



BLACKLASH

The Africana Collective

REPORT NO. 9

Black Women Cross-Culturally



INTRODUCTION

Backlash: The Africana Collective (BTAC) engages in interdisciplinary research to provide analysis and recommendations on a range of issues affecting the African(a) world—linked communities with peoples of African ancestry. Using our collective knowledge and skills, as well as our grounding as thinkers, educators, activists, organizers, and parents, our objective is to support and inform action toward safeguarded humane development throughout the African world. We are independent in our funding, research, and directives, allowing us to work decidedly in the best interests of said communities.

Each month, we consider one topical issue as a collective. In the process, we prepare individual statements, meet (virtually) to hammer out our findings, then prepare our report. That report is then shared with the African world via online outlets and through various networks a week prior to a (virtual) town hall meeting, where we invite members of the African world community to join us, debate, (dis)agree, and come away with perspectives that inform collective action. We strongly request that all attendees at the town hall read the report **beforehand**. This way, you are an active participant in shaping your own views and subsequent decisions. We encourage you to sign up, or register, for the town hall, so we may keep you abreast of upcoming events, key resources, and ways to translate the reports' ideas into collective betterment scaled to wherever you are and with whom you have to work.

In this thought paper, report no. 9, the collective considers how do we understand what Africana/Black womanhood is in the face of current/varied discourses. Join us for the virtual town hall on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at 6 pm EST/11 pm GMT.

Upcoming Town halls

"Environmental Justice & Food Security in the African World"

Date: 4/21/21 @ 6 pm EST/11 pm GMT

"Malcolm X and Manhood: Threatening Heterosexual Black Men"

Date: 5/19/21 @ 6 pm EST/11 pm GMT

"Intersections: Race, Gender, Sexuality"

Date: 6/16/21 @ 6 pm EST/11 pm GMT



PERSPECTIVE: DR. IYELLI ICHILE

“Resourcefulness is to a woman what serenity is to nightfall.”

—Ethiopia

“Women and sky cannot be understood.”

—Agikuyu proverb

Marimba Ani and others have asserted that the ‘compulsion to categorize, delimit and control everything in the world is central to the Caucasian ethos.’ The goal of this session might be similarly problematic in its quest to ‘define’ Africana womanhood. Still, in the context of this part of this world at this time, defining this may be a necessary endeavor—a defensive endeavor at least. Toni Morrison reminded us of the *power* gleaned from naming and defining a thing.

My goals are twofold; to lend a perspective on defining Africana womanhood and to empower Africana women by do so AS an Africana woman practicing self-definition.

As I have discussed and written briefly about in several spaces, *motherhood* is a rich concept, which provides a lens and a language with which I can pursue this definition with more clarity. Being an Africana woman has something to do with a covenant with the Universe which transcends all of what we would consider rationality and intellectual knowledge. It is the existence of a mission, whether the Africana woman chooses to accept it or not. To *feel* the call to stewardship, to a reciprocal relationship with Creation—even if she chooses not to heed that call.

It is both creative and destructive—and even the destructive is pre-destined to create...something. The essence of unstoppable (if insufficiently recognized) creativity in human form. It expands and contracts according to a rhythm, to the degree that the entire world seems hyper-aware whenever an Africana woman gets off beat. She is vilified for any misstep or mistake, without the conscious acknowledgement that the panic over a transgressive Black woman is because the world depends on her so. It is a primordial power which evokes fear in people who are ignorant—or people who are too intensely disconnected from the Source of all to recognize that this power is what makes their lives possible.

It is the ability to create the Universal metaphor of the Egg in her body; this happens on cellular levels, if not physiological ones, but always to live her life in a way that reproduces this cosmic metaphor. This can look a myriad of other ways. This means that ultimately, she is constantly producing and reproducing the world. This is not simply a function of having babies with melanin and squarish hair follicles. Although the importance of this womb-centered approach cannot be overstated, and is the



most iconic, everlasting expression of this cosmic metaphor. There are other approaches, other manifestations of this energy, identity and function.

Africana womanhood is giving birth to civilization, being the sign and symbol of its overall health (or disease) and staying on the ready to burn away what no longer serves its highest good. To clarify a bit further: while all of us can be trained, socialized, or culturally predisposed to practice *motherhood*, I believe that Africana womanhood is a state of being in which there is an expectation to operate within *motherhood* and a distinctly high capacity to do so.

Rather than approaching definition in what I feel is a western manner—seeking to delimit and thereby artificially constructing exclusivity—I have chosen to approach definition of this term in a way that seems more African—defining the thing based on deep structures, energetic functions and in ways that reverberate across space and through time. Tall order, huh?! I am still working this out, so I am hoping much more will be drawn out in the coming days and with more convenings with our community.

African proverbs about mothers/motherhood do, however, provide some insight about how Africana womanhood has looked for our people. Many of them focus on socially constituted, biological motherhood, but again, there is good reason for that; Africana women are the portals into and out of this plane of existence, from the womb to Mother Earth to which we return in some form at death.

Yes, Mother Earth is a black woman. She is green, I guess. And blue. And red and white in some places. And black is still the color we get when we mix all these other colors together. And we go back into her body when all is said and done.

BUT what we can also do is read these proverbs carefully to draw out the deeper meanings in this relational category, to locate an understanding that encompasses Africana women who have not given birth to children:

Take for example, this Ganda proverb: “A child in the mother’s womb unfailingly takes some qualities from her.” We know that this can be quite a literal statement, meaning that genetics are passed along from mother to (biological) child. We can also view this in terms of mentorship, training and nurturing, especially by those who have a hand in shaping us in infancy and early childhood. The book *Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation* by Anna Malaika Tubbs comes to mind. The general idea is that these women passed on much more than a certain nose shape to their sons.

Another one from Ghana “When a yam does not grow well, we do not blame the yam; it is because of the soil” speaks to the direct accountability for healthy, socially acceptable childrearing which falls to “the soil,” which is likely a reference to a mother, or perhaps it refers to all of the women influences in the proverbial African “village” raising a child. This child also then can impact the collective, and as the member of a new generation, there are always futuristic implications for the successes and perceived failures of Africana women.



Finally, the proverb “When a woman is hungry, she says ‘Roast something for the children that they may eat.’” This trans-African bit of wisdom indicates a widely held understanding that Africana womanhood (notice that this proverb did not say when a “mother” is hungry—but a “woman”) is about thinking not only about her own individual needs, but that there is something about her relationship to the world around her that prompts her to consider others—the children, the elders, the infirm, etc.

Am I arguing that all Black women are selfless givers and nurturers of children? No. Am I arguing that men are never held accountable and that they are not also nurturers? No. I am arguing that these are ancient African expectations, perhaps based on widely observed patterns of behavior, perhaps they are just ideals—which have been captured in this proverb, and which move us beyond a biologically constituted gender conversation, into some much deeper territory; territory in which a definition of Africana womanhood might be found.



PERSPECTIVE: DR. JARED BALL

In no way meaning to diminish radical women-led interventions into a critique of womanhood, particularly, Africana womanhood, that is, the meaning of womanhood from within the Black or African diaspora, I do agree with approaches which see nationhood as primary and that the question of womanhood is one which can only be answered via an exploration of the nation. To summarize this view, I am merely going to attempt a summary of one of my own influences on the subject, Safiya Bukhari.

In her essay, *On The Question of Sexism in the Black Panther Party*, from within her own classic book *The War Before...* Bukhari summarizes nicely what is my own overview sense of it all and she provides core lessons applicable with variation today. First, as she says, hers is a concern with the “... defeat [of] racism, capitalism, and imperialism and [to] liberate the Black nation.” In fact, as Bukhari says, “I am not a feminist. I am a revolutionary. I am a scientific socialist.”

From the outset Bukhari clarifies that there will be welcomed acceptance of divisions between Black women and men, attempts that are “well thought out and cultivated.” She is also clear that there exist patterns of anti-woman behavior among men that must be addressed and changed. But she is also clear that this change, the creation of society, civilization, and the creation of “new beings” capable of being revolutionary and creating that new world. This reads as more than a hashtag or less substantive calls for all men to be lumped and demeaned equally.

In fact, Bukhari lays out equally, “female passivity” and “ultra-femininity” next to “male chauvinism” as requiring correction. Women, she argued, has to be encouraged to accept their equality and to not meekly accept male dominance or to go too far toward the “I’m just a woman syndrome” which teaches women to proudly enjoy some perceived inability. And finally, Bukhari extended her critique to add what, for me, remains as prescient and relevant today as when she wrote it almost 30 years ago. She said there is also the:

other side of the coin” the use of femininity to achieve rank and stature. We must create a new being and a new society and a new way of dealing with one another. And this requires that we all “jump in” and struggle with one another.

It is Bukhari’s previously stated ideological clarity and involvement in political organization that generated what is perhaps an even more pertinent warning today: that to avoid the easily co-opted, the flagrantly clout-chasing, or politically reactionary abuse of the oppression of Black women, there needs to be a willingness for those criticisms to come from within revolutionary movements and from those analytical lenses, from those who have indeed “jumped in” to the struggle.

Today, there is simply too much criticism of patriarchy from outside these politicized spaces and from those who have refused to entrance into struggle. Too many Black women have risen to positions of relative prominence on the expression of anti-Black and anti-Black male rage and, again, from outside traditions or spaces of radical Blackness. The simple, but deep, declaration that, “I am not a feminist. I am a revolutionary. I am a scientific socialist” prohibits the grift and co-opted messaging which today continues to confuse.



Bukhari's involvement in organized political struggle, even having once so clearly stated that it "... wasn't the Black Panther Party that made me a revolutionary, it was the police..." assures a focus on national liberation that is an important backstop, particularly in this super/supra-constructed digital environment, against the illusory.



PERSPECTIVE: DR. KWASI KONADU

My *ena/awo* (mother) taught me about the category of being called “woman.” She did so without talking about it. I watched her and mothers like her. And so by the time I came to this country I had an evolving sense of what we might call *Africana womanhood*, shaped by her and Maroon Jamaica, as she fought a fight between self-understanding and the interpolated category she ought to embrace as if it were her own. I am not sure she won. But I am sure she finds bemusing all this *talk* about “woman” when all I have known of mother was *living* and *doing* on her terms.

Any talk of womanhood, especially in grammatically gendered (neo)European languages, puts us into a colosseum of “Western” notions of gender and fe/male, where we lose because the fight is on their terrain, using their terms as faux weapons. Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí has successfully argued the categories of “gender” and “woman” are not cross-culturally inherent in social relations, and remarking how these social construct entering the English language in the late 19th and early 20th century have been used uncritically.¹ In the context of Oyèwùmí’s Yorùbá culture, the category of “woman,” as biologically determined, did not exist until British colonial rule. The Yorùbá language, like the Akan language of Ghana which I speak, are gender-neutral. They do not grammatically declare gender. Cultural context does. The challenge for the African world is that European colonialism was global, and no part of the African world remained untouched by this inquisition. Discussions around womanhood for African women and women of African ancestry will, therefore, always confront their de-contextualized existence and the decontextualized knowledge produced about them. Viewed from this perspective, the more we talk and act in English, or French, or another decontextualizing language, about what it means to an African(a) woman the more we remain in the colosseum, fighting ourselves over which category, which borrowed imagination is best.

If we are open to leaving assured death in the colosseum, we have other ways of organizing social relations within communities, ways of understanding ourselves, ways of fighting against rather than on the terms set before us. An enslaved African named Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, from the city of Djugu in northwest Benin, wrote, “Great respect is paid to the aged; they never use the *prefix mister or mistress*, but always some endearing term, such as, when speaking to an aged person, they say Father or Mother, and an equal, they call brother or sister.” Mahommah was attentive to the distinct and overlapping roles performed by a range of individuals—father, mother, children, brother, sister, elder—but these were not “gendered,” hence, his shrewd rejection of “mister or mistress” and his preference for more “endearing term[s].”²

¹ See Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, ed., *Gender Epistemologies in Africa: Gendering Traditions, Spaces, Social Institutions, and Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), idem, ed., *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), idem, ed., *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003), idem, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

² Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua, a Native of Zoogoo...* (Detroit: Geo. E. Pomeroy & Co., 1854), 17-18.



Identity, sexuality, gender, life, and the like are culturally constructed, themselves shaped intimately by specific ecological, linguistic, and historical contexts. Though we have human bodies, what it means to be a “woman/man,” “wife/husband,” “mother/father,” or “female/male” is never nor solely a function of biology. Their meanings remain culturally-coded, registering with speakers and thinkers of a culture. The problem, then, is translation, more precisely, translating culture. Indeed, ideas of gender and woman are not cross-culturally valid, as Mahomah has shown, and these constructs have used without much concern for how identity and belonging were based in African world communities less on biology and sexual organs (or feelings) than on having successfully completed specific rites of human development.³ For African(a) womanhood, for peoples of the African world no less, motherhood remains the most critical of rites and thus a foundational basis for the placeholder, “womanhood.”

All women have a womb, but the origin of the English term *woman* is not from womb (or woe) + man. (*Woman* is a compound of *wif* + *man*, with the sense of “woman/female human being.”) Most in the category of women use their womb and become mothers; a few do not, while an even lesser cannot. But even the latter, especially in African world contexts, can still become mothers. Mothering, or what my colleague calls *motherly*, seems the soundest basis for the broader placeholder, African(s) womanhood. And I see this placeholder as bridge to terms and knowledges that do not alienate, that do not evict African(a) women like my mother from their self-understanding. I also see that basis and this bridge as a launchpad in the fight against intersexuality and its political implications. While an individual’s experience is private—removed from inspection—it is also not and cannot be fully representative, for lived experience and personal history is particular. It provides no unique source of revelation. Intersectionality proposes a particular and subjective position as “black women” or as women’s way of knowing, which is to say (falsely) only such women can understand the category of women to which they belong. This core tenet of intersectionality is not an argument about (Africana) women’s experiences but rather an ideological position in search of theoretical justification. Instead of fulfilling the promise of redressing the limits of “race” and “gender,” the vogue and academic product called intersectionality fractures race and gender identities, creating yet other categories that explains extraordinarily little in real, practical ways. Indeed, it forces African(a) women to choose among these metastasizing categories, but sets up antagonisms with African(a) men—recalled the *Why Black Men and Women Vote So Differently* debacle—reducing potentialities for effective mothering, for stable families, for healthy communities, for any collectivist victory.⁴

³ On the “gender” debate in African and diaspora studies, see, for instance, Oyèwùmí, ed., *Gender Epistemologies in Africa*; idem, *The Invention of Women*; James Lorand Matony, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Oyo Yoruba Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

⁴ <https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2020/11/why-black-men-and-women-vote-so-differently/617134/>



PERSPECTIVE: DR. MJIBA FREHIWOT

Who or what is the African(a) Woman? Our experiences as women, men and non-binary folks are often dictated by our location, culture, politics, ideology (even if we are unaware that we have one), race and our class. These elements often dictate who and what is an African (a) woman and who has access to exploit and contribute to this personhood. This author recognizes that the location, class politics, Pan-Africanist and socialist ideology impacts her understanding of African (a) womanhood. When interrogating African (a) womanhood a series of questions come to mind. 1. What is a woman? 2. Is womanhood universal? 3. Is African (a) womanhood different than African womanhood? 4. What about women who do not claim to be African? Are they automatically grand mothered into African (a) womanhood? 5. Where is liberation, resistance, and revolution in the definition of African (a) womanhood.

African (a) womanhood has meant different things to different people in different location based on one's direct or indirect relationship to the African continent. The African continent is both the source of African (a) women and the mother Global Africa. She provides the history, culture, political will, fire for resistance and liberation and even the coltan we are currently exploiting in our electronic devices. African (a) womanhood is often positioned as an (a) political designation that situates women at the center of a community or family. They are celebrated as healers, mothers, aunties, the glue that holds a community together but rarely are they described as political, leaders, fighters or the those who resist oppression. They are a force to be reckoned with culturally and in the private sector, however, in the public African world the African (a) women is rarely viewed as the center of "development" or a calculating figure. There are some women who are overtly political and operate in historically male dominate spaces. Political women are leaders in the Pan-African movement, Civil Rights Movement or other liberation movements are excluded from the notion of African (a) womanhood. To be fair some women in these movements have/or will view African (a) Womanhood as a hinderance to their contribution to the African (a) revolution. This divide between often causes ruptures among women and forces African (a) women to hold the mantel of either "womanhood" or "revolution".

Assata Shakur comes to mind when one is looking for revolutionary women who fall outside the general parameters of African (a) womanhood. Assata is celebrated for her contributions to the Black Liberation Movement as a woman, however, this does not necessarily align with her womanhood. The women of the Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC) in Guinea Bissau who fought on the front lines for liberation are among this group. In Guinea Bissau after African (a) women had fought and died in the liberation movement they found themselves battling societal and cultural norms that limited their political participation (Iy, 2014).

Likewise, women in Eritrea are hailed for their contributions to the liberation struggle. Often the picture of a women holding a Ak57 backing a baby is celebrated as African (a) womanhood during the liberation period. But the reality is that this image while powerful is sensationalizing women and painting one narrative of what African (a) womanhood is or should be. Did the struggle that Eritrean women engaged in for freedom equal



total liberation for Eritrean women result in their total liberation? The complexity of society, culture and the social construction of gender dictated that Eritrean women would not automatically enjoy total liberation. The South African case is a more extreme case where Azanian women were on the front lines for years fighting against the Apartheid regime and today not only are they being view as subjects, but they are being raped and killed because of their African (a) womanhood.

A quick academic search of African womanhood results in a plethora of articles examining African womanhood through African literature. These texts often challenge colonialism and patriarchy in ways that promote African women as mothers and daughters. This can be interpreted in multiple ways including, a). African women use their womanhood as a form of resistance; b). African women have a prescribed place in society and all activity must originate from that space and c). Even in their resistance African women must resist inside the straitjacket of motherhood.

To hear from African (a) women I sent out a short WhatsApp poll asking women the following question, “What is African Womanhood and how does it impact you.” Here are some of the responses:

1. For the Akan Nzema to be a woman is to be able to procreate to continue the maternal lineage. Women must go through whatever means to bear children because if you do not you are deemed useless. *-Lecture, Ghanaian/Akan Woman*
2. We are the mothers, sisters, wives and confidants of the struggle and we are the foundation creating and maintaining family and community. Long after the violence and arrests, the assassinations, the tears and verbal attacks, the funeral processions, and speeches. Even after the denial to hear our voices we still speak our truth-seeking justice that never comes, raising children and warriors, nurturing the movement forward! We have no choice because we are women, and we are black/African. *-AAPRP Senior Cadre from California*
3. African womanhood is being able to bare children and take care of your family, make sure your family is fed and so on. I could say African womanhood is when a woman is able to provide for either herself or her family, however, more honor is brought to the family and within society when you are married with children. It impacts me because it puts pressure on me as an African Woman, “now that you’ve finished school, what is next” I know they are all expecting me to bring someone home. But I want to enjoy my 20’s without the pressure of African womanhood. *-Student, Democratic Republic of the Congo/Canada*
4. African womanhood is determined by our experiences. Are we talking about our mother’s generation or our generation? Growing up I did not want to follow in my mother’s footsteps as she had to endure what we now call abuse (but then called normal). She stayed for the children, but I know that I would not be like my mother and women of her generation. It is like women are enslaved to African men and society and they must sit back and allow everyone else to make decisions for their lives. I am an outspoken woman who often faces push back from African men and societal norms because I refuse to be that African women who bows down to men. Strong and radical women are often viewed as *not*



marriage material as no man wants a woman who will struggle with their fragile ego. -*Program Manager, Born in Eswatini living in Washington, DC*

5. African womanhood, what I think of first is strength, survival & resilience. Supporting & uplifting one another. Pouring into one another, especially those behind us. Spiritually connected. Also, a state of mind. Impacts for me is due to the strength of course we tend to be the go-to person, the fix-it person. African women are innately able to take on anything good or bad and create and solve it. We tend to carry a great deal. Of course, our survival has produced many stereotypes about us being mean, hard to work with, and angry. Good impacts are teaching and supporting women collectively. Uplifting and motivating. Celebrating us, our culture, respecting one another and making a mark in our communities. -*Probation Officer, Black Woman from California.*
6. African motherhood is an overarching concept of mothering, not only of individual children but more so the African nation. It is a matrix that even the motherless can turn/return to. Educating, modeling, passing on values. Taking care of all who need care. Seeing what others cannot see and trying to assist wherever there is need. -*AAPRP Senior Cadre, African Born in America from Illinois*
7. One that is celebrated and appreciated. I do not feel 'gagged' but able to express my views. On the other hand, I recognize the man as the head of the family from the biblical standpoint and more as a help mate. I feel the African woman should and is hardworking, fending for herself and her family. I have the freedom to do whatever I desire to do and aspire to the highest level in career. In fact, this I inculcate in my daughters. This view I hold has impacted me positively, letting me strive to achieve great feats in my education and career and demanding excellence from my daughters. I also think that this perspective has helped me support my husband to achieve great feats in his life. It has made me be myself without any restrictions. What a man can do a woman can do also. -*Lecturer, Ghana*
8. African womanhood is a state of being. Its knowing that you are a part of a community and a legacy of greatness. -*Higher Education Director, African born in American from San Jose*
9. At first glance it seems to be a very basic question that all African women should be able to answer immediately. But I actually had to think about it for a while and I came to the conclusion, regarding my personal experience and growing up in an imperialist state, that it was a decision that I had to make to be an African woman and to embrace and practice African womanhood and not a colonized version of it. Speaking from a non biological but rather political view I had to become an African woman. That meant deconstructing Eurocentric, racist and sexist views on my body, mind, and my people (still in that process). And recognizing that I am connected with every African woman in this world but at the same time acknowledging the differences imposed by imperialist influences (class, tribalism, etc.) that divided and still divides us. So, it is impossible for me to define African womanhood without the fact that African womanhood has been taken away from us, enslaved, manipulated, and colonized. African womanhood is a part of our fight for freedom equality and one united Africa. That makes it for me more a process of reclaiming and deconstructing rather than something that is. So in order to reclaim it and to be a freed African woman I have the responsibility to fight for our freedom, well-being and unity (by organizing). -*Student, African women born in Germany.*



PERSPECTIVE: DR. TODD STEVEN BURROUGHS

Is there any connection between Maboula Soumahoro and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala other than race and gender? The easy answer is the white European spaces they occupy. The former is a professor of Africana and African American studies at the University of Tours who has written a book about French Black identity. The latter is a Harvard- and MIT-educated economist who is the first female and the first African to head the World Trade Organization. Where Soumahoro—a France native but the daughter of Cote d’Ivoire parents, a woman who attempted for a brief time to bring African Heritage days and Black History Month to France—is attempting to identify and legitimize a space

RFI: Why is it so difficult for France to address race?

MS: France, most of the time, limits itself to its European parts. And that neglect of the overseas departments is really what enabled France to cut off itself from racial matters—from blackness, and other racial or ethnic identities. The presence of black people in mainland France is often associated with immigration, and foreignness, even though some of the overseas departments have been French territories since 1848. The dichotomy exists is only between nationals and foreigners, and if you are French, you are just French. So, blackness, as a concept is not supposed to exist. The fifth republic, our current constitution, does not recognize race as a legal category. But just because it does not work that way, legally speaking, does not mean that race and blackness do not exist; they just unfold in diverse ways. Reality does not match the lofty ideals in the constitution. I am all for universalism, if it's real. I want to dream, but I need reality. I want my dreams to come true.

The latter, a Nigerian native, is trying to balance attention between the developed world (the West) and the developing world (which includes Africa):

You have developed-country members who believe they have borne the burden of liberalization — too much of it — and that maybe advanced developing countries have maybe not borne enough... I’ll be listening to the developed countries, listening to the advanced-developing countries and the least-developed countries and asking ‘Where is there common ground?’

Professional, high-achieving African women everywhere, in never-ending negotiation with the West, have been called on to be universal. So, the African woman who’s influenced by her ancestral home, the former French colony, and her former-British-colony counterpart have a shared, silent language all of their own, spoken through steely eyes. They have successfully trudged through the snowstorm to the mountain summit because there was no other way to advance. *But they have also done it because negotiation, not confrontation, has always worked for them in a post-revolutionary situation.* There is no “Black Girl Magic” here; what exists are the spaces for the determined and the brilliant and the talented (and perhaps the privileged) to enter and expand, and to live with and celebrate very practical, protracted victories. They are



no different from the young woman at the bus stop right now, coming home from classes, pushing toward that future degree. It's not just that Soumahoro and Okonjo-Iweala both were probably that student a moment ago; it's that that emerging adult is at that stop can be found in every place in the African world, existing simultaneously, quiet (for now) and determined to not just to find her place as an achiever but—for the best of them, certainly—to shape that space in ways that benefit her and reflect both her African values and Western goals. Their mirrors point inward and outward simultaneously because there was and is little luxury for the vacillation of shifting.



TOWN HALL AND RESOURCES

Town Hall

March 17, 2021 at 6 pm: <https://www.crowdcast.io/blacklashcollective>

Resources

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