



edited by Hannah Idil



hive mind

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hive mind

foreword

A hive mind are a group of people who share their knowledge or opinions with one another, producing a collective intelligence. Hive Mind is a collection of writing by Black students at Queen Mary to celebrate our shared ideas, experiences and our Blackness in all its glory. We are all different, and brilliant at that. We are not a monolith. We are not a hive mind and yet we are a hive. We are a family. We are a people - with different identities, beliefs and expressions - all unique and all beautiful. If we are thought to be a hive mind who all think the same, uncritically, then alright. But here are the works of nine people who prove otherwise.

Collectivism

I am thankful for being Black,
I am grateful for the shared pain and pleasure,
I can be sure that they have my back,
This I will always treasure.

I can count on my people to feel my pain,
Navigating through life, finding my own
I know I am not alone.
I can share my successes and
Be held to the high heavens as they
Congratulate me and share in my glee.
There is no better feeling for me.

The happiness when finding your tribe,
The beaming feeling we call pride
When we see our own fly,
Little nods and smiles of appreciation as we pass each other by
Starts or ends my day just right.

I am thankful for being Black
Despite the odds that are stacked
Against us for being just what we were designed to be.

We strive for greatness as a family
Paving the way for the younger ones
To love and cherish their identities,
To challenge thoughts and canons about them
And assert their presence with dignity.

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To remain positive and eager to learn
About our history and our return
To greatness, happiness and royalty.
Supporting our own will plant the seeds
For a generation to blossom without fear
Of societal restrictions that we will tear
Down and arm them with all the tools
To live their best life and set their own rules.

As proud and content humans, healthy and free
I am proud of being Black.
I am proud of me.

Yara Satti

Gone

Your eyes are like the depth of the oceans
Stare into my honey eyes
The constellations of your heart
The sun burnt touch of your skin
The echo of my name on your lips
'You're from opposite worlds'
Two different worlds colliding and crashing
Souls in the night passing
They said it'd never work
Dichotomies and binaries
Ice and fire
Light and dark
Ones and zeros
Noughts and crosses
Black and white
Your fingertips dance
Playing a song, we know too well
One of heartbreak and longing
For a time of closeness and us
We no longer watch the stars dance
and the sun rise
Those constellations and the sun tinged memories are all I have
of a time long gone
and I knew
we could never be
more than two people who could have had it all.

Safia Mohamoud

Lost and Found

Taunts on the playground
One of three
Look at her
A child who was once carefree
Mummy, I want blue eyes
Brown is boring
Brown is ugly
Why is my hair so knotty?
Where are the Black dollies?
Black must be bad
White means pure
Light
Innocence
So, what is Black I ask?
Impure
Dirty
Evil
Black must be bad
Your hair is so different
'Can I touch it?'
'Can I touch it?'
'Can I touch it?'
Different is bad
Black is bad
A little girl lost in the world
With a lack of representation
She's losing her nation
Takes too long to realise she's not some damn mutation
That she's deserving of admiration

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Say it with me now
Black is good
Black is beautiful.

Safia Mohamoud

XO

Do you think I'm exotic?
A fetish? My skin a canvas?
For your 'woke' antics
Who are you?
I am more than your project
My Blackness not something for you to 'accept'
My skin is not chocolate or caramel
'Oh, I could dip an apple into your skin, it's almost edible'
'You're so sassy'
'You're so feisty'
I'm not here to be your wifey
I am not your counterpart. Not the other.
What? Are you afraid of my colour?
Afraid of a Black girl that's more than her race and gender?
Who is fire and magic with a soul that would never surrender
Yes, we are beautiful
Yes, we are unique
Our skin a mosaic of stardust and Black girl magic so to speak
So, before you come here
Marvelling at my lips and my thighs
Like I'm some prize to collect
Remember, I am the sum of history, strength, ambition,
confidence and culture
So next time try a little respect.

Safia Mohamoud

If I fight, then we fight: The Women of Eritrea

If I fight,
Then we fight
I'm a soldier
I'm the blood on the battlefield
I'm one tenth of a fighter
I navigate slowly
And I'm the emotional bystander
Too afraid of the depths of brutality
Or am I my own internal captain
The brave, the wise who obstructs all captivity
If I fight,
Then we fight,
My capability exceeds all my political enemies
I'm part of a system that doesn't want me to be here
I'm my own biggest enemy
I'm my own saviour
Do I have the strength to be me?
If I fight,
Then we fight
I hear a woman crying,
A melancholy cry
As the enemy approach in numbers
I look around to see that our soldiers outnumbered
We rob and steal for our protection
We starve for freedom
The men march asleep
Us women fight on our knees
Subservient to our enemies as we battle in unison
We bowed down to the male order
Expecting to get the same fruits of our labour

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If I fight
Then we fight
The sacrifice we made to be here
I fight as a cultural savior
Owetna Hafash
The words and mentality of our people
The people buried in the ground
Because they knew death, was better than bondage
If I fight
Then we fight,
Am I in any position to hold this great flag?
All I am to do is conform
All I am to do is drown and swell in pain and suffering
All I am to do is accept defeat to my enemies
But my enemies are on my side.
If I fight,
Then we fight,
If I am to perform, they are to perform
Why have I chosen to live in fear?
Our presence is more than skin deep
But we are the winners of this war
A treacherous milestone
A people filled with joy
A debt paid with pride
The new life we have been given by God above
Will give me the strength to survive
So, what do we have to lose if we don't lose our ability to live?
It's time for me to leave my burdens at the door

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As this is my blank slate
My time to create
I'm free,
I'm free...
I'm free.

Shiden Tekle

Noir Ethos

Can it be summed up?

Can one put a sticker on what it means to be Black?

After all we alone are already so diverse

From the dark to fair to the coils in our hair

Culture and influence

Passion and knowledge

Excellency and respect

Unity and scrutiny

Can it all be summed up?

Can one really put a sticker on what it means to be?

To sum up our Blackness, our Blackness cannot be summed up.

David Smikle

Blossoming Roots

It streams through your blood
and runs through your soul
You try to find yourself in endless paths
That lead to endless wraths.
You walk but your soul – this intangible silky matter takes flight
To endless trails that form in your mind.
You venture south but your soul heads north – high above the clouds where
you too would go forth.
You try to see yourself through a different
Lense
And find yourself in-tune with yourself
Well who would have knew
That the question of identity lies in you.

Samrawit Elias

Liberation of a generation

Being a Zimbabwean man in a Western society like the UK has always proved to be perplexing. Even in a city as diverse as London, there aren't any massive communities or areas which are predominantly Zimbabwean. Our existence has always been in isolation, and this can sometimes be lonely. Our culture is forgotten and family members are few and far between. I am left feeling disconnected from both my culture and my country. So, I search for connections through Zimbabwe's modern history.

The historiography surrounding Zimbabwe has always created a narrative of a lazy, incompetent Zimbabwean elite. It's the main reason attributed to the failure of Zimbabwean society. The liberation war generation refers to the people that fought for the military wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union in the nation's war of independence. They would go on to become dominant and influential in Zimbabwean politics from its independence until the present day. It has had adverse effects.

Zimbabwe has one of the highest suicide rates amongst Southern African countries. This is due to young people being unable to find work and subsequently turning to drugs to cope. Through several interviews with citizens such as war veterans, dispossessed farmers and a Matabeleland massacre survivor, Dixon Chibanda, showcased how citizens from different walks of life had all been mentally affected by the reign of Mugabe, with some experiencing depression and even hallucinations.

It's clear to see how the liberation war generation have shaped the future of Zimbabwe. By sacrificing prosperity for the whole country in pursuit of personal gain, politicians such as Mnangagwa and Mugabe have placed the Zimbabwean citizens in a difficult position. Unemployment is high and shows no signs of decreasing, and suicide rates are following the same trends. Zimbabwean citizens are suffering.

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Whilst the roots of these problems were formed under Mugabe's dictatorial reign, Mnangagwa has done little to remove these policies. Instead, he has mostly continued them, giving the Zimbabwean citizens a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness.

The liberation war generation makes me feel angry and disappointed. Despite this, I have hope that one day Zimbabwe will be free from the shackles of this generation, and blossom to find itself truly liberated.

Tatenda Kirya

Colourism

I recently became captivated by a conversation between two friends. They were talking about girls and I found them to be fairly attractive (at least before they started running their mouths) – of course I’m eavesdropping. I enjoyed listening to one of them speak about their latest troubles with a girl who was ‘moving mad’. Apparently, she wanted him to stop liking and commenting on other girls Instagram posts.

“I only do it so when I drop a pic I get the likes and comments back,” he protested. I laughed to myself because, honestly, I do the same. Then he said something which seriously alarmed me.

“This is why I don’t do darkskins.”

This sentence brought great joy to them both as they laughed and dapped each other up at least 3 times, revelling in their colourism. Oh, did I forget to mention they were both Black? They carried on with this topic, raising multiple points as to why darker skinned girls should be avoided. I bit my tongue then but I would like to respond now.

“Their real hair is clapped, always wearing weave.”

This is one I’ve heard a few times and I just don’t get it. Are your own mothers clapped because of their hair? Are you not wearing your du-rag to manipulate your own hair? (I still don’t see any waves). There just isn’t enough understanding on the amount of time it can take to prepare type 4 hair.

“They think they’re too prestige”

hive mind

I'm sorry, honey. Does confidence offend you? I feel like some boys are happiest with girls whose well-being depends entirely on them. It's like they don't even realise the WORK put into the 'prestige' they see these days. The insecurity that preceded it. The self-doubt, and sometimes self-hate. This comment enrages me because it goes to show how possessive these weak-minded boys can be. An independent woman who is confident in herself in spite of them is frightening. It means they can't be manipulated or controlled.

“Lightskin girls are better”

This struck a chord as a 'lightskin' girl myself. A commodity defined by a list of countries and stereotypes about my attitude. I'm supposed to be flattered but statements like this make me sick to my stomach. Even worse is the fact that one of them gestured towards me, as if to say “like her”. Uhm, not gonna happen. Do they not hear themselves? Do they not see their own Blackness? Do they not realise how they're condoning the notion of Black inferiority? This needs to stop.

I really regret not speaking up at the time and will never dodge that responsibility again. Next time you hear views like this being celebrated, I encourage to intervene and educate. You can make a difference.

Anonymous

In Between

Something about my identity as a Nigerian-American woman seemed mismatched. My parents grew up in Nigeria, and they maintain secure bonds with the country. My relatives all speak the intricate languages of our country, cook the flavorful food, know the juicy gossip. They are traditional in loving God and respecting their elders. Growing up, I felt very much connected to being Nigerian. I saw it as something that made me different, more special than white peers. It wasn't until college that I really felt and understood the distinction between Black American and African American.

Growing up believing that I was special because of my Nigerian-ness, not despite it, probably saved me from the self-hating phase of Black womanhood that seems all too common. I liked standing out, and I never missed an opportunity to show that I wasn't like the "others." I am Nigerian. I am Proud. I am Remarkable. My mother taught my sisters and I that we are royalty. She constantly reminded us of the mansions we owned back in Nigeria, the many chiefs of my Mom's side and political figures of my Dad's, the pureness of our blood.

When my parents finally took my sisters and me to Nigeria, their stories seemed to add up. Our month long visit to our homeland was thrilling and unlike any experience I'd had in America. Of course, while there, it was excruciatingly obvious that my sisters and I didn't really fit. From the clothes we wore to our prominent American accents, we tolerated much teasing from our cousins and struggled deciphering pidgin in their thick accents. Regardless of these differences, we were always welcome and reminded that Nigeria is home. Everything else is temporary.

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Over the years as my extended family disperses across America, my parents gradually lose their accents, and our time in Nigeria seems more like a dream than a tangible reality, I wonder if there's some other way I can embrace my Nigerian-ness as a more stable core of my identity. In college, I've gotten to know Nigerian international students, Nigerian-Americans who speak Igbo or Yoruba, and Nigerians who know Nigeria like the back of their hand. All these interactions have made me feel more estranged from my culture, like a mask I put on when it suits me. I bounce between "no, enslavement is not my history" but "yes, I know what it's like to suffer from American white supremacy." And, "yes, I've been to Nigerian weddings" but "no, I don't know any of the traditional songs that we take up as a community." Nothing fits.

This in-between state of being read as Black American by my peers, and as purely Nigerian by my family leaves me feeling dizzy. Which identity is real and which is a costume? Surely, Nigerian-ness and Blackness are not antithetical. But why does it feel like embracing one is turning my back on the other? If Blackness is all encompassing, why does it feel so exclusive?

Lelosa Aimufua

Proud

I used to look for myself in the world around me. Look for a representation of myself on TV, in the magazines or at school, university and work. I could not find her. I yearned to find myself, a woman who could validate my being, tell me it was alright to be an activist, a news anchor, an actress, a woman in this world. She was not there.

I started college, did classes on African and Caribbean Studies, Anthropology and Sociology. All my niggling thoughts were confirmed – I was set up to fail. Beginning with representations of myself and ending with a cycle of complacency and invisibility, I refused to accept my racialised fate. I worked hard to find my tribe – women, rich in melanin and eager to uncover our roots. And after a long, hard search and a tumultuous journey of self-love, I found my place.

It was okay to be me. It was alright to stand out. It was my right to resist the looks. I deserved to question their micro aggression.

I feel elated that we have taken control of our representation on social media platforms. I log on and find cultural histories, achievements and more throughout these apps that uplift us. I find arrays of people, just like me, yearning to decolonise the media and the minds of the world on Blackness and educate their own to guide us on the path to enlightenment. I am proud to own novels that celebrate Blackness; from Gilroy to Ngugi wa Thiong'o. I thank my teachers for helping me find representation in education. Despite the lack of intersectionality that deals with my issues as a young Black woman, I am thankful for the change in narrative, spearheaded by the people, and I yearn to see profound change as the years ensue. I am proud to give to Black businesses as I watch them thrive to find a place in the market system. I am proud to own Pan-African items, and watch the looks I receive on public transport, smiling in the face of ignorance.

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As my years at university come to an end, I remember the beginning, struggling to find representation around me. Today, I see more and more young, Black faces around campus, my heart beaming with joy. At work, I see more and more representation, Black women finally getting a seat at the table.

Yes, we have a long way to go. A lot of unlearning and understanding of the world we live in, but I see a change in the hunger for education. I feel the brilliance of young Black adults talking about situations pertaining to those racialised as Black, eager to figure out ways to make their stories known and prevent the same experiences for the younger generation.

I am proud of my Blackness, despite the origins of its labels and the weight it carries with it. I will pass on the legacy of my pride wherever I go.

I am proud to be a Black woman.

Yara Satti

Not a parade, not a performance

My Blackness isn't centred around being granted a seat at somebody else's table. It does not care for being gentle to touch or palatable to taste. I won't dress it up in pink frills and the finest materials you can find. It's not concerned with being easy to accept, pretty to look at, comfy to be around or just bright enough that it doesn't disrupt the aesthetic you were going for. Sometimes it's heavy and sometimes I don't even realise it's there. But I won't parade it on a stage for it to be praised and gawked at and clapped for. You only extend sympathy when its pain is poetic. It's not there for you to feel like a better human being because you let it stay in the room.

It's not a photo op.
It's not there to fill diversity quotas.
I won't showcase it for you.
I won't stop it being loud or rough around the edges.
Maybe it's in a hoodie, maybe it wears a hijab, maybe it's rocking 95s today.
What if it's trousers sag? What if it has a du-rag on?
Can it speak one of its many languages in public?
Is that okay?

My Blackness can't be boxed in. It contains multitudes. Multitudes that I get to pick from. And me alone. Much like anything, my Blackness is there to exist. It doesn't have to go through the laborious task of assigning itself meaning if it does not so wish. It isn't a performance. I do not perform Blackness. I am it. It is me.

Hannah Idil



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