Representation, Gender and The Politics of Marginalisation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count*

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Abstract

Sexual violence inflicted on migrants and women of colour has always been rendered insignificant by their host communities, perpetuating the inequalities of gender, race, class, social mobility, citizenship status and nationality. The media, anti-sexual violence activism and anti-rape law are not built to address the sexual violence against African migrant women, thereby rendering these victims subjects of media and societal scrutiny, mockery and objects of caricature. Reading Chimamanda Adichie's Dream Count, this study applies the implicit bias theory as the primary framework to examine the Western media's framing and mainstream perceptions of sexual assault against women of colour, without institutional power. It analyses the challenges of narrating sexual violence by the victims, and the unconscious biases against victims, which lead to victim-blaming tendencies. Intersectionality is applied as the complementary framework to clarify how immigration, gender, class and race interact in the novel's depiction of gender-based violence. Through qualitative and textual analysis of Kadiatou's narrative, inspired by the Nafissatou Daillo case, the paper shows that implicit biases in Western media strengthen intersectional oppression and expose the limits of Western anti-rape law in sexual violence involving migrant African women and men-in-power using Adichie's Dream Count.

Keywords: *intersectionality, implicit bias theory, representation, migrant women and sexual violence*

Introduction

Sexual violence against women remains a pervasive manifestation of gendered power, inequality and bodily control across both the United States and Europe. However, its effects are not experienced uniformly, as race, ethnicity, migration status, class and legal precarity can intersect with gender to produce distinctive forms of vulnerability. Samari et al. (2024), in their qualitative study of immigrant women in New York, found that structural gendered racism operates across immigration policies, economic systems and interpersonal relations, producing forms of exploitation and insecurity that disproportionately affect women of colour. Such evidence suggests that sexual violence should not be understood merely as isolated interpersonal acts, but as a phenomenon shaped by intersecting structures of gender, race, migration and socioeconomic inequality.

The European context similarly demonstrates how migration and racialised marginality can intensify women's exposure to sexual violence and restrict access to protection and justice. A critical synthesis of research on migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Europe found sexual violence to be highly prevalent among these populations, while also identifying substantial difficulties in documenting its incidence because of methodological limitations, under-reporting and the complex social and institutional circumstances surrounding migrant women (Keygnaert et al., 2018). This circumstance further proves that for migrant and racialised women, sexual violence must be situated within a broader matrix of vulnerability involving precarious legal status, language barriers, racism, economic dependence, social isolation and fear of institutional consequences. An intersectional approach is consequently necessary for understanding how sexual violence is experienced, represented and silenced among women of colour and migrant women in America and Europe. Therefore, sexual violence against women of colour and migrants arises at the nexus of colonial history, racialisation, and long-standing power systems (Atewologun, 2020; Hancock, 2007; Tuori, 2014) that determine whose bodies are shielded, whose suffering is acknowledged, and whose abuses are concealed. Women of colour continue to face disproportionate vulnerability and systemic neglect despite increased attention to

gender-based violence on a global scale. These conditions are maintained not only by overt discrimination but also by implicit biases ingrained in the legal, medical, media, and humanitarian sectors.

This work seeks to explore a case of sexual violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count.* The novel mirrors the lives of four women: Chiamaka, a wealthy Nigerian writer, Zikora, a Nigerian lawyer, Guinean housekeeper and hotel cleaner, Kadiatou, and Nigerian banker Omelogor, during the COVID-19 pandemic, who navigate experiences of love, identity, racial and cultural pressures, sexual violence, marriage, and motherhood in the diaspora. However, this study focuses on Kadiatou, whose story powerfully fictionalises the Nafissatou Diallo case, detailing her sexual assault by a powerful man and the injustice of the legal system, contradicting the liberal ideals of the West on the dignity of the human person. Kadiatou's life in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count* embodies the precarious existence of migrant women of colour in the United States, shaped by intersecting forces of race, gender, class, legal vulnerability, and the media. As a migrant woman navigating economic insecurity and social marginalisation, Kadiatou occupies a position in which her labour is necessary, yet her humanity is persistently devalued. Her life is marked by endurance rather than visibility, reflecting the broader condition of migrant women whose presence sustains domestic and service economies while remaining largely absent from public empathy. Central to Kadiatou's narrative is her experience of sexual violence, which Adichie presents not as an isolated act but as a structural event, enabled by power asymmetries and sustained by institutional indifference. This work aims to expose the American media's stand and mainstream perception of sexual assault against women of colour, especially those in positions of power in the text. It aims to point out the challenges of narrating sexual violence by the victims and the unconscious biases against victims, which lead to victim-blaming tendencies. Furthermore, this article aims to figure out the interplay of immigration, gender, class and race in sexual violence in Adichie's text.

The Nexus of Implicit Bias and Intersectionality

In the 1970s and 1980s, social psychology research on implicit cognition laid the theoretical groundwork for implicit bias (Greenwald & Lai, 2020; Greenwald & Banaji, 2017). Advocates in the United States of America, Australia, and Europe frequently use implicit bias, one of the most effective examples of an academic idea being put into practice in recent memory, to draw attention to gender inequality and argue for organisational reform (Jenkins, 2018; Nielson, 2021). The concept of Implicit bias focuses on the unconscious ways in which prejudice can affect behaviour. It is understood as the phenomenon in which people act based on prejudice and stereotypes about social groups without intending to do so. (Nelson & Zippel, 2021; Tang, 2018). Alternative terms for the same phenomenon are implicit memory (Greenwald et al., 2002; Schacter, 1987), implicit perception (Kihlstrom et al., 1992), implicit attitude (Greenwald et al., 1998), implicit stereotypes and implicit self-concept (Rudman et al., 2001), implicit self-esteem (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000), implicit bias and implicit race bias (Staats, 2016; Morehouse & Banaji, 2024). This study employs implicit bias, which is the most popular. “Experimental psychology” is regarded as the foundation of implicit bias science (Morehouse & Banaji, 2024, p.23). According to research on implicit bias, actors may not always have conscious, purposeful control over the social perception, impression formation, and judgment processes that drive their behaviour (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). The term is widely used in both the popular press and scientific literature, as evident in the 2016 US presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump (Fazio et al., 2023, p. 75). In sum, implicit bias arises naturally and inadvertently influences decisions, judgments, and behaviours.

Intersectionality is a critical framework that provides the vocabulary to analyse the relationships and interdependencies among social systems and categories. This critical theory views knowledge as relational, placed, contextual, and reflective of economic and political power. It has gained popularity and is often discussed as a theory, paradigm, methodology, lens, concept, or framework, and is rooted in “Black feminism and critical race theory, intersectionality is a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool” (Carbado et

al., 2013, p. 303). An intersection in the social sciences refers to the meeting point, juxtaposition, or crossing of two or more social axes and categories, or systems of oppression, dominance, or power. (Atewologun, 2020). These systems and categories include "social identities (e.g. woman, Pakistani), sociodemographic categories (e.g. gender, ethnocultural), social processes (e.g. gendering and racialising) and social systems (e.g. patriarchy and racism)" (Dahmoon, 2011, p. 233). Intersectionality highlights the inseparability of social categories, including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age, as reciprocally creating phenomena rather than as unitary, mutually exclusive entities (Collins & Bilge, 2022; Collins, 2015), in the unique experiences of oppression or privilege experienced by individuals and communities.

Kimberle Crenshaw, a pioneer scholar of Intersectionality, coined the term in 1989 (Crenshaw, 1989), in view of the racialised experiences of women of colour in the US. That said, Black and Latina feminist movements of the 1970s and early 1980s had already criticised the artificial division of gender and ethnicity in women's lives, asserting that mainstream feminism had silenced the voices of minority women of colour while advancing the cause of white women (Atewologun, 2020). This clamour for inclusion gave birth to an intersectional approach. Intersectionality is "both an acknowledgement of power relations and a critique of those relations" (Arnoud et al., 2023, p.3). It is both descriptive and normative, aiming to combat inequities and to contribute to the transformation of material and symbolic reality (Bohrer, 2019).

In this study, implicit bias is the primary framework. It highlights the unconscious assumptions about integrity, morality, respectability and worthiness of compassion that shape media, legal and public responses to sexual violence against migrant women of colour. Intersectionality maps the structural distribution of those biases; it facilitates the connection between human rights and the multiple forms of (gender, class, sexuality) discrimination people encounter. Together, the frameworks move analysis beyond isolated prejudice toward the systemic reproduction of inequality through perception, media framing and institutional practice. Recent scholarship confirms that media representations of sexual violence continue to circulate rape myths, language of blame and framing that

ignores intersectionality (Andrews et al., 2025). Exposure to misogynistic media content is associated with increased hostility toward women. Such findings reinforce the necessity of examining how implicit biases operating through media amplify the intersectional vulnerability of migrant women of colour.

Sexual Violence in Relation to Class, Gender and Racial Inequalities in Adichie's *Dream Count*

Sexual violence against women cannot be adequately understood through singular frameworks of gender oppression alone. Instead, it emerges at the intersection of racialisation, colonial history, and enduring structures of power. Using Kadiatou in Adichie's text as a case study in this article, she first encountered sexual violence while working as a waitress under Monsieur Francois, the restaurant owner whose mother is Lebanese. One evening, as she closes the storage room, he enters, pushes her against the table and assaults her. (Adichie, 2025, p. 195). Sexual abuse in the workplace is not merely an individual moral failure; it is a structural act enabled by hierarchies of authority, economic dependence, and social inequality. According to the International Labour Organisation (2022), employer sexual abuse is made possible by asymmetrical power. The power differential is explicit- He is her employer and social superior; she is a poor, uneducated waitress whose livelihood depends on him. In this situation, power dynamics operate across multiple, overlapping social positions rather than through gender alone. This structural power creates conditions in which consent is compromised "Why did he not ask her, why treat her as though she was not worth asking? It could have been different, he could have asked her," (Adichie, 2025, p. 195); in this case, Kadiatou cannot scream much; she cannot report after the assault.

Owing to poverty, lack of education and exposure, she preferred to keep everything to herself as the text reads: "she had done nothing wrong; it was she who had been harmed, and yet she felt shame as an acute rupture of her internal order. She resolved then to reach the end of her life with this shame buried away. Nobody would ever know[…]" (Adichie, 2025, p.185). Intersectionality explains why this abuse does not affect all workers equally. The risk and consequences of abuse intensify at the intersection of multiple

identities. First of all, as a woman, women are disproportionately targeted due to patriarchal norms that sexualise and subordinate them. Secondly, low-wage workers, domestic workers, and service employees, as well as those experiencing class and economic precarity, are especially vulnerable because they lack financial buffers and have limited access to legal resources. The woman in this case is not equal to the man in any circumstance; she is seen as the 'Other'. This buttresses Simone de Beauvoir's point in *The Second Sex*, that a woman is defined relative to man as the incidental, the inessential, the Other remains relevant (1981, p. xxii). That is why Monsieur Francois treats Kadiatou as such. The storage-room assault is thus not an aberration but a structural opportunity shaped by the intersection of gender, class and workplace hierarchy. After this incident, Kadiatou meets Ahmadou, who helps her to seek asylum abroad, using female genital mutilation, rape, early and forced marriage as reasons to migrate to America. This narrative translates to a positive response from the immigration officials; he provides a cassette tape of a fabricated rape story for her to practice (Adichie, 2025, p.198-199). The asylum process itself becomes an early site of intimidation; the genuine reason for wanting a better life is considered inadequate, and a moving and engaging story of violation and violence is required. This preparatory fabrication later boomerangs as a weapon against her credibility, depicting how institutional demands for specific kinds of stories can themselves become instruments of later discrimination and disqualification.

In America, working as a hotel cleaner on the VIP floor, Kadiatou is sexually assaulted by a high-ranking French diplomat. Adichie meticulously documents the speed and dehumanising impact of the attack. After knocking and announcing her presence, calling out, "Hello? Housekeeping! Housekeeping! Hello?" (Adichie, 2025, p. 222), Kadiatou enters an apparently empty suite but is confronted by a naked man who forces her, pulls down her underwear violently, and forces oral sex (Adichie, 2025, p.223). In this situation, Kadiatou's violation is shaped by implicit biases that render her body accessible. Power, race, class, gender and vulnerability converge. Her status as a migrant woman of colour, limited English, economic dependence and fear of job loss constrain her from putting up a resistance. The hotel security manager, though initially supportive,

also registers the guest's VIP status "He is a VIP, but I don't care," Shaquana says, however, the Manager's "Oh my God exposes institutional anxiety about confronting an influential and powerful guest (Adichie, 2025, P. 224-225). As a migrant, poor and uneducated worker, Kadiatou faces the fear of deportation or visa cancellation, there are also language barriers and limited knowledge of labour rights. This situation explains the fact that race and gender asymmetry affect perceived trustworthiness (Valmori et al., 2023; Meltzer, 2025), because gender has an influence on the attribution of blame to a victim survivor. In Kadiatou's case, sexual abuse becomes intertwined with state power, as employers may implicitly or explicitly leverage immigration enforcement as a threat. With the help of her employer, the assault was reported immediately, the police came to hear her testimony and also take all the evidence they needed, including photographs of her private parts and her torn clothes and underwear. The hospitals took some samples, such as swabs of the mouth and body and X-rays to ascertain that, truly, there was an assault. This evidence collection constitutes a second invasion that Kadiatou experiences as humiliation (Adichie, 2025, p.232). The painful but invasive process is essential for legal pursuit, yet it clearly heightens the sense that her body is available for scrutiny while her personhood remains insignificant. The detective who later attends to her with relative respect stands out because such treatment is uncommon.

Subsequently, the case was brought before the court, and the media became aware of it. Kadiatou's life reveals the role of American media in mediating whose suffering matters. When her story enters public discourse, it is filtered through narratives that prioritise spectacle, respectability, and legal simplification. It is so because in these western countries, victims do not conform to socially constructed expectations, especially those with prior involvement in sex work, illegal migration or criminal activities, as they are less likely to be recognised as victims (Hoyle et, 2011). In that sense, media representations flatten the complexity of Kadiatou's lived experience, reducing her to a symbol, either of victimhood or controversy, rather than acknowledging her full humanity. In this process, implicit biases operate to frame her credibility, morality, and

worthiness of compassion, echoing colonial tropes that have historically disciplined women of colour through public scrutiny.

Victim Blaming Tendencies as an Implicit Bias Attitude

Victim-blaming tendencies refer to the social, psychological, and institutional practices through which responsibility for violence or harm is shifted, explicitly or implicitly, from the perpetrator to the victim. These tendencies are rarely neutral; they are shaped by power, bias, and historical inequality. Implicit bias plays a central role in victim blaming by shaping assumptions about credibility, morality, and worthiness. This leads decision makers to privilege evidence that aligns with preexisting stereotypes about the "ideal victims" (Ask & Granhag, 2005). Survivors from marginalised groups are more likely to be seen as unreliable or complicit. This claim is confirmed by how Adichie's text presents Kadiatou's testimony.

An African American lawyer becomes Kadiatou's Attorney. During one of the court sessions, an interpreter, Mariama, whose Fula is Senegalese rather than Guinean Pular, mediates for Kadiatou. This interpreter, owing to tribal differences in African countries, could not convey Kadiatou's words (from Guinea) accurately. Even when both speak Fula, originating from different African countries, their dialects differ. Tom Bone, the investigator's prosecutor, quickly left the sexual violence/ assault case to Kadiatou's asylum application and migration to America: "I'm going to ask you some questions about your asylum application to the United States" (Adichie, 2025, p.248). With this other charge, the assault was kept aside to talk about her immigration claims, and because some of those claims were made-up stories that Ahmadou, her friend, told her to say, she could not remember them. Under intense pressure, fragments of the practised asylum story surfaced. Bone pounces on them and labels her "a con artist" (Adichie, 2025, p.251). This situation proves Martschuk et al. (2024), who demonstrate that perceived inconsistencies in sexual-assault survivors' accounts can trigger doubts about their credibility and influence decisions concerning the prosecution of their cases. However, Kadiatou's assailant never gets to appear in court to answer the charges against him; instead, the assaulted becomes the object of legal scrutiny of her past. "One way to approach the problem of Intersectionality is to examine how courts frame and interpret stories

of Black women plaintiffs" (Crenshaw, 1989, p.141). This is so because cognitive and implicit biases have roles to play in blaming the victim (Janoff-Bulman et al, 1985). With Kadiatou's situation, Adichie works with three levels of Intersectionality: "structural intersectionality, political intersectionality and representational intersectionality" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). The ways that women of colour's actual experiences of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform differ qualitatively from those of white women due to their position at the crossroads of race and gender are known as structural intersectionality. Paradoxically, feminist and anti-racist politics have frequently contributed to the marginalisation of the problem of violence against women of colour through political intersectionality. In contrast, representational intersectionality demonstrates how women of colour are culturally constructed, and how debates over their portrayal in popular culture may also obscure their specific location, creating yet another avenue for intersectional disempowerment.

Through these levels of intersectionality, the assault she suffered was pushed aside to ascertain her credibility "This case depends entirely on your credibility. Do you understand that?" (Adichie,2025, p.238). She became the culprit instead of the victim: "'If there is any discrepancy in your asylum application, any at all, I need to know it now', Bone said." (Adichie, 2025, p.239). The assaulter never appeared in court to answer for his crimes; instead, the victim became the criminal, who is now interrogated about her immigration claims just because she is an immigrant. This situation solidifies the Harvard women's claim that "male power was reinforced by a judicial system in which the successful conviction of a White man for raping a Black woman was virtually unthinkable" (cited by Crenshaw, 1989, p.159). It is even more unimaginable when the perpetrators possess social control (e.g., wealth, race, profession, status). They are more likely to be presumed innocent. Kadiatou kept receiving emails sent through DHL from France, which read "You will die. You have destroyed a great man. He is innocent. You will die" (Adichie, 2025, p.246). As a victim, she is blamed and accused of destroying a rapist's life. Her life is also threatened. Kadiatou, as a victim already, goes through secondary victimisation (Ullman, 2010) as her assault is invalidated and she is blamed for trying to destroy a

powerful man. These victim-blaming attitudes have the potential to influence not only the public perceptions of victims but also the support, protection and justice outcomes they receive. That is how the investigation into her immigration claim took journalists down to as far as her hometown in Fouta Djallon, her daughter is haunted in school, her apartment in America is hounded as journalists keep banging on her door. Then, "it was a newspaper headline, in large print, above a photo of her. PROSTITUTE (Adichie, 2025, p.254). The word solidifies the implicit bias that sexualises and shames the migrant woman of colour while protecting the powerful White man. Crenshaw notes that "When white males raped Black women, they were being raped not as women generally, but as Black women specifically: their femaleness made them sexually vulnerable to racist domination, while their Blackness effectively denied them any protection" (1989, p.158). This injustice is why the law, female rights activists, the media, and even the people failed Kadiatou.

These unconscious biases allow observers to rationalise violence without overtly endorsing it. The victim-blaming also shields powerful perpetrators from accountability, because by blaming the victim, the system avoids confronting structural inequality and granting justice as is due. As a result, the French diplomat evades punishment: the charges were dropped because, according to the court and the press, Kadiatou had lied about too many things and could not be trusted. In the novel, "they said there is compelling evidence to support her version of events, but because she wasn't honest and forthcoming about her past, they can't trust her and don't think a jury will trust her" (Adichie, 2025, p. 405).

The assault is not invalidated, but it is rendered unprosecutable because the survivor falls short on an implicit test of purity and transparency that is rarely applied with equal force to powerful men. Kadiatou experiences the dropping of charges as an escape from a system not intended to profit people like her. It is clear how gender, class, sexuality, race, and migration status interact within a context of the systems and structures of power, e.g., laws, policies, state government, political and economic unions, and the media, all connected (Olena, 2014; Connor et al., 2022; Chamberlain et al., 2024) to deny Kadiatou justice. Despite the assault, the case was dropped because "they are saying they can't prove it because of what

she's said in the past" (Adichie, 2025, p.405). With this, the case of sexual violence against a migrant, poor woman of colour is swept under the carpet.

This omission of distinction in identity politics is problematic in the context of violence against women, primarily since the violence that many women endure is frequently influenced by other aspects of their identities, such as race and class. So "when the practices expound identity as woman or person of colour as an either /or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of colour to a location that resists telling" (Crenshaw, 1991, p.1242). That is why the victims will instead not tell their stories. Kadiatou saw the "dropping of the charges as an escape from a system she knew was not set up to benefit people like her" (Adichie, 2025, p.399). Adichie's authorial declaration is unmistakable: "A victim need not be perfect to be deserving of justice" (2025, p. 413). Through Kadiatou, Adichie exposes how sexual violence against migrant women of colour is not merely a private trauma but a public failure, produced by intersecting systems of migration control, racial hierarchy, and mediated bias. Kadiatou's life thus functions as an ethical centre of *Dream Count*, compelling readers to confront the costs of a society in which belief, care, and justice are unevenly distributed along colonial and racial lines. Importantly, *Dream Count* resists portraying Kadiatou as a passive victim. Her interior life, her memories, silences, and acts of endurance assert a form of agency that exists outside dominant frameworks of empowerment. Adichie foregrounds Kadiatou's dignity and moral clarity, even as institutions fail her, thereby challenging liberal feminist narratives that equate justice solely with legal recognition or media validation. Kadiatou's life insists on the value of survival as a form of resistance within conditions that systematically deny protection.

Media Representation as A Vehicle of Implicit Bias

This dynamic examines how the American media and journalists' reductionist representations of sexual violence involving women of colour often perpetuate implicit bias. The media's bias is both glaring and implicit. News coverage often focuses on the negative portrayals of minority groups (Ahmed, 2024). That is why race, sex, and class become substantial as they operate to disadvantage the victims

explicitly and privilege whiteness and maleness, as seen in Kadiatou's case. The novel's portrayal of the media is fundamental to its analysis of implicit bias. Press coverage does not simply account for events; it aggressively reconstructs Kadiatou's public identity. Her private space is invaded by Journalists, who travel to Guinea, lobby for photographs from her relatives, and spread an unappealing image of her that becomes symbolic. A character notes that nearly all reporting frames the story as "The People vs Kadiatou, instead of The People vs this Very Important Frenchman" (Adichie, 2025, p. 320). This narrative inversion is a marker of implicit bias. The headlines announcing "Kadiatou Bah, angel or demon?" and rumours about a political scheme (Adichie, 2025, p. 260) reduce a multifaceted human experience to public display and distrust. Confirming recent media reporting on sexual violence as mere rape myths, language of blame and setups that disregard intersectionality (Andrews et al., 2025), and that sexist media content intensifies resentment against women. In the novel, the above-mentioned issues consequently lead to threats, public shaming, the loss of privacy for Kadiatou and Binta, and the eventual override of legal compensation.

Kadiatou's broken English, her asylum past, her lower-class position as a hotel cleaner, and her migrant origin as an African are employed not as situations that explain defencelessness but as indications of untrustworthiness or veiled motive representing intersectional oppression. The media, through desire for sensationalism, depicts the very prejudices that the legal process also exhibits (Adichie, 2025, Author's Note, p. 410). They mandate the marginalised survivor, Kadiotou, to be faultless, honest and ethically untainted, while the culprit's social standing automatically confers and implies innocence.

However, Adichie rejects this societal projection; instead, she gives Kadiatou a rich portrayal with enduring inner strength. Her devoted care for Binta, quiet poise, and nostalgia for Guinea depict and define her great strength. By calmly accepting systemic flaws, Kadiatou proves that survival itself is an act of resistance, revealing an agency independent of traditional legal victory or media validation. The novel thus functions as a powerful critique that confronts and exposes the hidden implicit biases that shape how the American media depicts sexual violence against migrant women of

colour. Adichie challenges this representational bias by giving Kadiatou interiority, dignity and a history beyond the assault, thereby resisting the reductive "single story" through which African migrant women are often represented. Adichie restores emotional and moral complexity to a character reduced to a caricature by the press. Through this, she re-humanises a character whom institutions and the media narratives systematically deny. The link between implicit bias and media representation in the text becomes a vehicle for the perpetration of intersectional oppression of migrant women of colour.

Conclusion

This study shows that Kadiatou's experience in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count* demonstrates how media representation, implicit bias and intersectionality operate together in shaping the public understanding of sexual violence against migrant women of colour. Kadiatou is not represented simply as a woman who has experienced sexual assault; her identity as a Black African migrant, a woman and hotel employee influences how her credibility and victimhood are perceived. The media's focus on inconsistencies in her account reveals implicit biases that can associate Black migrant women with dishonesty, opportunism or economic motivation, thereby shifting attention from the violence committed against them to their perceived character.

Adichie therefore exposes how dominant media narratives can reproduce existing racial, gender and class hierarchies while simultaneously silencing or diminishing the voices of women whose experiences fall outside socially privileged models of victimhood. Finally, Kadiatou's case demonstrates that the representation of sexual violence is also a struggle over whose suffering is believed, whose voice is legitimised and whose identity is allowed to occupy the position of the credible victim. *Dream Count* challenges this hierarchy by restoring complexity and humanity to Kadiatou beyond the media construction of her as a migrant sexual-assault complainant. The text consequently suggests that addressing sexual violence requires more than recognising gender inequality; it demands an intersectional interrogation of the racial, socioeconomic and migratory biases embedded in the institutions and media narratives through which victims are judged. In this sense, Adichie's

portrayal transforms Kadiatou from an object of public suspicion into a subject whose experience exposes the structural relationship between sexual violence, racialised representation and unequal power.

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