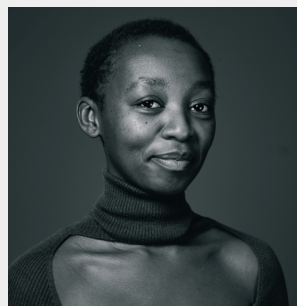


ubuntu magazine



Ubuntu, I am because we are

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**Ubuntu Magazine continues the mission
of the Dutch Black Scholar and Expert
Conference 2025, giving a platform to
the work and stories of Black people while
celebrating their knowledge, experiences,
and place in academia and beyond.**

Ubuntu Magazine reflects the core principle of what Ubuntu philosophy means, a reminder that we can only be fully human once we acknowledge that our humanity is dependent on one another. This is what this magazine is about: a celebration and a manifestation that we thrive through relationships, mutual care and community. This magazine is a reminder that, in a world where there is so much individualism, our shared humanity can only be achieved and strengthened through our relationships with others.

**Eduardo Campbell-
Bethancourt**



The Black Scholar and Expert Conference grew out of my observation that young Black academics in the Netherlands needed a dedicated space to connect with each other, support one another, exchange information, and build community.

Together with Tirza Snoijl and Tracian Meikle, I had already helped establish an informal network for Black PhD candidates. A conference felt like a natural next step. The idea was to create a platform where early-career Black scholars could showcase their expertise across a broad range of subjects, not only on issues traditionally associated with Black communities, but the full spectrum of research interests and professional interests. The conference was also an important opportunity for participants to meet peers, expand their networks, and see themselves reflected within academia.

At the same time, I recognized that academia is not equally accessible to everyone. Many people of African descent develop expertise outside the university, and their knowledge deserves equal recognition. That is why the conference deliberately extends beyond the walls of the so-called "Ivory Tower." It welcomes not only scholars and academics, but also professionals, practitioners, artists, activists, entrepreneurs, and other experts whose contributions enrich knowledge production and public debate.

Black academics remain significantly underrepresented and often invisible within Dutch academia. Although there are no official figures, because the Netherlands does not collect data on race or ethnicity, the small number of Black professors is striking. I can count the Black professors

I know on two hands, and many of them hold endowed (special appointment) professorships, which tend to be temporary rather than permanent positions.

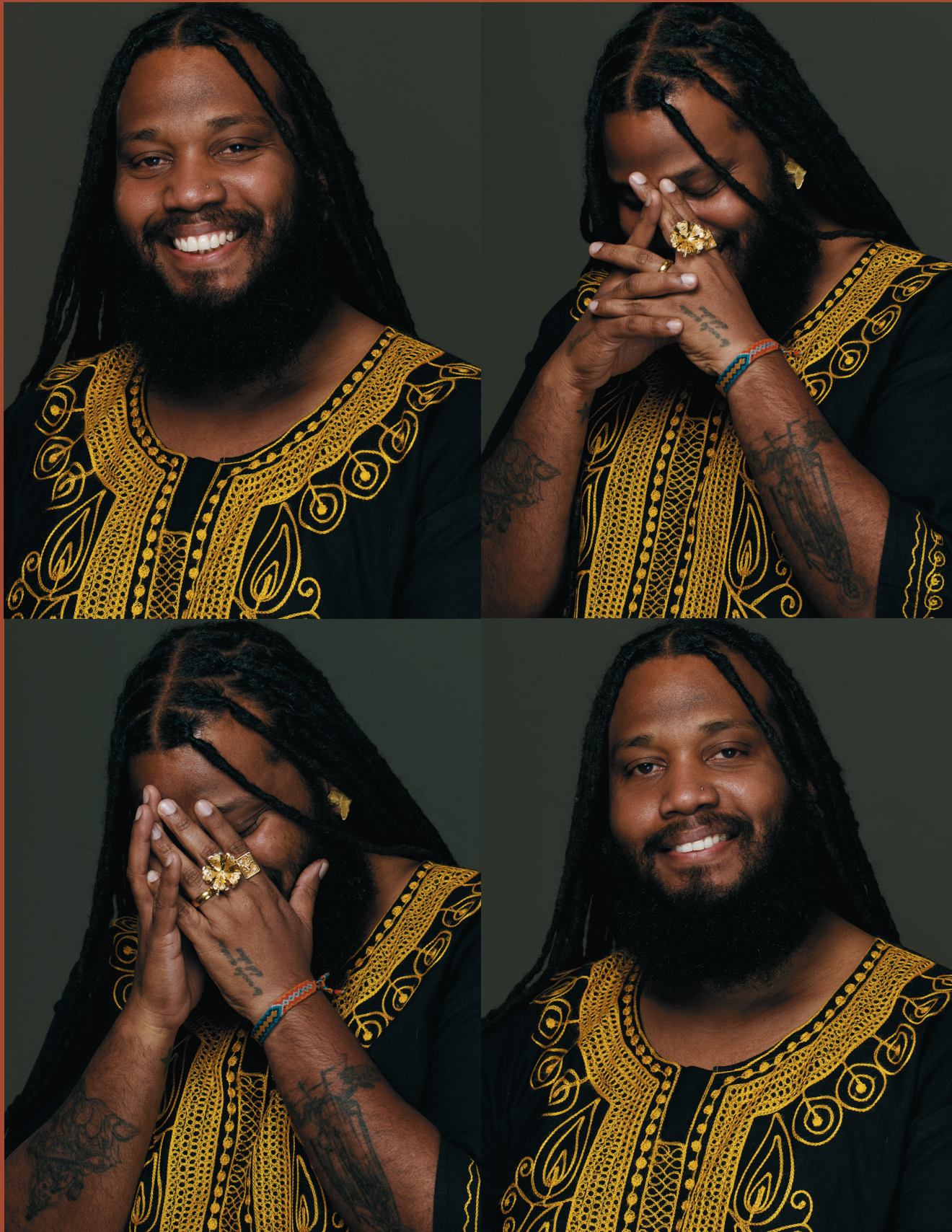
If Dutch academia were to reflect Dutch society more closely, we would expect roughly 3-4% of professors to be Black or of African descent. Applied to the current total of 3,217 professors, this would amount to approximately 97 to 129 Black professors. The reality falls far short of that estimate, underscoring how much work remains to be done to create a more representative and inclusive academic landscape.

Daphina Misiedjan



**Benjamin
Stanton Koponen**

**Community is a subtle thing.
I remember when I first realized that
the life I had built for myself in The
Netherlands had become a community.
It started with seeing the same faces
at different events. I can't say I became
friends with all those familiar faces,
but it was always cool to see them.
We would talk, catch-up, then move on.
At first, it seemed a bit superficial, like
a never-ending carousel of small talk.
But eventually those conversations got
deeper. Bit by bit. And at a certain point,
I realized that I knew so much about
these people who I had never even
hung out with one-to-one. So, thank
you to all of the familiar faces at the
conference. Y'all stay winning. Peace.**



Flâneur, Flâneur Noir, Flâneur Antillais

**i return to these forests
on foot as i did in the bush
about my island**

**trust, i've always known
the whims of our climate
that turned tropical eyes
into winter**

**among trees i will one day learn by name
i extend my tongue
to capture a Black rain
and my earliest need
for my mother's love
while running from the basin
of her heavenly arms**

**i believed in no fate, but passion
summoning me in vestments
instructed futures, to be goodservant
where every brown leaf was an emblem
and a single trail of Antillean memory
i called my own**

Amilcar Peter Sanatan

**Saja Nurien**

Being part of BSEC 2025 as, at the time, an MA student who sees and feels gaps in academia, which shows a "smaller picture" because of an absence of indigenous voices, as well as of young Black non-heteronormative voices from 'marginalized' geographies like my own Sudan, Haiti, etc. was uplifting in so many ways. I had a blast sharing thoughts and connecting with radiant Black creatives and scholars on love, life, ancestral connectivity, politics and more of what my heart loves. The experience left me in a sweet wonder! :)

**Emmanuel Akwasi
Adu-Ampong**

39

**African of Ghanaian
Adukrom-Akuapem origin**

**Associate Professor
in Cultural Geography**

Wageningen University & Research

How delightful it is to be surrounded by this community of scholars. We share, we laugh and we cry together as we navigate the world of academia. At each conference, I feel recharged with a renewed sense of mission as we hold space for each other. Long may we continue to build this amazing community of resistance, hope, love and joy.

**Emmanuel Akwasi
Adu-Ampong**



The conference was such a beautiful and affirming experience. Spaces such as these that foster knowledge sharing and building, intergenerational support networks and interdisciplinary collaborations continue to be essential as we seek out transnational Black communion and solidarity. This is especially true within the realms of scholar-activism. I came away from the event inspired, encouraged and feeling as though I'd found an important and nurturing community of new friends and colleagues.

Bryel Kerkhoff-Parnell



**Beauty, Love and Joy.
The ability to communicate
without words,
understand one another with the
simplest of phrases.
The diversity of thought,
knowledge, background,
being stretched so far across
the globe,
And still having grounding
connections.
This is what Blackness is to me.**

Wanjiru Kabanga

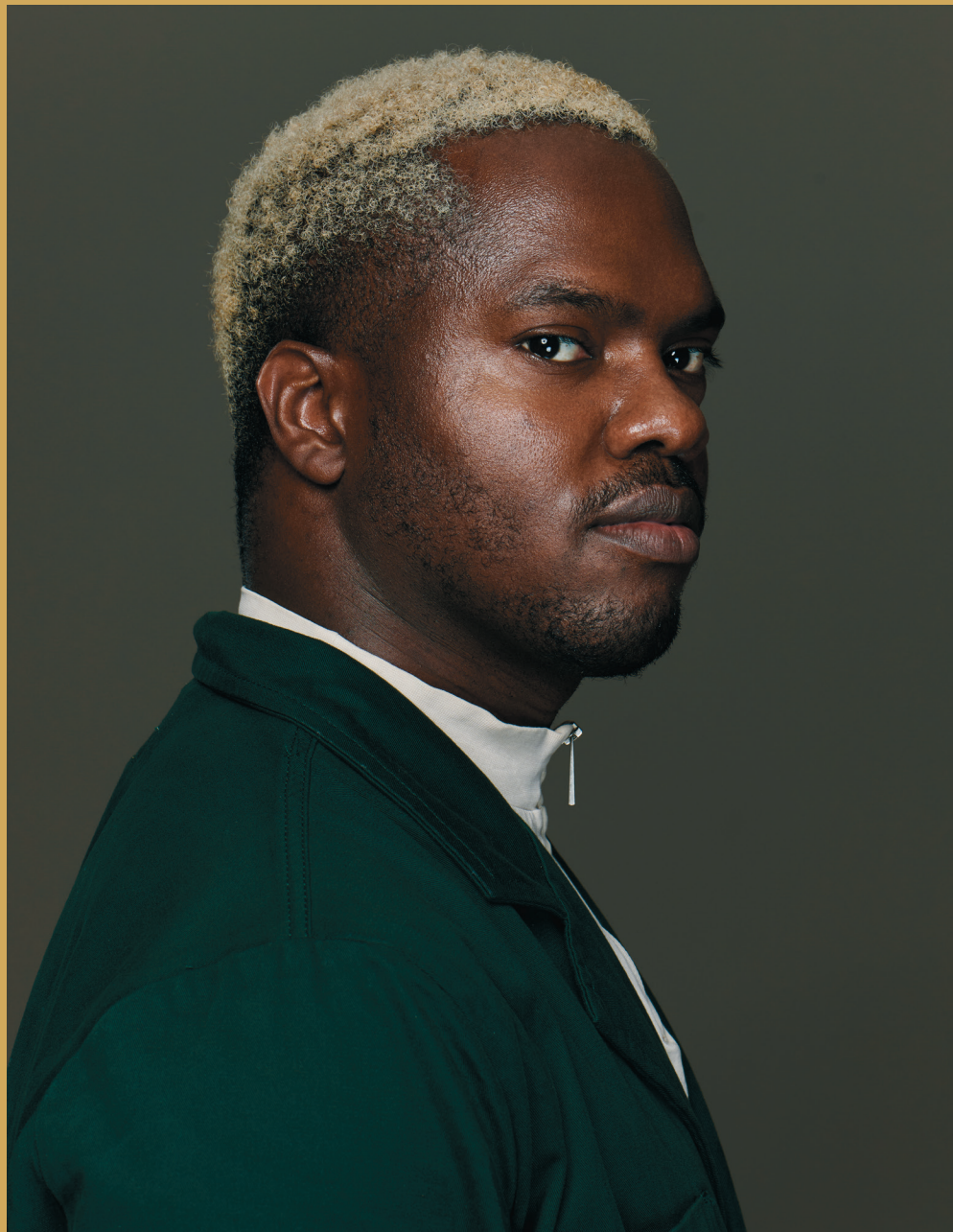


Cindy Steward

After working at the intersection of technology and neuroscience, one of the most important things I have learned is how much it matters who is in the room when solutions are being designed and created. Being present in spaces that aim to create real impact on society, while carrying identities and perspectives like mine, is not just meaningful but necessary if we want to build a future that truly works for everyone.

I care deeply about developing technology that reaches patients in ways that are inclusive and thoughtful. That means paying attention to who is being considered, who might be left out and how different people experience the same solutions. In many environments, these questions are not always at the forefront and I have come to realize that being someone who raises them can make a difference.

Having that role is something I have grown to accept as both a responsibility and a privilege. It is not always easy, but it is something I value, because even one voice in the room thinking critically about inclusion can help shape better outcomes for more people.



**Wigbertson
Julian Isenia**

Black Queer Joy

"When I utter the words Black Queer Joy, I do not mean to say something frivolous. I do not mean to say to party for party's sake. When I say the words Black Queer Joy, I mean that despite the racism and homophobia we must endure, we still create, we still rejoice and we still dream. I know this has been a challenging year; this fucking pandemic has been and still is hard.

Yet, we are still here.

So, what we are celebrating here today is how we can have joy despite all these hardships, how we continue to dream in a world that does not seem to be there for us, in a world that does not want us to exist. I think it is crucial to center Black queer joy today, as some want to define us through racism. As some want to define us through Black deaths, even as we know what it is to be made to doubt our own staying. Even as we know the cost of staying alive, to hold those tears when the world is not enough.

Yes, our activism, community organizing and relationships are attentive to racism in how we try to combat it.

However, I repeat: Black queer life is not defined by the struggles we face. For all those Black queers and trans people of all ages who need to hear this: You are so much more than death. You are worthy of joy, of love, you are worthy of care, you deserve support.

So, when I say Black queer joy, I mean it to say that in our joy lies a history, a lineage of joy as an act of resistance. We follow in their footsteps.

So, when I say Black queer joy, I mean to say that there is a power, an immense power in our laughter and our joy, powerful enough to poke holes into a doomed world.

So, when I say Black queer joy, I mean to say, Black queer joy as the comfort of the warmest blanket on a chilly day.

So, when I say Black queer joy, I mean to say something that cannot be contained. So, when I say Black queer joy, I mean to say this: I mean to say you, I mean to say us, we are a force to reckon with."

Speech given on 27 June 2021 at the Black Queer & Trans Resistance Protest: Celebrating Black Queer Joy, (Nelson Mandela Park, Amsterdam) during the pandemic and Black Lives Matter insurgency

Community means a convergence of persons from where personhood grows. For real Ubuntu to emerge, there must acceptance of any and all persons in this convergence and for a community to flourish, each person must have an expanded awareness of their unique expression of their personhood. This is what it means to be human together, for a person is a person through other persons and I am because of who we all are.

**Wakanyi
Macharia-Hoffman**



Nancy Hakizimana

I was born on the hills of Rwanda's red soil that holds the bones of those who came before me. I was raised in South Africa's rainbow nation that holds the breath of those who fought for its existence. Growing up in the shadow of Steve Biko, of Nelson Mandela, of Hector Pieterse, of Winnie Mandela and the Black bodies who organized without title, Blackness was the water I swam in. Growing up, Blackness was so abundant that it was unremarkable. I never had to reach for it because it reached for me in queues, in lecture halls, in the ululations at graduations, in the struggle songs that flowed through our bodies. But then I came to the Netherlands and realized how much I had taken for granted the Black abundance I had always known because suddenly, the abundance was gone. Blackness was now hyper-visible and invisible at the same time. The PhD I had arrived in the Netherlands for was an intellectual project in all the ways it may grant me access to academia, but it was also a project on survival, of my Black body and its right to exist in a space that was not built for bodies like mine. The loneliness of doing this project wore me down.

But then we built something. We built something where Du Bois's veil became a gathering place for the veiled to find each other. The Black Scholars and Experts Conference was an event that arrived only for one day and yet in it were lifetimes. I looked across a room and saw the faces of people who had learned to translate themselves into acceptability, but here we were all permitted to stop, even if only for just a day. In those rooms I felt my ancestors, who had survived the hills, stand up straighter inside me. Chinua Achebe wrote that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. We were, that day, the lions gathering in our glory.

A portrait of a man and a woman. The man, on the left, has dark curly hair and a beard, wearing a white t-shirt under a dark jacket. The woman, on the right, has long red braids, wears a black beret with a white logo, large hoop earrings, and a necklace. She is also wearing a dark jacket over a white shirt.

Daudi van Veen
Sarah Njoroge

33
32

Kenyan-Dutch
Kenyan-American

Assistant Professor in Youth & Family Studies
Communication Officer, International
Institute of Social Studies (ISS)

Erasmus University
Rotterdam

Daudi van Veen **Sarah Njoroge**

Black love is many things. Recognition. Understanding beyond words. Authenticity. For fifteen years, we have had the honor to navigate the world together. Along the way, we've built our love through each and every experience. It feels like we can just...be. Our love comes without explanation. Whether it be our values, our passions, or even something as simple as our hair. We can rely on each other to point us back to who we are when the world tries to lead us astray. Black love is our unending superpower, our shield and our foundation.

**Black joy is
not a
reaction
to pain,**

**it is its own
origin story.**



Cecile Jagoo

My work sits at the intersection of decolonial thinking, education and language, exploring how the way we speak, learn and share knowledge shapes our understanding of the world.

Beyond research, I'm deeply rooted in community work. Much of my focus has been on diasporic communities, previously with young people, but recently my attention has turned toward mothers and the vital roles they play in building and sustaining community strength. Their contributions are powerful, often overlooked and rarely captured in formal histories.



Nkemakonam Ijeh

I come from a lineage of women who knew how to hold things – grief, joy, fire, food, prayer – all at once. My grandmother did not call it resilience. She called it living. As an Igbo woman practicing psychology in the Netherlands, I sit at the crossroads of clinical training and ancestral knowing. I have learned that the most radical thing I can do is refuse to split myself in two. Chairing the Stories Unfiltered panel at this conference reminded me why: when Black people tell their own stories – unfiltered, unedited, in their full complexity – that is resistance. Not the loud kind only, but also the quiet. The kind that says I will not shrink to make this room more comfortable. Community is where that refusal is celebrated. It is the kitchen table. It is the circle. It is the room where someone looks at you and sees the whole of where you come from. Ubuntu – I am because we are – is not a philosophy I had to learn. It is something my grandmothers planted in me long before I had words for it. This gathering reminded me that Black joy is not a reaction to pain. It is its own origin story.



Yowali Kabamba

As academics, reading feels like second nature and after hundred of thousands of pages, it is difficult to remember a single sentence. There is one, however, that has stuck with me since I first read it:

“It takes energy to be the only black person in a lecture hall or one of the few nonwhite people trying out for a play or joining an intramural team. It requires effort, an extra level of confidence, to speak in those settings and own your presence in the room.”

(Becoming - Michelle Obama)

This statement perfectly illustrates, for me, the wish I sometimes have to be in spaces with people that look like me. How nice it was that the conference, if for but a moment, allowed me to just be.

Marisse Cato

**Black British
Afro-Caribbean**

Composer, Scholar and PhD Student

**Music Department at
Harvard University**

**Blackness continues to
be remade, re-articulated and
sounded in unexpected ways.
Keep listening and being
attentive to its ongoing
transformation and iterations.**

Marisse Cato



Nuria Habib Yhaya

Born and raised in Madrid, I am a daughter of Oromo migrants. Of people who left their country to pursue a better life. Of people who left their loved ones and moved elsewhere in hopes for a better future. They did not know how they would do it, somehow they achieved it and started a family. They also did not know that I would be, as they like to call me, their activist daughter leading to countless discussions and even fights about politics, society and livelihood. Joining protests and educational events since early in my teenagehood deeply shaped who I am today. The same way it did being a Black Muslim woman living in Europe. My upbringing not only made me care for my own rights or lived experiences, but also strengthened my solidarity toward other oppressed and unheard communities and peoples. I often encourage others to join me and support those who need it, and I want to do the same for you as a reader. If you can, join as many events, fundraisers and protests to educate yourself and learn more about what is happening as you read. From Palestine to Congo, from Sudan to Lebanon and Cuba, we all should be worried about the system that we are living in. Free all oppressed nations and peoples!



Sabrina Bowen

The conference was an invaluable space for Black people from a number of different countries and spaces to come together as a community and discuss themes and topics that are relevant to our lived experiences. It was refreshing to present in an academic context where Black joy and community were at the forefront rather than just resilience and struggle. I left The Hague feeling empowered and inspired by the work of Black thinkers, creatives and academics. I felt empowered.



**Ubuntu
is a
gathering
space.**

Larissa Tiki Mbassi



Nathifa Elshot

**Reading could be a lot more fun if
people could have books where they
are represented.**

Zuwena Elshot



**The conference has been a much
needed space to meet up with
other Black researchers in the
Netherlands. I'm always aware that
I'm never alone in any challenge, but
it is a joy to witness that in person.**

Sharifah Redan

The Black Scholars and Experts Conference as well as other black spaces are for me places of resistance, joy, shared experience and, above all, places that give me the relieving feeling of belonging. As a person with multiple heritages, it is difficult for me to find a place where I feel I belong. Places of Diaspora, in which Blackness is celebrated give me that feeling. As a critical legal scholar working on discrimination issues I am often confronted with situations in which experiences that are close and personal for me become subjects of study. Maintaining professional and academic rigor often means to distance yourself from these situations and I find it important to find a way back. Our perspectives make our work unique. There is a way to reconcile being impartial and professional while at the same time giving space for your own perspective. Creating a space for exchange with people who do exactly that across so many different disciplines encourages me to do the same! That is why belonging is so important for me.

Carlota Memba Aguado



Kim Dankoor

**The bridge I must be
Is the bridge to my own power
I must translate
My own fears
Mediate
My own weaknesses
I must be the bridge to nowhere
But my true self
And then
I will be useful**

From The Bridge Poem by Kate Rushin



On The Nature of Rebirth

In the aftermath of Hurricane Irma and COVID-19 and the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests and the apologies for slavery by the Dutch Government, Black futures on St. Maarten were reborn through creativity and resistance.

“I asked myself, if I had to imagine a world and fight for it, what would that world look like?”

Black futures were reshaped as response, as decolonial knowledge sharing, as pathways to healing and as return to who we always were.

“They don’t even know what’s happening, but they can feel that ancestral connection.”

The rebirth of pan-africanism on this small island in the Dutch Caribbean.

The moko-jumbies, the drums, the rhythms; the power of dance.

“Through this experience, they started asking who they are.”

Liberatory, imaginative, collaborative; Black futures are restorative.

“I was yearning to see myself.”

Ludmila Duncan



Nathalie Clue

"We likkle but we tallawah" - Joy as Our Resistance

As a British-born woman of Jamaican heritage, the phrase, "we likkle but we tallawah," which is rooted in Jamaican patois, is important to me because it means being strong and formidable beyond what size alone might suggest.

It captures something I have come to understand not just intellectually but also personally: that communities and peoples with the least institutional power have consistently produced the most enduring cultural and societal transformations.

That spirit was unmistakable throughout the Black Scholar conference. The presentations were sharp, the ideas bold and the willingness to challenge dominant narratives was not performative but deeply grounded. Scholars examined Black identity, memory, migration, decolonization, creativity and resistance and the cumulative effect was a reminder that Black intellectual and cultural life has never been marginal, however much it has been treated that way.

Our communities have never been passive subjects of history. At the conference, I presented research from my doctoral work examining the Windrush Generation and their descendants. For those unfamiliar with the story, the Windrush Generation refers to the Caribbean men and women who were invited by the British government to come and rebuild the country after the Second World War, answering the call of the so-called ‘Mother Land’ as British citizens, only to be met with signs reading "No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs" on boarding house doors and discrimination in workplaces and race-based violent terror on the streets. The name comes from the Empire Windrush, the ship that arrived at Tilbury Docks in June 1948 and it has since come to represent both the courage of those who made the journey and the profound injustice of how Britain repaid them.

My research focuses on how that generation and those who followed them did not simply endure Britain, they changed it. The famous London Notting Hill Carnival is one of the most visible examples. Founded in 1959 by the activist and journalist Claudia Jones as a response to the racist violence on London's streets, it has grown into Europe's largest street festival, drawing over two million people annually and contributing hundreds of millions to London's economy. It is many things at once: a celebration, a political act, a community institution and proof that joy can be its own form of resistance. At the conference, my presentation argued that culture is not simply something we consume but something we use to reclaim space, preserve memory, assert belonging and build worlds that institutions have tried to deny us. Every sound system, every mas band, every jerk chicken stall is a statement. We are here.

The conference left me reflecting on how communities across the African Diaspora in Europe continue to live out the spirit of tallawah, creating and transforming the societies around them, often with limited resources and in the face of structural barriers that are far from accidental. Being in The Hague, in a room where you did not have to qualify yourself before making a point or brace for the question of whether your work was "generalizable enough," there was laughter in the corridors and rigor in the lecture rooms and the two were not in tension. The scholars were presenting work that mattered to them personally and defending it with intellectual precision. That, in itself, felt significant.

Whether through scholarship, art, activism or community-building, our collective impact extends far beyond our numbers.

We likkle, still. Tallawah, always.

**Every sound
system,
every mas
band, every
jerk chicken
stall is a
statement.**

We are here.

**Ubuntu says
I am human
only because
you are human.
If I undermine
your humanity,
I dehumanize
myself.**

**Ubuntu speaks
of warmth,
compassion,
generosity,
hospitality,
seeking
to embrace
others.**