Clarion Review

General

Ejituru
Nwanganga Shields
Xlibris
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Set in Nigeria and the U.S., this captivating story touches upon culture, love, family, and finding one's true self.

Local customs, family dynamics, and personal aspirations collide in this culturally dynamic drama by debut author Nwanganga Shields. In *Ejituru*, Shields lends credence to her story by using her own knowledge of Nigeria and the United States to create her fully developed characters and their true-to-life plights.

Recently returning home from a highly esteemed girls' boarding school in Nigeria, eighteen-year-old Ejituru, the only surviving child of seven siblings, dreams of nothing more than attending a Nigerian university to become a doctor. With her doting mother's encouragement, and support from extended family and friends, she makes her preparations. Yet Nwakama, Ejituru's father, seeking a higher status in the community, has different plans for his daughter. Nwakama realizes he can achieve this better status with the marriage of his only daughter to Ignatius, the son of a man he believes has a high standing in society. Ejituru agrees to the marriage and moves to the United States. Amidst lies, secrets, and staunch refusals to cooperate, the couple's paths will, again, take another turn.

In *Ejituru*, the struggle to be obedient and pleasing, yet be true to oneself, comes with a price, yet the story also speaks to the possibility that, with hope and perseverance, anything can happen.

Ejituru is a captivating story about love, family relationships, and finding one's true self. Each of Shields's characters are paid due respect in this story that carries readers smoothly from one perspective to another, allowing them to sympathize with each character on a personal level. Shields's story also teaches that despite differences in skin color or ancestry, most people wish

for the same things in life. The characters learn that what is in one's heart, not the approval of society, is what matters in the end. As one character notes, "I feel as if I'm my grandfather, Achi, who went through so much before achieving happiness." It is a sentiment that most readers can appreciate.

The incorporation of the author's native Nigerian language into this rich, character-driven story serves the readers well because it enhances the integrity of the dialogue. "She's feeling better, Auntie. Thank you for your concern. *Nda aga imere?* How have you been keeping?" is a good example. With sequential events that, for all intents and purposes, may lead readers to think they know what lies ahead, the story holds revelations that will surprise and, ultimately, stir emotions.

Unfortunately, the book's cover does not reflect the beauty of the story itself. The silhouetted couple pictured on the cover speaks to the characters' angst yet doesn't express the story's bigger idea. In truth, *Ejituru* is a compelling and worthwhile read.

Tammy Snyder