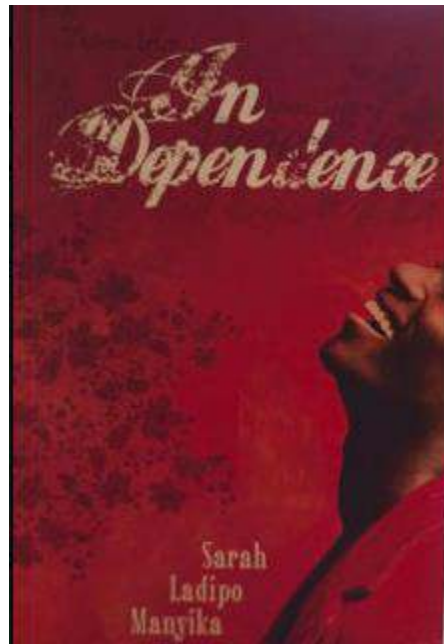


## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF INDEPENDENCE Novel: SARAH LADIPO MANYINKA**

Sarah was born and raised in Nigeria. She has also lived in Kenya, France, and England. Her father is Nigerian and her mother is British. Sarah inherited her maiden name (Ladipo) from her father who was born in Ibadan (South West Nigeria) in the late 1930s. Sarah's father met and married her mother in the UK in the late 1960s. She spent much of her childhood in Lagos and the city of Jos in Plateau State. As a young teenager, Sarah lived for two years in Nairobi, Kenya, before her family moved to the UK.

She studied at the Universities of Birmingham (UK), Bordeaux (France), and Berkeley (California). She was married in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1994 and now divides her time between San Francisco (where she teaches literature at San Francisco State University), London and Harare. Her writing includes published essays, academic papers, book reviews and short stories. Sarah's first novel, *In Dependence*, was published by Legend Press in 2008. Her short story "Mr Wonder" appeared in the 2008 collection *Women Writing Zimbabwe*.<sup>[6]</sup> Sarah's novel *In Dependence* was chosen by the UK's largest bookstore chain as its featured book for Black History Month. In 2009, *In Dependence*, was published by Cassava Republic, a literary press based in Abuja, Nigeria, with a stable of authors that includes Teju Cole and Helon Habila.

## ABOUT THE BOOK INDEPENDENCE - BY SARAH LADIPO MANYIKA



“**In Dependence**” was published in the UK in 2008, in Nigeria in 2009 and in the US in 2011. It is Sarah Ladipo Manyika’s first novel. The novel begins in the early 1960s when Tayo Ajayi meets Vanessa Richardson, the beautiful daughter of an ex-colonial officer. Their story, which spans three continents and four turbulent decades, is that of a brave but bittersweet love affair. It is the story of individuals struggling to find their place within uncertain political times – a story of passion and idealism, courage and betrayal.

In Dependence can be described as a love story. But it is more than that. It traces the trajectory of Nigeria’s political history; the military coups, the bad and treacherous leadership, and its renewed tentative steps towards democracy. It speaks to the demise – in the 1980s – of Nigeria’s international reputation and the country’s rapidly destabilizing reality. It looks at the poor whose situation never improved but actually worsened.

Using events in Tayo’s life, it describes the effects of misrule on the country’s universities and the ensuing massive brain drain that Africa experienced. Sarah Manyika achieves all this with a voice and an outlook that is truly authentic and

objective. The author captures the mood and feel of different decades and the three continents – Africa, Europe and America – that serve as settings for the story. Its scope is vast and sweeping.

## **SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL IN DEPENDENCE- BY SARAH LADIPO MANYIKA**

Tayo Ajayi, a Nigerian, and Vanessa Richardson, an English woman, had their affair boiling when it started, but as circumstances were meant to intervene, the relationship went sore and it seemed nothing could ever bring them together.

The book has characters that behaved in like-patterns, like in the case of Tayo's friend, Yusuf, who had dated lots of white English ladies. He (Yusuf) ended up marrying a Nigerian Woman as predicted (Yusuf knew what he wanted and seemed to get it). Tayo also ended up the same way in as much as his affair with Vanessa Richardson had been gleaming, although his had been out of the mistake of getting a young woman (Miriam) pregnant. And talking of pattern, the novel's beginning had opened up introducing Tayo's affair with Christine, a Nigerian Igbo lady.

One would think that Manyika had to end Tayo's relationship with Christine for the sake of bringing in Vanessa into Tayo's life, but still, Tayo had to end up marrying Miriam. And still the marriage failed, giving in to the familiar pattern.

Miriam in Manyika's novel represented the breeds of the Nigerians that would always run away to live abroad due to the collapsing image of their home country. Miriam went away with her daughter leaving Tayo behind. In as much as she persuaded Tayo, he wouldn't go. She didn't like an inconveniencing life. She wanted the best life for her daughter. Tayo, on the other side represented the crude breeds of Nigerians that felt home was home even though the country was boiling in corruption. In as much as the failure of the country stared firmly at his face with daggers, he chose to stay. Towards the late pages of the novel he had to leave the country under threatening circumstances against his life from the ruling military

regime.

The entire novel is told from the good days of Nigeria's independence down into the nineties. I applaud Manyika's ink, here. In as much as the setting of this novel floated through England, Senegal, USA, and France, she was able to use her third eye to draw out Nigeria's journey into the worse lanes of corruption, and hopelessness.

Faith is another issue that Manyika dealt with. It didn't matter to her if one was a Moslem or Christian. Reading through this novel, one couldn't tell if Tayo came from a Moslem or Christian family but we did know he embraced more of the Christian faith. She failed to point out the difficulties of inter-religious marriages in the novel, but centred more on the difficulties of interracial marriage.

During Tayo's life as a part time lecturer in Sans Francisco, Manyika used a scene to unbolt some deeper issues of racism. She pointed out the racist ties between the African American and the pure African. These issues she raised apply everywhere even within Nigerians.

A Yoruba would refer to an Igbo as a greedy money monger and dubious monster, and in turn the Igbo would refer to the Yoruba as a dirty, loquacious and foolish personality who spend all he earns on parties and alcohol. It had to be understood that racism was one those existences that would live for a long time as far as misunderstanding between people existed.

I captured lines that are coated with humour in this novel, but could be called racial remarks. Young black Yusuf came clean in his conversation with Tayo. He said white women were for sex treats while black women were for decent relationships that could lead to marriage. He added that a white woman looked so old when she turned thirty.

The worst racist in this book is Vanessa's father who was a one time colonial master in Nigeria before 1960. He was against Tayo marrying his daughter, and had refused to accept Vanessa's adopted half-cast son. He seemed more racial against half-casts earlier in the novel confronting Tayo about his fears for a half-cast grandchild.

It was later understood that his hatred for the blacks was as a result of an affair his wife had with a black man during the colonial era.

Manyika, whose picture shows she is perhaps half-cast, was able to make a point here. She drew a difference between being black and being a half-cast (brown). This would have been quite a storm for her to write about because of the racial wind against the brown people living in whitely dominated regions. In contrast to a pure black country, half-casts are seen beautiful which Manyika failed to point out. In fact in the black continent, the typical black man may feel inferior to a half-cast.

Manyika was also able to portray the polemic attack Nigerians receive from around the world these days. She didn't bring this to print but the image was represented, and I had to figure it out. I can say it clouds around the pain felt each time an IELTS or TOEFL exam is required before a Nigerian could study abroad. This doesn't exclude a masters' degree. Does the world think Nigerians speak Latin or Greek or some kind of language called 'Nigerian'?

'I said I haven't heard you speak Nigerian,' Joyce says. Joyce is one of Manyika's English characters. And I like the way Yusuf replies this. 'Nobody speaks Nigerian, you daft thing.'

A coincidence in this novel which I refuse to accept was the scene in which Vanessa had just come across one of her best music, Hugh Maskela, a song that reminded her of Nelson Mandela... And on the same day, not even up to two hours if I could rightly predict, her white husband is presenting her with 'Long Walk to Freedom', Nelson Mandela's biography. What a coincidence!

I also do not embrace the fact that Manyika saw hope for Nigeria through the eyes of Tayo only when Abacha died. There are still Abacha loyalists in Nigeria today who will find this offending. She should have kept the line in a riddle.

Vanessa did meet with Tayo at the end of the novel, but it was hard to predict if at all a love relationship was ignited between them. Vanessa was still married, but Tayo wasn't. Manyika maintained a non-adulterous plight between the two here.

The happy-ending-formula which most romance writers adapt was blurring in the novel.