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## 66. • Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

### FROM AMERICANAH (2013)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a novelist who has won many awards including the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, and Orange Prize. Her novel *Americanah*, excerpted here, won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction and the Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize for Fiction. It critically addresses issues of gender, race, and transnationalism in the United States. She was born in Nigeria and divides her time between the United States and Nigeria.

Ifemelu came to love Baltimore—for its scrappy charm, its streets of faded glory, its farmers' market that appeared on weekends under the bridge, bursting with green vegetables and plump fruit and virtuous souls—although never as much as her first love, Philadelphia, that city that held history in its gentle clasp. But when she arrived in Baltimore knowing she was going to live there, and not merely visiting Curt, she thought it forlorn and unlovable. The buildings were joined to one another in faded slumping rows, and on shabby corners, people were hunched in puffy jackets, black and bleak people waiting for buses, the air around them hazed in gloom. Many of the drivers outside the train station were Ethiopian or Punjabi.

Her Ethiopian taxi driver said, "I can't place your accent. Where are you from?"

"Nigeria."

"Nigeria? You don't look African at all."

"Why don't I look African?"

"Because your blouse is too tight."

"It is not too tight."

"I thought you were from Trinidad or one of those places." He was looking in the rearview with disapproval and concern, "You have to be very careful or America will corrupt you." When, years later, she wrote the blog post "On the Divisions Within the Membership of Non-American Blacks in America," she wrote about the taxi driver, but she wrote of it as the experience of someone else, careful not to let on whether she was African or Caribbean, because her readers did not know which she was.

She told Curt about the taxi driver, how his sincerity had infuriated her and how she had gone to