3rd Annual Black Feminism, Womanism and the Politics of Women of Colour in Europe

Savvy Contemporary, Berlin
29th September 2018
Draft programme

10.00 Welcome

10.15 Looking Back, Looking Forward: A Conversation with Katharina Oguntoye

11.15 Break

11.30 Parallel Workshops #1

**Decolonise! Part One**

Towards a Self-Decolonizing Feminist Practice in Academic Collaboration
Davinia Gregory and Elsa T. Oommen

Knowledge, Power and Education: Imagining Solidarity-based Antiracist and Feminist Classroom Settings
Sheila Ragunathan

Decolonizing Language Classes
Simone Zeefuik

**The Politics of Home**

Home as a Site of Freedom and Resistance
Gabriella Beckles-Raymond

A Sister-to-Sister Dialogue: The Role of the Kitchen Tables Throughout Black Feminist Memory and History
Giada Bonu

Chillies as Protest? Autoethnographic Musings on My Mom’s (Unintended Decolonial) Cooking Practices
Fallon Tiffany Cabral

Resisting Gentrification
Siana Bangura
Afrofeminism, Cultural Production and the Oppositional Gaze

Declaration of Self: Fashioning Identity in An African City
Krys Osei

But Some of Us Are Tired: Black Women’s ‘Personal Feminist Essays’ in the Digital Sphere
Kesiena Boom

All That You Touch
Silex

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Parallel Workshops #2

Learning from Our Past: 40 Years of Black British Feminism

Pasts, Presents, and Futures: Genealogies of Black Diaspora Feminism in Britain
Nydia A. Swaby

‘No Liberation without Black Women’: Gender in the Black Liberation Front
Amelia Francis

‘Strangers at Home’: How Black Feminists ‘Fought Back’ in Thatcher’s Britain
Jade Bentil

Black Sisterhood and its Fragments: The Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent
Sue Lemos
Afrofeminist Collectives in Conversation

**Afrofeminism in France: From 1920s to the Present**
Mwasi Afrofeminist Collective

**The Future of Female* Identified Activism in Communities of Colour: Transnational, Local, Different**
Jamile da Silva e Silva, AnouchK Ibacka Valiente, Hoang Tran Hieu Hanh and Clementine Ewokolo Burnley

**Soul Sisters Berlin**
Cienna Davis, Nasheeka Nedsreal and Christine Seraphine

**Schwarze Frauen Community**
Esther Maria Kürmayr

### Black Bodies in Spaces and Places

**Big Invisible Fridge**
Demelza Toy Toy

**Facebook, Blackness and Resistance: Digital Activism in an Era of Surveillance Capitalism**
Rhianna Ilube

“I’m asking you sincerely mother, did you truly survive it?” Queering FGM Discourses amongst Somali Communities in Britain
Hodan Omar Elmi

**The Ancestor is Epistemic: Colonial Exhibition of a Black African Girlchild in Finland**
Faith Mkwesha

15.30 **Break**
16.00 Parallel Workshops #3

**Decolonise! Part Two**

*Exposing Eurocentrism in Art and Design Education: The Case Study of a Women of Colour Reading Group*
Tanveer Ahmed

*Decolonising Knowledge Production: Culturally Responsive Teaching in Danish Classrooms*
Mette Toft Nielsen

*Voices from the Margins: A Conversation on Black Feminism in Peace and Conflict Studies*
Esther Wangari Philips and Mira Hellmich

**Black Feminist History, Memory and Archival Practices**

*Oral History as Epistemic Justice: Seeking out the Voice of Black Women and Elders on Political Blackness*
Alexandra Wanjiku Kelbert and Natasha Mumbi Nkonde

*‘Kinky Hair Blues’: Remembering Una Marson’s Early Contribution to Transnational Feminist Activism*
Amber Lascelles

*Womyn Loving Womyn; Creating Archive, Erasing Boundaries*
Dorett Jones

**Building the Movement: Documenting Afrofeminist Activism**

*“Distant Connections”: Black Feminist Experience and Literary Kinship in Audre Lorde’s *Zami* and Ika Hügel-Marshall’s *Daheim Unterwegs*
Anne Potjans

*The Transnational Activism of Afro-German Women in Europe from 1980 to 1990*
Pamela Ohene-Nyako

*By Us, For Us: “Brown Girls” and the Birth of a Women of Colour Movement in Finland*
Jasmine Kelekay

*(Re)Imagining Community: Building Afrofeminist Spaces and Practices in Spanish State*
Esther (Mayoko) Ortega Arjonilla
17.30 Break

18.00 Keynote: Noah Sow

19.00 Close
...from 20.00 Afterparty

Abstracts

Parallel Workshops #1

Decolonise! Part One

Towards a Self-Decolonizing Feminist Practice in Academic Collaboration
Davinia Gregory and Elsa T. Oommen

This paper uses collaboration as the subject of analysis and reflection, interrogating the potential of what we call a ‘Self-decolonizing feminist practice' as a means of feminist activism and self-preservation within academic institutions. The terminology ‘Self-decolonising feminist practice' is influenced by Bourdieu’s emphasis on reflexivity and practice which ‘sets out to make explicit the truth of primary experience of the social world' (Bourdieu, 1977: 3). Drawing from the postmodern turn within social sciences and the emphasis on praxis and embodiment in social theory, we argue that a reflexive feminist practice should also be decolonial in its ambit. We argue that this decolonization needs to begin with the individual researcher. As female researchers of colour with differing intersectional identities, we reflect on our own embodied practices of occupying the neoliberal academic space in the UK.

Additionally, the paper considers strategic essentialism as a tool for creating unity, having enabled collective confidence, strategizing, and mobilisation in political and cultural decolonisation processes over the past century. The research question that guides our enquiry is: How far is political blackness useful in contemporary UK academia; what are its problems, and what may be the uses of strategic essentialism within academic institutions, in navigating academic careers? To grasp the core of the self-decolonisation process, we examine collaborative processes within our own academic practices to understand the usefulness of something developed from, but moving beyond the
strategic essentialism of political blackness. These processes of collaboration enable us to reach beyond intersectional boundaries and dismantle intersectional hierarchies, to further decolonize each other’s thought processes and those of a wider readership, through fruitful and truly equal academic collaborations. It is this broader potential of feminist practice, which begins with individual researchers, that we term - self-decolonising feminist practice.

**Knowledge, Power and Education: Imagining Solidarity based Antiracist and Feminist Classroom Settings**
Sheila Ragunathan

The recent literature on institutional racism in Germany has shown that there is a tendency within German feminist social sciences to disavow the roots of intersectionality in antiracist struggles and discuss intersectionality’s body of thought without addressing understandings of the effects, relationships and interdependencies of power and domination in the context of the nation state (Erel et. al. 2011). In addition, Black student and Student of Colour activism has shed light on the lack of addressing race in feminist classes and/or that their bodies often function as the objects of study in the classroom.

My research focuses on the dynamics at play in German feminist classrooms and argues for an antiracist feminist pedagogy that aims to provide a space for the realities and knowledges of Black students and Students of Colour to be part of the epistemologies and research bodies taught and developed within the classroom. Because “the way we construct curricula and the pedagogies we use to put such curricula into practice tell a story” (Alexander and Mohanty 2010), I focus on an interview I conducted with six Black students and Students of Colour at Frankfurt University to highlight not only their story of experiencing (antiracist) feminist classroom settings but also their demands for transforming teaching and learning atmospheres.

**Decolonizing Language Classes**
Simone Zeefuik

In December 2013, one of my Sisters and I initiated #UndocumentedNL. We did so as a collective of approximately 90 illegalized, Black refugees settled in a squat-turned-shelter in Amsterdam. Together with a group of squatters, they co-created a space where they, as people rejected by one of Fortress Europe’s most notoriously inhumane asylum regimes, could strategize towards different forms of survival. It was still far from living and the vast majority of white supporters/volunteers who were involved with the collective, engaged in saviourist and other colonial behaviours.
There is a lot to be said about how saviourist toxicity ravaged and continues to demolish what could have been a strong, political movement but for this conference I’d like to focus on how in this particular case the decolonization of knowledge production could... correction, will lead to a social and political strengthening of the positions of Black, illegalized refugees in the Netherlands. As in my work with #DecolonizeTheMuseum and #RewriteTheInstitute, I focus on the linguistic side of social justice and other quests for dignity of marginalized Black communities in the Netherlands. For example: #UndocumentedNL became a space where we rejected the term “illegal” and introduced “illegalized” plus where we structurally countered *uitgeprocedeerd* (a Dutch term stressing that someone’s asylum procedure has ended) and offered “undocumented”, shifting the conversations from problematizing people to challenging NL’s asylum bureaucracy. We also used it to discuss the curriculum of Dutch and English we gave and critique the hyper-colonial Dutch classes refugees are forced to take for their “integration exam”. I’d love to discuss the work we’ve done with #UndocumentedNL + #IllegalizedNL and talk about our new series of language classes for illegalized refugees in shelters and in prisons.

**The Politics of Home**

**Home as a Site of Freedom and Resistance**

Gabriella Beckles-Raymond

In the twentieth-century migratory waves to Britain from across the African Diaspora, people left their homelands with their own conceptions of home. However, upon arriving in Britain, in addition to these socio-historical contexts African/Caribbean people experienced, their encounters with the hostilities of British society exposed a tension between core ideas entailed in the Western conception of home. In grappling with these tensions, as an inevitable feature of their experience in Britain, African/Caribbean people revisit, re-imagine, and reassert their conceptions of home. In adapting the home to suit these multifarious uses, ever-resourceful Caribbean people re-defined the home space in ways unintelligible to conventional Western ideals. Home, for Caribbean people, reflected their identity, their sense of self-worth, and the one space over which they could have dominion no matter what happened beyond the front door. I want to explore the ways in which twenty-first century Britons of Caribbean heritage are revisiting the home in attempts to navigate the idea of home as a physical/geographical space and home as a feeling. I will focus on the role women are playing in this process, first because the home continues to be treated as a primarily female domain, and second precisely on account of this bias, home for women is a space in which the fight for freedom must crucially be waged. My claim is that in
continuing to exercise agency in the context of interlocking systems of domination, women of Caribbean heritage in Britain challenge prevailing British conceptions of home.

**A Sister-to-Sister Dialogue: The Role of the Kitchen Tables Throughout Black Feminist Memory and History**

Giada Bonu

Kitchen tables and the space of the kitchen have been a crucial role in Black feminist/Afrofeminist/Womanist memory and herstory (hooks 1991). Since the very beginning, between seven and eight hundred, during the period of colonial plantation and slavery in North America, kitchens were mostly devoted to Black Women’s work and exploitation (Davis 2011). Nonetheless, these spaces gradually took on a different meaning, due to the use and agency put in place by Black women and the slave’s community (Davis 1999). The confidential and intimate space of the kitchen allowed women to build networks of care, solidarity, survival and resistance, against the exploitation of settlers, violence and gender segregation (Lorde 1984). The subversion of its previous function turned kitchens in spaces of protest, activism and care, through a secret and ongoing sister-to-sister dialogue. The kitchens have kept their crucial role even during the sixties and seventies for the rising Black Women movements, which across the kitchen tables has woven words and strength for the struggles to come (Hull, Scott and Smith 1982). A role proved also by the name of Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde and many other activists publishing house (“Kitchens Tables: Women of Color Press”) (Smith 1986). Kitchens are therefore private spaces intrinsically political, places of memory, places of transnational, intersectional and intergenerational coalition-building (De Petris 2005). Their role is at least threefold, as activist space, as place of intimacy and care, as topos of memory and herstory. More than “the room of one’s own”, so dear to white feminisms, “the kitchen tables” claim a collective and shared meaning for women’s survival and liberation. Why kitchen tables have been so crucial in Black feminist movements and how make it visible? Which space, time and practice they draw? Why understanding the role of kitchen tables could be crucial for contemporary activism? I’ll search few possible answers through the long history and genealogy of Black Feminist movements, also collecting several qualitative interviews to contemporary activist.

**Chillies as Protest? Autoethnographic Musings on My Mom’s (Unintended Decolonial) Cooking Practices**

Fallon Tiffany Cabral

When I was a child I wanted my parents to stop talking Konkani or eating with their hands in front of my white german friends from school.
I acted as white/german as possible. And my parents – first generation immigrants from Goa, India – were pushed into the kitchen asked to hide their cultural identity (Hall). But there was one field where my mom resisted subjecting herself to her kids claims to stop cooking Goan Indian food but rather prepare normal white-“german” food: spaghetti with tomato sauce or pizza. My mom might have accepted to cook these meals (using Maggi Fix) for me and my siblings, but she always insisted to add green chillies to these meals. So we always had green chillies on pizza, green chillies in tomato sauce, green chillies everywhere. In this talk I want to muse around the question whether or not, and if yes, to what extend – this habit can be read as decolonial (cooking) practice.

In my PhD project I am concerned with the (de/colonizing) negotiation of race/cultural identity and everyday racism in families of BPoC in Germany. Following the approach of Patricia Hill Collins that family is the place where we as BPoC learn how to live up to our socially assigned place in class, race and gender relations I’m trying to explore the difficulty to find moments of individual resistance in postcolonial families. In dominant western discourses BPoC families only serve as a site of patriarchal violence, where women are oppressed victims with no agency. This perspective might also be internalized by feminists of color in the global north that might lack to see everyday protests against re-colonization of postcolonial subjects. At the same time there is also the trap to romantize fantasize random practices of BPoC as protest.

Resisting Gentrification
Siana Bangura

Over the last three years I have developed an interest in the widespread global phenomenon of gentrification and the way in which cities become hostile to those at the bottom who built them. Hailing from South East London originally and now living, working, and creating in the West Midlands, I have had personal experience of the ways in which gentrification and social cleansing can dismantle communities and displace women and children in particular. In this presentation, I will explore the ways in which Black women have resisted the effects of gentrification in Britain and Europe in the past and how they are doing so today. Through referencing the work of local activists like Olive Morris in London’s Brixton and drawing parallels with other Black women activists across Europe and beyond, this presentation hopes to highlight the ways in which cities change and leave those who built them behind, the impact of this on the notion of community and Black womanhood, and the ways Black artists are documenting and archiving this moment.
Afrofeminism, Cultural Production and the Oppositional Gaze

Declaration of Self: Fashioning Identity in An African City
Krys Osei

The popular Ghanaian web-series, An African City, disrupts the stereotypical imaginings of Black African womanhood, by showcasing five women donning contemporary high-end wardrobes, created and produced by Ghanaian fashion designers—which, in effect, positions the metropolis of Accra as a world-class city of style and splendour, comparable to the likes of Western fashion capitals. In “These Girls' Fashion is Sick!”: An African City and the Geography of Sartorial Worldliness (2016), scholar Grace Adeniyi Ogunyankin applauds the use of fashion as a counter-hegemonic tool of activism, in which each character’s fashion identity declares “their refusal to be dispossessed and rendered ungeographic in the cosmopolitan cartography of sartorial worldliness” (Ogunyankin, 2016, 40).

This paper investigates the aestheticisation and stylisation of Black feminist fashion communication, by highlighting the production, distribution and reception of An African City, across the metropolitan diasporic locales of Accra, London and Washington, DC. I posit that my case study, An African City—through its positioning of fashion as a device of social justice, strives to overturn misconstrued understandings of Africa (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004, 352), by presenting itself as a diasporic “entry and exit point not usually dwelt upon in research and public discourse” (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004, 352), which further decolonises geographical knowledges of Black feminist cultural production, causing viewers to rethink Eurocentric geographic hierarchies within the context of diasporic Blackness, by challenging “the Western imagination of African women as the undifferentiated ‘other’ who is also at the periphery of global/world-class fashion” (Ogunyankin, 2016, 40).

But Some of Us Are Tired: Black Women’s ‘Personal Feminist Essays’ in the Digital Sphere
Kesiena Boom

I have poured my soul out online through ‘personal feminist essays’ that use my lived experience of misogynoir and homophobia to explain how oppression operates in an everyday context. The internet, awash with trauma, is saturated with such work by Black women, yet their experiences have been thoroughly overlooked by the academy. In order to address this overlook, this paper explores why Black women are motivated to begin writing and publishing ‘personal feminist essays’, the emotional demands that are placed upon them by doing
such work online, and the ways in which they cope with said demands. Covering white fixation with Black suffering, the guilt of exploiting one’s trauma for financial compensation and the peculiar and particular joy of finding that one is not alone in her experiences of racist and sexist struggle - this work is a contemporary look at what it means to try and affect change in a crooked and relentless digital system. By employing a combination of autoethnography and semi-structured interviews within a Black feminist framework this research explores the ways in which doing ‘the work’ harms and heals us. Ultimately, the study concludes that online ‘personal feminist essay' writing and publishing is a site of contradiction. That is, it is arguably exploitative and traumatic for its writers, yet also brings a myriad of educational and validational benefits.

**All That You Touch**
Silex

All that you touch
You Change.
All that you Change
Changes you.

This citation from *Parable of the Sower* (1993) by Octavia Butler is extraordinarily efficient at empowering the reader. For me, it totally reversed my priorities from expecting others to acknowledge or welcome my existence to being able to shape the world. And therefore, to rethink the kindredship between activists, artists and resisting folks that came before me, that struggles with and around me, and that will shape the world after me. I had to accept that I am part of this work-in-progress trajectory.

All that you touch is an evolving spoken word performance combining words, video and sounds. It describes the journey of a spaceship and its lonely occupant. The vessel was built by an unknown engineer when the earth was about to collapse and the living beings forced to flee. This spaceship has the particularity of broadcasting, apparently randomly, memories of black women** to the fleet in exile. What was the purpose of this feature? How would it touch the other black women** searching for a place to grow? What kind of vision they would then pursue? This piece digs archives and open source data, collects testimonials, celebrates hopes and dreams, and honors everyday struggles. It tries to make visible this path we are building.
Parallel Workshops #2

Learning from Our Past: 40 Years of Black British Feminism

Pasts, Presents, and Futures: Genealogies of Black Diaspora Feminism in Britain
Nydia A. Swaby

Moving between past and present, narrative and theory, archives and ethnography, in this paper, I trace a genealogy of black diaspora feminism in Britain. I examine the postcolonial struggles of women of ‘Asian’ and ‘African’ descent and the terms under which they collectively defined themselves as ‘black’. I also explore the convergence between ‘blackness’ and ‘Britishness’ in black feminist theorizing and self-identification. I argue that, in Britain, black feminism is diasporic in the sense that it emerges from the social and psychic effects of enslavement, colonialism, migration, and settlement and evolves in dialogue with the dominant discourses of race, gender, and nation. However, in the age of increased and increasing global dispersal, Britain’s diaspora space is evolving with greater nuance and momentum. The influx of migrants from Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and other parts of Europe has created new genealogies of migration, giving rise to an even wider array of differently situated diasporic identifications. Various forms of settlement – from refugees and asylum seekers, to those who are granted a visa as a foreign national or person of UK ancestry – has resulted in new displacements outside of and hierarchies within the paradigm of British national identity and belonging. In the present, there are new processes of racialization, making earlier notions of ‘black’ to name the shared experience of racism highly contentious. This makes it harder to mobilize collectively as ‘black feminists’ the way ‘women of color’ did in the past. Thus, by way of some concluding thoughts, I also consider how the changing landscape of persons living in Britain poses challenges for the future of black diaspora feminism.

‘No Liberation without Black Women’: Gender in the Black Liberation Front
Amelia Francis

The Black Liberation Front (BLF), one of the foremost organisations of Britain’s Black Power movement, was established in 1971. Ex-members of the North and West London branches of the UK’s Black Panther Movement (BPM), upon becoming disillusioned by the BPM’s unyielding Marxist and hierarchal doctrine, constructed the BLF as a grassroots organisation. The BLF conceptualised Pan-Africanism and an international socialist revolution as key to black liberation, and remained active until 1993, outliving the Black Power movement as it
began to deteriorate in 1976. Much has been written about the movement regarding its lacklustre undertakings of gender issues. Prominent assertions regarding women as having been relegated to domestic duties have begun to act as generalisations. This paper asserts that such statements should not be discredited, however they can run the risk of neglecting to examine the presence of gender discourse and the contributions of women within the Black Power movement, who in some cases became leaders and mentors to their fellow activists. The BLF’s legacy is often connoted with its initiatives such as the widely distributed Grassroots newspaper, prisoner welfare schemes, support to African liberation movements and the Ujima housing association. Less propagated by historical memory are the organisations women’s initiatives: a women’s group, a women’s column within Grassroots, a separate women’s newspaper, and a catalytic relationship with Britain’s late 20th century black women’s movement, which is pertained with the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent and Brixton Black Women’s Group, both of which the BLF were closely associated. This paper aims to present a more nuanced portrayal of gender in the Black Power movement by narrating the activities of women in the Black Liberation Front.

“Strangers at Home”: How Black Feminists “Fought Back” in Thatcher’s Britain
Jade Bentil

When 300 black women came together in March 1979 for the inaugural National Black Women’s Conference, they were aware that this event marked a turning point in the history of feminist activism in Britain. Creating a collective politics that sought to uproot their experiences of racist, sexist and economic oppression in the UK, Black British feminists refused to be silent. Nearly forty years on from this historic moment however, the Black Women’s Movement of the late 1970s and 1980s has been erased from the historiography of women’s history and activism in Britain.

This paper examines how black women in Britain challenged white supremacist capitalist patriarchy during a time when the political landscape of the country lurched to the right. Understanding that the experiences of black womanhood reside outside of dominant notions of “Britishness”, this paper argues that black feminists utilised their positionality at the margins of society in order to consistently challenge and reframe the concept of national belonging in Britain. In doing so, the Black Women’s Movement “fought back” against right-wing discourses that sought to render their lives both invisible and disposable by the British state. Thus, black women’s endeavour to speak truth to power from their liminal space within the nation places them as
vanguards in the development of black feminist thought and the historic struggle for global black liberation.

Black Sisterhood and its Fragments: The Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent
Sue Lemos

The formation of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) in 1979 was a catalyst for the black [African, Afro-Caribbean and South Asian] British women’s movement, creating the first documented national network of black women activists. In post-war Britain, people of African, Afro-Caribbean and South Asian descent conceptualised ‘black’ as a political moniker for their cross-ethnic coalition. It articulated a diasporic consciousness of their shared experience of racialisation in Britain and joint histories of colonialism and imperialism. OWAAD has been celebrated by scholars and activists alike for asserting a gendered discourse of political blackness – concerning the intersection of race, gender and class – that gave black women visibility. However, the dominant memorialisation of the organisation underemphasises the exclusion of black lesbian women and fraught praxis of Afro-Asian solidarity, which contributed to OWAAD’s demise in 1982. This paper draws on oral history collections, organisational documents, publications by activists and other ephemera to elucidate the exclusion of black lesbian women and political blackness as a contested space. Though the organisation projected ‘Afro-Asian unity’, South Asian women complained of their marginalisation and some sisters even proposed that South Asian women should not be included under blackness. Furthermore, the counter-memory of black lesbian activists illuminates OWAAD as a space of fragmented visibility and isolation. This paper proposes that the experience of heterosexism further politicised black lesbians, leading to the subsequent black lesbian movement. The question of sexuality and the question of ethnicity challenged OWAAD’s conception of black womanhood. This had a profound impact on how blackness and cross-ethnic solidarities continued to be conceptualised and reconceptualised within post-war Britain. This history has important lessons for today and reminds us of the need to embrace and address differences and conflicts when building a radical political praxis of solidarity.
Afrofeminist Collectives in Conversation

Afrofeminism in France: From 1920s to the Present
Mwasi Afrofeminist Collective

If one didn’t know better, one would think that Afrofeminism in France started with Mwasi. However, the tradition of Afrofeminist thought and organising in France dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. When two sisters, Paulette and Jeanne Nardal, started a literary club in their apartment in Clamart, Paris, it quickly became a hub for Black intellectual thought to flourish in the 1920s. Women of the African diaspora have carried Black feminism(s) everywhere colonialism and patriarchy have operated. France is no exception to the rule. In this presentation, we talk you through the movements and individuals that followed in the Nardal sisters’ footsteps, be it via Twitter, academic institutions or occupying public space. The legacy of Black migrant women led organisations such as la Coordination des Femmes Noires (1976-1980), MODEFEN (Mouvement pour la Défense des Femmes Noires, 1981 - 1994) laid the foundation for the activism we claim today in France.

As we near the 100-year mark between the Nardal sisters’ arrival in France and our own movement, we greatly realize that little has changed in 100 years. Antiblackness still fuels state racism in France: Makome M’bowole, Bouna Traore, Luwam Beyene, Lamine Dieng, Adama Traore, Marie-Reine are just a few of the names of the victims of French police brutality over the last two decades. The media attention and subsequent backlash that Afrofeminism attracts in France is a perfect portrayal of the asymmetrical balance between the hypervisibility and simultaneous invisibility of Black women, their labour and their voices. Since these forms of feminism aren’t present in academic French institutions, the transmission and archival our own movements are as political today as they were in the past. We do so as a testament to the history of Afrofeminist existence, resistance and brilliance.

The Future of Female* Identified Activism in Communities of Colour: Transnational, Local, Different
Jamile da Silva e Silva, AnouchK Ibacka Valiente, Hoang Tran Hieu Hanh and Clementine Ewokolo Burnley

First we want to show a film ‘Poetic Conversations’ (10m) from our collective of Berlin based Female* identified Artists and Activists.

Then we pose two questions to guide personal reflections:
• How do we deal with the day to day reality of working with differences in our movements?
• How do we do solidarity when we have competing and contradictory goals?

All feminists* are not all the same. Our differences are important to explain how we “do” feminist* political resistance and why sometimes feminist* coalitions are hard to sustain. “We” speak from four different positions: Southeast Asian, continental African, Brazilian and Cuban first generation migrant female* identified and gender fluid activist people. We think that these positions can be productively compared to European or US Black Diasporic feminist* positions. We draw on personal experiences of feminist* practice (and conflict) from multiple gender perspectives within Black communities and communities of colour in Berlin. Much work has been done in building feminist coalitions between communities with different racial and sexual identities in Germany. However, discourses of citizenship, economic marginalisation, and class continue to structure how feminist political consciousness is formed and expressed in Berlin. Developing intergenerational coalitions between transnational feminist coalitions (of colour, non-African), Southeast Asian, African diaspora (taking into account US and European dominance)/ continental African working class quasi-isolation is utopian, hard and necessary work on our way to self-liberation.

**Soul Sisters Berlin**
Cienna Davis, Nasheeka Nedsreal and Christine Seraphine

Soul Sisters Berlin is a Berlin-based collective of international Black womxn* who are interested in the decolonization and empowerment of Black consciousness. Online we provide a space for Black womxn to connect, network, share resources, and engage in discussion on various topics relating to our lives and experiences as Black womxn. In physical space, we organize retreats, workshops, meet-ups, anti-racist and feminist protests, community discussions, picnics, performances, screenings, hair and makeup tutorials, as well as, art and self-care nights. Recognizing the impact of sexism and racism on our social realities and self-understanding, Soul Sisters is grounded in a global Black feminist political outlook. We support movements and causes that address the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class. We are explicitly focused on empowerment, education, and exchange. Our most effective political strategy is connecting Black women and encouraging the endless possibilities that ensue when Black women unite!
Schwarze Frauen Community
Esther Maria Kürmayr

Schwarze Frauen Community was founded in 2003 and functions as a community centre for Black women and their families living in Austria. Our goal is to support and strengthen them to become full members of the Austrian society. In order to achieve this we organize activities and events guided by the values of equity and equality regardless of origin, appearance, sexual orientation, way of life, gender, language etc.

It is important to us that with our support Black woman, girls and boys reach their fullest potential on all possible levels. One of our main goals is to give each other support, to strengthen our self-esteem and share our experiences and stories because Black narratives are still pushed to the margins and Black women and families are still affected by an intersection of different kinds of discrimination in Austria today.

It is therefore essential that we present a variety of empowering programs in our centre such as:
- Counselling for women and girls
- A girl’s group
- Gender sensitive boys workshop
- Intercultural women’s cafe
- Black Sisters Brunch
- Youth Group Vitamin B (Black)
- Sensitization workshops for majority members
- Parents work

Black Bodies in Spaces and Places

Big Invisible Fridge
Demelza Toy Toy

Big Invisible Fridge is a work created in 2016 and is an investigation into the power dynamics of dominant culture through the presence of my politicised body. The development of this work links my background as a musician and performer to my current interests in my practice. In this work I was interested in the types of spaces that are created by assuming the role of a “Front Woman” and examining the potential of this space for transformation. While states of invisibility, visibility and hyper-visibility are in flux and present. The shifting relationships between power, space and time become activated through the collaboration of performer and audience. I often consider my works as tools to activate spaces for the potential of the audience to reflect upon their own complicity in the systems and structures that maintain and produce systems of dominance. These tools also take on the form of
self care and protection against violence enacted within these structures and systems.

I am interested in the potential that music and sound as part of my practice has for disruption through the questioning and experimentation of what constitutes art practice and artwork. The voice and the sonic represent a form of resistance and liberation from eurocentric art practice with an emphasis on listening as practice in opposition to a focus on seeing and navigation of the gaze.

**Facebook, Blackness and Resistance: Digital Activism in an Era of Surveillance Capitalism**
Rhianna Ilube

How do black activists use social media to organise and create transformative change, whilst confronting the ‘surveillance capitalist’ (Foster and McChesney 2014) practices of such platforms? I propose to run an activist-based workshop exploring the tensions between the mounting critique against dominant digital platforms; and the empowering nature of such platforms to amplify black feminist voices.

This workshop is important given the current political climate, which includes reports that Facebook provided data access for a product marketed to US law enforcement as targeting activists of colour (ACLU 2016); the arrival of the General Data Protection Regulation in the EU in May 2018; live debates surrounding the sexist and racial biases written into AI algorithms; and the concentration of wealth and global power into the hands of an extremely small and largely unaccountable tech minority (Runciman 2015).

The talk will be informed by a series of research interviews with black activist leaders who employ digital platforms to effect change. These interviews will seek to discern the level of awareness, confidence and/or concern that activists currently hold towards the platforms they use, and the knowledge and tools needed to protect minority identities and campaigns in a digital world. As activists, academics and practitioners, it is important for us to have a critical awareness of the benefits and limitations of building campaigns and movements based primarily on social media platforms, and to debate the ways in which technology companies can help or hinder the progress sought by black feminists in the modern world.
'I’m asking you sincerely mother, did you truly survive it?’ Queering FGM Discourses amongst Somali Communities in Britain
Hodan Omar Elmi

This paper seeks to deconstruct the ‘biological’ construction of black femininity presented in FGM discourses in Britain/Europe through racialisation and gendering of diasporic intergenerational Somali females. It is through contemporary discourses concerning FGM that first-generation mothers are discursively positioned as perpetrator, their daughters as victims through the racial-sexual difference and the gendering of bodily acts. It is through this discourse that second-generation Somali girls as victims become citizens of the statehood through mandatory protection of its subjects, i.e children & women.

FGM discourse reflects a ‘queering’ of black female heterosexualities (Haritaworn 2008) (Collins 2004) through which ‘normativity’ is actively reinforced discursively by mainstream media outlets, by the coining of terms such as ‘cutting season’ coupled with increased state intervention: strengthening legislation, mandatory reporting, and incarceration. Furthermore, I will critically examine how community engagement is primarily structured through the problematising of marginalised communities via Gender. I’ll be using Queer necropolitics to deconstruct how Anti-FGM activist perform their activism using “Queer invests in punishment” to achieve political ends i.e government resources. This paper isn’t about the specificity of FGM but rather a tool in which we are able to understand how state policy racialises specific communities through gendering. Additionally, I’d like to use this work in understanding how we can move away from dominant narratives that concern the black female body and how we as black diasporic women are often complicit in reproducing narratives that isolate communities that already exist within the margins of society.

The Ancestor is Epistemic: Colonial Exhibition of a Black African Girlchild in Finland
Faith Mkwesha

I employ ancestral knowledge from Sarah Baartman via Rosa Clay to the streets in Finland in 2017, where a pregnant African girl child is posing sexually for the passers-by in order to raise money for development aid. There is a history of exoticising and displaying black female bodies at street carnivals, museums and churches in 19th-century Europe- Sarah Baartman (Khoikhoi woman who was exhibited as freak show attraction under the name Hottentot Venus came from South Africa to Britain and France) and Rosa Clay Lemberg (a Bantu from Namibia to Finland and U.S.A). Walking in the street in Finland in August 2017, we suddenly encounter the child/your child displayed, pregnant and posing erotically in posters making visible colonial power
relations. Retrieving and revisiting the black female ancestor emigrants, I analyse the sexualised image of a 12 year old Zambian girl in photo images displayed at bus stops and an exhibition in Helsinki, Finland, by Plan International, working in collaboration with white Finnish women, Meeri Koutaniemi and Paola Suhonen to raise funds. Reading the advert from a Decolonial perspective and Black feminist Critical race theory I will analyse the advert, and also using discourse analysis methodology, I will analyse the chain of conversations in the social media campaign by SahWira Africa International #leaveblackchildrenalone and the responses by Plan International to justify the use of the girl in the advert. Sahwira Africa International is an organization founded by a Black African feminist.

**Parallel Workshops #3**

**Decolonise! Part Two**

**Exposing Eurocentrism in Art and Design Education: A Case Study of a Women of Colour Reading Group**

Tanveer Ahmed

Recent academic studies highlight how art and design higher education institutions in the UK can reproduce various forms of exclusion for people of colour, whether this is through racial bias in the interview process; the low attainment and poor retention of Black and Minority Ethnic students; or through the relative absence of non-white educators. In today’s rapidly globalizing education environment, where cohorts of undergraduate students are becoming ever more diverse, how should such exclusions be addressed? This presentation assesses how more pluralistic forms of art and design education could help address current forms of exclusion.

Drawing on a case study of a tutor facilitated women of colour feminist reading group at an art and design higher education institution in the UK, the presentation will highlight the importance of developing extra-curricular spaces of ‘inclusion’ in higher education contexts. Building on critical pedagogical traditions, the case shows how this reading group was utilised by art and design students to help expose how forms of Eurocentric privileging were embedded in a specific higher education context. Having exposed these biases, the reading group then used a decolonising approach to open-up dialogues about alternative art and design practices, whether in photography, textiles or other art and design disciplines.

The case illuminates that, in contrast to dominant forms of Eurocentric art and design education, the cultivation of ‘extra-curricular’ spaces of ‘inclusion’ can problematize and help develop alternatives to current –
often ‘exclusionary’ – art and design ‘norms’. What this case points to, therefore, is that a more inclusive and progressive contemporary form of art and design education is possible. But only perhaps by creating alternative pedagogical spaces where ‘difficult’ questions about hegemonic forms of art and design education can be aired and begin to be addressed in and through (individual and collective) practice.

**Decolonising Knowledge Production: Culturally Responsive Teaching in Danish Classrooms**

Mette Toft Nielsen

In 2017 Denmark marked that 100 years have passed since it sold the West Indies to the USA, thus gave up an important colony that has influenced greatly on the wealth characterising Danish society today. Focusing particularly on the consequences the Danish presence on the West Indies has had for the people of that time, but also the descendants of the former enslaved West Indian population, only little focus has been paid on how discourses and narratives continue to colonize the minds of people today.

The aim of this presentation is to highlight why it is important to counter the cognitive imperialism that occurs when the knowledge we are exposed to is rooted in colonial structures of white supremacy and a racist ideology that continues to alienate and other individuals from the Global South. I will discuss my experience of culturally responsive teaching and argue why this approach to teaching is not just of relevance when teaching children of colour, but equally essential when engaging in learning activities with non-racialized pupils.

Colonization, the concept of the Nation-State, culture and socialization are all topics that invite for engaging pupils in conversations about the world we live in, and how it has come to look the way it does. Further, giving young people insight into how meaning is created through language, discourses and narratives provides them with an additional tool to analyse interactions, as well as the communication they witness, particularly in the media. Additionally, it is important to present young people to literature, arts and influential people representing a broad variety of backgrounds to counter the single story we are presented for through conventional, colonial knowledge production. In this presentation I will invite the audience to hear more about how we, as practitioners, can decolonize knowledge production in the learning processes we facilitate.
Voices from the Margins: A Conversation on Black Feminism in Peace and Conflict Studies
Esther Wangari Philips and Mira Hellmich

In recent years, postcolonial and decolonial approaches have finally reached peace and conflict studies in the German academic realm. Despite an engagement with these approaches, Black feminist perspectives continue to be placed at the margins of the social sciences in general as well as of peace and conflict studies in particular. Kristie Dotson has written extensively on epistemic oppression by revealing that practices of epistemic exclusion lead to an infringement on the epistemic agency of knowers and therefore reduce the ability of Black scholarship to participate in epistemic communities.

Dominant white male European normative frameworks often analyse violence merely from a physical point of view and thus tend to construct the global North as a space of peace and the global South as a space of violence. This oppositional dichotomy still forms the foundation for analysing conflicts across the globe. The complex entanglements of different intersecting local and global structures of violence which shape conflicts in the global North as well as in the global South tend to be insufficiently analysed. A similar approach is reflected in the UN’s agenda on women, peace and security which aims at increasing women’s participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolutions. By merely adding women into existing structures and processes, interventions in conflict resolution fail to address the complexity of local realities, particularly for Black women and/or women of color in these contexts. Black feminist scholars like Kimberle Crenshaw, Audre Lorde or Hakima Abbas have offered crucial analytical, theoretical and methodological tools to analyse the complex entanglements of violence - thereby reaching far beyond a examination of mere physical violence.

Acknowledging the value of methods like storytelling we would like to present a structured conversation on advantages and challenges of using Black feminist perspectives, in peace and conflict studies. Engaging with different case studies we would like to stress the importance of intersectional conflict analysis for peacebuilding both in the global North and in the global South.
Oral history as Epistemic Justice: Seeking Out The Voice of Black Women and Elders on Political Blackness
Alexandra Wanjiku Kelbert and Natasha Mumbi Nkonde

‘Black denoted the colour of their politics, not of their skins’ (Sivanandan 2008:141).

‘Political blackness’, is a crucial frame of reference for anyone looking at anti-racist history in Britain. Stuart Hall described the political blackness as a “form of cultural and political resistance against the hegemony of whiteness and its associated racism” (1992). Under the paradigm of political blackness, all people of colour are ‘black’. In Britain today, books and archives documenting political blackness are predominantly written from the perspective of proponents of political blackness, often men. Further, the most documented critiques of political blackness are written from the perspective of Asian communities. Crucially, it is difficult to come across documented/written critiques of political blackness articulated by Black feminists and women* of colour.

It is our belief that this ‘gap’ in knowledge is a form of erasure, whereby Black women rarely get to write and be documented in our own histories. To construct a fuller picture of anti-racist organising in 1970s-1980s Britain, we intend to conduct interviews with black women and women of colour within the black feminist tradition to ask how they related to political blackness during its heyday. The interviews will form the basis of an oral histories project to be hosted online and deposited in an appropriate archive. We intend to write up an overview of these interviews in a zine to be shared widely and continue conversations beyond the conference. By seeking out the voices of Black women and elders on political blackness, we are hoping to build complex and nuanced insights into the work of solidarity and anti-racist organising. Beyond Britain, conversations are happening about how to build alliances amongst women of colour. We believe that collecting histories of how women of colour mobilised around difference, and why, will provide us with important insights for what solidarity might look like for us as organisers today.

*Inclusive of trans and cis women as well as gender non-conforming people
'Kinky Hair Blues': Remembering Una Marson's Early Contribution to Transnational Feminist Activism
Amber Lascelles

The connections between addressing local concerns and operating against white supremacist capitalist patriarchy on a global scale is of imperative concern to black feminists during this current moment; in doing this work, we look back at the histories of marginalised black women who came before us. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the little-known Una Marson was already doing grassroots political activism across borders. Born in Jamaica in 1905, Marson was a broadcaster, journalist, writer and anti-racist activist who founded the pioneering radio show Caribbean Voices as the first black woman to work for the BBC, founded the first Jamaican women’s magazine, led several women’s liberation groups in Jamaica and Britain, published three volumes of poetry and was secretary to Haile Selasi following the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. But her remarkable contribution to black feminist politics was erased; her poetry went out of print and her archive lay almost untouched until the late 1990s. Although she operated at the same time as several Pan-African black male intellectuals, she is generally not brought to the forefront of those conversations, and North American activists like Angela Davis, bell hooks and Assata Shakur stand at the forefront of second-wave black feminist studies.

Marson’s huge contribution to what I call a ‘Pan-African transnational feminism’ falls between the cracks of these two dominant narratives. This paper establishes Marson as one of the most important transnational black feminist activists of the early twentieth century. Marson’s last volume of poetry, The Moth and the Star, evidences her growing political consciousness after she moved to England and shows how she used poetry as a form of self-care to resist the ‘Kinky Hair Blues’ she experienced in white supremacist Britain. This paper discusses Marson’s activist work and her poetry to memorialise her as an important radical black feminist figure, paving the way for a globally-facing black feminist politics that we continue to strive towards today.

Womyn Loving Womyn; Creating Archive, Erasing Boundaries
Doreett Jones

Heteronormativity permeates every aspect of our societies so how do we as black womyn “do” difference? In what ways have we carved out spaces that are ours that allow us to Be. In the response to oppression, misogynoir, increased nationalism, transphobia and homophobia, have we become consumed with the focus of our resistance and reactions? In defending and struggling for our right to exist, to Be, in what ways can we illustrate the beauty of our different selves in the ugliness and rejection that white supremacist patriarchal
heteronormativity often brings? As France, the UK and the US enter into war with Syria, and the British government continues to withdraw rights, detain and deport British African Caribbean people of the Windrush generation, who have contributed over five decades to the British nation, spaces of organising retreat and archival collection are increasingly vital. I am interested in how social media spaces such as Twitter and Instagram are utilised to create social and political change for our ‘queer’ lives within womanist and feminist movements. These platforms are used in ways which allows for an expansion of dialogues of existence and contributes to commonalities of oppression across geographical boundaries.

Through conversations with activists including those from UK Black Pride, I discuss ways we capture and retain our herstories within ever growing diverse cultures and subcultures? Like those before us we must speak about and celebrate the importance of our herstories in the face of so much. We must continue to create archive of our different lives, Zami loves, Trans-womyn’s lives, Zami feminisms, our ‘queerness’ our spaces of gathering, joy, resistance, celebration, activism and recovery.

**Building the Movement: Documenting Afrofeminist Activism**

“Distant connections”: Black Feminist Experience and Literary Kinship in Audre Lorde’s *Zami* and Ika Hügel-Marshall’s *Daheim Unterwegs*

Anne Potjans

As a self-identified Black woman, lesbian, mother, warrior, and poet Audre Lorde engaged in several transnational projects with women of Color in Black diasporic communities. These connections were inspired by her belief in a mythical kinship and global sisterhood among Black women in the African diaspora, rooted in the common experience of oppression at the intersections of racism and sexism. When Audre Lorde came to Berlin in the 1980s and early 1990s, the connections she built with Black German women in Berlin have to be viewed in this light.

While Lorde’s impact on Black German activism and discourses on community formation remain indisputable, this contribution, however, focuses on her literary legacy and more specifically on the function of autobiographical writing in building, nurturing, and sustaining those cross-cultural ties. By looking at Ika Hügel-Marshall’s *Daheim Unterwegs. Ein Deutsches Leben* (1998) alongside Audre Lorde’s ‘biomythography’ *Zami. A New Spelling of my Name* (1982) it becomes apparent that Hügel-Marshall’s narrative displays various similarities with Lorde’s text in terms of personal, political and aesthetic elements which by no means seem accidental. I maintain therefore that for one, these multi-faceted
connections between the two books display how autobiographical writing is subverted and mobilized as a medium for community formation and cross-cultural exchange in a Black Feminist diasporic context. For another, I argue that the way Lorde engages her matrilineal ancestry in her autobiography and the way this is taken up by Ika Hügel-Marshall serves as a template for writing about (as well as writing as) community formation among Black women in the diaspora, where the idea of kinship and mothering is removed from its genealogical connotation but replaced by common experience.

The Transnational Activism of Afro-German Women in Europe from 1980 to 1990
Pamela Ohene-Nyako

Recent research and publications have highlighted the transnational dimensions of Afro-German women’s activism during the 1980’s and 1990’s, mostly focusing on the transatlantic interactions and influences of Afro-American feminist activist Audre Lorde. Whilst these findings are fundamental for an understanding of feminist diasporic experiences and resistance in Germany and Europe, less attention has been paid to the transnational activism and networks in which Afro-German women participated in collaboration with other Afro-European women and men, and People of Colour. Drawing on my current PhD research, my presentation will introduce three instances where Afro-German women collaborated with other Afro-European women and men: 1) the edition of anthologies Farbe Bekennen and Schwarze Frauen der Welt, 2) their participation within the World Council of Churches’ sub-programs Women Under Racism and SISTERS, and 3) May Ayim’s involvement within the mixed group European Action for Racial Equality and Social Justice alongside Black British activist John La Rose and Franco-Algerian scholar and activist Saïd Bouamana.

By Us, For Us: “Brown Girls” and the Birth of a Women of Colour Movement in Finland
Jasmine Kelekay

As studies of Black and woman of color feminisms are gaining more traction in Europe, little research has engaged the Nordic context. This is partly attributable to the so-called myth of Nordic exceptionalism, which frames the Nordic countries as bastions of gender equality and progressive social policy. Nordic exceptionalism also relies on the dominance of colorblind ideology, which obscures and perpetuates racialized structures by denying the salience of race – thus rendering analyses of race and intersectionality irrelevant and inappropriate. These national myths not only obscure the realities of lived experiences of women of color but also contribute to the oppressive mechanisms that impact their daily lives. In a context where the language of race
and ethnicity is actively erased from public discourses, few cultural resources remain for articulating and investigating intersectionality. Yet even among the Nordic countries, race and intersectionality remains particularly underexplored in Finland, which is often considered too small and homogenous to be relevant for diversity discourses in Europe. This, however, changed in 2017 with the birth of the Ruskeat Tytöt – Brown Girls – movement. When journalist Koko Hubara wrote a blog post about life as a woman of color in Finland one February morning, she had no idea what was to come. The post went viral, with thousands of women of color sharing, embracing, and responding to what was one of the first public articulations reflecting their experiences. A year later, Hubara received a grant to develop Ruskeat Tytöt from a blog into a multimedia platform, a creative writing school for girls of color, and a community hub for workshops, art exhibits, performances, and events by and for girls and women of color in Finland. This paper discusses the rise, significance, and impact of Ruskeat Tytöt as a woman of color feminist movement in Finland.

(Re)Imagining Community: Building Afrofeminist Spaces and Practices in Spanish State
Esther (Mayoko) Ortega Arjonilla

Traditionally, afro / black community in Spanish State has been built maintaining links with the communities of origin. Beyond a pan-African movement, there was no other Afro community in Spain that was grouped not only by interests and ties based on nationality or ethnic origin for decades. The spaces of Afro communities in Spain have been linked to migration and related problems or to the maintenance and recovery of some elements of origin’s cultures. In recent years, this situation is changing due to the new activist practices and spaces that are opening up in the main cities, at least.

There is a new activism from the Afro/ Afro-descendant community in the Spanish State that is embodied by a new generation of activists, mostly women. The discourses of this new generation are based, inspired and influenced by the writings and thoughts of prominent black feminist scholars, discourses of decolonial thinking in Latin America (Abya Yala). New activist practices based on mutual care, the value of experience and the need to be together. In this presentation, I make a map of some of these activist experiences that I have compiled in the last two years in different places of the Spanish State’s geography, though most of them are from Madrid, the city that I live. At the same time, I will try to highlight some strengths these new activist practices have and some problems they present.
This event is made possible by generous support from:

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