**Glasgow Women’s Library and FLUP the Podcast with Natasha Kelly**

**Tomiwa:** Hello, my name is Tomiwa Folorunso and this is Glasgow Women’s Library and FLUP, the Podcast!

***MUSIC***

**Tomiwa:** On my final day at FLUP in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, I had the absolute pleasure of sitting down and talking to Natasha A. Kelly. I say talking to, I did spend most of the conversation, just kind of nodding my head, looking at her in awe and just going ‘yes, oh my gosh’ and just laughing. But despite that I think we did have a really interesting conversation about Natasha’s work as an activist, as an academic, as an artist and what it’s like to exist in this world with a Black body. I truly found it, and I don’t use this word lightly at all, an inspiring conversation and so I want to say a huge thank you to Natasha for giving up your time, and your words and your knowledge with me and this larger audience.

I will also say, her film ‘Milli’s Awakening’ is currently showing in Edinburgh so I will pop all the information you need in a box below. And a little disclaimer, speak to anyone from Rio and you will know that city never sleeps, apologies for the background noise throughout but you do just get used to it and I promise you Natasha’s words are worth holding out for. So, here is, Glasgow Women’s Library and FLUP the Podcast with Natasha A. Kelly.

***MUSIC***

**Tomiwa:** I have obviously done my research, I know who you are, I heard you speak on the panel a couple nights ago here in Rio but I just wondered if you could please tell me how would you describe who you are and the work you do, in your own words?

**Natasha:** I would describe myself as an academic activist, I work at the intersections of art, academia and society. I, everything I do in the academic world is influenced by my activism but my activism on the streets, so to say, is also influenced by my theoretical readings, learnings, teachings, so it works both ways. So that’s, you can look at each individually but never separate from each other, these difference facets of my work and what I do.

**Tomiwa:** Do you think you were an activist or an academic first?

**Natasha:** Activist.

**Tomiwa:** Activist first

**Natasha:** I’m an activist first for sure.

**Tomiwa:** What makes you an activist? Or where did your activism come from? Or start from?

**Natasha:** I don’t know if there’s such thing as a starting point, I don’t believe in linearity as something having a beginning and an end but more in a circular sense of time that maybe I was just called to do it. I am a very talkative, chatty extrovert person. So, I am very political, very conscious and it kind of all fell together. Being a Black woman growing up in a white world, you don’t choose to be an activist, it’s something that you’re like kind of forced into, if you really want to make change, you have to be the change you want to see. It kind of fell together in a way.

**Tomiwa:** In a really nice way, that’s a really nice way to view your life. I view things very linearly and it’s really nice to see it as this whole circle of what’s meant to be.

So, I know you published a book, *Black Feminism: Basic Texts in German* and it’s a collection of translations from women from the Global North, so it includes work from Audrey Lorde, Barbra Smith, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, to name but a few. I’ve got a couple questions about this, but my first is, what encouraged you or inspired you that made you feel like, this is the time to do this?

**Natasha:** Well actually, I was asked by the publishing house to do this because I am an author also and I write, my pen is my sword, put it that way, to use Audre Lorde’s words, my pen is my sword. I’ve published several books and one of the publishing houses who I work with, they approached me, because they wanted to work with original texts translated into German. They asked me if I could imagine doing this and because I actually am a translator, that’s my first job. I learned foreign language secretary, I went to college and I learnt English, French and German so I do translate. That’s how I practically financed my way through university doing different translations for different magazines, bilingual stuff. They wanted to do something on Black feminism and my first reaction was oh, ‘intersectional feminism’ and they were like no, ‘Black feminism’ and I was like but ‘Black feminism is intersectional feminism’, I’m like that’s kind of weird, what’s this all about? And they didn’t get the point that I was trying to make and that encouraged me even more and I’m like, okay, then I will. Then I will, I will take on this challenge because if you don’t know that Black feminism is intersectional feminism then we have a real problem here in Germany right, because they like to run with our concepts, I think this is a Global issue anyway that people like to run away with our concepts, things get white washed and then disconnected from their roots right, so that’s what actually brought me to the concept of choosing the texts, so that it would actually portray the development of the intersectional debate.

So, I actually start with Sojourner Truth as early as 1851 who was one of the first Black women to actually stand up and say “Hey! Ain’t I Black, ain’t I a woman?” It can be one of the starting points of the intersectional debate where she’s Black and a woman, so we’re looking at Race and gender, and the texts that follow all refer to Sojourner Truth, so I go from Sojourner Truth to Kimberlé Crenshaw who actually coins the term, ‘intersectionality’ and I show how all of these Black feminists, all very well known in their own right, in their own sense of work, what they do. If it’s Audre Lorde, if it’s Bell Hooks, if it’s Angela Davis, Barbra Smith and so on but they all refer to Sojourner Truth, so I chose texts to show this development of this intersectional debate and end practically with Patricia Hill Collins who then shows what to do at the intersection, so actually offers tools so to say and reflects on action at the intersection of being Black and being a woman.

This is how it all developed into this book of what it actually is and the whole curation of the book was because of the way they asked me and approached me to do this project.

**Tomiwa:** How was curating that book? Or curating and reading and translating and working with these texts? Was that an exhausting process, was that an enjoyable process, was it a really nice way to feel grounded in history of what’s come before you?

**Natasha:** I think it was a little bit of everything, the story went on that first of all they said they had their own house intern translators because I didn’t do the translations myself, I really just did the editing, the choice of text and I was supposed to do the correction of the translations because they said they had an in house translator. That’s publishing politics I guess; you do that but please send the texts back to me. There are certain specifica when we write in a feminist context, gender neutral, Black with a capital B. These are all things which for me are a must, and I was wondering why I was not getting these texts back and I was waiting and waiting and then all of a sudden, sisters from my community, the Black German community approached me and were like “Oh Natasha, we’re translating your book!” and I was like “What do you mean you’re translating my book?” so behind my back there was an open call for translators, for some reason the in house translator didn’t translate, and then they gave the job, they outsourced the translation to a white translation company. This white translation company realised very quickly, okay, we cannot translate these texts, we need Black translators to translate these texts. So they did an open call, this is all behind my back I had no idea that this is going on, an open call that comes back to my community, obviously because we’re not that big and they’re having these disputes and discussions about the who and the whys of the translating and this is all beyond my knowledge. These sisters come back to me and this was all in process. I’m like “Wait, stop” everything is on hold because they should have come back to me and said we have an issue here, we need to find new translators, then I could have put the call out into my community myself, they made me look really ridiculous.

When all of that was resolved, anyway I started working with these women, I think there were 8 Black women translators, very diverse women, some of them translated individually, some of them in teams and I was in contact with them directly because I was like, that’s enough of that hierarchal bullshit, I need to know what’s going on. So after that point, I was in contact with them, all translating back and forth and my primary task was to correct the translations, so whilst they were translating I was practically correcting, sending back, so it was a kind of cycle until we had the final versions of each of these texts. It was very challenging, challenging in the sense that German is not a very easy language to translate, that’s the one thing and secondly because the texts, some of them were so highly academic, I’m like, do you not know what a full stop is ladies, one sentence goes over three lines, this is not going to work in German because we need more words in German than you do in English, so that’s going to make it a ten line sentence, so we really had to break the thing down to make it understandable and still stick to the translations. So it was a challenge actually translating these academic texts into German, so that was one thing.

The second thing was that we all as a team agreed on was that we see translating as feminist action. So there’s a difference to historical translations where people use the n-word and everything else that is in these texts, we said ‘no’ we see translating as feminist action and we would like to include the translation in the actual current debate. So, for example, we do not use the n-word which was obviously the case in Sojourner Truth’s texts as early as the nineteenth century, so we use Black which doesn’t change the context or understandability of the text but it is a political decision to say, we’re not using the n-word and we don’t care if the historical text uses it or not because A. Sojourner Truth didn’t write the text herself anyway and B. we’re in the power decision to decide this for ourselves. So things like that and we also used the \* when we used women or women’s organisations or anything that has to do with the woman used \* because for us it was also important to break the binary which Sojourner Truth actually started with deconstructing the concept of woman. This whole homogenic idea that women are all the same and have to be like ‘this, this, this and that’ and that’s what she started with by saying Black women are not the same as white women so do actually continue this debate and say yeah there is not only this difference between Black women and white women but there is also a difference between this whole biological idea of woman and we wanted to include trans debate, LGBTQI queer and so that’s why we used \* and for us it was important that it was readable today in the political context of where we stand now in the 21st century, 2019. Not as something historical in a Eurocentric linearity and that’s another thing that we say no, that we use these texts and include them in our cycle also. That’s why we used different translating strategies to make this visual on the written.

**Tomiwa:** I really like this idea of being like, okay so we have their words, but we are going to use the power we have to change things that we can to make it

**Natasha:** Without changing the text and that was the challenge.

**Tomiwa:** And the meaning and the intent and the context.

**Natasha:** So, we do leave it in context, and it is a one-on-one translation but just through different visual strategies and techniques we include it into current debate. It’s not like we’re changing anything, this is a critique we often get, oh now they think they can change, no, we didn’t change anything. It’s original text that you actually can read there, it’s just political nuances that we set you know.

**Tomiwa:** You touched on in the panel discussion the other evening about the Black body and how we have this shared universal experience that if your body is Black it means, nothing. I wondered how you exist with a Black body, how that feels? And what you do to keep existing and keep going?

**Natasha:** The Black body exists in nothingness, put it that way, use the words of Frantz Fanon, we exist in the world of non-being, so we’re not existent. We’re not really included in Eurocentric understandings of humanity or what the human being is because the human being was described on the backdrop of what the non-human being or the non-existent was. So, from a Eurocentric perspective, you have two forms of human beings, you have the master and the slave. To be able to define what the human was, it was defined off what the human was not. So, it was defined off what the Black body is.

So, this is a part of history that is always excluded from Eurocentric humanistic debate. Especially as an activist people are always like ‘we’re all human beings’ and I’m like, ‘honey, we are not.’ We had to become human beings and that’s a challenge you never had. Still today, we don’t have full access to human rights so don’t come tell me we’re all human beings, and if you take it from an Afrocentric perspective, we were actually the first human beings so when you centuries later decided to ratify your human rights, you didn’t even include that thought into who was human. Black people, African people were the first human beings but that’s a whole different debate maybe.

So it’s in the realm of this non-existence, this zone of non-being, what I coined in my dissertation as de-perception, politics of de-perception, we are constantly defined through the white gaze, white language, white mind pattern and thought pattern, and in that sense alienated from ourselves to use Fanon’s words again, ‘We must always go through the nothingness to become something.’

**Tomiwa:** Can you go back to the, we have to go through the nothingness to become something?

**Natasha:** Yes. We’re in the zone of non-being, we’re the non-existent, so we have to go through this whole zone of non-being to actually define who we are and what Blackness is. It’s not that we are part of the norm, so what Eurocentrism actually did throughout history was to define us through defining themselves, so their aim was to define themselves. They wanted to define Europe, but they didn’t say Europe is, they said Africa is ‘Black, dark etc etc’ to be able to define Europe as the opposite.

We have the choice, we can go that way and say I will be this peace of sh\*t, if I’m allowed to use this word right now, as the Europeans see us and try and figure out how to deal with my Blackness that way. Or I can embrace my nothingness and create something out of this nothingness, which is not prescribed as being ghetto, illiterate and all the racist ideas that was behind the Eurocentric perception of Africa and her people but to embrace this nothingness.

To say, I am in the zone of non-being, and I can be the non-being and I can define through nothingness what I want to be. This is a whole different approach to this whole empowering idea of not constantly fighting this stereotype, I’m not the angry Black woman. If you want to see me as the angry Black woman that’s fair enough, but in my perception, I’m angry, angry is an emotion and this anger comes from somewhere. This nothingness, where it comes, that’s what I will now start to define so that we can actually become who we want to be, self-defined who we want to be and not who other people think we are. This is kind of like the politics of de-perception, which works both ways.

**Tomiwa:** So you coined that in your dissertation, that term, would you say that is how you’ve existed then?

**Natasha:** I think that’s how all Black people exist in white majority societies in the global North. We were never perceived as subjects, we never had our own subjective voices, we never had a social position beyond periphery, we were always marginalised so in that sense this is how were perceived from the norm as outsiders, the marginalised, ‘the other’. So this is a form of perception but at the same time this perception takes place, a de-perception takes place. This whole idea of de-perception was the way I chose to describe these processes and how things on, on different levels. For example, you have the linguistic level, in Germany we have used the term Afro German, Black German for like over 30 years no but if you look into media, if you’re reading a newspaper and something happens around a Black person then they need three lines to describe this Black person instead of using the Afro German or the Black German, they’re like the person with the Black background who came through and from etc, which has nothing to do with the context in itself anyway. Instead of just saying this Black German, they go on and on and on and on. This is also a form of de-perception because the words are there, the self-definitions are there, the vocabulary is there, it’s been there for 30 years but you choose not to use it. That is the power of your decision where de-perception works on a linguistic level.

Another example from the other way around is that Europeans choose not to call themselves white. So, this also a form of de-perception, you’re white but you categorise yourself as the norm. For instance, feminists, when they talk about feminism, they actually mean white feminism, but they don’t call it white feminism, it’s neutralised and becomes feminism. So, this is also a form of de-perception and it becomes visible when Black feminists comment. We’re Black feminists, so what does that make you? This is also de-perception on a linguistic level.

Then I go into detail about how that works visually, how it works cognitively and how we are practically stuck in these perceptions and that perception is something that is trained colonially and transported through this whole colonial, racist idea on all levels.

**Tomiwa:** I feel like everyone I speak to, I’m like, I’m just, it’s just so many conversations I’ve never heard before, I’ve never engaged with before, witnessed before. That’s why I’m surprisingly quiet for me because, thank you, thank you! That’s the only thing to say.

You touched a bit on, Germany, and obviously that’s where you were raised and where you live, and I’ve spent a fair bit of time in Berlin because a couple of my friends live there. Was a little bit shocked when I went because I thought, I know lots of young people across Europe kind of flock to this city and I expected a real, to see a lot of diversity. I would say, I didn’t see just white faces, but I saw an absence of Black faces. Is there an Afro German, Black German community there? What’s it like being part of that?

**Natasha:** First of all, maybe we could say Afro German communit*ies* or Black communit*ies*, African communit*ies*. I don’t think there is one because are community is very diverse, it wouldn’t be fair to say there is one Black German community. I think Berlin, next to Hamburg definitely has the biggest Black population in Germany, maybe Hamburg would be even bigger but because Hamburg is smaller, it doesn’t seem that way, but I think actually, more Black people would live in Hamburg than Berlin.

In Berlin, it is de-centralised in comparison to the UK or to France where you have specific areas where Black people lived or specific neighbourhoods, so you know if you are look for the or a community you know exactly where to go. Berlin doesn’t function that way. It would function more through organisations and through initiatives. SO when you know the organisations and the initiatives and where they’re located, then you’ll know that’s where I need to go to meet Black people. So that makes it a little bit more difficult to navigate but we’re there. We’re such a small group, another difference, if you want a comparison but just to make it understandable. Our community in Germany functions differently, we do have Nigerian organisations or Cameroonian focussed organisations, or Ghana focussed organisation but you have also very diverse organisations that have members from all over the continent, all over the diaspora. This is an experience, correct me if I’m wrong that I make when I go to London especially has a huge Jamaican community and within this Jamaican community are Jamaicans. You would hardly find a mix of Jamaican, Nigerian whatever whatever, we hardly have any Jamaicans in Germany. Ghana I would say is the biggest national community, Ghanaian people due to the history. I don’t know if it’s changed, I was a child when I left England, but I remember being in Jamaican communities where it was Jamaica, Jamaican. We didn’t have a lot to do with Nigerians or Nigerian culture back then, it was Jamaican people, we would eat our rice and peas and curry goat and chicken, it would all be Jamaican. It’s not very segregated to say it carefully in that sense in Germany, you’re happy when you meet a Black person, you’re not going to start with are you Jamaican, Nigerian whatever.

**Tomiwa:** That’s the thing about the UK that you find. Obviously being in Scotland, growing up I almost viewed England as this Black utopia, where you walk down the street and you always see someone who looks like you and it’s this community, and it’s wonderful and amazing. The more I delve into it, spend more time there, speak to more people there, I think it is changing a lot within my demographic. But I would say it is the exact same, it is very much Nigerians, Jamaicans, like I mainly know Nigerians, of the Black people I know, they always tend to be Nigerians. Yeah, and then I find that weird thing of, our parents were born in the same country, we’re both Yoruba and I’m looking for this connection because of the heritage that we share and in actual fact, it doesn’t matter almost, it doesn’t create this connection that I may more likely get with someone who’s Jamaican.

**Natasha:** I totally understand what you mean and taking this from the other perspective but what connects us is the challenges we have with white majority society. So that is what brings a lot of these political organisations together, a lot of community organisations together is the work they do to survive. These power structures and the whole Eurocentric system, racist discrimination and depending on what the focus of their work is, they’re joint more on this level. There are also, don’t misunderstand, there are also cultural organisations who would look at heritage, if it is Igbo, Yoruba, that also come together and do their different celebrations. That’s why I was emphasising that it was communit*ies*, depending on what you’re looking for, you’d have to look more specifically but yes, we’re there, we are there and we have been in Germany for centuries, that’s what people also don’t understand.

When I went to the states, they were screening my film, I went on a film tour and toured the states for two months, went to all different cities, universities, cultural centres, political institutions, god knows where, all over the place. It was an amazing experience for sure, one experience that really stuck to my mind was when I was screening in DC, which is majority Black city and up to that point the biggest Black city I’d seen until I arrived in Salvador, so that was amazing. This is an experience I’m taking here, from Brazil, back with me because I always knew from the knowledge of academic understanding point of view that the biggest diaspora is in Brazil, but this is really the first time I actually experience what that means. Going to the US and being in Washington, although I know Washington is also being gentrified and the number of Black people is reducing but for me it was still with 60 plus per cent was the biggest Black city I had been to.

So I was screening my film in a cultural centre in DC and the Q and A was very striking because even in that diaspora, the African American diaspora they had the understanding that Black German history started with the Second World War or after the Second World War when Black American GIs came. I’m like no, African German history goes back to the eleventh century, we’re older than the country is actually in its borders today. I am constantly in conversation and debate with white people about that, but I was actually surprised to explain that to other Black people and other Black communities in the diaspora. I think this is work that we definitely need to do and being in Brazil, I realise I know nothing about Brazilian diaspora. We need this knowledge, we need to, as a diaspora grow together because that is where the source of our power lies, in the variety and understanding of each other and our diversity and differences which we can actually use as a source of creative power. So that was what I experienced in DC with people knowing nothing about Black Germany, is what I’m experiencing here right now knowing nothing about Afro Brazilian history. Nothing at all.

**Tomiwa:** I feel the exact same. I was almost disappointed in myself, how can you not know that this exists? I definitely see myself in more of a world,

**Natasha:** Global context? Me too. This is exactly the point that I’m trying to make that yes, it is important to fight on a local/national level, but our strength lies in the diaspora, beyond national borders, beyond national identities. We need to come together as a whole, we need to learn our differences, we need to see us in this whole global context that’s not defined geopolitically but diasporaly. That’s a whole different approach, that’s a whole different thing.

**Tomiwa:** Yeah, yep, it’s changed the way I think now which is refreshing.

You touched on your film screening and taking your film to America for two months, it is coming to Edinburgh.

**Natasha:** Yay!

**Tomiwa:** Which is so exciting, and I feel like this is so perfect, I will link everything about where it’s showing and the screening and the times etc, and I will definitely be there. Can you tell us a little bit about your film, please?

**Natasha:** Mmhm, well, my film. My film is called *Milli’s Awakening,* it’s a documentary film, 47 minutes and it consists of interviews with different Black German women who are active in the arts. They’re artists, they’re curators, or they just use art on a personal level for their personal healing. They are of different generations so the youngest is in her 20s and the oldest is in her 60s and this way I show the continuity of our collective histories but at the same time I chose to work sequencely, which means I practically made eight short films that are like a quilt, sewn together to create one collective story. For me it was important to show that we are very individual, that is another thing, that Black people are never seen as individuals. We are always seen as a collective and we are a collective, we are a community, out of community we grow our strengths, but we are also individuals with our own personal histories, with our own biographies that can be completely different from one another. Although we grew up in the same place, same time, different time, whatever! I wanted to show that we are individual and each of us have our own individuality but at the same time, I sewed it together so to say, to result in a collective story. It can be seen on multiply layers, the experience that I have made, it’s a year old now.

It was commissioned by the Berlin Biennale and I was surprised what impact it made. The only place, the only continent I haven’t been to, I went to North America, South America, I was throughout Europe, oh and Africa, I’m still planning Africa, I have been to Africa but not to screen my film. Oh, we did go to Asia, it was screened in India, sorry. It was screened in India, but it wasn’t screened in Africa yet. But I will get there, the ancestors are calling me.

In November it will be in Edinburgh, Scotland. I was not expecting this because for me, making this film was when the Biennale asked me to do something, I just started working with the media film because I met my film crew. I also do theatre; I work in theatre. I’ve staged my books in different ways, I’m staging one of my books here in Brazil as well.

Oh yeah, it was commissioned by the Biennale and for me it was important, I don’t want to show and centre myself, who am I to make a film about myself?

Obviously, I work with the topic of Black German, Black German history it was clear I was going to do something about that and I work with feminists, so it was clear it was going to be something on and about women, with women, Black women. Then, because it was the Biennale, art, and because of what were just talking about and this whole idea of de perception, it was also on a visual level.

For me the visual is, I’ve been doing this work for twenty-five years now, and I’ve had long debates of how racism works in and through language. I’m a communications scientist, shifted through the visual communication into the arts kind of thing and I’ve been having less debates, I’m not saying the art world is racist free, do not misunderstand me on that, but you have less debate because as they say, a picture says more than a thousand words. So, I could skip proving that racism is fact, what you always have to do on a linguistic level, this is not an opinion, racism is a fact. Can we take the facts as they are? In art it’s there so nobody could really deny that racism is kind of like a fact so you could jump all these initial conversations so to say and start talking about the actual thing. That’s what shifted me into the arts, I got tired of explaining facts to people. This is not a Natasha Kelly opinion, this is fact, can we please take it from there and talk about the facts? In art that is possible, you skip all this interpretation of subjectivity of, and opinions of and you have. That was the third component where I said okay so Black German, women and art and that’s how it all fell together and out came this documentary.

For me it was also important, obviously as a film director I have to take the decisions of what is going to come into the film and what not, these stories for me, were so valid and so important, each of them in their own sense. I then published the book, with the non-cut versions of each of these interviews in German, translated by myself into English, so it’s a bilingual book available to the film, as the e-book, if you prefer because we are in a digital world, to read on your devices you can go to an online bookshop of your choice and download it as an e-book and read it on your device in both languages.

It’s also, what came out of the States was that it is very popular in German studies courses, so, I’m in conversation with a schoolbook editor, right now that we’re going to actually use the film to make German studies course material on Black Germany. This is a section of German studies, like usual, we are overlooked in the whole historical context of what Germany is, how Germany was built on the back of colonialism and on the back of Africans. This is a project that I’m looking into developing out of the film next year so there will be a coursebook and a textbook.

**Tomiwa:** It’s going from the academia to the art, back to the academia.

**Natasha:** That’s what I was telling you, there is no way I can be one without the other. That’s how we roll as Black people anyway, we do not have this separation of you can’t be emotional or activist in the academia. That’s what created our knowledge, is the activism it grew out of, so of course I’m going to take it back to academia and see what comes out of it next, just keep this cycle going.

**Tomiwa:** When I woke up this morning, because I’ve been thinking, I graduated two years ago, maybe I’ll do a masters, maybe I won’t, maybe I will. I’ve said, when it feels right, I’ll do it, when I’m ready to get back to studying, I’ll do it. It’s suddenly starting to be like, I want to know more my stuff more, I want to have the facts.

**Natasha:** Yeah, there’s more out there.

**Tomiwa:** I need to learn; I want to know more.

**Natasha:** I totally understand you. That’s interesting because one of my younger protagonists in the film, she’s a student and she says she hates studying. In every second text there’s like the n-word, she’s ‘reading crap from dead white men’ to actually literally quote her. I totally understand, why do we have to go back that way when there’s so much knowledge here from intelligent Black men and women and bodies creating, bringing different perspectives to the table, where we could start at completely different points at what knowledge brings to us as a people, instead of going through that way, only being allowed through the back door. Because Black people can’t be intelligent, we can’t be professors, we can’t be this, we can’t be that. Then you lose interest in wanting to study because you’re in constant challenge with the whole academic system, with the texts you read, with the people who teach you..

**Tomiwa:** The people you’re studying around!

**Natasha:** The people you’re studying around...

**Tomiwa:** The institutions you’re in..

**Natasha:** The institutions that you’re in and say, ahhh, no, my sanity is more important right now. I totally get it because this for me was, I went right to the top, I don’t know how I survived that!?

Maybe to experience this day where I am right now, hard work pays back and I’m getting my payback now. Actually, the piece that I’m bringing on stage here in brazil as my dissertation, so I’m like yes, this is why you did it! This is why you survived that, because payback time is now. You’re getting to experience all these amazing things, meet amazing people like you, empowering you now to go back, I’ve done everything correct, that was why I had to survive. Although a system I was never meant to survive in.

Girl, go back and get that knowledge! Go, back and get it, bring it into the present and create out of it that future you want to see.

**Tomiwa:** Than you, I had one more question, but I almost don’t want to ask it, you can answer it if you like, it’s up to you. It was just, what is a woman or a person or a book that has inspired or defined you at the moment you are at now?

**Natasha:** it would have to be *Farbe bekennen, Showing our Colours* is the English translation. The book is called *Farbe Bekennen* it has become the foundational work of the Black German community. When I found that book, for me for the first time, I grew up in the German countryside in the village, I didn’t even know that Black people existed. In the cities that may be different, you may see the odd Black face now and then but, in the country, that’s a whole different thing. When I found that book in your late teenage years, I was like, wait a minute, there are more Black people? That totally changed my perception 30 years ago of the world around me and the society that I live in. It was translated a few years later into *Showing our Colours: Afro German Women Speak Out,* and it was the first critique of Black German women towards German colonialism. You also have to understand that Germany is a country that denies its colonial history or it tries its best to deny its colonial history, after losing the colonies, after the First World War, it was like okay, we don’t have to deal with colonialism anymore.

**Tomiwa:** It wasn’t us!

**Natasha:** Yes, it was just the French and the British, we had nothing to do with it, although, it was actually Otto von Bismarck who invited to the Scramble for Africa which took place in Berlin, where Africa was divided in Berlin. All of these very, these historical moments that are excluded out of the whole narrative, national narrative of Germany, this was the first book that actually brought that back.

Also, with interviews of the older generation of women, Black women who survived national socialism, who were telling their experience.

That was my first understanding of, wait a minute, I’m not only not the only one, but there’s also a long history of Blackness in this country. That’s when I actually started looking more into it and a whole new world unfolded in these pages for me. SO that must be one of the, the most important books for the work that I do and everything that follows in that line.

**Tomiwa:** That’s perfect, thank you so much, thank you for your time and your words and your wisdom!

***MUSIC***