

Intersections: Theorising black/African feminist theatre aesthetic (through) in the writing and theatre-making process of IGAMA?

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This performative and online paper (and/or hybrid) presentation investigates how black/African feminist theory can influence a playwriting structure that can dramatize issues of intersectionality (gender, race, class, sexuality,) and the dual oppression that black women experience every day. In South Africa, this lived experience also engages with the issues pertaining to culture, tradition, marriage, language, and white Supremacy. By mapping these experiences into a performance-playwriting structure, this presentation aims to show the ways Black women in post-colonial South Africa negotiate their lives through different hierarchies of power on stage. I argue that the intersectional lived experiences of Black womanhood cannot function within a rigid (beginning, middle, and end) playwriting structure, because this limiting form forces the black woman to be depicted through a one-dimensional experience when black women's experiences are multi-layered, nuanced, complicated, and should be structured within a six- dimensional experience that reflects the Black women's identity as a form of resistance to refuse remaining muted, othered, and oppressed.

Therefore, in my on-going praxis, experimental process I have been investigating a framework that would further assist my negotiation of art and self as a black woman. I have been needing to break out of the traditional spaces that have housed my workspaces that uphold the traditional white gaze and colonial influential theories that I found myself in. I have made it a personal quest to find not only my voice as black woman playwright, but to find ways to interrogate my identity, weave my identity into threads, themes, which have been the main points of interest in my main theatre works; themes that can influence the structure of theatre-making as we navigate new territories for the spaces in which theatre can exist. In so doing, to raise awareness on the status quo and injustices caused on black women I wanted to investigate a structure of theatre-making. Where, I started to question what the past, present, and future language of black womanhood looks like on stage for black women living in post-colonial South Africa. It is through the influences shaped by black/African feminist epistemologies, Black South African women playwrights are beginning to find their voices and create their own spaces where they can re-name themselves, re-place themselves and re-claim their voices inside and outside of theatre spaces. And to further answer my argument I question what the past, present, and future language of black womanhood looks like in a digital art space for black women living in post-colonial South Africa. This idea is to now see how a body loaded with memory survives and tells its histories; how the body as site—with embodied memory, is complicated and transposed in a digital arts space; where we challenge the non-linear form of storytelling as has been my ongoing praxis, and its importance to understanding the complex lived experience of black womanhood.

Therefore, my aim is to use an award-winning (filmed) theatre play that I wrote and directed titled 'IGAMA? (My name is?)', (that started as my MA research work) in a digital arts installation. Making use of the filmed work to project holographic footage of IGAMA? the live/online installation, and the projections will further drive into the exploration of the non-linearity of memory and the body as an embodiment of memory that is encountered in the space.

Slindile Mthembu is a playwright, director, creative producer, and navigating through the voice of a researcher. Her areas of interest include issues of black identity, sexual,

psychological, emotional, cultural violence(s) and the Black womxn's lived experience on all three different levels (gender, race, and class discrimination).