

In Conversation: Weaving Pan Africanism at the Scene of Gathering, *The Weaving Kenya Women's Collective*

Ta Imaaagini!

Ta imagini that
you and I
and all the women
of this world
stood hand in hand
marched side by side
crossing
dividing borders
constructing
connecting bridges
shattering
binding chains
creating
delinkable links
across the nations
across the continents!
– Micere Githae Mugo

What is important to us matters. We matter. How we feel and think and desire matters.
– Pumla Dineo Gqola

To whom do theorists speak?
– Carole Boyce Davies

Sound into Space

* Your email has been sent *

The year is 2014. President Barack Obama of the United States is “the most powerful man in the world.” The African Union, formerly the Organisation of African Unity, is celebrating its 50th year. Lupita Nyong’o has been installed as the most beautiful woman in the world by global acclamation.

The year is 2014. In the United States, black men continue to die the deaths of the disposable. In Africa, the African Union licenses African presidents to commit war crimes with impunity. Egypt convicts Al-Jazeera journalists for doing their job and sentences them to long prison terms. “Corrective rape” in South Africa leaves women’s corpses in the streets. Boko Haram kidnaps hundreds of schoolgirls. An Ebola panic thrusts already precarious lives into greater vulnerability as the need for medical services rises sharply away from its availability. In Kenya, an ethnic-cleansing exercise disguised as a security operation incarcerates thousands of ethnic Somalis in the Kasarani Sports Stadium, deports some to refugee camps, repatriates others to Somalia, and alienates many of them into exile.

[A]t the centre of Kenyan social and political culture [stands the phallus,
as a literal and symbolic signifier of power.

– Grace Musila

What might it mean to chart imagined communities that sutured, rather than excluded, acknowledged the critical linkages between and contributions of women rather than re-inscribing the phallogocentric erasure of women? What alternatives futures become possible by taking seriously the world-building but quietly routine mycelium of women’s networks and relationships, instead of remaining incarcerated in the fractured dystopias of the AU’s cabals?

I have wondered why very little of what we write has to do with our
ordinary lived realities.

– Oyeronkwe Oyewumi

If you ululate, they will come.

Akitelek Mboya: I’m here!

Aleya Kassam: Thanks!

Dayo Forster: iPads and my chubby fingers don’t mix well.

Garnette Oluoch-Olunya: I am here!

Kerubo Abuya: Nipo pia!

Marziya Mohammedali: Here!

Mshāi Mwangola: 'Mshāi!'

Ngwatilo Mawiyoo: It's 3 a.m.

Wambui Mwangi: Aha!

Wangui wa Goro: Unleash, unleash!

Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg: I'm here, too!

The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and its continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember, and, second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things.

...

The political realm arises directly out of acting together, the "sharing of words and deeds." Thus action not only has the most intimate relationships to the part of the world common to us all, but also is the one activity which constitutes it.

– Hannah Arendt

Where is "here"?

"Here" is everywhere the ululation finds a resonance and creates a "sharing of words and deeds." Thus, "here" is a space of transformative collective possibility, where it is possible to "act together" in articulating our world. "Here" is wherever you are standing when you turn *toward* the ululation, and in turning, arrive at the part of the world "common to us all."

Weaving Kenya is a feminist collective formed in 2012 as a staging ground for women's collaborative and cooperative creativity. In a cyber-space anchored in Nairobi, a group of Weaving women convene a virtual round-table on '*Pan Africanism, Diaspora and Gender*' to revisit ideas of belonging and identity, and to see what happens if we take our own lives, our own experiences, and our own memories seriously as a mode of being-in-the world.

Wangui: For a person without food and shelter, or for a person with more than enough food and shelter, these may not be immediately pressing questions. But for those whose task it is as thinkers or creative people, whose life-work is to find explanations, solutions, or answers for the more intractable problems of our time, these issues remain of interest to us in their philosophical and material forms.

The future of our world may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new ways of relating across differences. The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly arranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation and suspicion.

– Audre Lorde

Mshai: The story-teller endeavours to make something new—to create or fashion anew—out of that which already exists. The intention is always to shed new meaning, to arrive at new knowledge or insight, to make those who engage the story, or who are part of the story-ing process, perceive something new, to become conscious of something even in that which is most familiar.

The language of “weaving” is a foundational claim to our cultural traditions and legacies of women working and speaking together, of collaboration and co-operation. We claim not any one method or fabric, but the practice of weaving our labor and weaving the imagination of women together, so as to make something new.

Space into Ground

Kenya's official languages: English, Kiswahili and Silence.

But there was also memory

– Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor

Ngwatilo: Whatever is African about me has to be able to have and articulate its identity. It has to come with its own narrative and aesthetic, one that can stand revision, and it has to come with its own “mental space,” with *grounding*.

This grounding is the call. The call is that to which one turns, and in turning, finds oneself standing on the ground of the call. Here, then, we treat the propensity of women to show up for a work of community labour as the work of a spatial extension of community itself. The spatial reach of the sound is the radius of the community. The ululation does not merely travel across its own diameter: it gathers the trajectory to itself and transforms it into a mode of its extension.

We follow Audre Lorde in transforming silence into language and action—articulating, validating, affirming, performing, and supporting diversity, even as we celebrate communality.

–Mshai

A ululation, properly understood, then, creates a central point for a sonic navigation of a community of those within hearing, or those who present themselves in the present. This is the first act of the political: the action of gathering toward each other, in a gestural demarcation of a “here” able to generate its own temporality by shaping a workable past and a livable future from the resonance of its present articulation.

There’s a conjuring going on.

– Nalo Hopkins.

For Weaving Kenya, ululation is an epistemological stance as well as an ethical one because it is a breaking of silence, a resistance to enforced norms of decorum, an often joyful noise, an always powerful intervention, a way of calling out and answering yes to each other, and, sometimes, a way of grieving. Even when a ululation is one of lament, however, *to be heard* lamenting is to create a community from an audience bound by a shared signal. Those who hear themselves addressed show up. Sometimes, they show up *in* the address.

We ululate in order to animate our “we” with attention and participation, to claim and to call up the generative dissent, creative refusals, and critical discourse that we claim as a collective legacy of feminism. If ululation makes a space in-between those who know themselves addressed by the sound, it simultaneously creates the grounds for the addressees to call to their other communities of belonging, in their turn. These relationships are part of the ongoing work of building a sharable world. These are the architectures of our world(s).

“She” wraps herself around tar and brick, around wooden scaffolding.

– Heba Amin and Akitelek Mboya

Architecture

Mshai: In this space, I want to share how sister-souls come beside us to lighten the load we are carrying and walk alongside us on the difficult patches of our journey – their presence is the grace that helps us get through those rough patches.

I had been in Melbourne for my Masters, and in January 2008, I left for Ghana to participate in a fellowship divided equally between the University

of Ghana and Northwestern University. Since I had to get my US visa from my home country, I stopped over in Kenya. I was excited to see my family, as I had not seen them for two years. I did not know it was a grace-trip to farewell Dad. Dad was in hospital at the time. In the way families shield those living in diaspora from these things, I had not really been fully apprised of his condition, and it was a shock to see the “Daddy” I had left behind – the man who was strong enough to take on the whole world – so frail.

My friend Charity invited me to spend a night at her place. When I got there, she offered me the gift of either talking about what was happening around me, and to do whatever I wanted, laugh, cry, reminiscence, rage. Or, I could shut out the realities outside the house for that one blessed evening. I chose the latter. I can’t remember what we cooked, only that it was made delicious by her quiet caring. Then we sat up and watched a video. It was that silliest of comedies, *Father of the Bride*. I laughed and cried and it was not about the movie at all but about something I could not express. Then we sat up for most of the night and talked. I can’t tell you about what. The next day I left with the gift of that precious, life-shaping interlude.

Dad died about a month later, when I was in Ghana. My family did not want to send the news directly to me, so they e-mailed Prof. Kofi Anyidoho. Prof. and Prof. Sandra Richards from NU, the two preceptors of our institute, who broke the news to me. Sandra Richards, my first African American big sister, held me in that first instance of telling. I must have cried. I must have said something. All I remember is that she put her arms around me and provided comfort. That day, the other fellows on the programme taught me a new dimension to pan-Africanism: beyond our different passports and histories, it was a relationship of care. They held in that first mad wave of grief.

To this day the only way I can describe it is that it felt like I was a room full of furniture and someone suddenly pulled the carpet on which it all stood from under the legs of it all and everything went crashing over, scattering contents of drawers and tops all over the room. It would be months before I gathered it all again together, before I began to put together the room without the comfortable cushioning that the carpet had provided, before I got used to the bareness of the exposed floor and realised I could—and would—live without it, and survive, even thrive. But those first moments, that group of fellows closed ranks around me and held me together.

The sister to my heart—Jean—was in France. That December—this was in February—Jean forwent her regular trip home to Kenya to come instead to Australia where I had returned, knowing how difficult that first Christmas would be. 25th December is Dad’s birthday. At the most difficult times, when I just could not find it in me to be nice or happy, Jean took the brunt of it. She loved me through it in a way I had no idea I even needed. She made it possible for me to get through that first Christmas of the rest of my life.

Years later, I happened to be in Kenya over summer, and ran into her family, who told me her father was in hospital. I went to visit, and just before I left, he asked me to pray, “because it will be like having Jean here.” I got a call the next day—he’d gone, before Jean was able to arrive from France.

cracks gently ease together
 I temper our scars with gold
 You whisper our story, trace
 a path to a yearning truth
 we breathe. Our fractured souls
 glimmer in the moonlight.
 – Marziya Mohammedali

Gr(ou)nding to a Halt: A Method of Interruptions

Make it find to out what your own hands are good for.
 – Shailja Patel

What difference does gender make?

We need to think of feminist transnational practices as a way of re(encountering) what is already encountered, in the very crossing of national and regional borders.
 – Sara Ahmed

We start to work, but we are interrupted. We stop. We start again. We re-start, stop, start, stop. Delays, emergencies, exhaustion, children, hospital visits, equipment breakdowns, competing deadlines, travel and family schedules.

En considérant le travail non rémunéré des femmes comme un 'travail familial' dans le cultures de rente effectuées par les homes, dans les 'activités de subsistance' (de la culture à la transformation des cultures vivrières à l'approvisionnement en eau et en combustibles) et dans les tâches domestiques (entretien des enfants, cuisine et ménage), les études

féminines et la recherche féministe ont aidé à faire prendre conscience du fait que le travail salarié et la production de marchandises ne constituent pas les seules formes de travail qui existent ou qui contribuent à donner de la valeur.

– Ayesha Imam

Garnette: August is the school holidays. The children are at home all day.

Wanjiru: [Distant sounds of frenetic schedule]

Eleven Weavers answered the ululation but only nine arrived. Two were arrested along the way by the exigencies of life: interruptions that subvert work and good intentions, obligations that stretch capacities to breaking point, and attachments that distribute the self between duty and desire.

We draw attention to these absences not only to mark our loss of a certain intellectual energy, but also to suggest them as paradigmatic of the quotidian forces that separate women from the world of appearances. This dis-appearance has significant historical effects:

Is it not possible that there were more key women figures in this pan-African history, or simply that many have gone unrecognised? . . . [S]cholars have not sufficiently turned their attention to the lives and contributions of women.

– Hakim Adi & Marika Sherwood

Kerubo: There was a power cut from Friday to Monday.

Wambui: There was a power cut as I was writing about power cuts that interrupt writing.

Those who arrived at the digital convention were reminded again that contemporary social formations are cyborg and multi-element assemblages containing and depending upon many inanimate and inorganic elements. The relatively small group of women in Africa with access both to electricity and the internet are often reminded of the precarity of our privilege by the frequency and caprice of its withdrawal.

There is another power cut. We finally get it: *There will be interruptions.*

Marziya: KPLC means Kenyan People's Lamps and Candles

Our woven worlding is a mark of social specificity at a time when most women in Africa are still awaiting the opportunity to complain about interruptions in electrical supply.

Interruption becomes important: a rhythm. Sometimes we are the interruption. Sometimes we are interrupted. Some of these interruptions

are planned. Some of these plans are interrupted. We learn to work in and through interruptions. We watch the work of the interruption. We weave interruptions into the work. We work interruptions in, to do work, to perform a labour.

making a poem
 we hadn't a shape for
 layering improvised harmonies
 onto an unscored page
 – Shailja Patel

The interruptions prevented us from having a system, as they disorganised its patterns and linear formations and placed us instead in an unpredictable field of conversation.

These in turn produce what can be identified as a “new space, an area of transformation and change where we can no longer accept a factual or natural account of history and culture, nor simply seek to retrieve a hidden authentic identity.”

– Carole Boyce Davies

Interruptions create hitches, glitches, pauses, enigmatic aporias, uneven patterns, momentary disturbances, a small turbulence. Voices overlap, weave in and out, over and under, confirming, questioning, calling: creating space, making small spaces into which might slide an elsewhere, an Other, a “something-else.”

We summon women who speak of un-homing, dis-placements, border crossings, bodies out of place. We call them to interrupt us, to intervene, to erupt amongst and between us. Summoning them disrupts the bounded configurations of our conversation, crossing, and re-crossing the boundaries between our many “heres” and “theres,” and dissolving and recombining our sense of “them” and “us.”

The words name, stand alone, relate, reduce themselves and build as they speak critically, signify, oppose dominance.

– Carole Boyce Davies

These women interrupt our preoccupations by intervening with sometimes dissenting constructions of “Africa,” of “woman” of “Blackness,” of “Pan Africanism,” and of “Africa.” Together, we trouble citational conventions, the structures of bibliographies, the fraudulent smoothness of textual and rhetorical linearity, the space of the page, our own voices.

This includes not only the diversity embodied in and articulated by African/black women but also in other feminist intellectuals whose commitments are similar to our own—Trinh Minh-ha, Chandra Mohanty, Gloria Anzaldúa, Purinma Mankekar, and so many others.

– Mshāi Mwangola

We learn to see the interruptions as openings and leakages, leading in new directions, or as remnants and revenants, returns of the unreconciled. There are many forms of interruptions, at one extreme of which are the forces structuring social precarity, displacements, and un-homing.

Routes into Memory

–How do we experience these locations as both situations and interpolations? How do they impress upon our lives as embodied persons?

What is it to inhabit a world?

– Veena Das

Discourses of sisterhood and “Africa” imbricate us, interpolate us, interpellate us, call us home to injury. We probe the soft spaces of vulnerability and grief, the still-aching losses, separations, dispossessions, dislocations and disorientation.

To bear witness

– Mshāi Mwangola

To bear witness

– Meida McNeal

To bear witness

– Renée Alexander Craft

To bear witness

To call up memory, consciously respecting its power to heal as well as to hurt

– Meccasia E. Zabriskie

Five Stories

I. Wangui: I have had chemo three times in my life, and each time I lose my hair, all of it. It feels like a loss of a tooth that will never return. The baldness of chemo is unlike any other. The follicles fall from the root, so that rough undergrowth is missing. You long for the tug of the comb, and the crunch, crunch that you hear as you comb it.

Your head is so smooth, no scarf will sit on it, and those turbans, am I going to wear one? They are worse and will draw attention. Then you will have to talk about it. Console people. Do I go bald and shock and annoy?

You hear strident voices speaking about hair and you keep quiet, swallow, when they say you should not straighten your hair, or perm it or wear a wig. The righteousness gets my goat. I was like that once.

I think of hair differently now.

Now, I don't know what lies beneath people's clothes or heads. Maybe they are carrying bigger burdens than Afro-centrism. They are fighting for their lives and the little dignity a wig can afford them. They should be allowed them.

I take a photo of me before the follicles fall off. They want to match the length.

The textures here don't reflect me. Maybe they think only white women get cancer. I will go to the Afro-shops, and buy myself a wig, nay, wigs, lots of them. I am feeling sexy, outrageous. Lets go red! It will be a couple of weeks before I wear it, and it too slips off so you have to wear netting that holds it into place.

All those Afrocentrics will go ballistic: *Wangui wa Goro is brainwashed!*

Wigs have become a healing part of me now. I look at women's heads and wonder. The more daring the wig, the more I feel I understand.

Black women survive these climes in weaves or wigs or perms, trying to blend in.

The absence of any standard languages of pain is perhaps symptomatic of the fact that I cannot separate my pain from my expression of it—another way of saying this is that my expression of pain compels you in unique ways—you are not free to believe or disbelieve me—our future is at stake.

– Veena Das

Let's face it: we're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something.

–Judith Butler

II. Marziya: A typical Saturday morning in the city of Perth, only interrupted by a man who walks up behind you, and unexpectedly shouts, “Terrorist!”

Your first reaction is to jump away from where you are standing. Somewhere in your mind, you know you should be taking note of what he’s saying, should be walking away. You’re not quite sure how to react.

Without really thinking about it, you turn on your heel and look at him, exclaiming, “What? Where?”

You feel half-dried, worn-out, alone, trying to understand the labels that have been slapped on you: Muslim. Woman. Kenyan. Pakistani. Student. Hijabi. Oppressed.

Headstrong. Struggling.

Lost.

[T]urning back evokes not so much the idea of a return, as a turning back to inhabit the same space now marked as a space of destruction, in which you must live again. Hence, the sense of the everyday as the sense of something recovered.

– Veena Das

when trees die

all small hearts break

...

all life becomes danger

how to find

another place

where all is not

yet barren.

– bell hooks

III. Kerubo: I awoke to information that the beautiful palm tree at the front of my parents’ home had been cut down. Yes, I am mourning a tree. She was beautiful, elegant, and just so visually enchanting.

I loved her. I thought about her all morning/afternoon. I cried in the

shower. Yes, I did.

I was informed that four trees that had been clipped would also be cut down soon. I vehemently protested.

Something silently reminded me that I am an unmarried Omogusii woman who lives in her parents' home. In coded silence, I remembered that I am not supposed to complain. After all, the men of the home had endorsed the cutting of the palm tree. She belonged to them. This is their home. Not mine. I have no claim to the palm tree. I really don't belong here.

IV. Saidiya Hartman: A pattern of collegial joking and teasing had developed over the course of our first weeks together. Ninety percent of the remarks began "You South Africans," "You Nigerians," "You Ghanaians." But whenever I entered the circle I was greeted by an awkward silence, either because my colleagues didn't know what to say or because they feared I would be insulted if they called attention to my difference, which was charged for all of us, especially in the context of our collective investigation of slavery. My presence tainted the glory of pre-colonial Africa. I was the disposable offspring of the "African family," the flesh-and-blood reminder of its shame and tragic mistakes. When behind my back my colleagues grumbled "those Americans," I didn't discern any tenderness or affection, only ridicule and envy.

[N]one of my colleagues . . . gave much thought to the way their history was enmeshed with mine, nor did they entertain the idea that the Africa in my hyphenated African-American identity had anything to do with their Africa. They made it clear: Africa ended at the borders of the continent.

V. Akitelek: My family, numbering in the mid hundreds, was displaced from their land in Saboti, Trans Nzoia, in the 1992 post election violence. During the clashes my grandparents' house was burnt to a crisp. I would have been just a few years old then but the events of this time are some of my earliest memories. This is the point at which my life began.

The only thing they salvaged from this particular attack was a shiny red chair from my grandmother's house. Fake leather, ruby red. My grandmother died a few months later. My mother says she died of distress over the lives she had lost through the destruction of her objects. This shiny red chair represents the testimony of my grandmother's life, and the symbolic lives of all my family.

The pivotal experience of my life was one in which objects were lost. I don't keep things. I have no fabric, no trinkets, no jewellery handed down, no books. I have never kept anything that could be physically taken from me. The things I do have I dispose of as soon as I start to attach to them.

Our first pass at a transnational sensibility tended to produce ambivalence at best and hostility at worst as if we, too, did not know what happened at the end. However, when we arrived at the end of our conversations we found new layers of resonance waiting there for us. In revealing our scar tissues from the injuries of un-homing suffered even by those who are "at home," we re-collected networks, reprised friendships, and remembered acts of grace described in such detail that they gathered us in to the re-collecting grief and into a memorialised gratitude.

The Complex Order of Community

When we entered this conversation, Akitelek Mboya was journeying West across the Sahel; when we reached its official end she was crossing from North Africa to Europe. Until we started on this conversation, she had not read Carole Boyce Davies' work on the transgressive writing of border crossings women. Akitelek read it for the first time as she was crossing borders herself, and navigating the abyss between abstract Pan Africanisms and the fleshy menace of African customs officials. Afterwards, she said,

Akitelek: You were right. [Carole Boyce Davies] is changing my life at every turn.

The "carrying of ideologies" is the final iteration of "ordinary" Pan Africanism. Ideologies are carried by and through persons embedded in overlapping networks of belonging. By 'ideology' here we mark not a political platform but a way of relating of being

In-relation with.

In this room, for one hour

Let's be easy in our skins

Observe ourselves

With gentle curiosity

Proffer and accept

Selected morsels of our lives.

– Shailja Patel

Dayo: My current emotional journey has as much of a bearing on the things I will say and how I will say them. As my mother pointed out to me yesterday, I left her 30 years ago, when I was eighteen. Just that statement makes me want to cry. She's giving me advice about how to let go of my son, who is now nineteen, and about to go to university. He's been on a gap year and we've spent a lot of time together in the past year bonding. I am about to let my son—remember when he fell out of the high wardrobe cupboard at 3, when he got concussed from rugby, how his terror of mannequins developed from the enthusiastic clown that chased him in Abidjan, how he used to dance with forefingers pointing outwards to keep the beat until we laughed it out of him—go.

The story began long ago . . . For years we have been passing it on, so that our daughters and grand daughters may continue to pass it on. So it may become larger than its own proper measure, larger than its own in-significance. The story never really begins nor ends, even though there is a beginning and an end to every story, just as there is a beginning and an end to every teller.

– Trinh T. Minh-ha

We introduced this woven engagement with the question of Pan Africanism by presenting and attending to four intertwined ideas of “being here” or being “present”: locale, location, located-ness, and localisation. We foreground the individual and specific geographical locations from which we think and write because the sights and sounds and smells and sensibilities of being in place also structure what we think of as ‘our’ place. We mark that that our collective re-articulation and representation of these diverse spaces, places, and situations is a practice of ‘worlding’ and by implication, also one of mapping our imbrication in the diverse situational and generational interpretations of an imagined continental or global community.

Genealogies that not only specify and illuminate historical and cultural difference but also envision and enact common political and intellectual projects across these differences constitute a crucial element of the work of building critical multicultural feminism.

– Chandra Talpade Mohanty

We underscore the attachments, affiliations and sutures of belonging, often forged in the direst moments of our migrations and re-crossings, as the anchors of one ephemeral mapping of the world. Similar mapping-networks

are iterated multiple times in the relationships through which women build and memorialise a world, patterning and archiving it in a repository of material artifacts and remembrance.

All that you touch,
 You Change.
 All that you Change,
 Changes you.
 – Octavia Butler

Mshai S. Mwangola is a member of Weaving Kenya and of *The Quilt*. Wangui wa Goro and Carole Boyce Davies have been friends for years. Carole Boyce Davies taught Mshai Mwangola in graduate school. Shailja Patel is a member of Weavers. Shailja Patel and Amina Mama are friends. Amina Mama came to Nairobi and caused this Weaving to appear. Akitelek, during her travels with *Invisible Borders*, travelled from North Africa to Europe and met Jean Thevenet, who is “Mshai’s Jean,” in France. Dayo and Wangui met in England for the first time during this conversation.

I have been unprotected. I have been naked and exposed. I have been clothed and armoured. I know what I carry in my suitcase. I carry my history. I carry my family. Over my saris, I wear my sisters.
 – Shailja Patel

Evocations: Calling Criss-Crossing Community

We began with a ululation. We end with an evocation. We call up the women who have sustained us, inspired us, accompanied us, comforted us, befriended us. Those who embrace and hold us, those whose writing enlightens us and whose music moves our bodies in synchrony and syncopation, those who feed, and hold and nurture us, those whose thoughts we invite to mingle with ours, women we love and learn from. If the ululation is a space-making gesture, the evocation sutures us to lineage of feminism that extends across the world and across time. If the ululation creates and affirms our community, our evocations memorialise and affirm the many worlds that we inherited and the many worlds that we have made together with women around the world.

Abby Lincoln, Abena Busia, Abiola Ogunsola, Assia Djebar, Akua Gray, Alice Walker, Ama Ata Aidoo, Amina Mama, Angela Davis, Angelique Kidjo, Antoinette Handley, Anumbai Patel, Aretha Franklin, Asa, Aseneth Odaga, Asma Mohamed, Abdel Halim, Atsango Chesoni, Ayesha Imam, Azadeh Moaveni,

bell hooks, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Busi Mhlongo, Buchi Emecheta, Carol Boyce Davies, Caroline Wanjiku Kihato, Cedella Marley, Chelagat Mutai, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Doreen Baingana, Edwidge Danticat, Efua Sutherland, Elizabeth Orchardson-Mazrui, Ellen Kuzwayo, Erykah Badu, Fatoumata Diawara, Gcina Mhlope, Georgia Ann Muldrow, Gloria Naylor, Grace Jones, Grace Ogot, Grace Onyango, 'Funmi Olonisakin, Hazel Carby, Heba Amin, Hope Azeda, India Arie, Jamaica Kincaid, Jill Scott, Jita Allen, Kara Keeling, Kelly Coate, Khadja Nin, Laura Mvula, Lauryn Hill, Maisha Auma Eggers, Margaret Ogolla, Mariama Ba, Mary J Blige, Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru, Marjorie Oludhe-Macgoye, Matlhogonolo Maboe, Maya Angelou, Mariama Bâ, Mbilia Bel, Mekatilili wa Menza, Melissa Williams, Micere Mugo, Miriam Chemmoss, Miriam Makeba, Miriam Were, Mkawasi Mcharo Hall, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, Monica Arach, Mora wa Ngiti, Mumbi wa Maina, Mumbi Kaigwa, Muthoni Garland, Muthoni Likimani, Muthoni Wanyeki, Mwana Kupona, Nadine Gordimer, Nalo Hopkinson, Nahid Toubia, Natasha Jafri, Nawal el Sadaawi, Ng'endo Mwangi, Nina Simone, Nkiru Nzegwu, Nourbese Phillips, Obioma Nnaemeka, Nozipo Maraire, Oprah Winfrey, Oumou Sangare, Penina Mlama, Patricia Collins, Patricia Williams, Phoebe Asiyo, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Rasna Warah, Rebecca Njau, Rita Marley, Rokia Traoré, Sade Adu, Sade Auma Adeyemo, Sandra Richards, Seble Dawit, Sharon Dean, Shailja Patel, Sitawa Namwalie, Sonia Sanchez, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Suki Ali, Susan Kiguli, Suzanna Owiyo, Sylvia Tamale, Thandiswa Mazwa, Titilayo C. Harrison, Toni Morrison, Violet Birungi, Wambui Otieno, Wangari Maathai, Wanjiku Kabira, Wanjiru Kihoro, Whitney Houston, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Yvonne Vera, Zahara Mkutane, Zora Neale Hurston.

If you evoke them, they will come.

Interlocutors

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