

HERE, THERE, NOW

A Digital Storytelling Collaboration

BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE | LONDON, UK

Newsletter #2

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Things are hotting up as young women artists from West London, UK, and Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, immerse themselves in the creative processes of this exciting artistic collaboration; an international storytelling project between the two countries 8000 kilometres apart - vastly different, but so much the same.

Participants are deep into the process of meeting and online discussions, developing monologues and sharing them with someone across the world; feeling their joys and pain and finding the expressions to tell each other's stories.

Rolling out under Nhimbe Trust's long-running Women in Theatre & Television programme in partnership with the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre of London, UK, and supported by the British Council, filming has already begun, and the final outcomes will be shared online.

The project is carried out in partnership with the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre and Nhimbe Trust and funded by British Council as part of their Digital Collaboration and Storytelling Grants scheme.

#blacklivesmatter #alllivesmatter #blackwomen #sheroes



Meet the London participants



Felicia Akin-Tayo

Felicia Akin-Tayo was born in Nigeria and currently lives in London where she is studying for a BA Acting CDT degree at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. *Here, There, Now* is the first time she has been involved with the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre as she said she couldn't miss the opportunity to be involved.

She said: *"It's not often that I see the casting call asking specifically for a group of black females so I was eager and excited to apply. I could not wait to create and produce a piece that would come from our experiences and stories and even better collaborating with other females from Zimbabwe which was an unmissable opportunity to learn more about their culture, experiences and exchanging stories together."*

"Here, There, Now is everything and more than what I expected it to be. From the first session on zoom, I immediately felt comfortable, safe and empowered amongst the group of females present. What excites about the project is that I don't know exactly how our piece will come out but I am certain that everything we put into the project from our discussions, text, skills and our voice will be from a place of truth because that is what the project has allowed us to be. Truthful. So I am excited because I hope that our truth will not be watched and heard but will inspire other females not just in the UK to feel more comfortable and confident in their own truth."

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Amaliyah Allison

Amaliyah Allison grew up in West London and lives in Maida Vale. She is currently studying for a Level 3 Extended Diploma in Production & Performing Arts and wants to continue working in theatre and telling more stories as well as travelling the world, exploring different cultural styles and having the opportunity to collaborate with more wonderful creators.

She said: *“Here There Now gives me the opportunity to create and come together with other Black female artists who have similar views to me. I look forward to coming together with these women and sharing stories that’ll be eye-opening for our community. I love to create as well as perform. I feel that connecting with these women will help give me more inspiration, as well as gaining more knowledge of the world around me and hearing stories on what it is like to be a Black woman in the UK, from different perspectives.”*



Deja Linton

Deja Linton was born and raised in West London. She is currently working and wants to continue in performing arts, working on her artistry performing in theatre, TV and stage work, striving to be the best she can be.

She said: *“The opportunity to collaborate and create with other black females from not only London but also Zimbabwe has been very empowering and beautiful, and to know that we are creating something so authentic really excites me. I wanted to be a part of Here, There, Now as I thought this would be a great opportunity as a Black female to be a part of a production that shares and celebrates black stories, also the chance to collabo-*

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rate with other black females and share stories about womanhood, identity and race creating something special and relatable for audiences across both nations. But also the opportunity to work with Black creatives, Monique Touko and Lady Tshawe. I felt this opportunity would not only challenge me artistically and creatively but it would be a great way to create something innovative and original.”



Nash

Nash grew up in London and Trinidad. She currently works as a marketing executive in the finance sector and also acts which she would like to do full-time, going on to create theatre for her community.

She said: *“I’m excited about getting to work collaboratively with other Black women. We’ve already begun creating a bit of magic out of our shared experiences. I suppose that is what is also great about Here, There, Now - realising that we have all experienced the same fears, joys... By force or by fire, we have had such similar journeys but our life experiences have coloured them in different ways, so what we get out of blending them together with Here, There, Now is this patchwork quilt of stories that feel seamlessly connected.”*

She added: *“My given name Nyasha is Zimbabwean. I’ve always cherished having a connection to the land in that way, even if it is only in name. I hope to visit the county in the next few years.”*



Taga Obano-Cox

Taga Obano-Cox is from Chiswick in London. She is going on to study a Masters at drama school. She currently works as a nanny and in a pub and would love to work as an actor full-time. She is passionate about the environment, tackling global warming and raising awareness of Crohn's Disease.

Taga said: *"I have spent a lot of time at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre as a child, I remember watching the shows and just falling in love with theatre. The Lyric is my local theatre and I have been meaning for a long time to get involved in projects. Here, There, Now, just seemed like the most perfect project for me to join. Being a young mixed raced female living in London, I have struggled with my identity and who I was, trying to fit in with one side or the other and not realising I really didn't have*

to do that. I just had to be me. I wanted to be a part of the project so I could connect with other Women of Colour from west London and overseas and share our stories so that other young woman can know they are not alone in their feelings."



Joanitta

Joanitta was born and raised in London. She is currently studying at university and is interested in property and is looking to grow a property investment portfolio.

She said: *"I am a university student that studies a completely different subject to performing arts so I was excited to see this project arise. The fact that I was not only able to work with Black females in London but in Zimbabwe as well was an extra benefit. For Here, There, Now, I have had the opportunity to meet amazing Black females with inspiring stories and I have been able to share my own story as well.*

From the good to the bad, all the discussions we have had have been informative yet heartfelt. Being able to engage in the tasks that we were assigned to do has helped me release some blockages that I was experiencing with performing arts."

Joanitta's future career plans are to be working as a film and theatre actress. She added: *"I would also like to have engaged in more philanthropy work because I believe it is important to give other people opportunities to live as blessed as I have."*



Hannah Balogun

Hannah Balogun was born in and grew up in London. When not acting or auditioning she also works to raise awareness about sickle cell anaemia to increase blood donations in the Black community and she has joined the charity Africa Sickle Aid (ASA) which funds work in Liberia.

She said: *"I wanted to join Here, There, Now because it gave me the opportunity to meet and work with other Black female creatives who I could possibly keep in contact with after the project. We also get to freely talk about our experiences in a creative space which also appealed to me. I also loved the idea of creating a piece of work, from scratch, with a group of other people that I (hopefully) will be proud of*

by the end of it. I enjoy hearing other people's ideas and life experiences as well as sharing mine and then, as part of this project, I get to combine that with my love of storytelling.

She added: *"I think it's really exciting to see and be in a project featuring all black women. And the fact I get to work with black women not only in the UK but also in Zimbabwe is amazing. Just getting the opportunity to work with a group of Black women and create stories based on our lives and experiences is really exciting."*



Na'eemah

Na'eemah is from South West London and is studying BA Acting at St Mary's University.

She said: "I joined Here, There, Now because after being at drama school I hadn't had the chance to be creative and create something I wanted. The chance to work with other Black women in London and abroad sounded like an amazing opportunity that I couldn't not apply to. The thing that excites me about Here, There, Now is the chance to create something and share it with other Black women. Sharing our experiences and being able to learn from each other."

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Yiga

Yiga is a freelance actor and musician who grew up in Brixton. She has previously visited Zimbabwe and has lots of family friends and connections to the country which says she has fallen in love with.

She said: "The fact I had visited Zimbabwe before made me understand how lovely and talented the people are from there. I also wanted to be in a women-driven space also Women of Colour space is very rare but makes a big difference on how open people are with their feelings and their opinions. We would have very honest conversations. I also have a lot of family friends from Zimbabwe as my mum travelled a lot there when she was younger. My mum's boyfriend is also from there. When I went to university three of my best friends were from there, so I've had so many connections to the country over the years and I've really fallen in love with it."

"What excited me about Here, There, Now is being in a room with so many intelligent and creative black women from here and Zimbabwe. Sharing our ideas and creating something beautiful. I thought it would also be therapeutic as I've never been in a space that is so safe in terms of theatre before."



The Zimbabwean director Lady Tshawe said: "

"Working with the ladies was a breath of fresh air. They were not only eager to learn but eager to share what knowledge they had. They were a gentle reminder that there is strength in being woman. There is purpose in being a black woman. The similarities between the Zim and UK ladies showed us that wherever one may find themselves on earth, you will belong and find someone who understands you."

Our Partners

The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, London



The Lyric Hammersmith Theatre is one of London's leading producing theatres. For a hundred and twenty five years, they have welcomed some of the world's finest writers, directors, actors and theatre companies to their stage. From Harold Pinter to Tanika Gupta; Sir John Gielgud to Sheila Hancock; Complicite to Frantic Assembly.

Right in the heart of Hammersmith, they **produce bold and relevant world-class theatre**, committed to being vital to, and representative of, their local community and to being a major force in London and UK theatre. They develop and nurture the next generation of talent, and provide opportunities for young people from all backgrounds to discover the power of creativity.

<https://lyric.co.uk/here-there-now-international-digital-storytelling-project-announced/>

Rob Lehmann of Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, and Director of Young Lyric, said: "Here, There, Now is a new and exciting opportunity within the Young Lyric offer that connects young people from West London internationally with their peers to acquire a local, national and international perspective on the world through the use of theatre and creativity. We are delighted to be working with both local and international collaborators and look forward to developing a partnership with Nhimbe Trust who have a track record of artistic excellence with young people."

Nhimbe Trust, Bulawayo



Based in the city of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, Nhimbe Trust is an arts education organisation and a leader in cultural policy research, training, advocacy and defending freedom of creative expression.

Nhimbe's *Women in Theatre and Television (WITT)* programme provides vocational training and resources to emerging women writers, actresses, directors and producers. WITT regularly presents the work of these women and empowers women's voices on stage. The programme has grown through the support of Africalia, Belgium over a number of years.

www.nhimbe.org

The British Council



The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. They build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. Last year they reached over 80 million people directly and 791 million people overall including online, and through broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934 The British Council are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

www.britishcouncil.org