

Original Article

**SLAVERY AND DEHUMANIZATION IN NIGERIA MIGRANT DRAMA:
A STUDY OF AYAKOROMA'S *ONCE UPON A DREAM***

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the destabilizing effect of migrant experience on Africans, especially with the Nigerian foreigner in an immigrant nation. It elucidates on the dehumanizing relationship between the slaves and their masters who actuate the oppressor and oppressed dichotomy in immigrant slave trends. Ayakoroma's *Once Upon A Dream* provides copious background to the sordid tales emanating from foreign countries where Nigerians are treated as second class members, or in the worst form, as animals. The subject is problematized by the need to throw more light on the dangers associated with migration without a good knowledge of the destination city's law and history. Most Nigerian immigrants care less about the consequence of leaving one's country to another with culture contrast, ideology and politics. They appear more hurried to leave because of the country's problems, forgetting that nobody will solve Nigeria's challenges unless they do. The result has been devastating and counter-productive, in most cases. Thus, the increasing search for new frontiers by the unemployed and unskilled force as occasioned by bad leadership, economic poverty and political instability in many African nations has dealt a blow on migrants' personal dignity and self-worth. There is need for engaging and reinforcing resistance to slavery and the dehumanizing of immigrants. Nigerian migrants need a humane and pragmatic approach to decolonizing wealth and achievement that is in tune with contemporary realities. The study adopts content analysis of the qualitative method of inquiry.

Keywords: Slavery, Migration Studies, Dramatic Criticism, Nigerian Migrant Studies, Ayakoroma.

INTRODUCTION

This study examines Nigeria migrant experience in foreign countries and its socially insecure and discriminating social, economic and political environment, as well as oppressive and dehumanizing conditions. Migration to African nations and other parts of the world by Nigerians come often with unexpected and unfamiliar danger, hostility and brutality. Daily reports in the social and conventional media offer detail information on the excruciating life and economically battered conditions that most migrants from Nigeria face in their immigrant countries. They are employed as slaves and domestic labourers to work for masters in plantations, firms and in homes where they are exploited. Some even are forced to work as economic prostitutes, and at worse times, kidnapped and kept meeting the sexual demands of their oppressor/abductors.

Nigerians leave their country daily in droves in search of greener pasture. Biting effects of poverty and hardship account for this trend, which is caused by the political leadership/class that have failed to be responsive and responsible to the masses. The glaring social inequality and lack of a fairly competitive access to the public job market continue to be the

cause of so much drift by many young Nigerians. The inability to secure public or private funds to facilitate self-reliant economic measures is third among many others.

In order to get away from the harsh life that Nigeria offers, many are quick to believe rosy tales of a secured future in far-away distant lands whose laws and history are barely known to the travellers. Sooner they are there when they begin to realise how they have been deceived as the reality of a debilitating life dawns on them. Though some of them are lucky, at happenchance, with arriving at these illusory promises, not quite a few others usually get arrested on trumped up illegal charges and imprisoned and or killed. Komolafe (111) reveals that due to the tightening of controls on illegal immigration into Europe, traffickers are resorting to more and more daring and dangerous forms of people-smuggling. For example, many Nigerian women and children are obliged to take a long land route across the Sahara to North Africa and then make a hazardous journey across the Mediterranean Sea in small boats. Some however fail to reach their destination either because they were abandoned on route or drown in their attempt to cross the Mediterranean.

It is no more news that unemployed Nigerians, the under-employed and skilled and unskilled force migrate to places such as Libya, Dubai, Qatar, Indonesia, Omar, and South Africa; nations with stringent and unfriendly laws where they are recruited to work as domestic labourers in hotels and security organizations. A few of them carry outlawed /illegal drugs and other illicit substances and are caught and either sentenced to a life imprisonment, deported, hung, exterminated by firing squad. Some are victims of slave trade who are tortured and left to die in slave camps. The incidence of Nigeria returnees from Libya provides apt instance. A lot of them have worked out their life force in some of these countries serving masters and organizations with very little to show for it. Some of them while they are there survived with the assistance of family from home. The effects are rippling when considered in the light of huge economic losses, changing health and life patterns, and exposure to trauma.

Most of the stringent laws put in place by governments all over the world to check influx of migrants and immigrant activities are in the public knowledge. The administration of President Donald Trump in America, for instance, has tried to pass some bills to stop migrants from entering the United States of America without proper documentations. Migrants from some African countries and the Nicaraguans, especially Liberians had been warned by Trump to move back to their homelands. Many Nigerians are aware that places such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Yemen and Omar have stringent laws for aliens and migrants. Countries in Africa, for example South Africa is well known for homophobia or suppressive killings of Nigerian migrants. South Africa and American citizens feel that their jobs are being taken away by migrants, particularly Nigerians, hence the strange laws to check entry of foreign migrants. Many Nigerian migrants although work long-hours in America are known to be compelled to pay heavy tax for overwork. This unarguably provides income for government to provide for the lazy and the un working American class. Despite this ugly scenario, Nigeria continues to be the last choice of destination for many who consider a successful life in America, South Africa, and Libya where they compete for the few luxuries of life available to their citizens. The prevailing order thus is antagonism, discrimination, and other subterranean measures of slavery and dehumanization to counter migrants.

This study highlights some of the trends in Ayakoroma's *Once Upon a Dream* as pointer to the realities of life as a Nigerian migrant. The migrant must study the intending host country's laws before eloping from Nigeria so as to overcome the likely oppression that is the order of the day. The intending migrant however should avail oneself of the available

opportunities that abound in the country in spite of whatever difficulty.

Migration in Africa and Global Contemporary Realities

According to a *The Punch Newspapers* report (2018, n.p) found on the social media discussion platform *Nairaland Forum*, no less than fifty Nigerian migrants were rescued in the Mediterranean Sea by Libya's Coastguard and the Medicines sans Frontiers (doctors without borders) recently. Reuter, *Punch* report states, reported that more than half of the migrants numbering over hundred and ten were Nigerians heading towards Italy. They were caught, including traveling migrants from other sub-Saharan African countries and some Palestinians, across dingy seas in west and east Tripoli. Libya, the report further stated, remained the main departure point for migrants trying to get to Europe by sea.

Sex prostitution and slavery is one among the many evils of migrant travel and smuggling into Europe, Libya and some other places. A Nigerian human trafficking victim whose name was not mentioned had testified before the Nigerian Senate organized seminar awareness in Benin about how she was trafficked from Edo State to Russia to live and work as a commercial sex vendor. In an event titled "Migration and Human Trafficking" she said that she was forced to sleep with four men who urinated on her after refusing to pay. She knew she was going to Russia to work as a prostitute and make money and be able to further her education. She paid her trafficker madam virtually for everything which ranged from food to clothing and house rent. She was not only assaulted by men who came to demand sex but arrested and detained all the time by the police. Komolafe (109) has strongly voiced out that trafficking activates affect women and children who are the treasures and future leaders of any nation as women and children trafficking is the most lucrative and fastest growing transnational crime all over the world, especially in the African continent. Trafficking has been defined as the relocation of persons from their communities of origin by agents mainly for economic gain. Komolafe went on to reveal that "according to a religious institution in Italy, the trafficking of Nigerian women and children to Italy, for example, and other parts of Europe has slave-like characteristics".(111)Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007) observe that the commercialization of slavery became expedient because of its crucial element in the economy of nations and individuals in which slaves were not just made to labour in domestic capacities or forced into concubine age but provided the dominant work-force of entire economies. Ukwuma (2013) in his localization of migrant experience also notes that, apart from contributing to the growth of the local economy, migrants through their remittance have helped in the completion of community-based projects

as rents paid by migrants were sources of income to their host communities.

The President of the Nigeria Senate, Bukola Saraki (2018) stated that Nigeria accounts for the world's highest number of irregular migrants going through the Agadez Route. Nigerian citizens represent the fifth largest number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea into Europe. Nigeria's hierarchy on the Global Slavery Index of one hundred and sixty-seven countries is twenty-three and with the highest number of slaves. This shows that many Nigerian migrants are aware of the dangers of living in immigrant countries, the nature and condition of jobs they are going there to do as well as the fact that they are compelling themselves to accept illusory promise of a better life as a migrant, even when it was obvious that truth detracted from the promises.

At other times the migrants are killed and or imprisoned. Recently, a Nigerian student in Malaysia was reported to have jumped to death while fleeing from immigration officials. The victim identified as Uju Pius Ejikeonye while trying to evade arrest by immigration officials in Kuala Lumpur jumped from the thirteenth floor of his condominium and died. The report, according to Nairaland, (2018) states that this was not the first time a Nigerian will die while escaping from Malaysian immigration or police officers. Immigrant life is characterized mostly by immigrant "decapitations, monstrous killings and suicides, kidnappings, abductions, forced disappearances, displacement of families and forced migrations, sexual violations, rapes, slavery and enslavement, maternal and child mortality, food insecurity and starvation, psychological and mental trauma, economic sabotage" (Ojilere 48). The hostility that exists between the settler and the indigene, for example, in Nigeria political space, may be likened to the nature of the immigrant government or master and the alien slave. Tonwe and Eke (2014) note that settlers exist because some people, due to the advantage they enjoy, have succeeded in defining themselves as indigenes in order to exclude others, whom they have defined as settlers. This often generates conflict because, in a bid to share in the benefits granted to indigenes, settlers attempt to violently force the former into a position of disadvantage, thus making identity conflicts an all too common experience. Tonwe and Eke used the incessant clashes between the indigenous host communities and the Hausa-Fulani settlers in parts of northern Nigeria as an example of the nature of conflicts that exist among people of divergent policies and cleavages. This the character of the dichotomy and identity that manifest more of the time among the Nigerians seeking greener pasture in foreign countries where most of them end up trying to subvert the laws of the host country, thereby creating tension that give rise to enslavement and oppression. According to

Udeke, Alozie and Ezeifedi (2015), criminal and illegal activities pursued by some of the migrants for their personal ends have threatened the peace and tranquility of their host communities, stressing further that the challenges posed by trans border activities of migration by Nigerians are signs of substantial danger to the political, social and economic stability of their host states. Jide (2014) used the Nigeria-South Africa relations between migrants and the immigrant officials and citizens as one example to buttress the above claims by Tonwe and Eke, while quoting *The Nation Newspapers* (2012:21) editorial:

The basis of hostility to Nigerians is the apparent non-conformity of our citizens with the mores and traditions of the foreign societies where they live. Nigerians also have a reputation for carrying drugs across frontiers, for indulging in advance fee frauds and for exploiting the spiritual needs of their host and for general loud behaviour including wild parties and loud music.

South Africa has always been home to homophobic arrest and clampdown on Nigerian migrants by the South African citizens and state officials. The maltreatments and dehumanization that most Nigerian travellers face in that country are mostly explained away as counter-measures of preventing them from abusing the nation's understanding of international conventions and standard practices. Most of the countries Nigerians travel to have diplomatic face-off with Nigeria as it may seem true to subject the opinion of Jide (2014) to appraisal, where he stated that South Africa's 'maltreatment' of Nigerian travellers stemmed from the "cold war" cloud built in the bilateral relations as a result of the Libyan crisis in which Nigeria was up against South Africa's support for Muammar Gaddafi and backed the rebel-controlled Transitional National Council (TNC) that ousted the Libyan strongman. According to him "Nigerians were visibly shocked that South African authorities, hanging on their fingernails, deported Nigerian travellers, on March 1st, 2012, from Oliver Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg on the immediate reasons adduced by the receiving country as relating to health and 'fake' yellow fever card certificates" (Jide 64). This argument highlights some of the challenges that desperate Nigerian travellers witness in countries with diplomatic row with Nigeria, and probably the reason why intending migrants must always seek to know the laws of the destination country and the bilateral relationship between both countries. Often, migrants who run into diplomatic conflicts with their host are, as noted by Akomolafe (2014), separated from their familiar support networks which put them in a new, often hostile environment where they find themselves not able to speak the language. They are also excluded from the main stream of society and are not able to attend schools, that is if they are within the educational age bracket or have access to medical care because

they do not have the necessary documents. Many immigrants in a new country are not registered and are not given citizenship status of that country. This condition of being stateless deprives them of social and economic opportunities and exposes them to many forms of discrimination. Paraphrasing Orisakwe (*The Guardian Newspapers*, 2008) Akomolafe added that in these conditions, the only available option left to migrant workers is to work in dirty and dangerous jobs. Their jobs are often undocumented, unprotected or illegal. Many lack immigration statuses, making them prime targets for police crackdowns, detentions and deportations. Thus, it is not uncommon for migrants to be asked by authorities to pay bribes and for women sex workers to provide free sex, to avoid penalties.

Slavery and Dehumanization in *Once Upon A Dream*

The setting, first is in Abalutoru a town in Bayelsa State Nigeria and secondly, at a colonial building in a foreign land, ostensibly portending that of South Africa. The play accounts for the travails of the protagonist Dagogo and his son Amaebi who are caught between the activities of their past and present lives. *Once Upon A Dream* opens with the celebratory re-union and homecoming of father and son with the people of Abalutoru community. Structured in a flip-flap present-retrospection-present Brechtian narration, Dagogo takes the reader through his bitter experiences of living as an immigrant in South Africa. He is enslaved and dehumanized by his South African masters Mr Chaza and wife Nuwela and the repressive security officers of government.

The play ostensibly begins when Dagogo has returned from South Africa with his son Amaebi, the result of his love relationship with a South African Masela Zikena. As Amaebi progresses through childhood to teenager hood, the conflict often associated with a child of doubtful parental lineage emerges. Amaebi feels that his father's wife is his biological mother. It is this stark reality that confronts Dagogo with the need to re-establish Amaebi with his biological-mother-parentage to South Africa that exposes the reader to the trauma of life as an immigrant in that African country.

Mr Chaza and his wife Nuwela represent forces of evil in the play. They are the oppressive agents of the South African colonial state who enslave and dehumanize poor blighted African migrants. The colonial setting of Dagogo's slave experience (at Chaza and Nuwelas and the government) was that strange and brutal absurdist South Africa of Athol Fugard's apartheid tales. For most of the colonial officers, represented by Chaza and Nuwela and the secret police, foreign slave migrants were nothing but animals and abnormal human beings, and its strange laws and regulations are boundless opportunities and arena in which they could find means to exploit,

assault, denigrate and impoverish and imprison their household servants. Thus, the encounter all through is that of the oppressor-master and the oppressed-slave struggle to intensify superiority and regain the self. The reader will carefully observe that both Nuwela and Chaza treat Dagogo the same way that Buntu in Styles photographic studio captures life while working at the Ford Motors in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. Dagogo comes in and sets the table, Nuwela goes and inspects the plates, and then the glasses. She finds fault with one of the glasses. She pours the water on his face and throws the glass at him. He dodges the flying object, which crashes onto the wall and breaks to pieces. She looks at the table, which is flooded with water. Dagogo removes his shirt and uses it to mop the table. He goes on to pick the shards of the glass all over the place (Ayakoroma50, 51). Thus, Chaza's brother Uyanda engages his relatives on the need for a change of attitude by reinforcing the truth of the unpredictability of life. Times are changing, and our country cannot be an island forever. The use of repressive force alone to govern is always temporary. It may subdue for a moment, but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again. How many Dagogos are you going to put behind bars? You have the ears of the government. Use it to bring about positive change (Ayakoroma43). The ruthless attitude exhibited previously was because, as complained by Nuwela to Dr Uyanda, "That idiot of a servant cleared all my pumpkins in the farm instead of the grasses" (Ayakoroma51). In his chastisement of Nuwela and Chaza and condemnation of the enslavement of Dagogo, in what he described as "treating him like a slave" and "working him to death" (Ayakoroma 51) Uyanda bares what is at the core of the problem of the physical, mental and emotional humiliation and deprivations of slaves to be the "South African conscience" (Ayakoroma 53) of rearing and destabilizing migrant slaves by their masters, such that in the words of Nwankwo and Nwankwo (106) while re-echoing Leon Pinsker, the hierarchization of the migrant slave in history and in works of literature is because the slave "is not allowed to be proud of his heritage".

I suppose you have a South African conscience. You treat him like a slave You know it; and you enjoy it every day. He does everything for you. (Mimicking her.) Dagogo... remember to wash my dresses... Dagogo, iron my dresses... Dagogo, water my roses... Dagogo, did you wash my... Dagogo, this... Dagogo, that... For God's sake, how would he be human? Why wouldn't he clear your pumpkins, instead of the grasses, when you confuse him with series of messages (Ayakoroma 53).

While the row continues unabated and the Chazas' storm out of the living room in anger, unable to understand why "Society has to be dynamic" (Ayakoroma 55), the reader should be aware that neither Nuwela nor Chaza would underestimate the

law and order of respecting “societal demands”, for as far as Ayakoroma is concerned, immigrant slave history is a disruptive process which violates and destroys the life, social and cultural value systems of the dehumanized African immigrant slave. This brutish inclination of the oppressor-master is made possible only by state laws and the inhuman and lawless security force. As for Chaza’s ranting of Dagogo’s being “an ass”, “a fool” and “Is that thing human?” (Ayakoroma 55), there is the precondition and belief that the slave masters and their agents, apart from a few ones like Dr Uyanda, are generally members of a society who seem to care more for slave-labour, money, political power, and earthly pleasures than to bring about “changes [that] have to reflect societal needs” (Ayakoroma54). They seem to thrive gloriously in a lawless slave trade world ruled by arrogance, lies, pride, and deprivation. To these masters and enforcers of the state law and order, the immigrant slaves are no more than aliens “who have a reputation for always answering questions with questions”(Ayakoroma 36).This subtle remark undercovers the structure of hierarchization of personality and identity in place as a backdrop to the representation of exposed racial sentiments. Domestic services, working at the plantation, are no more than a hide-out for wicked, callous and disoriented state officials to unleash venoms on immigrants. It is noteworthy that in *Once Upon A Dream* the social responsibility of lies belongs to the state power as no matter what the slave servant does for the master-oppressor he would normally be deflated without praise and appreciation. Hence, the Officer takes pride in explaining this immigrant’s destination’s social conundrum to Dagogo:

You see, we hate liars in this our small country. A wise man once said that the rulers of the state are the only ones who should have the privilege of lying, either at home or abroad. They may be allowed to lie for the good of the state. You hear me? Only leaders have the liberty to lie! (Ayakoroma38)

In a retrospective spotlighting of the harrowing experience he faced in South Africa to his son Amaebi, a “visibly moved” (Ayakoroma 57) Dagogo shares his phobia of dehumanization as an immigrant slave with Uyanda, I started as a farm boy and later doubled as a houseboy when Kenku was sacked. I thought my salary would be doubled but all I got was a five shillings increase... I am more of an outcast. How can I have a son and I cannot proudly hold him and say, this is my son? Tell me! Just because I am an immigrant... They say you should be your brother’s keeper... but there is so much suffering here. I don’t know myself anymore... I have worked very hard every day only to end up deflated (Ayakoroma57, 56).

Retaining the service of the jailed slave after Dagogo was released from prison is of course indispensable to the maintenance of law and order of dehumanizing of slaves, what Dr Uyanda aptly describes was “because

they have no human feelings” (Ayakoroma 56). But interestingly, as earlier have been mentioned, the short fat and obese Nuwela would raise several mentions of demands, “Dagogo, I need some water in the flask”, “Do not forget to iron my dresses”, “Make sure the plates are washed”, “Make sure that you wash my undies!”, “And they had better be clean...” (Ayakoroma 61-62). This is a highly ridiculous, uncivil, sadist, though true interpretation of the immigrant slave trade culture in Africa as elsewhere; be it South Africa, Libya or Europe. As seen in Fugard’s work, there is the domestication of service “routine” in *Once Upon A Dream* which is meant to further impoverish Dagogo and to checkmate him from planning for his future. When Mr Chaza was expected to pay Dagogo the salary of One Hundred and Fifty Shillings and he is handed out fifty-three shillings, ninety cents, he announces that it is routine deductions for state tax, water rate, accommodation, feeding, electricity; and home property damages – broken plates, burnt plantains, and damaged pumpkins. In this play, Ayakoroma would reliably assume the role of the character, Dagogo to inform the reader about the debased slave master-oppressor and his despicable attitude of salary routine deductions:

But Master, the pump is dry... no water has been running in the Boys Quarters for over three months now...

But I share it [water] with Doggie! Master, left over! [feeding] I manage the leftover after Doggie must have had its fill. There has been no bulb [electricity] in the Boys Quarters for over two months, Master.

Master, [broken plates] it was the hen that jumped on the...

[Burnt plantains] But it was Madam that fried them now...

Hunger o! [damaged pumpkins] It was the work of hunger, Master (Ayakoroma59-60).

The grab and bark posture mentality of the colonial secret police is treated in the play. One of the strange laws in place incriminates social gathering of slaves and the citizens, with zero tolerance for love relationships between these slave-servants and their host country women and girls. So much of the grabbing and barking talk in the face of Dagogo by the uniformed men reveal incessant monitoring and tracing of unwanted or outlawed love relationships as characteristic of apartheid South Africa. The Officer among the secret police threatens, We have been on your trail for quite some time now. The honeymoon is over! You have enjoyed yourself long enough, and you will regret every minute of it. Let me tell you... Love ceases to be a pleasure when it ceases to be a secret. You are under arrest for abducting, seducing, raping, thereby defiling Masela. This is in addition to your contravening Section 10, sub-section 5, paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code of this Republic. (Grabbing him and barking into his ear again) You will rot in jail.

(Ayakoroma36). Thus, the theme of dehumanization and denial of the immigrant's espousal right to love is reminiscent of a highly cynical, pessimistic, incisive and ruthless brute force to subject the slave victim to a conformant status of the obnoxious decrees in place which are meant to checkmate migrants and aliens. Ayakoroma is vehement about his condemnation of migrant slavery and its attendant evils of human degradation, exploitation of non-natives and the blind ambition and authoritarian hypocrisy of colonial and political bigots. The incriminating mood of the play's setting is captured herein with assault and villainy by the Officer and Sergeant;

Going to grab Dagogo and trying to bundle him out. Masela attempts to stop him.

They grab her; she struggles as they pinion her hands behind her.

They start battering Dagogo and Masela screams at them. She struggles fruitlessly to free herself, calling them names in the process. Just then, the master comes out. He is a bulky looking bespectacled man. He is Mr Chaza. Hence, Officer reinforces commitment to maintaining the strange law of the land. "We are a small country, and we do not want you crossing over to carry our girls, as kites would take little chicks"(Ayakoroma37, 38). Chaza's appearance at the moment of brutalization of Dagogo and humiliation of Masela was no better than to aid adherence to the offensive law of the land. He appears to be amazed at the news of his servant impregnating the young Masela Zikena and concludes questioningly that "You have been messing around with my houseboy?"(Ayakoroma 39).

Masela replies: No master... I don't mess around with nobody.

Then, Chaza retorts: So, it is true he is your lover?

And Masela says; He is not my lover! I want to marry him! (Ayakoroma39). It is not shocking to see Chaza flop to the ground following Masela's profession of love for Dagogo. Masela will pledge her unalloyed love for Dagogo promising that "whatever happens, know that I love you and I am carrying your baby..." (Ayakoroma40). One may assume and hope that even disconnection and state separation may not stop her from loving him, again, not minding the fact of Nuwela interrogating her thus: "If you must allow a man to touch you, can't you look for a good and responsible person?" (Ayakoroma 42). The generality of African playwrights on the slave and dehumanizing theme(s) in African colonial and migrant literature may well agree with the actions of the characters, Chaza and the secret police that rejection, brutality, dislocation and violence characterized the order of slavery elsewhere, as in the world of *Once Upon A Dream*. And Ayakoroma vehemently argues that anywhere slaves were being accused and tortured by the state or their master it was a "finished" case. He says to Dagogo, You are finished! (Standing up.)

Finished! Did I not warn you? We have laws in this land, and they must be obeyed. You will suffer the full consequences of your action! You will learn to fall out of love, if you ever get out! Take him away. (Ayakoroma40) Ayakoroma further reports about the hauling and maltreatment of Masela by the state agents.

She frees herself and runs to hold Dagogo. The police push her away violently. She falls and gets up only to start clutching her stomach and writhing in pain.(Ayakoroma 40) However, Dr Uyanda represents a sharp contrast with the authorities of the state who clamp down on the dignity of foreigners and immigrant slaves. He is the opposite of his brother Mr Chaza and wife Nuwela who would stop at nothing to ensure the denigration and death of their slave Dagogo. It is Uyanda who always steps in for Dagogo whenever he is being cajoled or disrespected by his brother's wife or Chaza. He advocates love, friendship, understanding, and equality in the play, cautioning his relatives about how to treat their servant as a human being fully deserving of all rights and privileges. A case in point is when Dagogo was accused of cutting down the vegetables in the farm and when he is ordered to clean the table with his shirt by Nuwela, a table he had soiled with water. Uyanda expresses deep reservations about the indignation and indifference coming from his people toward their servant. In other to make up for Dagogo's inhuman treatment he elects to serve himself at the table, preferring that Dagogo had some "rest in order to function like a normal human being" having returned from the farm, his destroying the vegetables being that "mistakes are bound to happen"(Ayakoroma52). Again, he seems to be more educated and enlightened than Nuwela who was seen reading a book sometime, and her husband who works with the government. Nuwela and Chaza do not know how to talk and they portray the basest of human understanding and love with their fellow being. Dr Uyanda knows what it means to love and shares his knowledge unreservedly with his wife's brother about love being a strong bond or connection between two individuals, in as much as their visible cultural backgrounds and differences remained. Even when he is accused of defending Dagogo he maintains that it is his responsibility to stand by integrity. When Nuwela fumes and queries: "How can an animal like that fall in love? Dagogo must have charmed that girl" Dr Uyanda replies accurately, albeit philosophically,

A woman is like a ball; once a ball is thrown, no one can predict where it will bounce. You have no control over where it rolls and even less over who gets it. Often an unexpected hand grabs it! Dagogo struck the right chemistry with Masela, and that is the truth... (Ayakoroma 42, 43) It is Uyanda who paves the way for the re-unioning of father and son in a meeting point that turns the tide for Dagogo's freedom from the shackles of immigrant slavery. It was him who also

disturbs Chaza to plead with the government so that Dagogo would be freed from incarceration. He assists the slave Dagogo to recover his mind and to understand that his motherland has all the things a man needs to survive in life. His encouragement and support are the weapon that Dagogo needs to question himself and be able to challenge, for the first time, his oppressor-master and his wife Chaza and Nuwela.

Am I better than your Doggie in this house? One hundred and fifty shillings you call my pay! (*Bringing out his pay packet angrily.*) But what do I have in here? Fifty-three shillings ten cents, just to keep me alive for you to use as a slave...

Chaza: Routine, Dagogo. Routine And Dagogo replied vehemently; Yes you can go to blazes with your useless and stupid routines! Burnt dresses... broken plates... damaged pumpkins... I say to hell with everything! I go now with him, my son. I don't know where you leave your hearts. Do you hang them on clotheslines to dry? My motherland is waiting for my footsteps. Yes... it is hungry to receive my footsteps and I leave you to your conscience... (Ayakoroma 66) Among the evils of migration and slavery is the presumptive arrogance of masters and the law whose assumed superiority over the immigrant slaves and foreigner degenerates into a form of pathological disorder, race-phobia, and hate, as witnessed with the Chazas, Zikenas, and the South African state law agents. The lack of human respect and value, understanding and sympathy exhibited by Nuwela, Mr Chaza, the Zikenas, Officer, Sergeant, and the third nameless law enforcer and the generality of unmentioned South African government officials, in their relationship with the migrant slave Dagogo, vilify them beyond redemption. These representative characters neither believe in nor strive at establishing any form of friendship between them and the slaves. Hence, Mr Chaza whose house, the setting of a colonial building predates exploitation and oppression unabashedly proclaims:

Pregnant! That decides it! As you make your bed, so you shall lie on it. You don't fall the tree whose shade protects you. Laws are meant to be obeyed. You shall face the full wrath of the laws of the land. As for you, Masela, your father and I should come to a sort of agreement, as to what to do. (Ayakoroma40-41) And the Officer orders: "Well, Serge, just slam any number of charges at him. We jail him and maybe repatriate him home to die at his old age (Ayakoroma 37)". Dagogo reveals this frosty relationship, while stating of the situation that existed between him and Masela: She was hounded and forced to forget about me. You know absence is to love what water is to fire. The father made sure that the secret police accounted for every movement of hers. All I could make of her was the few letters she managed to smuggle across to me. They tried to abort the pregnancy, but she refused bluntly. She maintained that even if her parents would

not allow us to get married, the child would be a cord that will, forever, tie us together. And so, you were born... (Ayakoroma45) Again, if at all there should exist any relationship, it must be such as exists between the wealthy employer and their poor subjects. Dr Uyanda pleads with his brother and wife to be more open to friendship with their servant Dagogo "I just want us to be human" His brother Chaza retorts, "Human! Is he human? Tell me! Is that thing human?" (Ayakoroma54). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007) affirm that the institutionalization and hierarchization of slavery offered oppressors and masters seemingly endless source of power and exploitation as well as, of the desire to construct a prejudiced culture of the "civilized" in contrast to the 'native, the cannibal, and the savage'.

When Dagogo walked in from the farm, "wearing a baggy short, a pair of khaki shirt and a pair of rugged rain boots" (Ayakoroma 47), with other paraphernalia of crop production, and Mrs Nuwela was seated reading a book and seeing his "bizarre appearance", shouts, "Get out! That's how you would have come in even if we had visitors. Get out! Nonsense!" When he appears awkward in his oversized trousers, Nuwela screams at Dagogo again: "You punk! Why did you clear my pumpkins?" (Ayakoroma 49).

The morbid and racial prejudices against migrants also results in the South African man's absolute disregard for adequate economic compensation for the services rendered to them. Even Mr. Chaza cannot help expressing his fury and nonchalance at Dagogo's representation as a migrant slave. "I can't play with my sweat. The son of a bitch thinks that I would have made it in life if I were lousy? I worked for every damn cent and no one is going to mess me up" (Ayakoroma 49-50). According to Dagogo, "To Mrs. Chaza, I was no better than the ordinary mud" (Ayakoroma 46). As noted by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (192) in reference to Torgovnik, the superimposition of terms like "primitive, savage ... undeveloped, developing, archaic, traditional", connote deeper translations in the construction of the savage and the civilized dichotomies where the slave savage is no more than an 'inferior' human, 'different, deviant, subordinate, and sub-ordinate able'. The slave migrant is also expected to be brainless and abnormal, but Dr Uyanda foils this myth of the animal slave not falling in love. Dr Uyanda is undoubtedly a brilliant judge of human character and has mastered the psychology of human love. His excellent answers to Nuwela are the product of a fertile medical brilliant mind. Uyanda fails to reason like the other South Africans only when he does not see things the way of Chazas and defends Dagogo. The South African slave character in *Once Upon A Dream* is anything but an idiot or fool. He is not a human being and usually feed after the dog has eaten. However, despite the intellectualism and remarkable achievements of the South African

characters, Chaza and Nuwela are still seen behaving in a most servile manner towards immigrants. Though it would be said that these characters remain static and fail to change or improve their ego, except for Uyanda, and Mr Chaza who agreed to talk to the government to release Dagogo, which the reader should know, was to advance further Chaza's personal inclination to hold him as a slave, Chaza and Nuwela evolve and learn by experience only when it was late, the better way to handle the slave master's inhumanity. Towards the ending part when Dagogo takes his son Amaebi to leave for Abalutoru and his masters, they, in their typical South African cantankerous manner charge at him, upon stumbling into the scene where he was with Dr Uyanda, expecting answer which Dagogo reliably manages well. The stage direction affirms that, Nuwela is moved and entreats him to stay, shortly, she breaks down in tears. Mr Chaza goes to her, and lifts her up, consoling her in the process. She falls on his shoulders, weeping uncontrollably. She tries to control herself as she turns to the door. (Ayakoroma 67) The futility of the black slave immigrant's pursuit of a good life and the disposition of many of the government officials and slave masters are lucidly explored by Ayakoroma in this play, a work narrating the bitter experience of old Dagogo in a foreign land as a young man and a slave. Dagogo talks about his "going across the seas, in search of a meaningful life" (Ayakoroma 32), because he had been told that there was much money to be made there. The atmosphere is replete with hatred, hostility and uneasy peace. Whereas Uyanda seems to be open to friendship and solidarity the Chazas are the representatives of the oppressor's symbol of enslavement and dehumanizing of the foreign migrants.

CONCLUSION

Available works treating the theme(s) of migration and its attendant results of slavery, disconnection and dehumanization, be they by Western writers or Africans, depict trans-border or trans-national and international migration of foreigners as an ill which afflicts the victim as it does the victimizer. Ayakoroma's play suggests that migrants are not aware of the limitless opportunities that abound in their own land. Ironically, Dagogo is a victim of this premise, as he puts it succinctly: "Our people say the water that you will drink never flows past you" (Ayakoroma 34). Many African unemployed and educated youths, the less skilled, and the un-skilled force especially, Nigerians face danger to their lives and dignity while they work and live as foreign migrants in various African and Asian countries, including in the European world. The law of the host immigrant countries are most times, harsh, strange, and inhuman. They grossly misconceive the hypocrisy and façade of the endless blissful life of wealth and opportunity in some of these nations.

Ayakoroma views the effect of slavery and oppression occasioned by immigrant life as at best a dehumanization and at worst a stifling of the rights of man to live anywhere in the world. The totality of the impact of migration in *Once Upon A Dream* is violative, disruptive, non-progressive, and exploitative. It leaves often the legacy of the myths of the punk, asshole, and animal with its usurping and abnormal individuality; a rapist, abductor, and cunning eloper who must be tamed at will from destroying and taking away the means of livelihood of their host nation, by the great apostles of wealth and development – the South African oppressor-masters and their likes elsewhere, the representatives of slavery and dehumanization. Conclusively, it should be understood in the play's world, as it is happening anywhere else, that the positive effects of undocumented migration are slim, considered more with its ravaging aspects of human brutality and exploitation. Despite the many illusory hopes and promises of a good life after crossing over, migrants always know that there is no better place like home.

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