' despising attitude towards Natasha as she is a black immigrant. Therefore, the fact that Lester Barnes verbally assaults Natasha could lead her to emotional feeling.

Furthermore, Jeremy Fitzgerald's wife offends Natasha by asking her questions to make her afraid, rather to get answers. She interrogates Natasha as follows: "What does America mean to you? Why do you want to stay? How will you contribute to making America greater?" (Yoon 2016: 84). Jeremy Fitzgerald's wife makes Natasha understand that she does not belong here (America) and she considers Natasha's stay in America as worthless, therefore assuming that Natasha could not contribute to its development.

In addition, Natasha faces physical violence. The novelist Yoon also presents cases where the immigrants encounter physical abuse through Natasha. As an illustration, Lester Barnes, the case officer at USCIS, pushes Natasha with a box when she meets him for her family's deportation case. As Natasha says: "He closes the file and pushes a box of tissues toward me in anticipation of my tears" (Yoon 2016: 14). This passage lays emphasis on physical violence that the immigrants endure in the hand of white American officers at USCIS. As this is not enough, Jeremy Fitzgerald's wife disrespects Natasha and throws her with a sheaf of forms: "She pushes a sheaf of forms at me and doesn't look at me again" (Yoon 2016: 83). This illustrates how the immigrants are doubly abused. First, they are ill-treated by the white man and secondly by the white man's wife.

In *American Street*, Fabiola and her cousins experience verbal comments at school. They are offended and addressed a nickname by the fact that they speak French at times. Fabiola explains that: "In middle school, it got around that we spoke French. And some dumb motherfucker started calling us the Frenchie Sisters" (Zoboi 2017: 27). This statement points out how immigrants with a French linguistic background are categorized in the American school milieu. Therefore, this is considered as linguistic marginalization.

Moreover, when Fabiola meets Imani, a white American girl at school, she starts commenting on Fabiola's accent when this latter speaks English. She asks Fabiola thus: "Where's that accent from?" (Zoboi 2017: 32). This quotation shows that Imani, in interrogating Fabiola about the kind of her accent, does not really

seek to know where that accent is from but to nullify or invalidate Fabiola's language accuracy. Such a question is expressive of microassault and its underlying meaning may be that Fabiola's accent is odd or fake. Through the character of Fabiola, the novelist Zoboï presents the instance where immigrants undergo verbal abuse in school milieu in America.

Another case of behavioral discrimination that Fabiola confronts is shown when an unnamed American woman checks Fabiola's belonging due to her accent. She then poses that: "Are you from around here?" (Zoboï 2017: 37). Additionally, Imani addresses a nickname to Fabiola and her cousins. She calls Chantal, Primadonna and Princess as the "Three Bees" and later adds Fabiola the fourth. Imani reveals thus: "Everyone thinks you're the Fourth Bee" (Zoboï 2017: 32). Through the metaphor of "bee", Imani qualifies Fabiola and her cousins as savage and aggressive girls. More than that, this metaphor is a stereotype directed to black immigrants, especially Haitian immigrants in the United States. In connection with verbal assault, Filipczak (2016) submits that Jasmine is assaulted on a New York street after she refuses to give money to a beggar and later on two men in a bar insult her and her partner Bud implying that she might be a foreign prostitute.

Apart from verbal abuse, there are also situations in which immigrants experience racial discrimination. The novel *The Sun Is Also a Star* signals cases of mutual racial assaults when Daniel, one of the protagonists and son of a South Korean immigrant, brandishes statistics of life expectancy and attaches an illness to black women in America. He tells Natasha that: "Statistically speaking, a black woman living in the United States is most likely to die at the age of seventy-eight from heart disease" (Yoon 2016: 70). Natasha also makes Daniel know that: "Asian American men are most likely to die of cancer" (Yoon 2016: 71). From these two quotations, Yoon points out how immigrants of different skin colors address stereotypes towards each other. This also explains the paradox of the encounter between a white immigrant and a black immigrant in America.

Also, Daniel's parents have a negative attitude towards Natasha who is in a romantic relationship with Daniel as he says it himself: "After all, my parents would never approve. Not only is she not Korean, she is black. There's no future here" (Yoon 2016: 80). From this statement, Daniel's parents consider his relationship with Natasha as an aberration because she is black and this friendship will not have a bright future. His parents only require that they date Korean girls. Daniel affirms thus: "My parents only want us to date Korean girls" (Yoon 2016: 240). The discourse of race and ethnicity is present in the construction of romantic relationship between white and black immigrants in Nicola Yoon's *The Sun Is Also a Star*. Immigrants from South Korea see themselves whites and refuse to engage in love relationship with other black immigrants. This represents lack of esteem and strong connections between immigrants of different colors.

Also, Guruprasad (2016) states that Bart, who is a 'black' immigrant in a romantic relationship with an English girl whose parents are furious with him because of his light skin, is chased from his girlfriend's house by her father. Then, Galahad faces racism when he dates Daisy, a white English girl. Arguing this from sociocritical theory, this social construct of the romantic relationship that should be among people of same skin color is unfair and not advantageous in a multicultural setting like America where people from different horizons and cultural backgrounds live

in. Thus, Daniel's parents' racist behavior pushes Natasha to doubt the multicultural make-up of America as she says: "America's not really a melting pot" (Yoon 2016: 96). For Natasha, America as a melting pot with "race-blind" policy does not exist because of racism. With regard to racial denigration, Olorunsiwa (2016) shows that Ifemelu, Adichie's protagonist in *Americanah* is disenfranchised and devalued not only because she is a woman but also she is an African immigrant; she is called by her school mate a "nigger", an American term of racial derogation. Also, Julius in Cole's *Open City* is often mocked and called a "nigger" by a white American.

Then, Charlie blames his younger brother from dating Natasha, a black immigrant. He looks upon Natasha as an object and at the same time not a girl that Daniel should fall in love with as he says: "Where are you gonna go with this?" (Yoon 2016: 104). This quotation illustrates how Charlie discourages his brother to date Natasha because she is an immigrant from Jamaica. Charlie's use of non-standard English can be interpreted as a negative language behavior aiming to neglect Natasha because of her black race as well as qualifying her as an object but not a girl to engage in a love relationship with. Cultural marginalization is the last but not least element of analysis in this section. There are circumstances in which black culture is criticized. For instance, Afro hairstyle is judged unfavorable and considered as ugly by the host community. Yoon states that: "Postslavery, African American hair took on complex associations. 'Good' hair was seen as anything closer to European standards of beauty. Good hair was straight and smooth. Curly, textured hair, the natural hair of many African Americans, was seen as bad. Straight hair was beautiful. Tightly curled hair was ugly" (Yoon 2016: 97). Here, based on the white western norms of beauty, the Afro hairstyle is unprofessional and less attractive.

Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2022) report that Ifemelu encounters all kinds of prejudices and discriminatory attributes just because she likes wearing natural hair and her African culture is therefore considered inferior to American culture on the basis of American standards of beauty. Later on, Daniel's father also perceives Natasha's wearing Afro hair as bad and he then recommends her to buy a relaxer in order to treat her black hair: "Here. Relaxer for your hair" (Yoon 2016: 107). This also shows how black culture is criticized by other immigrants who look upon themselves as superior.

### Degrading Economic and Health Situation

In *The Sun Is Also a Star*, Yoon presents an instance wherein Samuel Kingsley is excluded from acting activity. Consequently, this exclusion drives him into underemployment as he ends up picking a job that is not his vocation. In such a situation and having no other choice, Samuel Kingsley takes an informal job for survival. The novel reads thus: "He got a job as a security guard working at one of the buildings on Wall Street" (Yoon 2016: 31). Arguably, this statement implicitly describes Samuel Kingsley being underemployed because his dream is to be employed as an actor but not as a security guard in America. This reveals also that the immigrants are denied good paying jobs and they can only manage the odd ones irrespective of their qualifications or knowledge in a given domain.

Further, the fact that Samuel Kingsley is underemployed with an unfavorable salary affects the wellbeing of his family. Given that his wage cannot help him to rent a decent apartment,



this has a repercussion on the physical health of his wife, Patricia Kingsley. Yoon declares that: "My mom got sick of living in a one-bedroom apartment. All her friends in Jamaica lived in their own houses. She got sick of my dad working in the same job for basically the same pay" (Yoon 2016: 161). This shows that Patricia Kingsley falls sick because of her husband's lower-paying job that results in difficult living conditions.

Finally, the novelist Yoon depicts Samuel Kingsley's job termination and its subsequent consequence. That said, Samuel Kingsley is fired without any reason as this is brought out when the narrator reveals that: "And then he lost his job. I don't know if he was fired or laid off" (Yoon 2016: 161). This therefore makes us understand that Samuel Kingsley remains unemployed. This joblessness leads him to poverty which in turn affects his family's supply. Thus, it becomes difficult for him to provide good food for his family as his wife complains: "I never going to have a real kitchen and a real fridge" (Yoon 2016: 161). Patricia Kingsley expresses her dissatisfaction that she will never make a good cuisine because her husband does no longer work. Conversely, Sree & Kumar (2018) assert that being marginalized in the relationship because of her inability to speak English language, Dimple gets addicted to watch TV and the effect of isolation leads her to madness which subsequently pushes her to kill her husband. Also, Yan-qiong (2017) adds the fact that Mrs. Lee is refused the profession of doctor by American society leads her to mental suffering.

Therefore, the reception Caribbean immigrants have in the USA is overwhelmingly negative. This is because they face social exclusion, spatial isolation, verbal abuse, racial microaggression, degrading economic situation and adverse health conditions. This shows the dimension of marginalization, discrimination and stereotyping that the young adult Caribbean migrants are exposed to in America.

## Resistance to Dominant Discourses and Immigrants' Success

This section investigates the strategies used by the characters to resist the dominant discourses of race and culture represented in the texts under study; and success stories.

### Adoption of Afro-Caribbean Culture Aspects

This part examines Afro hairstyle and gastronomy as elements of culture adopted by the characters to oppose the norms of dominant culture.

#### Afro Hairstyle

Despite the criticisms of Afro hairstyle by the white people, the immigrants stick to their traditional hair braiding style. In this regard, Natasha, the protagonist in Yoon's novel *The Sun Is Also a Star*, holds on to her Afro hairstyle; as she opines that: "Apparently—according to these posters, at least—only certain hairstyles are allowed to attend board meetings [...] when I decided to wear an Afro, saying that it isn't professional-looking. But I like my big Afro" (Yoon 2016: 95). This passage demonstrates how Natasha opposes the Western norms of beauty by wearing her own Afro standard and attends board meetings. It is important to note that Natasha's wearing of Afro hairstyle symbolizes the resistance to the dominant discourse of Western culture which positions and considers white hair braiding style as the norm and that of the blacks as less standard. In such a situation,

Natasha's putting on her Afro hairstyle is a form of cultural statement which contests cultural marginalization. In contrast, Dasgupta (2019) mentions that the character of Ratan resists his marginalization through extension of humanitarian values when he saves Gopal Chatterjee who used to detest and torment him while others oppose the oppressive structure by clearing the forest, turning the wasteland into a village and build their houses.

Moreover, Natasha's decision to wear Afro hairstyle does not only stand for a counter discourse of white cultural domination, but also to secure her culture and claim her black identity in diaspora. Although her natural braiding style is criticized that it is not professional looking, Natasha wears it. With the success of wearing her own hairstyle, Natasha proves to those who hate or criticize Afro hairstyle that she also has a culture; she retains her Jamaican cultural trait, and remains loyal to her land of origin. Thus, for Natasha, her hair braiding style is a marker of identity that indicates everything about her origin. The novelist Yoon therefore projects Natasha with a strong cultural connection to her homeland Jamaica as she is culturally grounded when faced with challenges related to difference of cultures. From this, Yoon equally portrays Natasha celebrating her Jamaican culture in diaspora. She remains constant even though she faces the threat of cultural dominance.

#### Gastronomy

Food is another element of culture that the characters use to resist in the process of cultural domination. Yoon in *The Sun Is Also a Star* introduces this through Natasha's refusal to order a sweet coffee drink; she rather requires coffee without sugar and enjoys it while in the restaurant: "Natasha orders black coffee with no sugar" (Yoon 2016: 53). The order of 'black coffee' in Yoon's narrative is symbolic as it shows Natasha's resistance to American culture. Again, the choice of black coffee with no sugar represents Natasha's maintenance to her identity in the face of marginalization from the dominant culture.

Analyzing the immigrant characters' resistance against the dominant discourse of culture, Anitha has a different view. She claims that the protagonist, Nazneen, employs her strategies of resistance by "escaping from traditional space, using sexuality in order to move beyond restrictions imposed on her and thus renegotiating the space in which she actually resides" (Anitha 2019: 207). This shows how some female immigrants use their body to challenge the structures of power in diaspora. According to Nyongesa, "Both fixity and hybridity are immigrants' strategies of resistance against the culture of the dominant group" (Nyongesa 2017: 207). For him, some characters stick to their culture while others embrace cultural aspects of the dominant community as coping strategies in the host land when faced with discrimination. From all these, we understand that some immigrant characters remain constant while others change in the face of dominant discourses and all the immigrants do not use the same strategies of counter discourses.

Similar to Yoon, Zobo's *American Street* depicts Fabiola and her cousins eating their homeland food in America. Fabiola decides to cook a Haitian soup instead of making American dish—the turkey. She adds thus: "Still, my cousins eat [...] and the best one of all, my soup joumou" (Zobo 2017: 148). The fact that Fabiola and her cousins cook and eat traditional Haitian food, soup joumou, symbolizes their opposition to American cultural dominance. Fabiola reclaims her culture and celebrates it as a way

of maintaining her culture abroad. It is also evident that Haitian soup *joumou* is a special food eaten on January 1<sup>st</sup> every year to celebrate the successful revolution that paved the way to Haitian independence as the first black nation in the world. By challenging the dominant culture through Haitian food, Fabiola and her cousins assert their agency in America.

Contrary to Fabiola who enjoys her Haitian food as a form of resistance, Guruprasad (2016) opines the fact that Galahad catches pigeon in the park and Captain catches seagulls to eat symbolizes poverty and also a discourse of resistance of black immigrants against the dominant culture. Furthermore, Zoboï presents a Muslim immigrant family (Kasim's family) refusing to celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Kasim declares thus: "My family boycotted Thanksgiving 'cause my father didn't want to celebrate the white man's holiday" (Zoboï 2017: 148). Here, Zoboï brings to knowledge how the immigrants protest against cultural imperialism in the United States as they also have their own culture that they need to practice.

### Cultural Production

Cultural production constitutes a key strategy used by Caribbean immigrants in the USA to counter the inherent structures and influences of power. Play or acting is one of the aspects of cultural production used by the immigrants to react to the oppressive circumstances in which they live. Yoon's *The Sun Is Also a Star* demonstrates this instance through the character of Samuel Kingsley. This is evident in Samuel Kingsley's performance of the play entitled *A Raisin in the Sun*. The novel reads that: "My family. [...] of coming to see me perform the role of Walter Lee Younger in the Village Troupe's production of *A Raisin in the Sun*" (Yoon 2016: 168). This quotation shows that Samuel Kingsley is on the stage. In fact, the title of Samuel Kingsley's play comes from the real play written by Lorraine Hansberry. It is of interest to mention that the reference or presence of the play *A Raisin in the Sun* in Yoon's novel is implicitly a kind of intertextuality. This highlights how Yoon's text is interconnected with a play which is another text.

While the play *A Raisin in the Sun* is not explicitly mentioned in the novel *The Sun Is Also a Star*, its themes and characters resonate as a powerful discourse to understand the struggles of the marginalized people in the face of obstacles. As such, in his play, Samuel Kingsley acts as the main character, Walter Lee Younger. He criticizes the way people are not treated equally based on their race, deals with his dreams to be a famous actor in order to solve his financial and social problems, and he also reveals the obstacles that stand in his way.

Thus, Samuel Kingsley's performance represents his resilience and struggle to be recognized and accepted in a predominantly white acting community. Concisely, Samuel Kingsley's play is an expressive symbol of resistance to dominant power. Nevertheless, Li (2021) argues that as a strategy to challenge the dominant group the character James encouraged his children to take part in parties, attend films and attend events with friends. For James, sociability is a plan for overcoming the challenges in the dominant community. Therefore, connecting with the dominant group may reduce racial discrimination that he faces.

In *American Street*, Zoboï incorporates writing to show how the immigrants use it to get their voices heard in the face of oppression as she displays it through the character of Fabiola. Required to write a research paper, instead Fabiola writes an essay

that evokes the Haitian revolutionary hero whose achievements set the grounds for the Haitian army's final victory on the colonial masters. This hero of revolution reflects the resistance, inspires her writing, reminds her homeland and the past, and above all gives her the strength to challenge the order of the dominant power as well as the American system of writing. She thinks of the idea and practice of resistance of the past hero and puts it in her writing. Zoboï states thus: "You were supposed to write a research paper, not a personal essay [...] I wrote down everything I knew about the Haitian revolutionary hero Toussaint L'Ouverture and why he is important to me" (Zoboï 2017: 74). Arguing this from postcolonial view and more specifically from Said's view that resistance is an element of postcolonial writing, Fabiola's writing creates the theme of resistance as she disobeys her English teacher's order and writes her own essay by referencing the hero of Haitian revolution.

And then, Fabiola's writing is a powerful symbol standing for identity, self-expression, resilience, and the changing power of art. She finds agency, that is, a space for self-expression and storytelling in her writing as she mentions Haitian revolutionary hero. We also discover her character trait as somebody who is loyal to her roots. In spite of experiencing challenges like discrimination and separation from her mother, Fabiola's writing expresses resilience as she centers on the hero of Haitian revolution who overcomes and triumphs over the adversity. Therefore, the success of writing her essay symbolizes her bravery to resist the subjugation and challenge the negative stereotypes. Arguing this from postcolonial theory, Fabiola represents a postcolonial subject whose writing is a form of resistance which also reflects the author's experience as a postcolonial woman writer in diaspora. Thus, after challenging the dominant group, some immigrants make success.

In the midst of the marginalization and the subsequent hardship they endure, the immigrants have to adapt coping or resistance strategies. Some of these include the utilization of the Afro hairstyle, Caribbean gastronomy and Caribbean cultural productivity. This entails that the cultural backgrounds of the immigrants is a strong element in their adaptation strategy.

### Immigrants' Success

Despite marginalization they experience at different spheres of American society, some immigrants succeed and own various resources. They possess their personal houses, own commercial buildings, engage in entrepreneurship and do remittances.

### Possession of Houses and Commercial Buildings

Possessing houses is one the aspects of immigrants' success described in Zoboï's *American Street*. She depicts this through the character of Phillip François who succeeds to buy his own apartment as an immigrant. This is seen in the instance where his wife Matant Jo François shows it to Fabiola: "So, here is the fridge, the stove, some pots and pans. Make yourself at home. This is the house your uncle Phillip bought with his hard-earned money. This is the house your cousins were raised in. And now, I am so happy to share it with you" (Zoboï 2017: 12). This house gives Phillip François a sense of belonging.

In addition to owning a house, there are other material properties attached to it as the narrator points out these valuables: "Ma had the newest car on the block—a minivan with leather seats. Then later, we had the first flat-screen, the first laptops, the first



cell phones out of everybody we knew” (Zoboi 2017: 27). The items listed demonstrate Phillip François’ family’s material wealth. More importantly, their car represents a crucial means of mobility for getting to work, school, other places, and it is associated with the American Dream, therefore symbolizing success, prosperity and freedom as well. Unveiling Phillip’s financial strength, we notice that he buys his house with a huge amount of money as the novel reads: “[...] Jean-Phillip François, the Haitian immigrant and the first occupant to actually land a job at a car factory—the Chrysler plant—paid the city three thousand dollars in cash for that little house on American Street” (Zoboi 2017: 139). This proves how Phillip François is financially stable as he is able to buy his own apartment. Phillip François’ and his wife’s material belongings symbolize their achievements in the alien land.

Commercial building is another element of real estate properties owned by the immigrants. The reading of Yoon’s *The Sun Is Also a Star* reveals Daniel’s father, Dae Hyun, having his beauty supply store. The narrator discloses that: “My parents own a beauty supply shop [...]” (Yoon 2016: 22). The store is a symbol of material possession and a space for business. His beauty supply shop is a place where women, especially those of color, come and purchase hair products fashioned to their specific needs and cultural backgrounds. In fact, Dae Hyun’s store signals the beginning of his success as this shop helps him to establish and develop his personal business in order to solve his family’s social and economic hardships.

### Economic Empowerment

This section analyzes entrepreneurial aspects of immigrants as source of income and financial stability. The novel *The Sun Is Also a Star* presents Dae Hyun, having his beauty supply store. In this store, Dae Hyun noticeably deals with the sale of hair products. The novel displays: “[...] own a beauty supply shop that sells black hair care products. It’s called Black Hair Care” (Yoon 2016: 22). It is important to note that Dae Hyun is not alone in hair care business but his cousin also opens a similar shop. The novel reads that: “Daniel’s family did not enter the black hair care business by chance. When Dae Hyun and Min Soo moved to New York City, there was an entire community of fellow South Korean immigrants waiting to help them. His cousin had a similar store, as did many other immigrants in his new community. The stores were thriving” (Yoon 2016: 111). These quotations do not only demonstrate immigrants’ involvement in entrepreneurship but also their dominance in the establishment of black hair care shop which is a more lucrative business in the United States. Moreover, there is mutual help and solidarity among immigrants when it comes to establish a business. Indeed, this is a kind of network in entrepreneurship and strategy for immigrants to dominate the sector of black hair care activity. The novel discloses that:

It’s estimated that South Korean businesses control between sixty and eighty percent of that market, including distribution, retail, and, increasingly, manufacturing. Be it for cultural reasons or for racial ones, this dominance in distribution makes it nearly impossible for any other group to gain a foothold in the industry. South Korean distributors primarily distribute to South Korean retailers, effectively shutting everyone else out of the market (Yoon 2016: 111).

The above quotation shows the domination of South Korean immigrants in the hair care business. This contributes to their economic security and advancement. Thus, immigrants’

involvement in the hair care business represents the spirit of entrepreneurship and hard work that they bring to their new country. In connection with job creation, Anitha points out the protagonist Nazneen who makes her life successful and gains economic autonomy when she opens a clothing trade thus: “She establishes a clothing business with Razia and other Bangladeshi women” (Anitha 2019: .207). To Anitha, the character of Nazneen makes a name for herself in spite of the obstacles she faces in London.

Also, some immigrants own restaurants; as the protagonist lists: “There are Jamaican jerk restaurants, bulletproofed Chinese restaurants, bulletproofed liquor stores, discount clothing stores, and beauty salons. Every block has at least one combination deli/grocery store, windows almost entirely covered in beer and cigarette posters. Every block has at least one check-cashing shop. The stores are all crammed together, fighting for the same piece of real estate” (Yoon 2016: 244). These numerous restaurants and other stores owned by the immigrants testify their economic empowerment. They create jobs and make profits that can enable them to take care of their extended families back home.

Another aspect of success out of hair care business is represented through Daniel’s professional career. His educational success helps him to become a successful poet as one of the titles of his poems illustrates: “Symmetries” (Yoon 2016: 160). This reveals Daniel’s achievement that lies in writing thanks to his education. Shedding light on aspects of immigrants’ accomplishment, Gasztold (2021) emphasizes the success of Asian-American immigrants that: “Their hard work and education finally lead them to success in the form of economic and individual stability”. She mentions that despite the difficulties linked to the mastery of the English language and American norms, the character of Kimberly succeeds in school and her academic achievement leads her to professional life which also offers her a higher position on the social scale and economic success.

Also, Jaya (2017) argues that as an immigrant in America, Ashoke adds to his educational qualification by pursuing a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering at MIT that allows him to get a job in a University. He even buys a house on Pemberton road which helps his family to live a comfortable and sophisticated life, while Olorunsiwa (2016) says that Julius, who is often mocked and called a “nigger” by a white American, works hard as a student, challenges the dominant power and later becomes a renowned psychiatric doctor in New York, helping the poverty-stricken, marginalized and oppressed members of the society.

In the novel *American Street*, Matant Jo François operates her business as a bank. She lends money to people and makes profit from it. The narrator states that: “She loans money out. Makes money from the interest. Like a bank [...]” (Zoboi 2017: 31). The way Zoboi represents Matant Jo François giving loan to individuals shows how some immigrants are financially stable and they can even send money back home.

### Remittances

Immigrants who are financially successful and with the desire to support their families send money back home. The remittance is one of the aspects of immigrants’ success and this part looks at the end the sending of money serves. In *American Street*, Zoboi presents a female immigrant sending money back to her family in Haiti that helps to pay school fees and for living expenses. The narrator declares that: “With Matant Jo’s money

back in Haiti, my mother was able to send me to one of the very best English-speaking schools” (Zoboi 2017: 31). As explained earlier, this statement clearly mentions that the money sent back serves to send Fabiola the protagonist and narrator of the novel to one of the prestigious schools in Haiti. This makes Fabiola to be proud as she is able to attend a best school. She expresses her contentment that: “My classmates were the sons and daughters of NGO executives, Syrian businessmen, Haitian football stars, and world-renowned musicians. We were all shades of brown and not-brown. This is what the tuition paid for—to be with other students who were examples of the world” (Zoboi 2017: 31). For Fabiola, attending a best school with students of the upper class parents is also a success.

Besides the money for school fees, Matant Jo François sends another amount of money to afford living expenses. Fabiola continues that: “It’s over a million dollars in Haitian gourdes, and my mother and I received that much and more from Matant Jo within a year for my tuition and living expenses” (Zoboi 2017: 165). This symbolizes Matant Jo’s strong sense of family and responsibility as she endeavors and sacrifices her own comfort and financial stability to transfer money back to her family in Haiti. Her remittances stand for a vital source of support. Briefly, the amount of money that Matant Jo sends to meet the needs of her family back home highlights her financial security and success in diaspora.

With the adaptation strategies deployed by Caribbean immigrants in the USA after the initial challenges and marginalization they face, a good number of them emerge successful in their hostile host environment. This is seen as some possess houses, own business structures, have economic empowerment and remit money back home. This points to the fact that the ‘other’ can always have a chance of succeeding if the appropriate resistance strategies are adopted.

## Conclusion

The diasporic narratives of Nicola Yoon and Ibi Zoboi in their respective novels *The Sun is Also a Star* and *American Street* explore the experiences of Caribbean immigrants in America; highlighting the motives for their migration, the challenges they endure in the host country, their adaptation strategies and their success stories. By examining the significance of specific cultural and historical perspectives on the migration and adaptation of young Caribbean adults, specifically Natasha’s Jamaican heritage in Yoon’s *The Sun is Also a Star* and Fabiola’s Haitian lineage in Zoboi’s *American Street*, this study highlights the importance of unique backgrounds in shaping the Caribbean immigrants’ navigation of the multifaceted challenges they face in America. This paper adds to the ongoing conversation about diasporic perspectives, challenges, identity dynamics and adaptation strategies; with focus on the Caribbean immigrants that are often overlooked in the broader discourses of migration literature.

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