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"Don't Put Words in My Mouth!" To what extent does socio-institutional accessibility create a divide amongst black, female practitioners within the South African Theatre industry?

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"Don't Put Words in My Mouth!"

To what extent does socio-institutional accessibility create a divide amongst black, female practitioners within the South African Theatre industry?





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MA RESEARCH Report

MASTER OF ARTS by CW and RR

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Thank you to the examiners for their extensive feedback notes, there is always room for improvement.

Thank you to change, we really tried it, but it backfired. The same has conquered again, I have tried to change, but change has gone back to the voices of the collective.

Abstract

The research seeks to critically engage with the power structures that have a circular flow within the South African Theatre Industry. The work seeks to highlight the dualism of age and accessibility and how this has created unequal power relations amongst black, female theatre practitioners. This research draws on two South African National Theatre Award Shows hosted annually in South Africa: the Naledi Theatre Awards hosted in Johannesburg and the Fleur Du Cap Awards hosted in Cape Town. The research interrogates how award-winning and award nominations bring societal validation and credibility that allows for personal reflection and socio-institutional accessibility to manifest.

The aim is to find out whether black, female, theatre practitioners 'feel' the need to excavate these power relations for a different construct to be built; that asks for a shift in the subject to be at the forefront. The research seeks to reveal if the responsibility for change sits in the power and agency of the systemic structures that mediate theatre award spaces as well as the individuals that micro-manage these theatre spaces.

This work focuses on Cape Town and Johannesburg based practitioners as these are the only two cities in which theatre awards, on a national level, currently take place. However, every province within South Africa has their own theatres and awards, including Durban, where the voices of Durban based practitioners are still a crucial part of the study. Who gets access to credibility within these socio-institutional spaces will help uncover who gets to speak and how they get to express themselves through such platforms. This work refuses to keep black women separate from the rest of the industry, but instead requests the platform for black women to stand on an even playing field alongside their counterparts when looking at systematic credibility.

Key terms: Critical Discourse Analysis, third world feminism, South African theatre studies and psycho-analytical discourse.

Keywords: language, Affect, credibility, access, intersectional, intergenerational.

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CHAPTER 1 | Introduction (The Adventure)

"An award, sometimes called a distinction, is something given to a recipient as a token of recognition of excellence in a certain field… An award may be described by three aspects:

1) Who is given 2) what 3) by whom, all varying according to purpose.
…The recipient is often a single person or else a representative of a group of people, be it an organisation, a sports team or a whole country.
…The award may also be accompanied by a title, certificate or diploma, as well as an object of direct value such as money or a scholarship.
… An award may be conferred as a state decoration by sovereign state, dynasty or other public authority, or else a private organisation or individual
… Finally, an award may recognize participation rather than victory."

-English Oxford Living Dictionaries. 2017.

My research investigates whether there is a socio-institutional impact on how power tactics are being used within award systems in order to fuel black-on-black, gendered hate speech amongst theatre practitioners, resulting in black actresses seldom achieving their ambitions.

Brief history of South African theatre awards

While there are several smaller, provincial awards programmes, I mention only the major ones that offer – or used to offer, until their demise – national opportunity for recognition:
In 1965 the Three Leaf Arts Awards (now known as the Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards) was established in Cape Town, claiming to be honouring theatre excellence. Fleur Du Cap believes that even long before democracy, it has given voice to the otherwise unheard. Today, it believes that it continues to hold up that legacy of providing powerful insight and challenging the pace of transformation within Cape Town and its surrounding areas.

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The founder of the Naledi Theatre Awards in 2019 gave mention to the expansion of panels due to the demographics of the 100 judges that are said to populate the panel.

The discontinuation of the Durban Theatre Awards in 2018 was explained as being caused by a lack of budget. The award system that had existed for 15 years came to an unforeseen close, as the generosity of its sponsors collapsed.

At the Durban Playhouse Awards final program run in 2016, there were no nominations for 'new female performer', 'Comedic performance by a female' and only one nomination for 'Lead actress' in its full list of award nominees. The Judges would be disclosed only on the evening of the ceremony.

This summary shows that only two national awards systems have dominated the South African theatre industry for over twenty years.

The dearth of awards programmes has left very little opportunity for recognition for any actress, and particularly in the context of this work, black actresses, to chisel out a name for themselves, gain academic accreditation, international review and job opportunities through the acknowledgement of these awards.

There is little in-depth documentation found on the impact of these awards. What information there is, can only be found on the marketing platforms of the institutions themselves, from newspaper articles and from my personal two years spent working for one of these award systems. This scarcity of information is part of the many realities faced when working as a professional South African theatre practitioner, and seriously undermines efforts to collect academic research on the usefulness of such award systems.
The danger in creating a document that states the history of award giving within a country via media, short articles and word of mouth is that a one-sided truth gets built, and thus slants the accuracy of the history being documented.

I am interested to see if there is a socio-institutional impact on how power tactics are being used within award systems to fuel black on black, gendered hate speech amongst theatre

practitioners. This hate speech does not focus on black women themselves, instead it is focused on what Sara Ahmed (2008) calls the *politics of good feeling*. In this context, the accepted understanding of why black women do not achieve socio-institutional success in the theatre industry, is a crisis that the industry attempts absolve itself from, claiming rather that it has come about because black women fail to idealise and idolise each other.

There is a narrative that suggests that this is because they suffer from a mixture of the *Queen Bee syndrome* (a woman in a position of authority who views or treats subordinates more critically if they are female), the *Pull her down syndrome* (a way in which too often women denigrate other women) and the *imposter syndrome* (a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their skills, talents or accomplishments and has a persistent internalised fear of being exposed as a "fraud").

Therefore, I find this research to be an adventure because I believe these descriptions are not always true. Rather, I believe that racially gendered and politically charged power structures that hide behind state-funded institutions and privately owned spaces, such as national and provincial award systems, are designed to keep black women at the bottom of the South African theatre's echelons of industry-based opportunities.

1.1. Research Question

"Don't put words in my mouth!" to what extent does socio-institutional accessibility create a divide amongst black, female practitioners within the South African Theatre industry?

My sub-questions are as follows:

- Who gets honoured within their country's artistic community, and how does it affect their careers?

- How do power relations based on emotional experiences dictate workspace accessibility?

- Is there an intergenerational fear of black female vulgarity and artistic professionalism?

- Are there new ways to bring to the surface the voices of black women within South African theatre that can be dictated by the voices of black women themselves?

1.2. The Tools

To analyse the data collected, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2007) has been chosen, as it explores the individual's personal account as voiced and documented as knowledge over merely opinion. It also allows for the researcher to play an active role to stay close to the world of the participants (Conrad, 1987). Interpretative phenomenological analysis is also useful when conducting small-sized samples for research, in this case being the voices of the five women who were interviewed (p.55).

Even though I am aware that studies found in this research do not equate to an overall conclusion of how black women treat each other based on age and accessibility privileges, it does however take a step closer to finding out how new paths need to be made in order to intervene and reimagine the documentation of the realities of black women within the industry. The aim is to find shared themes and understand the complexities of these experiences and how they intersect with the physical existence of black women within the industry.

For Heidegger (1938) the ability to interpret human experience is the ability to break free from prior understandings and come to accept knowledge as a conscious perception on events. I am inspired by what Heideggar uses as the hermeneutic circle method, where there is a constant reflection process that the researcher must undergo in order to review and analyse the parts of text that fit into the whole text. This agrees to the notion that the researcher cannot fully remove themselves from the meanings extracted from the text; the researcher continues to become a part of the phenomenon.

The chosen women ranged from their twenties to their fifties, all academically qualified with a Bachelor's Degree within theatre studies and all still faithfully engaged in activism work in one

way or another within the South African Theatre industry and within their respective communities, as well as theatre and development sectors across the country. These women were selected and questioned in the context of the current job placeholders that they occupy.

I had given these five participants only three connections of relation: gender, race, and credibility.

In this understanding of gender, I am grouping my participants into the title of Woman, that being a self-chosen recognition of being titled 'woman'. I am, however, aware that these said women do not participate in heteronormative understandings of the socio-political term 'woman' and were also not obliged to re-enact such binaries during the participation period within this research study.

The next connection was that of race; in my understanding, meaning any said woman who is not white. I thus claim all my participants to be black, with the understanding that I want to only give voice to the marginalised racial communities that have been able to defy the odds and successfully venture into the South African theatre industry with their counterparts, categorised as white. I participated with women who identify as Indian, African and Mixed Race.

The final connection is that of credentials. In this research I focused on the two previously mentioned theatre awards that are hosted in the two largest cities in South Africa. My primary source came in the form of discourse, and how black women chose to articulate themselves, regardless of theatre industry approval and help. I allowed the women to put aside their diplomatic responses to engage in the emotional reflections that the women had experienced, both for the worst and best of their careers.

I had aimed to ask for self-understood interpretations of particular words that suffocate the voices of these women and others like them within specific artistic spaces (Kilomba, 2013); and whether these words are shared or personalised.

I then compared the conversations with my participants thematically, to find the intersections between age, accessibility and information, which I kept referring back to how these women's

experiences were not left to stand alone, but rather how practical information was shared with me during the interviews.

During the five semi-structured interviews, the harsh realities of how age, gender and race have been constantly used both in support of and against black female theatre practitioners on their pilgrimage for artistic validation, creative relevance and self-acceptance, were revealed. I was interested to examine how confrontation is controlled by accessibility within artist spaces. My focus during the interview process was on how these women handle the environments in which they have received, and not received, validation from the formal and informal sectors of the South African theatre industry.

The importance of informed consent was a constant reminder throughout the process as the participants' information would be both private and public knowledge. Oftentimes, this was heavily layered, with the result that sensitively managing the lines between the private and the public information constantly weighed heavily on me.
It was only when I became fearful of losing sight of this documented information that I realised how powerful this type of work is, and so I have done everything in my power to make sure that privacy of information did not hinder poking the system, but that it was also appropriate to share within the chapters.

There is a total of six chapters, and each chapter attempts to unravel some of the sources of information using self- and participant reflection. Each chapter builds on to the next, highlighting the intersectionality of how often the same experiences are undergone, but also based differently reflecting on demographic, age, and school of thought from each participant. Each chapter holds a nugget of important information from every participant.

Chapter Two is called The Map because it is the literature review. This is the blueprint of where my thought process was moving towards when doing the research, finding participants, and choosing them explore the information found throughout this project.

Chapter Three is called The Packed Bag. It focuses on the methodology of the paper. Its sub-headings are titled, ‘Academic accreditation, Haves and have not’s, Why and Who”.

This focuses on academic accreditation and how the award system is a construct that is built into every institution. Oftentimes, from even before the individual can realise how the institution uses awards and accreditation as a reward for persons who obey the system, and as a rite of passage that excludes those who do not fit into the system.

Chapter Four is titled The dirt and dirty words. This chapter's sub-headings are "Dirty words, Root causes, The Power of Titles and Affect and response". This chapter's focus is on the power of titles and how this affects black theatre practitioners. How possible 'dirty words' for my participants match or reflect the social and political affairs of the practitioners' industry lifespans. It then talks about how black women treat and mistreat each other within the South African theatre industry, regardless of counter-discourses that are said to encourage social cohesion amongst black female theatre practitioners. This chapter asks the participants to self-reflect and acknowledge traumas, both self-inflicted and externally provoked.

Chapter Five is the discussion; the chapter is called The Treasure and New Discoveries. The sub-headings are, "How we treat each other, Black women, Resolutions and outcomes, and New words. It looks at giving alternative methods of awarding and rewarding artists in manners that can reclaim the dignity and the craftsmanship of black female practitioners.

Chapter Six attempts to tie up my limitations and conclusion. The chapter is called "The Road home", which highlight the blind spots that this research has revealed and makes sense of why the proposed questions are worth answering and unpacking in a manner that could affect the lost histories of silent voices and affect the future generations who are called to continue on the journey of critical engagement and understanding of meaning-making.

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CHAPTER 3 | Methodology

(The Packed Bag)

> "…they are reminders of places we can hardly enter. The places we never 'arrive' or can't 'stay'." – bell hooks, 1990.

Bell Hooks (1990) talks about how institutions that are built in the image of patriarchy, white supremacy and capitalism constantly remind the 'other' to feel inferior, illegitimate, and unwelcome. Even a guest is someone invited to share the fruits of labour, but Hooks makes it clear that the existence of the 'other' within institutional spaces across the board can never be a welcomed guest, because it was the 'other' that laboured, and so the institution can never allow the same hands who laboured to share in the fruits. Instead, the institution will constantly find ways to what Hooks says, create places that the other can never arrive or stay for long, create places that can hardly be entered.

I call this chapter 'The packed bag' because every adventure needs a packed bag filled with items that are of use for one's journey. Within any possible job opportunity that one might venture into, a source of academic accreditation and a form of experience is important to be qualified for the job placing. The theatre industry on the other hand does not always abide with such expectations. Every individual goes through different experiences even though they are on the same journey. If I am going on an adventure, I might pack a bag filled with items that are personal. As I travel, as I follow the map and allow the road to lead me, I am aware that I am not the only one who has travelled this journey. Of course there will be similarities with those who have taken this trip before me, and there will be similarities for those who are yet to travel this path, but I will add and remove items from my bag as I go. This will be done because there will be obstacles that will try to hinder me from what I want to achieve.

3.1. Academic Accreditation

In this chapter the understanding of what *academic accreditation* is, the *haves and have-nots,* the *'why' and* the *'who?'* are the four subheadings.

How does accreditation continue to maintain and control the systematic rules of black female theatre practitioners? Secondly, I am interested in *why* one receives an award and *who* are the ones to attain awards?

Note that I have chosen to transcribe the answers of the participants exactly as they expressed them, in the same way as I believe authenticity is essential to me expressing my own voice in this study.

> **Wendy:** Shu… I think when I came to do my undergrad here… I didn't know that this is what I wanted to do. So, my cousin from Lesotho told me, "Hey, you like doing drama at school, so there is this space here in Observatory where they perform. So why don't you just come, audition for that in the meantime and then figure out what to do." Because after high school I didn't know what to do, I also didn't want to come back to South Africa, so I felt kind of trapped.

Wendy is a middle-aged theatre practitioner who in the above, expresses a sense of entrapment when she first started her journey into the arts. Theatre for Wendy was nothing that she had dreamed about from her childhood, nor was it a major focal point in her family's history, but her refusal to attain a new living environment without purpose is evident. Wendy understood the repercussions of doing nothing and so she decided to travel on a road less mainstream. To this day Wendy is recognised as one of the first and few black women who went on to study theatre as an academic practice before being fluent in the craft as a freelance practitioner.

> **Nomsa:** Ok who am I *(Laughs)* I was born in Johannesburg, I grew up pretty much all over the world because my mother is also an artist and my father is also an artist and they travelled with me, my mother mainly travelled with me for wherever she performed. My father is European; my mother is South African, so I also have a European background. And then we moved to Durban when I was about 5 or 6, but my art history I suppose indirectly began… Well, I took my first steps on stage when my mother was performing and of course the whole performance stopped taking place because there was the drama of this child who decided to suddenly start walking you know.

For Nomsa, who is in her mid-twenties, her art journey was somewhat handed to her due to her parents having the opportunities to become well-known theatre practitioners themselves. Even though Nomsa had options, creativity was a focal point in the lives of her parents.

Nomsa's love for her parents and her ability to perform persuaded her to pursue her journey further than what her parents had achieved by her age.

It could easily be argued that Nomsa is the epitome of privilege but let one be reminded that Nomsa's existence is not just classified as 'other' within white supremacy. Rather, Nomsa's identity is classified as being deviant as she does not fit into the strict moulds of blackness and whiteness. Nomsa is a deviant classification of race because she is neither the master nor the slave thus making her a larger threat to control within her abilities to move through the theatre institutions that are still controlled by racial binaries.

Even though the older Nomsa gets, the more aware she is of her calling for theatre within South Africa in particular, Nomsa is also more aware of the spaces in between the margins and the centre, the spaces that often women like Nomsa fall through, unrecognised.

> **Fran:** I became an actor by chance, and I thought I was going to be a fashion designer I studied that and dropped out because I was bored… I didn't even know you have to study; I grew up in Gugulethu where a sketch is a sketch, so I didn't know that people were studying for acting. But anyway, the following year I auditioned for the University of Cape Town and I got in.

Fran, a theatre practitioner in her early fifties, makes mention of how her socio-economic background did not prepare her for the possibilities of her journey. Fran's call was creative; however, it took her some time to accept that calling. To Fran's surprise, theatre within the city was taken a lot more seriously than what she had experienced in her local township and this both interested and surprised her.

What Fran is speaking about is how the standard of theatre can change based on where it originates. When theatre stems from the margins, and in this case, places of poverty and overpopulation, it is then socially accepted as communal activities that allow for conversation, debate and communal awareness, to help aid the social ills that plague its people. Whereas theatre from the centre is a means to entertain, to perform and to unpack Western history in a creative manner that allows for the turnover of capital to commence.

Fran knew that she would become one of the first black, female theatre practitioners recorded in South African theatre and one of the only black women within her community to break the

mindset of what theatre is within her community and start on a journey whiter than the palms of her hands.

Mindy: In the beginning, there was Meryl Streep in high school, but it has never been about a particular person but more for the love of it, itself, like a movement. Meryl has fallen away, and space has been taken up by different black women that look like me. But just the love of it, especially when I was younger, the love of doing it drew me to it.

Mindy, the youngest participant who is in her early twenties, explains having no family background in theatre. She was introduced to the art from her private schooling background. Mindy might not have been the class clown, but her ability to access and understand what acting is, was a packing bag that sat hand in hand with her academic ability to thrive in a private school. Mindy's emotional intelligence and cognitive ability to generate meaning-making in self-worth and self-satisfaction helped her grasp what the journey to her future could become if she chose this adventure. However, Mindy's access to this credibility lay firmly in the hands of the institutional hierarchies that govern the private schooling system both helping and hindering her at the same time.

> **Gina:** I was in the Drama Department and our work was, I think, ahead of its time. Because remember when you go to a black university you don't have anything to judge it by, but we had lots of lecturers who did a lot of pioneering work and who went to North-West University and left the country.

Gina, who is the oldest participant, admits that she thoroughly enjoyed her studies at University, which was less about theatre and more about activism work in the form of performance. For Gina, the Apartheid government, and violent townships in Durban that she resided in paved her outlook on what is 'just' versus what is 'problematic'. These realities helped reveal her packing bag to her, as neither theatre nor socio-political fields gave voice to non-white South African citizens.

One could argue that underground South African politics had to call her because the state of the country's socio-political issues left an oppressive sting to anyone who chose to exist in a manner outside of the ideologies of the government.

Even though the call towards her adventure sounds very enchanting, the realities of this decision are not. If it is not personal preference then it is the socio-political, cultural-historical, and generational-demographical force that led her into this career.

3.2. The Haves and Have-nots

> **Gina:** I wanted to become an actor, but it was just this country… So we did a lot of protest theatre but I never worked as a professional theatre person, I did professional productions but acting was never going to become a career.

Gina grew up in a time where becoming a patriot for a new South Africa was not just a dream, but also a reality if one was willing to work for it. For Gina and for many black female artists like her, as well as those from spaces where tertiary education was not even accessible, the post-1994 South Africa had achieved little within the theatre industry. The agency to create opportunities for women like her to have a respectable place within the work of the arts was all but non-existent, and so she fell into a space of acceptance. Gina had to accept that change came slowly, and that some things would never change. Gina's map had shown her a relatively straight road ahead, but the reality of the potholes that Gina has encountered on the journey has not just ruined the wheel alignment of her car, but scratched her bumper and forced her to oftentimes drive in the yellow line to avoid damaging her completely.

> **Mindy:** I snapped. I was aware of the racial tensions, especially at those model C schools, the culture of that knowing that you cannot be great in that space. And I know that is not my space, I have never been back since I finished.

For Mindy, ten years later, the emotional experience was like Gina's. Mindy speaks about snapping, as though her map was holding onto a string of rope that finally broke, never to be replaced but rather to be removed, and again by a system run off the basis of a Western method to control and dictate the appearance of information.

One could say that the system has never created a space for Mindy and although this may be true one cannot forget that the system was never designed for Mindy to co-exist in it, let alone achieve higher than her white counterparts.

> **Fran:** I am between Cape Town and Joburg because work requires that. I feel like I need to expand, and I am also ready to play with other children, because I have been playing with the squad and so playing elsewhere, well it's exciting.
> I think it is important because the theatre industry is so small that we get caught up in the same spaces working with the same people, the same way of working, and the same way of thinking so for me it's important.

Fran whose age falls between Gina and Mindy concludes to this point: It is ok to become more. Noting that this will only occur when one has realised that there is more for one to become. A reminder that it has taken Fran some decades to acknowledge that her adventure has detours and she no longer fears following her map. Fran is also honest enough to admit that she was not asking for directions because she was unaware that asking for help was what she needed. Fran needed to look at her map from a different perspective and a perspective that in the end enables her journey to continue regardless of her newfound paths.

> **Nomsa:** … I guess the mixed-race voice kind of goes under the radar very often or becomes a very stereotypical voice, and when you can't identify to the common view of being coloured as we are often categorised, you kind of feel like a castaway, you are often not sure then.

Nomsa continues to grapple with these issues and shares a very raw reality of her map which is that many outsiders have believed her map to be detailed because of the age in which she was able to start her artistic career. Sometimes taking your first steps on a stage during a performance is simply just that. In this case, the child in the performance who decides to take their first steps is viewed as unfocused, not sticking to the plan, going wherever and whenever.
For Nomsa, breaking away from the colours and the lines on her map that try to dictate who she is, both as an artist and as a person from a mix-race people, has not been childlike at all. Rather, it has freed her enough to find her voice at a younger age than her peers. Nomsa is the woman who was able to fight against the odds of career entrapment and has become the road less navigated for those younger and yet to travel. Her daily journey reflects how her very existence becomes problematic to a system that wants to dictate one's straight and narrow path of understanding.

> **Wendy:** Well I mean they had to fill in the quota yeah? It was the 90's, where we were a rainbow nation you know what I mean...

Wendy highlights how her packed bag also suffered many signs and symbols that she constantly has had to decode and make sense of. Moreover, Wendy makes it very clear that from the start of her journey she became very aware of this: how the system that was set up to be general, had rather articulated outcomes in the day-to-day realities for black women such as herself in the nineties. Wendy speaks in amusement as she recites her realities of being a black artist within the system of bringing in black bodies and black female faces into white, male-dominated areas within the context of the expectations of the rainbow nation and the unwelcome idea of BEE and quota filling.

I find it interesting however, that even Wendy, through her articulation of this issue, makes vivid how the use of filling in quota was a constant roadblock on her map, because waiting endlessly on a road that you are travelling alone, instils one question: *why* and *who* is attempting to derail you on your journey?

For my participants, although desiring the same adventure and picking up the same map, they packed very different bags and ended up choosing quite different roads to travel within the South African theatre industry.

All women understood whatever they have gone through is not a solo act and will not end with them either. Thus, this chapter is aware that the intersection of age, gender, and race play key roles in understanding the collective artistic journey of black women within the South African theatre industry over the last 50 years.

3.3. Who

Below is a table, broken down into the race and the gender of the individuals and the groups involved in the Fleur Du Cap and the Naledi Theatre Award shows, the two largest, remaining

national theatre award shows within the country. What appears on the table is the classified race and gender of those who won the awards in that year.

Note how majority black female artists are given a space that only allows them to win as performers and not as producers, theatre practitioners and/or production houses. Another mention is that most black female performers, set and costume designers, lighting technicians, and directors are also cast in white-run productions and that black narrated stories are produced by white companies, white directors and funded by white-owned and white occupied institutions.

Bear in mind that these are only two sample groups from the most recent awards (2019) and awards from ten years ago (2009). (Note the awards are given for the previous year's achievements). This table does not consider the significance of the shows but rather, indicates that throughout a decade, very little has changed in the random spiking of black female representatives winning awards, possibly indicating lack of growing levels of inclusion and diversity.

Winners for The Naledi Awards:	**2018**		**2008**	
	Gender	**Race**	**Gender**	**Race**
Supporting Actress	F	W	F	B
Lead Role in a Musical (Female)	F	B	F	W
Production for Children	F,M,F	W,W,W	N/A	N/A
Breakthrough Performance	M	W	F	B
Costume Design and Lighting Design	M,M	W,W	F,F	W,B
Production of a Musical and Play	F,F	W,W	M,F	W,W

Musical Director	F	W	M	W
South African New Script	F	B	F	W
Director of a play	F	W	F	W
Lead Performance in a Play	F, M	B,B	F,M	W,B
Solo Performance	F, M	B,B	F	W

NB: *W = White, B = Black, F = Female, M = Male*

Winners for Fleur De Cap Awards:	**2018**		**2008**	
	Gender	**Race**	**Gender**	**Race**
Promising Student	M	W	F	B
Actress in Leading Role	F	B	F	W
New South African Play	M	W	M	B
Costume and Lighting Design	M,M	W,W	F,M	W,W
Musical Performance	M	W	F	W
Performance in a solo show	F	W	F	W
	F	W	F	W

Innovation in Theatre				

NB: *W = White, B = Black, F = Female, M = Male.*

3.4. Why?

Within the South African theatre industry, the packed bag, for black women, has become largely irrelevant when it comes to winning at the Fleur Du Cap and The Naledi Theatre Awards. It is evident in the above-mentioned breakdown that black women might study and work for as long as they please, but the possibilities of those who are awarded and those who are not, may hardly change, even over 10 years. The black female practitioner who doesn't want to be left outside of the centre finds that in order for her to receive success she should mould herself into the woman that she won't see in her reflection in the mirror.

When the black female theatre practitioner decides to claim her success, it is these very institutions that then allow her to constantly reach for greatness, yet with minimal reward.
Black women may perform; black women may design; black women may choreograph, write and direct; but black women may never be allowed to be all of these things on their own merit, or to believe that their value is worth that of their counterparts, who do not even need to receive best-emerging awards before spiralling to achieving top awards. It is unfortunate that the success for a black theatre practitioner may only be seen as credible and nationally valid within the South African theatre industry through two national award systems that do very little to bring to surface the voices of black artists who mare not supported by state funded theatre spaces.

Yet these award systems have run for decades and continue to present themselves as the highest custodians of trust and credibility. The suitcases of the Fleur Du Cap and the Naledi Awards are old and worn, they have taped their suitcases closed so that not just anybody can arrive and unpack their tools for victory. For the black woman, her suitcase is new, and her attire is what she feels to be appropriate for the journey. Her ability to make over-packing look like child's play is often how the path is designed for her.

- **Who gets honoured within their own country's artistic community, and how does it affect their careers?**

Participants have spoken about the disadvantages of being part of marginalised groups, how they have more than once been ostracised based on nothing more but their gender, age, and race. Some participants have also mentioned how age has played an important role. The belief is that older black women have a stronger voice within the running of the South African theatre industry and its award systems.

Participants have also spoken about their geographic location and how that has either worked for or against them, when looking at who gets honoured within the country.

More than once mention was made across all the participants of how white people and black men are chosen to be honoured before a thought is even given to black women. It is therefore my belief that within the boundaries of this specific study, this is a clear understanding amongst black women who have played in this field over the last fifty years. This understanding echoes in history, that black female artists are relegated to the bottom rungs of the award system, seldom, if ever, achieving a position in the top three.

Participants have also noted the lack of black women empowerment within community theatres, independent theatres, and mainstream theatre spaces. This is a nation-wide phenomenon, not just a regional or provincial conception.

Those above 30 years of age all agreed on the notion that awards withheld from black female artists have stirred multiple forms of protest theatre works, to highlight the seriousness of the predicament. They expressed their grievances of how this specific lack of support and acknowledgement has led to the continuing depletion of black women being able to climb the artistic ladder of higher job opportunities and salary challenges.

These women have made it clear that the counterattacks that black women have launched to create alternative spaces has often led to isolation and exclusion.

They are of the opinion that there needs to be a constant push towards black women empowerment whereby black women choose black women first. They still hold onto the realities of their lived experiences that keep them sceptical as to whether these new discourses could be achieved.

The younger participants in their twenties strongly believe that there is a realistic goal to create an alternative theatre industry run and led by black women who will select black women first. However, I would like to warn that this could just be a repeat of the previous and current situation of hierarchy of nomination.

Participants in their twenties believed that being honoured within one's own country, or internationally, would result in little outcome with regards to their artistic careers.

Even though one of the younger participants believed that her success within and outside of the country has resulted in her not attending normal audition procedures (she had no time to do so), she did not believe that these awards, should she achieve them, would in any event elevate her position within her age group. Everyone in this study agreed that they saw the need to create an alternative platform for black women to be recognised and that they were, and have already been, part of alternative methods for elevating the voices of black female artists.

CHAPTER 4 | Results

(Dirty words and the dirt)

In feminist speech, the use of dirty words is performed acts of subversion. Academic activists such as Stella Nyanzi and Mona Eltahawy have fallen back on terminology such as 'radical rudeness'. The use of vulgarity in speech is purposefully vulgar because it refuses to be captured on the highest levels of academia and politics.

Stella Nyanzi in 2011 was arrested in her home country of Uganda by the president of Uganda because of her ability to be steadfast in feminist work that stands against public politeness in speech. For these radical feminists and women like them, the unwillingness to be oppressed, even in expression, is a tool they can use against the system. The manner in which it has become common for a black woman to exist in constant self-frustration and nonsensical thought processes, or that of a black woman seeming to struggle to carry a job occupation within the South African theatre industry, one could argue that theatre practitioners such as dance activist Mamela Nyamza and former communications and project manager Yusrah Bardien in the year 2019 were abiding to a similar radical form of subversion which led to them being fired.

For this chapter, I have split my four sections into The *dirty words*, *The Root Cause, The Power of Titles and The Affect and Response*. In this chapter, I am interested in bringing clarity to the word, the dirt and the dirty word.

4.1. Dirty Words

On this road to discovery one must be tested and trailed, booby-trapped and hunted. These are often the 'dirty words' found on the way to the larger treasure. These are the gems or the clues that remind us that we are on the right track to attaining what we believe to be of value. Nevertheless, it is like the diamond in the rough, in the sense that these gems and clues do not always look glamorous or victorious at all. Rather, they seem to come at you like thrown stones, unpredictable, harsh and damaging if one is not equipped to deal with them.

These dirty words are often what create or hinder the artist's pursuit. I had asked each of my participants to name their dirty word alongside my own, to see if I could find a possible link of what a dirty word dictionary could possibly look like.

> **Mindy:** … mine right now as an actor is 'maternal', just because of how I have been cast, the grounding and the cantering of my voice and my body. If I am maternal one more time Hannah, honestly…

Mindy highlights the word '*maternal'* as her dirty word. It might sound strange to dislike the term maternal. Mindy's issue stems from the constant abuse that plays on the psychological stereotype of the black woman whose body, vocal ability and linguistic status force her to have to play the ultimate nanny.

Historically, black women on stage had to play the role of the domestic worker either for or against her boss, the middle man and often that of her actual love affair with the garden boy, postman or house painter, depending on the flexibility that was given to the male performer. From the famous cartoon strip of 'Madam and Eve', to the more modern 'the coconuts' and various theatre plays included.

Currently, Mindy is tired of having to work harder to fulfil the trope of the hard-working black woman, yet at the same time, her peers have constantly relied on her to do so, both in the rehearsal process and on the stage.
Mindy is exhausted having to play the bruised and beaten black woman stereotype that has to be strong because nothing can change for her in her life if she shows emotions outside of being brave, fierce, loud, and dominating in physical features, skin tone and vocal training.

> **Nomsa: T**here are a lot of random terminologies that are used in the arts; I find it as a golden economy thing because nobody knows what the golden economy is. I hate the reference to… so, on one hand, I studied marketing and drama and that's why I understand the idea of being a product that must be sold. But when you go, "How much must your tickets be to this

> performance?" I question how you can put a monitory value on what I'm trying to offer, but on the other hand…
> I do need to because I need to live, and it should be worth something in comparison to other work that is not art… so this idea of being a product. The balance between the monitory value of artists, or artwork… art, versus the intellectual value, the… yeah… stuff like that bothers me.

For Nomsa, the idea of being a product is her dirty word. The discomforting reality that Nomsa has to be sold, has to sell herself and has to be bought in order for her worth to be of any worth whatsoever. This is what keeps her up at night.
Nomsa struggles to identify with the idea that her art needs to be consumed on a material level before it be worthwhile and relevant. The conversation around the price of a field slave and the price of a house slave comes to mind for me.

Nomsa's parents have worked hard enough as field slaves and birthed a house slave. For example, how the master expects Nomsa to feel special or chosen because she has had an easier upbringing and more work opportunities. Nomsa understands she is still a slave which is something that she cannot escape from. This construct of the black female form who is groomed, fattened and then auctioned off for her to be recognised as a property of value has been accepted and approved of from the lens of the predator. Nomsa is plagued by the uncertainty around who will allow for her next meal, or not. Nomsa understands this is an issue that she will have to deal with for decades to come.
Therefore, it is in this perceived soul-selling game that Nomsa finds herself soul-searching in order to possibly change the weight of the dirt that these words hold for her.

> **Hannah:** And so for me, that's what my paper really is about, how 'dirty words' are used to dismantle black women within the industry. So for me, the dirty word has been the word 'emerging'.
>
> **Gina:** *(Laughs)*

Gina does a lot of laughing and I appreciate that because I am aware that she is not laughing at me. It is possible that at times she laughs at me in pity as she foresees the future of my

questioning. Gina is also laughing in memory of her life's experiences, the more she reflects on them. I have chosen to label Gina's dirty word 'big mouth'.
Gina had been able to give me story after story of how her speaking out, speaking against or speaking up has repeatedly led her to be given various nicknames around her having a 'big mouth'.

For Gina, the lack of transparency that she witnessed over the years has aggravated her. It has encouraged her to speak up when she felt the need, and resulted in her 'big mouth' label by her peers and those within her workspace. The manner that Gina narrated this story is constantly linked to her gender, age, race and professional ability. Gina understands the use of historical and political stereotyping which has been used over the decades to justify the wrongdoings of those who feel threatened by the truth and knowledge that she carries.

Name-calling for Gina has also been used as a tool to cover up what exactly she had said in moments where change might have been possible, and her company wasn't open to a different opinion. By being reminded that women such as Gina were supposed to be the meek and mild symbol of her cultural upbringing, those who labelled her talk as nonsensical and loud-mouthed found themselves justified in her vocal capacity to retaliate. Now Gina became the uncivilized and emotional black woman that needed to be silenced.

The power and agency in these subversive "big mouth" actions that women perform do not allow them be concerned about the ways that patriarchy would have them display submissiveness and professionalism.

> **Fran:** Salary, it's a dirty word… And in the theatre you don't get a promotion, it's not like other jobs. So salary is part of your promotion, whether you are emerging or not, you are defined by how much you earn. So if you keep saying you are emerging then people will keep saying that you are emerging, and then your salary stays in a certain bracket… *(Laughs)* I just thought of it now. There are no brackets in theatre, 5-10 years, here is the bracket… no.

Fran's dirty word is 'salary' and said with no hesitation. Fran dived deep into her concern with this word. Fran, who sits in a space where she has had to compete with women older than her

for her rates and despite the odds, has won, is well aware that now that the tables have turned with regards to her understanding of age and experience.

She is having to compete with the younger generation of black women that offer just as much as she can at more competitive rates.

Nonetheless, for Fran, her word stayed the same. Fran understands some younger, less experienced performer will walk into the room and ask to be paid more than her. Even though she came across as understanding ~~to~~ that reality, Fran was also very concerned about how easy it is for her to be chosen over someone younger, merely because of her age, and by the fact the other performer might be asking for less income due to intimidation from her peers.

For Fran, the psychological fear that pushed her to know her worth and to not settle for less was this: the idea that her worth at any moment could be raised or dropped depending on the terrain of the course that she might be in. Fran's desire to work with new, younger and different artists has also had her worried that she might be taken for a ride by both her peers and those she works with. Her self-worth as a human being and need to make ends meet fights with her artistic ability, because at the end of the day Fran is aware that the industry will never provide her financial stability. So the constant need to measure herself up to others becomes the artistic death within her.

Her friends who did not do art are financially comfortable, whereas Fran's thoughts are always on her next opportunity, her next work, and her next moment to be paid her artistic worth. In addition, even though she has set up her own particular amount of pay for herself, Fran has a fear of rejection, of not being enough and it is constantly playing on her mind.

> **Wendy:** Yeah, sure that is (emerging) a dirty word. Another dirty word is… and that's from the perception from those who perceive it, and not from the… free thinker.
>
> **Hannah:** free thinker… ok, why?

Wendy then highlights some important black female artists, who are in their thirties and forties and who currently work within the South African theatre industry, who she believes to be free thinkers.

> **Wendy:** As an example when you take Vatiswa's letter, she used a particular company as an example because she could get the facts and the evidence related to that company, as an example of what everybody has been saying for years and years about the TV industry and how the producers mess everybody up. However, it was read as an attacked when she was just saying that we have these problems, and can we deal with them? Do you know? It was read as an attack on a particular company when it was about the entire industry. And as an example, I don't know why we are not seeing Khutjo Green's work on mainstream stages… free thinker.
> I don't see why we don't see a lot more Mwenya Kabwe on mainstream stages… Do you know what I mean? I don't see why Nelisiwe Xaba always has to be performing overseas or at Jay Pather's things, the only time I actually see Nelly performing in the country is if there is an infecting the city or a live art thing that Jay has organised. But generally, within the country, it's like Nelly doesn't exist.

I find it interesting that instead of sharing her own story about being a free thinker, she would rather push forward the stories of other black women. On the one hand, it could be argued that this is a rather polite and noble act to perform because Wendy is making it clear that she is not alone in these issues. What also arises is the ownership of the term 'free thinker'.

Wendy is a free thinker and because she mentioned artists who are examples in her dictionary understanding of what a free thinker looks like, I wonder if she does not want to stand out and hold that title alone. Wendy proposed that in fact no individual gets to coin a real dirty word; instead, a dirty word is an umbrella term that is used to pacify the masses.

She described these black women who are at an experiential level alongside hers, to be freethinkers who have been given time to think, to be free and to think freely, not just in thought but in current social stance and active performance metanarratives.

What happens to women like Wendy who believe that they are not alone yet feel a bit lonely when it comes to the possibilities of what they have to offer to the industry both academically and artistically? Do they mention each other for fear of being the only artists with such dirty words being thrown at them or do they join forces and unite against these forces in order to overthrow the system?

4.2. The Root Cause

As much as I highly concur with Wendy's 'free thinker', Fran's 'salary', Gina's 'big mouth', Nomsa's 'product' and Mindy's 'maternal' dirty words, I still question how "emerging" fits in.
I decided to put these clues together in order to find the secret code to help bring to light the treasure that I am looking for:

> *"Hannah met a **free thinker** whose **salary** did not match the **product** she was selling, and so Hannah's **big mouth** got her into trouble because her lack of **maternal** instincts reminded the producers, the directors, the founders, the private and the public sectors that Hannah was just an **emerging** artist."*

It seems all these women have one thing in common: the psycho-analytical tug-of-war between the dark caves of the unknown, which they have all travelled, and what must be left behind – a softer attitude, a naivety that could brighten up space if only they submitted to it.

All these women have had to stop being scared of these dirty words but acknowledge that they too are seen as the clutter, the dirt, the slowing down of these spaces. The idea that if you are not careful, you too, will allow yourself to disappear into the darkness and haunt those yet to come, by the shadows you cannot break free from.

Perhaps it is in this place that we find ourselves in a room full of shadows where only those behind us can point out. Those who are yet to come will have even darker rooms to squeeze into if these dirty words are not taken into serious account.
Even if it means black women asking other black women to help them wash off the dark spots of dirt that lay thick on parts of themselves and which they cannot see without the tuning in of another.

4.3. The Power of Titles

When digging for treasure, there are two layers of dirt. There is the dirt that covers what it is you are looking for and there is the dirt that is pushed up into the air, blurs your vision and sits on you.

This dirt gets caught in your ears, burns your eyes, triggers your sinuses, catches in your throat, seeps into your skin and clings onto your clothes for dear life. Often the dirty word is chosen as a singular entity, as if it is the word that is the issue, and then once the word is dealt with and deconstructed, the word will no longer exist.

> **Wendy:** I once had a conversation with an artistic director who said to me, when I was trying to sell them a show, and remember this person is an artistic director, she said to me, "the problem with you Wendy is that you make art" and I wanted to know what that meant? Because I assumed that all the work coming into the space was artistic, and so I wanted to know why this was different from the work that some other dude would be making.

Wendy talks about the power of the artistic director, how she had an encounter with an artistic director who at first glance had an issue with Wendy as an artist. The artistic director is the person who puts together the annual program for a theatre complex; the artistic director can add or cancel an event within their theatre space. For Wendy as an artist and coming in as a director at that moment in the conversation, to be told by someone who is in a higher space of artistic authority than herself, is quite an insight because these are said to be the mentors or talent scouts of the industry.

The artistic director who runs the whole court, has essentially told Wendy that she cannot sit with them. The artistic director's decision goes further than disregard for Wendy's offering in question, but implies that it has no artistic value within the entire theatre complex space. Essentially, her power enables her to 'trash' Wendy's work *in toto.*

Taking into consideration that the power of the mainstream space gets to distinguish between what is deemed to be entertainment and what is deemed to be experimental art, if Wendy's dirty word is 'free-thinker', then the dirty word is less about being a free thinker, and more

about a superpower that could be seen as a potential threat. In this case, the Artistic Director who has polluted Wendy's treasure with the authority of her dirt.

> **Mindy:** Defiantly people who are two decades older than me, it's that top-down approach concerning power, concerning who gets to dictate how space is run. It's always older directors that have put me in that role.
>
> **Hannah:** Not in general just older? Because also the role of a director is expressed through a particular age, a particular gender as well.
>
> **Mindy:** Now that I think about it, even younger directors, they might not have named it that but the way they wanted me to embody the characters.

The conversation with Mindy was more of a wake-up moment for her because she is in her early twenties and has had much less exposure to artistic opportunities outside of her institution. Nonetheless, Mindy is highly aware that in her case, the power of the director within the space has dirt that hovers in the air which blurs the vision of young artists who do not see this reflection of power taking place until shown otherwise. Mindy's dirty word being 'maternal' has led her to be typecast, meaning, her role is chosen for her on the fact that she suits a role. Again, this seems reasonable as a director and a writer always have an image in their head of what they want, clothing the nearest living person they find with that image and that idea of what they want.

However, in this case, there is a clear power play at hand with regards to what a director expects from the artist and the repercussions that play out to be an act of soft force on the artist. Of course this is a broad sweeping conclusion but I said what I said.

Think of it as an abusive family member~~,~~ the artist loves the director, looks up to the director, sees the director to be the stimulator of their growth. Instead the director uses their power to abuse the artist, if not with sexual advances then with a scare tactic of rejection.

The director is believed, is heard and is understood over the artist because like any structure built on age and status, the director always knows best. The director is needed to instil structure because the artist is not able to do the work themselves, or they would and thus become the director. The artist needs direction and thus hands over their agency into the socially trusted, respected and powerful hands of the director who provides the platform for the artist to please the masses.

> **Fran:** Producers… but also that becomes tricky because in some cases, not always but in some cases also the producers are working with a certain amount that they get from funders so there are funders, there are producers so it becomes… yeah.

Fran speaks about producers and funders in television and theatre in one breath. In most cases, the producer is producing content with financial aid and resources. For this scenario, I will therefore include the producer in the role of the funder. The funder is handing over a specific amount of finance that affects the artist's salary, which is a dirty word that Fran spoke about. Because the funder is usually approached by the artist for help, the funder expects a clear explanation as to what must happen with the handed over money.

This sounds fair, however, the likelihood of the funder not funding their friends over other applicants is hard to pinpoint at times. Funders are aware, and those they have worked with previously are aware, that those who have worked with them before are more often than not chosen over any new or unfamiliar participants. Fran and other participants laugh at the fact that there is always money for the arts within this country but who the money is given to and how it is spent is a different issue.

For an artist who sits close to the bottom of the pay-out scheme, the likelihood of them getting a fair cut of the deal for creating most of the labour heavy work is seldom the case. Without the funding, the artist has no platform to showcase their work, and with no work, the artist has no right to expect to be financially provided for through the work of the arts alone.

Fran who has been in the industry for over twenty years admitted that if she wanted to fund her projects, she would need to generate wealth via screen acting to produce her independent theatre works. Because the industry is so small, it is no surprise to Fran as to who gets annual funding to showcase their works on mainstream theatre platforms and who doesn't. The same names and shows constantly re-appear.

> **Nomsa:** Its academia, and it used a lot by government systems… like BAC (Business arts and Culture) talks a lot about the golden economy, and apply for the golden economy of artists and you know… and even that emerging artist's term that you speak about. But it's those institutionalised things that they think they are making things simpler but in that supposed simplicity it's kind of like, "Ok we have a term because we haven't put much thought into you or your value, we will just go and give you golden economy because it sounds fantastic, it sounds beautiful so you should just believe it, you are just artists anyway, you shouldn't analyse this".

Nomsa's dirty word is a 'product'. The power of institutions run by the state are often good at talking about progress from a media platform but fail to infiltrate their teachings, in this case, they fail to produce the product they are preaching about. For Nomsa, the frustration comes when the artist, and especially the artists within academia state-funded theatre spaces, are perpetrators of this too. These structures preach about decolonising such spaces but that is not the case. Because of the small size of the South African theatre industry, the processes of decolonising these spaces have become a never-ending mountain that often leads to artists being swallowed up by the system.

For Nomsa, the fight against the system has taken generations to overcome and, especially within the theatre industry, it must be continued. Progress can be achieved only if the messengers for progress do not become 'sellouts' of the change Nomsa believes the industry needs.

> **Gina:** I was also dealing with a board who wanted me to be sweet, and boards are a huge problem in South Africa. We know about the Eskom boards, and in the Arts, they are one of the biggest challenges because oftentimes they know nothing about the Arts. And so you can be a

> leader who just spends time massaging their egos and doing whatever they want you to do, or you can just do your own thing, which is me. I'm not used to asking for people's permission.

Gina's dirty word being 'big mouth', she always points to the boards of directors who can suss out individuals who pose a threat to themselves and their institution. (This is different to the case where the producer and the funder play the same role within mainstream theatre). Gina speaks more specifically about the role of the board CEO. It is said that the CEO has the final say, they hire and fire whomever they see fit. If the CEO wants a project to happen the CEO and the board members speak to the artistic director who will then speak to their producers who will then speak to their directors who will then call for the artists.

If the artistic director wants resources for a project, he will have to request this from the board, and the CEO will then speak to the funders. For Gina, who has spent decades working within the management sector within South African theatres across the country, it clear that the only way for change to transpire is to lower one's expectations. Given her big mouth, Gina has voluntarily left and also been kicked out of many theatre spaces.

Calling out injustice, not wanting to participate in fraudulent actions and questioning is not welcomed within such spaces, and so those members who are seen to expose secrets or question the board are forcefully silenced, counter-arguments are created to cover up the truth or simply result in the individual being banned from their institutions and blacklisted on others. As much as Gina came close to this power, her big mouth is the reason why she would never be accepted onto the round table where under-the-carpet decisions are being made.

4.4. The Affect and Response

I am very aware that my participants can choose to disagree, have other words that they deem as dirty, and might not believe that dirty words exist in such a manner at all. I am also very aware that when a truth has been revealed to the naked eye, metaphorically, the vulnerability of that eye would be covered to protect the eye.

To what degree does one blind the eye instead? At times the truth becomes blurrier the longer one digs, and so the digging slows down or stops. The false belief that no treasure exists in the darkest spaces comes from the fear of the unknown, from exhaustion of not seeing change and progress, and from the enemy who wants to distract one's course. I have noticed that the more one digs, the line blurs between what the dirt is and who the dirt is. Soon the frustrations become the norm and so the actions of those digging change course.

It is in this space where the lines of who the enemy is, is no longer clear and so often, because the black female artist sits at the bottom of the rank, she becomes vulnerable to infighting.

- **How do power relations based on emotional experiences dictate workspace accessibility?**

This issue came up for all participants, that accessibility became hard when emotional experiences dictated spaces.

One of my participants, who is in her twenties, spoke about two scenarios that she went through. The first experience was when she found herself being directed by a black female director who was closer to her age. She was aware of the power relations that played out between director and performer; however, my participant enjoyed the respect that was afforded to her throughout the process. Her second scenario was when she was a performer for a black female director who was older than her that left a foul taste in her mouth.

She experienced emotional abuse from this director, as well as finding out that the work created was based on the exploitation of black female bodies. She expressed difficulties with her director choosing to overwork performers during the rehearsal process and by the end of the process she found the director focusing on their personal issues instead of having a debrief process with performers.

She knows that she will never allow herself to work with this director again and she will deliberately have to close doors for herself due to her experience with this director.

Furthermore, she is also aware that this director will choose to cut her out of / reject her from future work due to the negative emotional encounter they had.

All the participants older than 30 spoke about experiencing moments within their careers where they were held back from specific job opportunities due to how funders, directors and fellow performers felt about their existences within the space. They also spoke about how the misuse of sexual affairs and false sexual relationships were part of who got preference and access into specific artistic communities and work opportunities. Women who did not chose promiscuity but instead fought against it were vulnerable for job opportunity pushback and exclusion within certain theatre communities.
You say no to one place and they speak to the next place to cut you out, just because women chose to say no to “performance prostitution” to get work.

Participants discussed the stereotypical expectations that were linked to race, gender, ability and socio-cultural backgrounds and how these had direct implications within the theatre space to allow for black women’s voices to be discredited.

The oldest participants disclosed how racist slurs were used to nickname them for their actions, having been belittled or reprimanded in public gatherings and on news media-based platforms. Another participant in her 40s spoke about how her emotional fallout with a black female practitioner linked to a government funded theatre led to her work as an artist being compromised.

These issues become dangerous because an industry that claims to be radical, creating cutting edge work and is said to be a public means to help manage social injustices is still able to use the racist and prejudiced card to discriminate and keep artists segregated. This needs to be highly sifted through and dealt with appropriately.

I would like to direct attention to the Arts and Culture White Paper that is based on cultural policies; however I am aware that there has been almost no change to this document since Apartheid, a regime based on racial and sexist segregation.

Those who have attempted to make changes within the cultural policies of arts and culture in South Africa have been placed on pause, and no major or new policy amendments have been made to the Arts and Culture White Paper.

CHAPTER 5 | Discussion

(Treasure and new discoveries)

> "…For within living structures defined by profit, by linear power, by institutional dehumanization, our feelings were not meant to survive."
>
> – Audre Lorde, 1984.

Humility does not equate to gratitude but rather to the individual to lose trust in them, doubt their capabilities and crook their feelings into spaces they do not always stand dignified to take up.

In this chapter, I want to focus on how *black women* treat each other, in and out of the workspace. This chapter also focuses on possible *resolutions and outcomes* such as looking at *new award* systems. Do we see ourselves as the 'real deal', or do our actions put a chip on each other's shoulders?

5.1. How We Treat Each Other

They say that one man's junk is another man's treasure, and in the context of how black women treat each other, this really applies. To name a treasure as treasure is usually based on who is looking at it. It is even argued that gold is gold, that diamond is diamond, but for many years there has been a constant falsification with such minerals.

You cannot just pick up something gold and shiny and claim it to be of value, it needs to be tested, it needs to be placed under critique and evaluation before it can be claimed and deemed as treasure. Often the fool's gold looks more real than real gold, and as in the wording of such material, that it becomes gold for a fool.

> **Hannah:** Do you believe that women in power choose women first?
>
> **Nomsa:** Most of the time yes… most of the time but sometimes it is the thing of, "I am now in power so now I have to self-preserve this position of power so that maybe one day in the future

> there can be more?" But sometimes when you are in power you know you are in a corner even in that power.

Nomsa believes that most of the time women will choose women first, but she acknowledges the reality that this choice might take time. I appreciate how Nomsa speaks about self-preservation as a means of survival because even she knows that power for women does not just have a top-bottom approach but it also has a circular power relation that can both elevate particular women in power to the point that their power stagnates them before it emancipates their ability to act on that power.

For Nomsa, a woman has to recognise her power source before she can admit, accept and act on it. Nomsa's majority group of gold diggers (as per my analogy above) would be supportive of each other as they are aware of how hard it is to reach the treasure, without realising that it is in themselves that the treasure is found.

> **Wendy:** She could have handled it, they had already hired someone by the time I had left, I had spoken to people I even sent the information to them, I gave them the budget and this was going to be up until June and then they could continue with something else. And it was only to make sure I don't leave the space dry. But also when your vision and the vision of the one who is supervising you are not aligned, which is also a thing. I went there thinking that my 5-year plan was the reason as to why I was hired but not because I was following the plan and yet it was problematic.

Wendy took me through the process of not dropping the ball. Dropping the ball, in this case, speaks to Wendy recognising and believing that women are in a game against superior structures and that they need to hold each other accountable to a degree that can continue to challenge the system, solely by existing and acknowledging each other's existences within the system. For Wendy, the belief is that if she is digging for treasure and gets tired, she expects her colleague to continue to do the work until the treasure is found. Instead, she finds that her colleague would be the first to deny Wendy's hard work and claim the treasure findings to be due to her own efforts.

Her experience left Wendy with the sense that *she* was the fool, because she believed that she was not digging alone, when the reality of her old work environment was based on the survival of the fittest.

For Wendy, there is no going back, next time she will not become someone else's fool. This is the gold which she unearthed in herself.

> **Mindy:** … And I haven't been directed by a woman a lot until… yes, her and we all know how badly that went *(Laughs).* And we all thought it was finally a black woman we were excited and then we were bruised. I worked with another black woman actually and we worked for two years, me and my colleague, and so from that experience, she never projected anything, she was younger and I think that is why she allowed things to be complex, she allowed us to decide who she was.

Mindy highlights how age plays a pivotal role in how she has experienced working with black women at different times. The first woman was older and occupied a higher status than herself, so she was more able to accept the pain that came from her experience at the hands of this woman. Mindy goes on further to articulate how working with a younger black female brought a sense of healing.

She was a younger woman who was not afraid to be liked nor disliked, but was rather focused on creating a process in which she could extract the best gems out of her performers. Mindy admitted that it was exactly what happened. She was not only able to reveal herself to a director closer to her age, but was able as an artist to go through the furnace and come out with a new treasure for her artistic vision as well. Is there a belief that those of a closer age have little to learn from each other? Wendy felt sabotaged by a colleague who sat in a similar age group as herself and subsequently found they lost respect for each other. Mindy, on the other hand, was able to look up to her peer on a platform that allowed for a shared experience without regard for power play, with each individual performing the work they were assigned to.

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> **Fran:** People must just die out because that is how we have been conditioned. And all of a sudden you have a female and you think just because they are female, you assume that these issues are going to be dealt with… now it goes to the funders.

Fran spoke about the matter of industry transformation rather broadly. She strongly believed that the removal of pressure would result in a safer space for a new mindset to form, but she is also reminded that with a mass death or removal of the industry creators who are above 30 years old will be a new issue. For Fran, the tree must get cut down to deal with the roots, but she seems rather pessimistic about the possibility of pulling out the root issues.

Perhaps Fran does not believe that in her lifetime, such issues around age, transformation and privilege will be resolved? One thing came out loud and clear, if she were to bomb the cave, she would completely disperse the treasure found, sending pieces of shattered treasure around, making it harder to piece back together in the end. Implying that it would become someone else's job to relocate the missing pieces. Looking at the younger voice of Mindy mentioned above, this is exactly what is she is experiencing in her workplace.

5.2. Black Women

> **Gina:** The black women in my opinion often feel the need to emulate male kind of behaviours because institutions and people make it so hard for them to be women, to be artists to be managers without being strident, without being bitches. I'm sure you've heard of," Oh Gina has got this reputation of being hard." I don't even know what it is, I've always spoken my mind, but I speak my mind about everything. But, as a manager, I would like to see myself as someone who has spent my whole life nursing other women specifically.

Gina gives a more detailed response to what all women have made mention of, either directly or indirectly, and that is the reality of how black women who hold positions of power behave in a similar way to men in power. The idea that when a treasure hunter is close to finding her

treasure, in fear of losing her treasure to another treasure hunter, she hides her treasure using booby traps and secret doors.

The treasure hunter who hides her treasure often dies in her cave with her treasure; her bones are all that seem to remain but, her soul is trapped. She haunts those who try to touch her treasure, yet the treasure hunter has no idea that it is she who has become the treasure. She is only but a lurking ghost waiting for a discovery that she is not yet sure she is ready to receive.

Even Gina admits that she has been called out on this before, however, for Gina, she makes it clear that often for those who fall victim to this, it is usually a subconscious act and not intentional. For Gina, keeping your treasure clean will result in you pushing the dirt off of yourself and onto those who come around you, possibly as a threat, possibly as a traitor, but as another black woman with a larger piece of gold than what you believe to have.

- **Is there an intergenerational fear of black female vulgarity and artistic professionalism?**

Participants were asked to share only one dirty word alongside that of mine (emerging), which all participants very easily came up with. These words are not made up words but words that were and are used against my participants within their fields of work.

I believe that if I had asked for more than one, every participant would be able to give me at least a page full of words, sentences and slurs that these women have been called and accused of.

For these women, the very ability to overcome these words is what alerted them to acknowledge that there could be possible problematic words that are used by others against them, in the first place.

For the older participants there was a shared understanding of older dirty words evolving into new dirty words, and possibly these are old dirty words that were just never explicitly used or openly justified and visible.

The older generation believes that it is to a degree, harder for the younger generations of black female practitioners to avoid the name calling and bullying as they are aware that there are more black women now who will have to compete against each other on levels that differ from what they had to go through during the older generation's times.

For the younger participants there was a form of denial with regards to how severe both the name calling and the competition is.

For these participants there was the way to deal with them was to call out these dirty words to expose them, so that they lose their value. They were very much aware that these dirty words needed personal and public interrogation from multiple angles. The younger participants believed that older black women had endured a lot more emotional and psychological abuse under the name of experience, exposure and rite of passage. They concluded that their journeys have been made easier because of the black women who already sit in high-ranking positions. None of the younger participants acknowledged that black women who had power would keep them out of their artistic privileges in the future.

From my own experience I had noticed during interviews how the older women chose to conduct themselves, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes or sitting in spaces of their control and leisure. The younger participants took the interviews a lot more seriously on their own accord, apologising for miscommunication, re-questioning my questions, and meeting in more neutral spaces and overall, having less to speak about. At first, I assumed that the realities of age were at play, but I realised after some time that this distinct difference in approach was based on the intergenerational fear of black female vulgarity and artistic professionalism.

I was cognisant of, was that the social understanding of artistic professionalism and the individual perspective of self-understanding within the industry was at play. Older women were

not afraid to take up space, were unapologetic and were loose with their tongue because the line between their brand and their identity was clear.

For the younger participants, an approach of learning alongside me emerged, where a back and forth of opinions was shared before the questions were responded to.

As I reflect on this process, I believe that the younger participants are yet to experience the industry in a manner that will allow them to find comfort in fault and error and the normalisation of mistake-making.

I am also aware that the industry is shifting into a new order that will ask for younger generations to evolve faster, produce more and fight in different ways, manners that will become irrelevant to the question in this section.

5.3. Resolutions and Outcomes

I believe that focusing on the current, largest national awards that are held annually in Johannesburg and Cape Town, those being the Naledi Theatre Awards and the Fleur Du Cap Awards, would be useful to create a baseline for a test trial documenting what a possible new national award system would look like.

How does one help throw light onto the socio-historical and financial privileges that continue to replay themselves out today, with regards to 'who' gets 'honoured' within their own countries' artistic community?

I had asked my participants what possible *outcomes and resolutions* they would devise with a view to implementing a possible *new award system*. Most of their responses were a mixture of personal feelings reflecting to their achievements. If participants were able to use the magic "IF", then they were able to conceptualise alternative outcomes. This question was of utmost importance to me as I believe that if one wants to find new ways to recreate old patterns, one needs to be honest to self and each other.

In the interviews, my final question was asking each of my participants what advice they could offer to help make a difference.

> **Wendy:** Do life without their position. They won't know if you are their mentor, I did that through my 20's and 30's, I just asked for advice and I took it as a mentor. Now I have one, but beforehand I just took from whatever. And yes the youth are not supportive of each other, they don't show up but everybody else… has excuses like no money yet you see them out on the weekend drinking. And that is not even just the youth. But everybody is shifting, in Cape Town, there is a lot of tribalism and territorialism here which I think in Joburg is less because everybody is from everywhere.
>
> It is hard for somebody who comes in to come in and get recognition from fellow black peers if maybe they haven't grown up here, but just as much as it's difficult for those who grew up here. But either way, people need to travel.

Wendy talked about travel throughout our engagement, which I found most interesting. For Wendy, there is a sense of 'information gathering' and 'information sharing' that takes place when an individual can travel. I wondered how much travel is being done by these national award systems, whether they too found themselves travelling from festival to festival, from theatre to theatre and from province to province for them to select who they believe to be deserving of awards and nominations. If they do, the reality of those who they nominate constantly shows otherwise.

Each award group has over fifty adjudicators judging in different places for different types of works. However, one cannot ignore the realities of the powers that be, which ultimately impact on the awards and have a final say in decision making. Wendy also speaks about doing life outside of the gaze of the spectator. She understands those who are peers, colleagues, friends, family and artists are aware that she exists and is creating work. For Wendy, it is about continuing to do the work of the theatre practitioner and not being swept up in the emotions of others. Not permitting the effect of others to have possible affective repercussions in one's life, but instead to soldier on with one's journey that takes place regardless.

> **Fran:** I'm at the point of my life where I am trying to talk less because the strange thing about transformation is because there were people before me… like Toko, who was talking about transformation and about shifting and there is a new generation doing the same thing. And so it goes back to finding alternative ways and not just talking but about shifting things and also not just expecting. There is an expectation of wanting things to shift but if history has shown one thing is that things have not shifted that much. Why are we still talking about it, they have been talking about it, you are talking about it, the others are coming.
>
> And so you talk about finding alternative ways to talk about it, which for me is doing and it's making a conscious decision… Which is the question you've asked earlier. It's about asking the conscious decision, who am I going to work with when I have the money and the opportunity?
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> I was doing a proposal for a show and you know they ask you, how many people doing the show, how many men, how many women, disability. And it hit me hard that I wrote zero in disability and I thought wow how many people write zero?
>
> Because it is not a conscious thing, I am going to do a show and I am going to make sure that there is someone with a disability in the show, so for me, it's about less talking and conscious action. And we don't usually have the opportunity because we don't usually have the money to make these to act on these choices.

Fran highlights a resolution and an outcome. Fran is aware that there is an unspoken duty of speaking out that she believes artists have done before her, during her time and will do after her time.

Speaking is important but speaking with one voice is even more so. When Fran can link the conversations between her generation and mine, and can backdate it to a time before hers, she is claiming that the genealogy of the black woman's voice within the South African Theatre industry has not been so silent, and has not digressed that much at all, but rather it has evolved and strengthened with the continuation of every black woman's voice from before.

This is a powerful statement because Fran, who previously spoke about the mass eradication of older artists who are slow to change, has now move to believing and admitting that in reality, no black woman stands alone, having a responsibility to pass down the baton, no matter how hard or long the journey is. Fran then highlights the idea of mobility.

Fran's actions speak louder than words and words that lack action mean nothing at all.

The ability to act on spoken issues is what Fran wants, she is tired of watching people talk and sign petitions where little change happens, and she is ready to see mountains moved. She is ready to make it to the other side of the tunnel and stand to tell the tale. In the current time and space that Fran is in, she is seeing herself talk less and change more.

> **Gina:** Well look artists just love getting awards, it's part of that whole thing. The Naledi Awards the Fleur De Caps, a lot of it is to do with the criteria, lots of it is about who is judging. At the Naledi's half of them are school teachers from Germiston. In Cape Town, it's a very liberal mentality and the question then becomes firstly do you see everything? Nobody can see everything but… and this is where the institutions become important because how much space and time are they giving to people to allow them to be seen in the first place? And then are the people who are watching sufficiently knowledgeable about, or themselves involved in the art form? But you know, the thing is and there are very valid answers depending on what side of the argument you stand on, what's the alternative? And right now one person runs the show.

Gina sees no harm in the giving of the awards. If anything, she argues that more awards should be given to more artists, and that further influential and financial support should be part of the gift of giving. Gina's main concern is who gives these awards, believing that not all theatre practitioners find themselves as winners after receiving these awards.
By this I speak about what it means to be a winner, a hero in a discipline, not just to the other racers or those giving out the trophies, but to the spectators who live vicariously through the Award winner, feeling like a victor themselves when they cheer on the winner's name.

For Gina, the awards system is still a group of friends who cheer each other on and place the word 'national' in front of anything they do, to justify their actions. Gina asks who these judges are, what do they want, how do they operate, what do they know, where do they live, what do they like, what don't they like, and why them? I see that she is a lot more concerned about who the masses allow to judge them, so for Gina, an award means nothing to her if the award has not been given to the people most deserving. If Gina had it her way, she would run her own awards system regulations committee.

> **Nomsa:** I think so, I think if there are discussions to be had, if there are things to be said, and conversations around why different people think it is or is not a dirty word, as long as it's open discussion then totally. And I think it's happening, small scale or it's being closed off… So, it's happening, and people are trying but there is still a lot of politics…
>
> I think as much as it involves white people, I think it also involves other black people who are just trying to get ahead and are kind of manipulating the situation to favour them. Whatever that means for them… Or who do not understand the importance of spearheading projects that allow women to showcase their voices. Because it's not giving women voices, women have voices; it is allowing them to showcase the voices that they have.
>
> And so ways are happening, there are definitely ways that can probably still happen. And lots of young women are doing it right now, it's just that they don't have the loudspeakers to say it, but they are coming, I have faith."

Nomsa has faith because she has grown up in an environment where she has repeatedly been exposed to black women who were able to speak and shake down a room. Nomsa has also been exposed to the willpower of how much effort such means of communications need for things to happen. She has seen black female artists rise and fall and rise again and never stop rising, getting further from falling. Nomsa does not believe that this work is easy, she is aware of how many sacrifices need to be made for this work to stand steadfast but that does not scare her. For her it is about the process of the work before it gets awarded. If the process is genuine and it shows determination, then already there is an achievement, already the winner is not those on the podium but the winners are those who continue to do the grassroots work in undefined spaces and in places under attack. Nomsa spoke about the importance of women uniting, not just winners patting each other on their backs, but breaking the boundaries of what it means to be a hero.

For Nomsa the fallen female heroes are not dead, because she is aware that the great ones are yet to come. For me, I believe that she needs to start labelling herself as one of the great ones who have arrived because young artists like Nomsa find the means to support black female theatre practitioners, even if she feels left out of the picture. I strongly believe that Nomsa has had the privilege to experience women like her who have come before her, joined alongside her and will be alive to help carry those who are yet to come.

I am also aware that expecting this from Nomsa is a big ask. However, she is one of the lucky ones because her family has taught her the importance of never having to grow alone.

> **Mindy:** So not waiting for but just doing it for you. As a black woman, you have to be excellent because someone else works a third as hard as you and gets it, but what happens when you strive for excellence? What does that do? And why can't you just be excellent already?
> As a benchmark, and at the age of transformation and seeing and technology, where being is enough and saying, 'I am enough'.

Mindy speaks about being excellent and being enough. For Mindy this leaves her with no option. What Mindy reiterates is the definition of what excellence is, and questions one to challenge the notion of black women existence being enough, and in this, being excellent.

For Mindy, black women need their platform to exercise their agency, rather than being swept up in the notion of an award system that was never designed to allow black women to be good enough. Mindy is tired of the comparison and asks for black women to compete alongside each other for excellence instead of competing against each other, when already the rest of our competition does not feel like "wasting" time and energy competing against us.

5.4. New Awards

I believe what a national awards system could look like is twofold. I recommend that provincial awards should take place initially as a launch pad before the national awards occur. This not only opens the platform for the viewing of more shows from various locations to be judged and nominated, but that each province gets afforded an opportunity to present work that is worthy to be nominated for a theatre award and an opportunity to possibly win.
I am convinced that the opportunity for provinces to compete will spread out production funding.

Instead of artists leaving their provinces void of theatrical skills, original and local-based talents and stories can create more opportunity for a larger mixture of race, age, ability and gender to

participate. This would result in a broader scope of contribution and appreciation by all communities.

The winners within the provincial award system must then be selected to be part of the national awards process. At the provincial awards, a maximum of five nominees per category may be selected, with a minimum selection of two nominees per category. If there are less than two nominees in a category, then that award cannot be counted for that province. We may be surprised by what phenomenal work can be unearthed from an under-resourced province. This stands opposed to the current status quo where there is a weighted focus towards the works that originate from larger cities with multiple theatres and platforms of opportunity.

At the national level, there will be no more than nine and no less than two nominees. A trophy, certificate and prize money must be part of both award spaces, and a separate lifetime achievement award should go to one person from each province. Although this might sound excessive per year, one must factor in the reality of how many theatre practitioners there are, and have been within the country, with a mixture of backstage work, production creation and performative aspects.

Each province should be afforded the platform to have a winner that is not based on popularity or funding opportunities, but by individuals who have dedicated their lives to the craft, and have showcased sacrificial service for the sake of the industry. This encourages previously disadvantaged communities including the up and coming artists and does not ostracize or diminish their efforts and developing skills.

The awards would take place on an annual basis. Within the space of two months, an awards season can be documented and sponsored for presentation on a larger scale than just the South African theatre industry. Awards can be named after any group or individual who chooses to sponsor an award, but this may only happen on the Provincial level.

This avoids any bias of privately funded awards choosing their winners over and above their competitors, who will then lose on a national level. Fundamentally, this levels the playing fields.

I recommend an honorarium be awarded provincially and nationally to every lifetime achieving participant.

Provincial awards should be attended in the beginning of the year and lifetime achievers should be presented their honorariums within their provinces. This would give each lifetime achiever the financial ability to create content, and perform projects and workshops throughout the year, leading up to the national awards. These awards should be opened to the public at a small fee, recorded and uploaded on a national theatre community website, including upcoming projects and performances of the provincial and national award winners for that year.

National awards should be held at the end of the year, with award nominees being hosted for two nights within the annually chosen city of the national award ceremony. This annual shuffle will allow artists the opportunity to travel the country for awards and will constantly bring in new audiences. Live streaming of the awards should take place on national television and privately owned special channels to enlarge the audience and create a greater awareness and appreciation of the theatre industry within all communities in South Africa.

Judges and sponsors should shuffle annually and may not be allowed to win personal awards on national or provincial levels if they are judges or sponsors that year. Below are my suggestions in drafting new awards.

Provincial and National Awards

Production	**Direction**	**Musical Composition**	**Choreography**	**Performance**	**Design**
In Children's Theatre *(age 12 and below)*	New text-based work	Musical Theatre	In Dance	In Ensemble *(2 hander plus)*	In Children and Young Adults theatre

In Young Adults *(age 13-18)*	Dance work	Dance Work	In Musical Theatre	In Solo work	In Musical Theatre
In Community Theatre	Text-based work	Text-based work	In Ensemble work *(2 hander plus)*	Lead actress and Actor in Musical Theatre	In Text-based work
In Main Stream Theatre	Ensemble work (2 hander plus)	In Originality	In Solo work	In Diverse works	In Lighting
In Musical Theatre	Solo work	In Children and Young Adults theatre	In Children and Young Adults theatre	Lead Actress and Actor in Text-based work	In Costume
In Dance Theatre	Musical Theatre		In Originality		In Set and Props
In Text-based Theatre In Alternative Work (site-specific, Street theatre, performance art)				Supporting Actress	In Sound In Alternative Work (site-specific, Street theatre, performance art)

- **Are there new ways to bring to surface the voices of black women within the South African theatre industry that can be dictated by the voices of black women themselves?**

All participants agreed to be part of a movement of change and believed that they have already contributed to the possibility of change. Each participant however questioned what change meant, how long change would take, and what change could look like?

In the beginning I had not put change and time on the same scale; I believed that change and time had no relation to each other, but as I started the process of conducting the interviews, I was overwhelmed by the participants comparing change and time. Black women are not impatient; black women are rather the opposite. Black women have allowed the distortion of change to manifest itself through the fallacy of time. The theatre industry being a platform that has grown over time is a recurring statement made by theatre institutions, academic institutions and the social systematic constructs of transformation in theatre. The oppressors have allowed the public to believe that situations, problems and praise are matters that can be fixed only with time.

When looking at what makes a performance a performance, one looks at the possibility of change in time. An example is a theatre show that starts at 8pm on a Thursday, the story is set in the year 2002, and the play begins in the morning for the characters who are arriving at the local coffee shop on a Saturday morning.

The characters go through emotional journeys that range over a period of two months, ending the story in the year 2003, on a Sunday morning at a graveyard.
The ending of the play is at 10pm real time on that Thursday evening of the play. Surely then change is an act that can happen regardless of time.

How my participants chose to cut their thoughts short by restricting their beliefs of change being effected by time reminded me that often the fear of understanding one's position and ability is what the oppressor uses to keep the oppressed, oppressed.

Considering black women are oppressed in the industry not just by imagination but by reality, it is not an easy task to ask for new, but to rather ask for change. Because new needs thought, new needs sacrifice, whereas change only needs time.

Understanding that black women have agency and power to use technology for their best interest is a task hard to achieve. Often one wants to hold up a mirror and tell a black woman that she is the treasure, when in reality the black woman needs to get to a point where she can hold up a mirror for herself and claim herself to be the treasure, without being told so. But even black women are human, and humans look before they act, they see before they do and they respond based on what has been given to them.

If black women from older generations are no longer scared of age, of relevancy and financial income, how much more will the younger generations of black women follow? But how do you ask a people who live in a history of being second to put themselves first?

One of the participants jokingly responded in mass murder, but even this will not work. Do black women have to drink from the same cup as white men to create their supremacy ideologies to counter inequality? Or does this simply lead to the reverse effect? Are my participants correct in linking change to time?

What I know for certain is that if life's a stage, then change does not need to be dictated by time, and black women can, if willing, choose each other before they allow their insecurities to choose for them. More radical approaches such as withholding certain privileges that men have over women is an option.

For example, the boycotting of theatres and performances until a forcing of the hand of those in power is manipulated, and this out of desperation to save the theatre industry by putting black women first.

However, I must be reminded that the livelihoods of people are at stake.
Again, the constant retreat due to fear and reality constantly plays itself out in manners that seem to continue to force the black woman to have to sacrifice to see change. And so, I

question if such change is even worth it, if it will forever come at the cost of a black woman's life.

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