

**Two-Day Online Conference**  
**Wednesday, 27th & Thursday, 28th October 2021**  
**(Both days: 2pm – 6pm GMT)**

***Ain't I a Woman? : The “Black Woman” in Historical and Contemporary Context***

**Programme Timings**

**Day 1:**

GMT	EST	Mins	Agenda – Wed 27 Oct
1400	0900	10	Welcome, Housekeeping & Intro: <b>Marilyn Clarke, Dr Elizabeth Williams</b> 10 mins
1410	0910	60	<b>Panel 1: <i>Black Women: Social Justice, Subverting Invisibility and Marginalisation</i></b> Moderator: Sophie M Niang Timings: 15 mins x 3 plus 15 mins Q&A
1510	1010	60	<b>Panel 2: <i>The Historical and Contemporary Resistance of the Rastafari Woman</i></b> Moderator: June Reid Timings: 11 mins x 4 plus 16 mins Q&A
1610	1110	5	Refreshment / Loo Break 5 min Break
1615	1115	60	<b>Panel 3: <i>Black Women’s Agency, Self-Representation and Survi/Thri-ving Strategies.</i></b> Moderator: Rita Gayle Timings: 15 mins x 3 plus 15 mins Q&A
1715	1215	30	<b>Keynote Speaker: Prof. Olivette Otele</b> 30 mins
1745	1245	10	Closing

**Day 2:**

GMT	EST	Mins	Agenda – Thurs, 28 Oct
1400	0900	10	Welcome, Housekeeping, Intro: <b>Dr Elizabeth Williams</b> (10 mins)
1410	0910	45	A Freedom Fighter: Nomzamo Winifred Zanyiwe Madikizela Mandela: <b>A discussion between Sisonke &amp; Pascale Lamche</b> Moderated by Nadia Joseph Timings: 30 mins plus 15 mins Q&A
1455	0955	60	<b>Panel 4: <i>Black Female Change Makers: Inter-generational Resistance and Activism</i></b> Moderator: Amelia Donkor Timings: 15 mins x 3 plus 15 mins Q&A
1555	1055	5	Refreshment / Loo Break 5 min Break
1600	1100	60	<b>Panel 5: <i>Trapped in Structural Racism: The Mental and Physical Well-Being of Black Women</i></b> Moderator: Gertrude Amarh Timings: 15 mins x 3 plus 15 mins Q&A

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1700	1200	30	Headline Interview: Margaret Busby OBE with Dr Angelina Osborne 20 mins + 10mins Q&A
1730	1230	30	Keynote Speakers: Stella Dadzie 30 mins
1800	1300	10	Closing Vote of Thanks

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**PANELS & ABSTRACTS**

**Panel 1: Black Women: Social Justice, Subverting Invisibility and Marginalisation**

**Moderator: Sophie M Niang**

**Paper 1: ‘Pay Women Not the Military’: Black Women and Greenham Common  
Women’s Peace Camp**

**Frankie CHAPPELL**  
PhD Candidate, University College London

Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp began in September 1981, in opposition to the decision to site cruise nuclear missiles at the military base in Berkshire. The camp lasted for 19 years and attracted thousands of women. Greenham captured the popular imagination and remained in a turbulent relationship with the press throughout its existence. It continues to be memorialized in exhibits and events, but from most interpretations you would be forgiven for thinking there were no Black women there. On the contrary, a number of Black women, particularly from the Black Women for Wages for Housework (BWWFH) movement and King’s Cross Women’s Centre, engaged with the camp consistently.

This paper will address the question ‘what practical and intellectual roles did Black women play in Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp?’ The literature on this subject is limited, but where it has engaged with the interactions of women such as Wilmette Brown and other BWWFH women at the Camp, it has largely focused on disputes and difficulties. I will argue that Black women played an important role in the development of Greenham women’s political thought, and that one particular section, Yellow Gate, became a dynamic centre of dialogue around the connections between race, gender, class, peace and environmental issues. The contributions of Black women at Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp can tell us about their role in the wider peace, environmental and women’s movements.

**Paper 2: Black Women, Feminism and Ethical Film Production**

**Nicola Zawadi CROSS**  
FEMINIST FILMMAKER

There are not enough women characters, and fewer black women, on screen and behind the camera. I am a light-skinned, educated, Trinidadian woman and I work with women to make films that convey their experience of the world. My intention is to contribute to de-otherising or deconstructing the stereotypical images of black women by conveying women as complex and nuanced human beings with human agency. I have made films that make black women visible. I have made several films with black women with limited access to resources, in Kenya.

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My carefully designed filmmaking process allows for the combination of my filmmaking skills with the women's in-depth knowledge and expertise in their lived realities. Both skill sets are equally valid and yet, are not always perceived as such. I come with my own particular gaze, as do they, which affects the power relations between us. Variables such as geography, history, skin colour, gender and

culture impact upon the way we see ourselves the way we interact during filming and thus in the final films. Representations of black women should convey their challenges and their human agency, with dignity. The challenge of a feminist filmmaker is to work in a way that deepens the understanding of the storyteller's essence, the way she experiences the world and to convey this in a manner that is true to and respectful of the storyteller. This session will critically discuss the filmmaking process with a view to ongoing improvement of nuanced representations of black women and ethical film production.

**Paper 3:      A Green Black Feminist Theory? Black Women and Ecology**

**Lydia Ayame HIRAIDE**  
Goldsmiths, University of London

In recent years, environmental issues have featured more heavily in public consciousness. We know that Black women, indigenous women, and women of colour will be, and already have been, hardest hit by the effects of ecological crisis worldwide. Black women have long been at the frontlines of environmental struggle – for example, in the widespread US Environmental Justice movement or the Green Belt Movement of Kenya. As some scholars and activists have noted<sup>1</sup>, however, Black women have been erased from popular mainstream narratives and discourses about environmental issues. But what happens if we foreground environmental action undertaken by Black women across the world? How can we develop a thorough understanding of the practical and theoretical relationships between Black women and ecology?

This paper draws on historical and contemporary Black women's ecological praxes, as well as the Black feminist concept of intersectionality, to explore what it means to think about ecology from a Black feminist perspective. It reflects on how Black feminist praxes disrupt hegemonic environmentalisms which do not account for the ways in which the same processes that drive ecological degradation also drive social, political, and economic oppression. Whilst the paper moves towards a 'green Black feminist theory,' it also reflects on challenges posed by hegemonic historical narratives and practices; in particular, the problematic ways in which Black women have often been positioned in relation to the concept of 'nature' under colonial cosmologies. It thus reflects on how these complex histories inform how we might think about Black women and ecology today.

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<sup>1</sup> Gilliam, C. (2021). White, Green futures. *Ethics and Education*, 16(2), 262-275.

Gomez, A. M., Shafiei, F., & Johnson, G. S. (2011). Black women's involvement in the environmental justice movement: an analysis of three communities in Atlanta, Georgia. *Race, Gender & Class*, 189-214.

Malowa, V., Owor, A., Merissa, E., Lado, S., & Mayelle, H. (2020). The erasure of Vanessa Nakate portrays an idealised climate activism. *Africa at LSE*, 1-8.

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**Panel 2: The Historical and Contemporary Resistance of the Rastafari Woman**

**Moderator:** June Reid

**Paper 1:** “Rastafari Women’s Gender Justice as Guide to Freedom”

**Dr. Shamara Wyllie Alhassan**

**Abstract:** Rastafari Women have transformed the justice aims of the Rastafari movement to center gender justice as a cornerstone of achieving Black freedom. The move to discuss abolition of all structures of oppression and imagine and build a just world must center the leadership and engagement of sistren. This paper charts the ways Rastafari women put gender justice as central to the aims of the Rastafari movement and move the needle toward freedom.

**Paper 2:** “There is no Rastafari in Bamako Without Women”

**Dr. Linda Ainouche**

**Abstract:** Sista Mam, regarded as the First Rasta woman in Mali, sets the tone with her solid commitment: “There is no Rastafari in Bamako without women. I am together with my sisters in the forefront now, more than ever.” Persuaded that Rastafari provides a way for Malians to change their behavior and turn the page on the repeated national troubles, Sista Mam is facilitating a vibrant and dynamic culture of activism and organizing in Mali. Who is Sista Mam? What drives her to demand change? How does she run her activities? What are the obstacles she faces as a Rastafari woman? Sista Mam is an important part of the evolution of the Rastafari movement in Mali from its roots and orientations in Jamaica. This paper will discuss Sister Mam’s reappropriation and recontextualization of the liberation ethos of Rastafari in the Malian system.

**Paper 3:** “Toward a Project of Transnational Justice: Rastafari Womanist Epistemology”

**Dr. Imani Tafari-Ama**

**Abstract:** My Rastafari woman womanist perspective, which employs indigenous knowledges to destabilize discourses of white supremacy, undergirded my application of an Africa Caribbean perspective in the curation of the “Rum, Sweat and Tears” exhibition at the Flensburg Maritime Museum. This point of view was deployed to countervail Eurocentric erasures of the Maafa, the Holocaust of African enslavement from history and to critically reflect on the ontological implications of the 2017 Centennial of Denmark’s sale of the land of the people of the Virgin Islands to the United States 69 years after Emancipation. What was visible through my Rastafari womanist lenses, substantiated by Transatlantic ethnographic

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research and analysis, was pervasive cognitive dissonance in Eurocentric representations of empire and the enduring detriment of colonial heritage to African identity. This transitional justice project demonstrated the utility of Rastafari womanist epistemology to articulating race as a discourse of resistance to domination and dehumanization.

**Paper 4: “The Womanist Theology of Merriam Lennox in Early Rastafari”**

**Dr. D.A. (Daive) Dunkley** University of Missouri

Abstract: Merriam Lennox was a forerunner of Womanist Theology in the Rastafari movement from the 1940s through 1960s when Jamaica achieved political independence from Great Britain. Lennox used her understandings of the Bible to denounce male supremacy as part of her fight against white supremacy. She viewed Womanist Theology as critical to the Black struggle against colonialism, racism, and classism. This paper discusses Lennox’s Womanist Theology while highlighting the implications of her thinking and experiences for the scholarship, teaching, and outreach of Africana Studies.

**Panel 3: Black Women's Agency, Self-Representation and Survi/Thri-ving Strategies**

**Moderator: Rita Gayle**

**Paper 1: Black women owning sexual choice through Jazmine Sullivan's *Hauex Tales***

**Natasha HENRY**

Goldsmiths University of London

**Rianna RAYMOND-WILLIAMS**

Glasgow Caledonian University London

For centuries, the Black female body has been stigmatized, oppressed and othered. Gendered and racial troupes experienced by Black women continue to create compounded forms of oppression coined by Black queer feminist scholar, writer, and activist Moya Bailey as “Misynoir” which refers to “*the specific hatred, dislike, distrust, and prejudice directed toward Black women.*” thereby impacting how Black women access, navigate and claim space, specifically with the realms of sexuality.

For many years, depictions of Black females expressing and celebrating their sexuality on screen have been minimal. Whereas white women in *Friends*, *Sex in the City* and *Girls* have been afforded space to freely explore and express their sexual desires alongside their personal, social and educational trajectories. However, in recent years we have seen mainstream programmes such as *Scandal*, *Power*, *She’s Got to Have It* and *Insecure* showcase Black female protagonists owning and exploring their sexual desires on screen, alongside their careers,

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education and social interactions. Thereby highlighting sex and sexual exploration as an intrinsic element of their personal development.

This paper will present how Black women own, discuss and celebrate their sexual agency through Black American singer-songwriter Jazmine Sullivan's critically acclaimed 2021 music album *Hauex Tales*. The album chronicles Black women expressing their thought, feelings and attitudes towards sex and reproductive choice through a combination of extended spoken-word interludes and songs. Themes depicted throughout the album include respectability politics, sexism, classism, feminism and sexual subjectivity.

We argue that *Hauex Tales* has created space for Black American women to reject notions of Misynoir and freely own and discuss their sexual choices without shame, in addition to Black women's bodies being reframed as sites of power, beauty and control in comparison to being sites of extraction.

**Paper 2: Stolen Breath**

**Vanessa Damilola MACAULAY**  
Queen Mary University of London

When we accept that the world, the climate is anti-black, we have to imagine ways to survive. Christina Sharpe complicates a conventional theory of the weather by theorizing it as an inescapable state of being, as the climate of antiblackness is located in the air. She writes, 'I've been thinking about what it takes, in the midst of the singularity, the circulant antiblackness everywhere and always remotivated, to keep breath in the Black body.' This paper argues the performative potential of breath and breathlessness can reframe agency in Black women and our performance practices. I locate the performative space where breathing is protected but not held.

Stolen breath demonstrates the reparative possibilities of breathing for Black women, which recognizes breath as not only gasps, pants and sighs in moments of crisis, but as opportunities to

breathe as a collective: to be in the same space, breathing in the same air. This opportunity is exemplified in the formation of groups like OWAAD and the Brixton Black women's group. The methodology for collecting Black women's stories has often been through oral histories, the physical exchange of breath, experience and knowledge spoken on the breath. Stolen breath constitutes care and healing for Black women that stages a theoretical and methodological potential beyond Black fungibility as a way of articulating a mode of existence and a survival strategy.

**Paper 3: There Ain't No Black In LGBTQ**

**Wasuk SULE-PEARCE**  
School of Human and Social Sciences, University of West London



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The LGBTQ+ community have been critiqued for erasing race and pushing neoliberal narratives that slide race into sexuality with the assumption that the civil rights movement marked the end to racial injustice. This gives way to colorblind rhetoric that focuses on gender and sexuality. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine how colour-blind narratives in the White, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (WLGBTQ+) community impact the everyday lives of Black, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer + (BLGBTQ+) people?

To collect data, I conducted an integrated review of existing literature on race, queer theory and Black queer studies. I then used thematic and cross-sectional analysis to identify common themes. I found that by not discussing systematic racism, the LGBTQ+ community represent BLGBTQ+ people as victims of oppressive power structures on one hand and heroes of their perceived resilience on the other which serves the purpose of denying persistence of racial injustice. In addition, WLGBTQ+ people claim marginalization along sexuality lines while dis-identifying with the political power of white skin. This erases the specific experiences of BLGBTQ+ people and these uneven parallels between oppressions neglect the uneven relationships to privilege and end up reproducing White supremacy. What is more, the LGBTQ+ community portrays diverse representation and equal opportunities however BLGBTQ+ people are over looked for leadership or speaking roles and looked to for their performances which is regarded anti-intellectual. With this in mind, an LGBTQ+ community that acknowledges the intellectual, and political contributions of BLGBTQ+ people in the struggle against homophobia and other oppressions would provide a safe space where BLGBTQ+ people would survive and thrive.

**Panel 4: Black Female Change Makers: Inter-generational Resistance and Activism**

**Moderator: Amelia Donkor**

**Paper 1: I Read About Her In A Magazine – Wasafiri ‘In Praise Of’ Beryl Gilroy**

**Angelique GOLDING**

Collaborative PhD Candidate - Wasafiri: The history of a little magazine  
Queen Mary University of London

A magazine spread is two pages that are next to each other. It is not two pages separated but two pages that work together to create one unit. Wasafiri – Magazine of International Contemporary Writing – printed several articles written by and about matriarch Beryl Gilroy between 1989 and 2018. They are individual pieces, but I use this description of a magazine spread as an analogy of how I will bring these otherwise disparate articles together into a spread – into one unit – intending, through the sum of these parts, to form a whole that spotlights the work and life of Beryl Gilroy. Within the framework of magazine scholarship, I will examine these pieces to highlight how she, as a Black woman, challenged the established order through her work as educator and creative to

dismantle obstacles in her own life and those of her pupils in ways that gained the respect of her peers and found her a place in history. Critical literature on magazine culture contends that magazines serve as mirrors of the sociocultural realities of their times. Examining the



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selected pieces through this lens will draw attention to the ways in which Beryl Gilroy was portrayed by Wasafiri magazine and how these differed from mainstream presentations. Straddling three important decades, the articles will be discussed both as part of the context when they appeared and through present-day spectacles that will provide a new perspective that offers a re-reading of the shifting literary, cultural and political context in which she was placed.

**Paper 2:       An Introduction to Maria: Black womanhood, resistance and religion.**

**Mara Livermore**  
MA, University of Liverpool

In 1823 a young, Black woman named Maria marks her place in archival history by making it into court records for multiply attempting to murder various enslavers and attempting to run away many times. This paper would aim to explore the relationships between individuals and systems through the lens of Black womanhood, African Traditional Religious practice and the intersection of both as resistance to the status quo.

Building on the academic and practical legacies of Zora Neale Hurston, Prof Bayyinah Bello, Dr Michelle Yaa Asantewaa, and Prof M. Jacqui Alexander this paper will explore the ways in which radical Black femalehood and Black Spiritualities can be expressed, and attempt to evaluate the application of such learnings to the problematics of understanding a case like Maria's. The exploration of such potent 'storialisational' attempts to inspire and support collective progress and healing.

**Paper 3:       Intergenerational transmission of black resistance: Jessica Huntley and Mother Hectorine Carroll.**

**Claudia TOMLINSON**  
PhD Candidate, University of Chichester

Studies have previously considered the intergenerational transmission of values, identity, self-worth, and resilience from black mothers to their daughters. These have focused on the domains of education, racism, health, and psychological well-being. This is a relationship that has also been explored substantially in literary discourses, film, music, and theatre, by and about black women. This paper seeks to examine this theme in the context of the mother-daughter relationship in radical black activism and resistance. It analyses the lives and intergenerational transmission of pan-African identity, and values from African Guyanese mother Hectorine Carroll to her daughter, the prominent Guyanese-British activist and publisher Jessica Huntley.

Drawing on interviews, photographs, audio-visual materials, and correspondence, this article presents an enduring black mother-daughter bond with significant intergenerational transmission of pan-African resistance. It will be demonstrated that the pan-African activism prominent in Jessica Huntley's contribution in Guyana, Britain and globally, is rooted in her parenting by Hectorine Carroll. Evidence demonstrates the transmission is mediated by relationship threats, relationship recovery, tensions, and cohesion over a lifetime. In conclusion, the paper identifies strong and enduring intergenerational synergy between

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mother and daughter on values, belief, activity, and character in the domain of pan-African resistance. The paper presents findings that can be applied to further research in the domains of black history, health, black identity, and community-building practice.

**Panel 5: Trapped in Structural Racism: The Mental & Physical Well-Being of Black Women**

**Moderator: Gertrude Amarh**

**Paper 1: 'Clarissa is by far the best working wench': Tales of the Enslaved in 1756**

**Sheryllynne HAGGERTY**

Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation, University of Hull

This paper comes from a wider project on Jamaica in 1756 based on a unique cache of letters in The National Archives, UK, which were sent from Jamaica in 1756. These letters come from what Marisa Fuentes calls the 'traditional archive'.<sup>2</sup> Amongst the letters is an inventory of the enslaved on one Jamaican plantation, Mesopotamia. Following Fuentes, this paper uses this inventory to subvert the power of colonial discourse to try and tell the stories of these enslaved men, women and children.<sup>3</sup> Rather than focus on the values ascribed to them by Europeans, this paper focuses on the working lives and health of these people. For example, Matt was a driver and Guy a Blacksmith, but what of Chance and Diego, who were most likely 'prime field hands'? What of the two Sarahs who tended the cattle in the satellite pen? Were Molly, Hagar and Cooba, all doctoresses, and purchased from another estate that year, accepted, or resented by the existing community at Mesopotamia? Had Leah and Margarita all lost their hands feeding the sugar mill? Were Clarissa and Tom, who would 'chuse[sic] not to be separated', fictive kin and afraid of being separated? By asking these questions this paper attempts to tell the stories of the working lives and physical and mental health of these individuals, not to leave them on the page with the values ascribed to them by whites.

**Paper 2: Black Feminism, Afro-pessimism and Structural Racism'**

**Amirah MOHAMMAD**

MA Literary Studies: American Literature and Culture| Goldsmiths, UoL

Analysing mental health in fiction tends to delineate madness or illness with roots in trauma. Attention to ill health is welcome, yet I would amend this approach when considering mental health in Ntozake Shange's choreopoem *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf* (1975). Combining Black Feminist thought with Afropessimism, I suggest that Shange's language choices force us to resist medicalisation when analysing her characters' mental health. As such, we can then attend to the social consequences of perceiving (one's and others') "madness" or "illness" for African American women. In doing so, linguistic (self-)expression becomes a tool to critique the language of mental health within a framework of structural racism as well as providing an insight into the complexity of mental

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<sup>2</sup> Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p1, footnote 1.

<sup>3</sup> Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, p.4.

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health in intersectional experiences. Finally, I want to consider how and whether the formal innovations of Shange's choreopoem, alongside its theatrical and filmic incarnations, allow the narrative to be interpreted as a move towards mental wellness.

**Paper 3:        Re-imagining Female Prisons as Socially Responsive and Purposely  
Designed Rehabilitation Centres for Black Women**

**Helena POMBARES**

Institutional Affiliation: University of West London (UWL)

This research aims to study the consequences of how female prisons are currently designed and managed in the urban context, to determine if a more rehabilitative approach and rethinking of their design would reduce rates of recidivism. This will bring an architectural perspective into the discussion of prisons, comparing and contrasting the experience of female prisoners in Angola and the UK.

There is a distinct group of women that is constantly attracted by the criminal justice system in most countries: poor, from ethnic minorities and single mothers. (ICPS; Feinman, 1994; Santa Rita, 2006; Kruttschnitt and Gartner, 2003). Black women are usually subject to triple discrimination because of their gender, race and class. The wrong presumptions that black woman are more likely to commit crimes than white women, affects the way they are treated by the criminal justice system in general (Chigwada-Bailey, 2003). Chigwada-Bailey (2008, p.29) states that black women are usually seen as capable of committing crimes, instead of seen as victims. Thus, while childcare could work as a mitigating factor for a white woman and would make a judge reluctant to send her

to prison, a black woman usually would not benefit from this mitigating factor. Therefore, an objective of this research is to show the importance of addressing black women's needs to keep them away from imprisonment and to avoid recidivism, thus preventing a series of emotional and psychological issues that may have severe social consequences (Cook and Davies, 2000; McIvor and Burman, 2011).