

**TYPE IS BLACK  
BOO WHAT IS  
BLACK IN TYPE.**

*Typography and The Black Female Experience.*

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A Thesis Paper Submitted In Partial  
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NOT  
KOJO

# acknowledges.

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# big thanks <3



# dedication.

*To my mothers,*

You are my rocks. You are the real definition of a  
strong black woman.

*Dear black woman,*

You are who you are. Let your melanin shine.  
Your braids, weaves, cornrows and your nails are  
fine, it defines you.

# abstract.

*Black Women, feminism, racism, classism, sexism, discrimination, intersectionality, representation, community engagement, knowledge sharing, culture, connection, design, graphic design, font, experimental typography, self-publishing, zines*

In my creative practice, I harness the power of typography within zine creation to confront the pervasive influence of Eurocentric design norms in media and society. I perceive striking parallels between typography and racism, as both elements envelop us and shape our daily interactions. For black women, navigating through the intersecting challenges of colorism, classism, racism, and sexism underscores the urgent need to acknowledge and dismantle these systemic injustices for the advancement of a more equitable society. I explore how the use of playful and decorative typefaces can foster increased engagement with my work. However, I recognize that the typefaces I employ may not always align with the narrative I aim to convey. My artistic endeavors are deeply rooted in experimental typography within editorial design, with a primary focus on print media such as zines and posters.

Drawing inspiration from a rich legacy of subversive activism posters, particularly those from the 1970s and 1980s, I seek to channel the spirit of socio-political dialogue surrounding issues of racism, sexism, and prejudice against black individuals. These posters often utilized typography as a potent tool for communication, such as the iconic "I AM A MAN" movement, which employed bold, plain sans serif typefaces to demand equitable treatment for black men in the workforce. This juxtaposition invites the reader to engage with my zines on multiple levels, sparking curiosity and provoking thought through contrasting tones of loudness and playfulness. Ultimately, my goal is to open up spaces for dialogue and reflection, challenging existing norms and fostering a more inclusive and critical engagement with design and typography.

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# glossary of terms.

***The Black Woman*** – This term emphasizes the unique experiences, struggles, and identity of black women, often acknowledging the intersectionality of race and gender in shaping their lives.

***Intersectionality*** – Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a concept that recognizes and examines the overlapping and interconnected nature of social categories such as race, gender, class, and sexuality. It highlights how various forms of discrimination and privilege intersect and influence individuals' experiences.

***Racism*** – The belief in the inherent superiority of one race over another, leading to discrimination or prejudice based on race. Racism can manifest at individual, systemic, or institutional levels.

***Sexism*** – Discrimination or prejudice based on a person's sex or gender. Sexism can manifest in various forms, such as unequal treatment, stereotypes, or the marginalization of individuals based on their gender.

***Feminism*** – A social and political movement advocating for the rights and equality of women. Feminism seeks to address and challenge gender-based inequalities and promote the empowerment of women in various spheres of life.

***Oppression*** – The unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power, leading to the systematic subjugation, discrimination, or mistreatment of a particular group or individual.

***Decolonization*** – The process of undoing colonialism, which involves challenging and dismantling the structures, ideologies, and practices established during periods of colonization. Decolonization aims to restore indigenous sovereignty and cultural autonomy.

***Representation*** – The portrayal or depiction of individuals or groups in various forms of media, culture, or society. Discussions about representation often focus on ensuring diverse and accurate portrayals to reflect the realities of different identities and experiences.

***Calling-in*** – A strategy for addressing problematic behavior or attitudes by engaging in private, respectful, and constructive dialogue. Calling-in is seen as an alternative to calling-out, focusing on education and understanding rather than public shaming.

***Calling-out*** – A direct and public confrontation of problematic behavior or attitudes. This approach aims to hold individuals or groups accountable for their actions and may involve publicly highlighting and criticizing perceived wrongdoing.

***Design*** – Design refers to the purpose of creating and arranging visual elements to communicate a message or achieve a specific purpose.

***Experimental Typography*** – Experimental typography involves the exploration and innovative use of typefaces, fonts, and text elements to convey a message or create visual interest.

***Typography*** – Typography is the art and technique of arranging type to make written language readable and visually appealing.

***Zines*** – A zine is a self-published, non-commercial publication often created by individuals or small groups. Zines can cover a wide range of topics, including personal narratives, art, poetry, politics, DIY (do-it-yourself) culture, and more.



# introduction.

I am Natasha Assma Kowo, a first-generation Zimbabwean-Canadian, currently on the cusp of attaining my master's degree, having already secured two previous degrees. My journey unfolds against the backdrop of my upbringing as a black woman in Harare, Zimbabwe, raised by a resilient single mother of Zimbabwean-Mozambican heritage. In the heart of Harare, I witnessed the unwavering commitment of my mother, from the first light of dawn until the shadows of dusk, gracefully navigating not only her 9-to-5 responsibilities but also juggling various side hustles. Her dedication went far beyond ensuring my own education; she generously extended her care and support to others. As a Zimbabwean-Mozambican single mother, she seamlessly embraced the roles of both mother and father, exemplifying resilience in the face of adversity. In my younger years, the complexities of her sacrifices eluded my understanding. However, with the passage of time, I've come to appreciate the profound depth of her commitment and sacrifice. My mother embodies the quintessence of what we honor as a Strong Black Woman, a paragon of strength, resilience, and unwavering determination.

Black women have long been the foundation of this world, particularly during colonization and slavery.<sup>m</sup> It is noteworthy how contemporary society often unfairly scrutinizes Black women based on various aspects such as their appearance, skin tone, hair, physique, and manner of speaking. Black women are frequently labeled as loud, aggressive, and overly sensitive, while individuals who are not Black feel entitled to pass judgment on them. Our identity as Black females is significantly influenced by societal perceptions. When Black women embrace their natural appearance, it is often considered unattractive; for instance, their body shape might be criticized as too large, too curvy, too dark, or having features like big lips, among others. Conversely, when non-Black females adopt the same aesthetic, they are often celebrated. They undergo procedures such as lip augmentation, tanning to darken their skin, Brazilian Butt Lifts (BBLs), and adorn themselves with long nails and lashes. The phenomenon of "blackfishing"<sup>\*\*</sup> has emerged as a trend among non-Black females, involving the emulation of Black people and their cultural attributes. This trend encompasses various aspects, including adopting hairstyles traditionally associated with Black culture, such as braids or cornrows, as well as appropriating vernacular language and mannerisms<sup>\*\*</sup>.

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\* Bezuneh, H. (2022, January 14). *It's time we talk about blackfishing - Ms. magazine*. Ms. Magazine. <https://msmagazine.com/2022/01/13/blackfishing-black-culture-appropriation/>

\*\* Lang, C. (2021, June 10). *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Is Ending. But Their Exploitation of Black Women's Aesthetics Continues. *TIME*. <https://time.com/6072750/kardashians-blackfishing-appropriation/>

The symbiotic relationship between the design sector and the arts has undeniably thrived upon the rich tapestry of the Black aesthetic. This aesthetic permeates diverse realms, from the rhythmic beats of jazz to the dynamic expressions of urban wear. The book *The Black Experience in Design - Identity, Expression & Reflection* (2022), co-authored by six Black designers offers a multifaceted journey, intricately weaving threads of cultural heritage, social justice, and empowerment into its fabric, serving as a powerful lens through which one can examine the pivotal role of the Black experience in design. The book is a comprehensive anthology featuring essays by prominent Black designers, essential reading for every aspiring Black design student and arguably every design student. This seminal work delves into a myriad of crucial topics spanning Design Practices, Design Education, Activism, Advocacy & Community-Engaged Design, and Afrofuturism in Design, and more. Through the essays penned by these designers, readers gain valuable insights into the challenges and triumphs encountered by Black designers within the design industry. Black designers were often not included in design curriculum, recruited to the field of design or hired as faculty. Black designers were often paid less than white designers. This book serves as a tribute to the invaluable contributions made by Black creatives, highlighting their profound impact on the very essence of design. By shedding light on the experiences of these designers, it offers a platform for recognition and celebration of their talents and accomplishments.

For me personally, *The Black Experience in Design - Identity, Expression & Reflection*<sup>\*</sup> (2022) holds immense significance. It provides a poignant glimpse into the struggles faced by these designers, many of which resonate deeply with my own experiences and professional journey. Engaging with this work not only enriches my understanding of the design landscape but also serves as a source of inspiration and empowerment in my practice. In this thesis paper I will discuss in detail how this emerges in my graphic design work.

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<sup>\*</sup> Berry, A. H., Collie, K., Laker, P. A., Noel, L., Rittner, J., & Walters, K. (2022). *The Black experience in design: Identity, Expression & Reflection*. Simon and Schuster.



Intersectionality plays a big role in the lives of Black women. Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of Intersectionality (1989), which acknowledges the interconnectedness of various elements within an individual's identity, including race, gender, class, sexuality, and more. This framework recognizes that these facets intersect and interact in complex ways, shaping individuals' experiences and impacting their encounters with societal obstacles and opportunities. It highlights that systems of oppression and discrimination are interconnected and cannot be understood or addressed in isolation from one another. I have always been a designer who has been working to establish her presence, her skill, and her identity as a Black female graphic designer. When I examine my work environment, I notice a pattern of marginalization and a lot of questions come to mind. I have often been the only Black female student in my programs of study (Diploma in Advertising, BA in Graphic Design) and I am currently one of two in my Master of Design program. In my professional role as a graphic designer, I am often working on a design brief on my own. I have a lot of control, but I also bear the burden of responsibility for the outcomes. This creates a lot of pressure. Unlike other types of design such as interaction design, which is more collaborative and uses co-creation methods, graphic designers frequently work in isolation. I want to set an example for other female Black graphic designers. I want to be the design role model I haven't had. I'm concentrated on using typography in conjunction with my expression of Black beauty as effectively as possible. Experimental typography allows for the exploration of new ways to communicate and express ideas through the manipulation of text beyond traditional conventions which tend to rely on standard serif or sans serif fonts. I use a playful and decorative approach, for example, drawing on bold and bubbly font types to imbue my design with a sense of fun. I also frequently work with zines as a medium. A zine typically diverges from the commercial and professional realm, resembling a magazine but with its own unique flair. Unlike magazines, zines prioritize amplifying diverse, often marginalized voices overturning a profit. They are crafted out of personal interest and zeal, frequently self-published by their creators. Collage techniques are commonly employed in their creation, and they are often reproduced via photocopying, accessible to a wide range of individuals. Zine making aligns closely with the principles of experimental typography. Zines are often small and accessible – people can more readily afford to both make and purchase them. Zines come in many different formats, even when using standard letter size 11x17 paper you can fold the paper in multiple ways to allow for different lay outs and reader engagement. There is an inherent playfulness and principle of inclusion within zine culture. My work utilizes typography as visual expression, promotes creative exploration in the use of materials and formats, and makes cultural and social commentary accessible.

**Utilizing Typography for Visual Expression:** In the realm of zine making, typography serves as a means of visual expression. Through experimentation, I employ unconventional layouts, collage techniques, and other innovative typographic approaches to communicate my message in distinct and impactful ways.

**Promoting Creative Exploration:** Zine making, akin to experimental typography, fosters creativity and innovation. This allows me to venture into diverse materials, printing methods, and formatting choices, thereby expanding the boundaries of traditional design, and uncovering fresh avenues for visual storytelling.

**Cultural and Social Discourse:** Zines offer a platform for cultural and social commentary, enabling me to delve into themes of representation, identity, and power dynamics through typographic and visual means. By integrating experimental typography into my zines, I challenge prevailing narratives, elevate marginalized voices, and initiate critical conversations with my audience.

To actualize a truly inclusive and representative design landscape, my focus centers on the principles of intersectionality and the imperative task of decolonizing design. This transformative process hinges on four key pillars:

**1. Representation:** A deliberate effort to combat stereotypes and cultivate a design narrative that embraces authenticity. It is about dismantling preconceived notions and offering more accurate, nuanced, and inclusive portrayals that reflect the richness of the black experience.

**2. Collaboration:** The path to meaningful change necessitates forging alliances with black artists, designers, and communities. By actively seeking and fostering collaborations, we can dismantle barriers and co-create narratives that resonate with the diversity of voices within the black experience.

**3. Cultural Sensitivity:** In navigating the realm of inspiration drawn from black culture, a conscientious approach is paramount. Avoiding cultural appropriation is not only a commitment to respect but also an acknowledgment of the need for genuine understanding and appreciation.

**4. Education and Mentorship:** To nurture the future of design, emphasis must be placed on mentoring young black designers. This involves actively promoting diversity within design education, ensuring that it becomes a space where varied voices are not only heard but also empowered to shape the discourse.

In summary, the collective embrace of these principles fosters a collaborative and inclusive approach to decolonizing design, ensuring that diverse voices are heard, valued, and empowered to shape the future of the industry. By working together, designers, educators, communities, and industry stakeholders can effect meaningful change and create a design landscape that reflects the richness and diversity of human experiences.



# research

*“How am I designing into spaces where I don’t see myself being represented?”*

My research question delves into the exploration of designing within spaces where one’s identity or demographic is not adequately represented. This inquiry encompasses various dimensions, including cultural, social, and personal perspectives. By investigating this question, I aim to understand the challenges, opportunities, and strategies involved in creating designs that are inclusive, responsive, and relevant to diverse communities and individuals. This research exams existing design practices, studying theories of representation and inclusion, exploring case studies, and potentially proposing innovative approaches or frameworks for addressing this issue in design contexts.

# question

The definition of “Black” and “Blackness” entails comprehending the complex connotations of these terms, which include social experiences, cultural heritage, racial identity, and more. Here are a few dimensions to think about:

- **Racial Identity:** When discussing race, the term “Black” usually designates individuals of African descent or those descended from African diasporic communities. This identity is frequently linked to a common history of African peoples and their contributions to diverse societies, as well as to experiences of racism, discrimination, and marginalization.
- **Cultural Heritage:** “Blackness” refers to a diverse range of customs, languages, foods, music, art, and other cultural expressions that have been derived from African and African diasporic communities.
- **Social and Political Identity:** The collective struggles for equality, justice, and liberation have shaped Blackness as a social and political identity. It includes anti-racist, anti-colonialist, and civil rights movements in addition to continuous initiatives to combat structural oppression and improve the rights and dignity of Black people and communities.
- **Intersectionality:** The complex ways in which blackness interacts with other facets of identity, including gender, sexual orientation, class, and nationality, shapes people’s experiences. Intersectional analyses acknowledge the complexity and diversity of Black people’s experiences, which are shaped by a wide range of social, political, and economic variables.
- **Cultural Critique and Resistance:** Another aspect of being Black is resisting dominant narratives and hierarchies that uphold racial stereotypes and hierarchies. Black people of colour challenge Eurocentric norms and assert their own perspectives and experiences through art, literature, activism, and other forms of expression.
- **Individual and Group identification:** For those who identify as Black or as a member of the larger black diaspora, being black can personally be a source of pride, identification, and belonging. It includes one’s own experiences as well as a feeling of belonging to a greater group of people who have similar experiences and hardships.

All things considered, the ideas of “Black” and “Blackness” are complex and dynamic, including a broad variety of experiences and meanings. They are continuously altered by historical legacies, modern realities, and ongoing struggles for justice and liberation. They represent the complexity of race, culture, identity, and social interactions.



# readings.

## 1. The Black Experience in Design – Identity, Expression & Reflection: "Designing with Complexity: An Intersectional View" – Chapter 0.4

Literature like *The Black Experience in Design – Identity, Expression & Reflection*\* has been instrumental in enriching my understanding of the narratives shared by fellow black designers. Despite their significant contributions to the field, these designers often remain overlooked within the broader design landscape. The lack of educational focus on black designers in academic curricula exacerbates this issue, perpetuating the invisibility of their achievements. For instance, Jennifer Rittner's chapter on "Designing with Complexity: An Intersectional View\*\*" sheds light on the unique challenges faced by black women, particularly regarding dress and hair. This underscores the importance of intersectionality, which recognizes the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression, such as racism and sexism, and their compounded effects on individuals experiencing multiple layers of marginalization. Black women, in particular, contend with discrimination stemming from colorism, classism, racism, and sexism simultaneously. Addressing these intersections is vital for fostering a more just and equitable society.

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\* Berry, A. H., Collie, K., Laker, P. A., Noel, L., Rittner, J., & Walters, K. (2022). *The Black experience in design: Identity, Expression & Reflection*. Simon and Schuster.

\*\* Berry et al. (2022, p. 37)



## 2. The Black Experience in Design – Identity, Expression & Reflection: “The Strong Black Woman”– Chapter 2.5

In “The Strong Black Woman\*\*\*\*” chapter, Terresa Moses dismantles societal norms that have long targeted black women. Moses explores key elements such as context, racism, sexism, intersectionality, levels of oppression, beliefs, cultural influences, and institutional dynamics. Her insights have informed my research question: “How am I designing into spaces I do not see myself bring represented?” As a Black woman, I have personally experienced the complexities of intersectionality in both work environments and institutional systems. Through my research, I aim to highlight the immense strengths and contributions of Black women, challenging existing narratives and advocating for greater representation and recognition.

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\* Berry et al. (2022, p. 148)

\*\* Berry, A. H., Collie, K., Laker, P. A., Noel, L., Rittner, J., & Walters, K. (2022). *The Black experience in design: Identity, Expression & Reflection*. Simon and Schuster.

## 3. Ain’t I A Woman – Black Women & Feminism – Chapter 1

bell hooks *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*\* examines how race, gender, and class intersect in Black women’s lives and criticizes mainstream feminism for failing to sufficiently address the difficulties that Black women face. Hooks examines Black women’s experiences both historically and, in the present, praising their contributions to feminist philosophy and activism and criticizing the ways that racism and sexism combine to oppress them. her book *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Feminism & Self-Recovery*,

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\* Hooks, B. (2014b). *Ain’t I a woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Routledge.

bell hooks writes: “The stereotypical image of the “strong” Black woman was no longer seen as dehumanizing, it became the new badge of black female glory<sup>\*</sup>”. hooks work offers significant insights into the complex issues of identity, oppression, and empowerment within the Black female experience, which is relevant to my research. It emphasizes how crucial it is to give Black women’s perspectives and experiences a central place in conversations about feminism and social justice. My research can gain a deeper understanding of intersectionality and its implications for the design field, specifically regarding representation, inclusivity, and social change, by incorporating hooks analysis. In addition, hooks focus on resistance and empowerment motivates me to investigate how design can be a tool for fighting injustice and supporting those who are underrepresented, such as Black women.

\* (Hooks, 2014b, p. 6)

#### 4. Sisters of the yam – black women & self-recovery – Chapter 6: Dreaming Ourselves Dark & Deep: Black Beauty - Chapter 6

bell hooks book *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery*<sup>\*</sup> explores Black women’s experiences and their path to empowerment and self-healing. In this book, hooks investigate how racism and sexism, two forms of systemic oppression, affect Black women’s self-worth and general well-being. She highlights the value of self-awareness, self-love, and self-care as methods of emancipation and resistance.

*Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* provides insightful information about the connections between Black women’s empowerment, wellness, and identity that is useful for your research. My research can get a better understanding of the ways that design can be used as a tool to support resilience and self-recovery within marginalized communities by diving into hooks analysis.

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\* Hooks, B. (2014a). *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery*. Routledge.



# role models.

These remarkable women collectively embody a rich spectrum of experiences and perspectives within the Black female narrative, underscoring the intricate dynamics of intersectionality and its profound relevance in comprehending the multifaceted layers of identity, oppression, and empowerment. Their stories serve as poignant reminders of the diverse realities faced by Black women, illuminating the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and more in shaping individual journeys. These women are not just role models; they're also catalysts for change, motivating me and others to embrace our authenticity, question societal norms, and fight for liberation and equality. Their resilience, bravery, and unyielding dedication to advocating for themselves and their communities serve as powerful examples of the transformative impact of reclaiming agency and amplifying marginalized voices. Here is a selection of the numerous Black women who have inspired both me and my research:

Ammara Brown

Birth: 6 September 1988 | Occupation: Singer, songwriter

**Notable Contributions:** Ammara Brown is a Zimbabwean singer and songwriter known for her versatile musical style, blending elements of Afro-pop, R&B, and dancehall. She has gained recognition for her captivating performances and empowering lyrics, addressing various social issues and celebrating African culture through her music.

Ammara Brown's music often addresses themes of identity, empowerment, and the experiences of Black women in Zimbabwe. Through her artistry, she contributes to discussions on intersectionality and the diverse experiences of Black women across different cultural contexts. On the other hand, Brown is a half Zimbabwean and half European, she is considered a colored woman. This segment explores the historical context of the term "coloured" or "goffal," used to refer to people of mixed race, predominantly in the southern parts of Africa. The term, now considered a racial slur, reflects a progression from derogatory labels such as "slave" and "nigger" to the more inclusive terms "black" and "African American." In Zimbabwe, using the term coloured is not seen as a racial slur, rather its an identity of one's being. Whereas, in North America, the term is very much seen as a racial slur.

Ammara Brown's musical style is a vibrant collage of genres, ranging from Afro-jazz and pop to traditional Zimbabwean music. Her artistic expression seamlessly embodies the Afrocentric aesthetic, contributing to the cultural landscape with depth and diversity. In the context of my research, Ammara Brown's influence extends to various crucial aspects, including cultural heritage, identity, self-affirmation, empowerment, Pan-Africanism, and the Afrocentric aesthetic.



*Fig. 01*

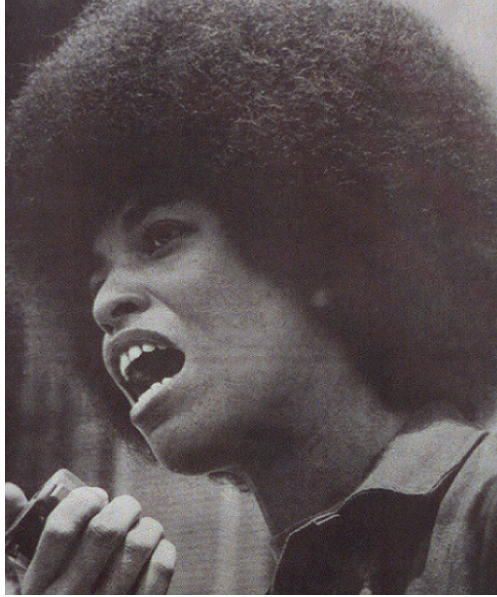


Fig. 02

### Angela Y. Davis

Birth: January 26, 1944 | Occupation: Political activist, scholar, author

**Notable Contributions:** Renowned for her involvement in civil rights, feminism, and prison abolition movements. Davis's scholarship and activism focus on issues of race, gender, and class inequality. She thought that capitalism and racism posed threats to American justice. The Black Panther Party and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's work drew Angela's attention. Although Angela did not entirely agree with their policies, she was intrigued by their dedication to Black Power and civil rights. The differences between the male and female members worried her. She believed that women were supposed to follow rather than lead by men.

From being the first female on the FBI's Most Wanted list, Angela Davis's unwavering commitment to fighting for her people remained steadfast. Despite numerous obstacles and challenges along the way, she persisted in her activism and advocacy, refusing to yield to intimidation or suppression. Angela Davis is my role model because of her resilience. There were many moments when she could have succumbed to pressure or abandoned the struggle, yet she chose to persevere. Her courage and determination serve as a beacon of inspiration for me, fueling my own drive to be unyielding in the face of adversity. Her resilience is my drive to be steadfast, determined, and unwavering in my pursuit of justice, equality, and liberation for all. Angela Davis exemplifies the power of resilience in the face of oppression, and her legacy continues to inspire generations to stand firm in their convictions and fight for a better world.



Fig. 03

### bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins)

Birth: September 25, 1952 | Death: December 15, 2021 |

Occupation: Author, feminist, social activist

**Notable Contributions:** Pioneering work in intersectional feminism, challenging traditional gender roles, and advocating for the empowerment of marginalized communities.

As a renowned feminist theorist, bell hooks has extensively written about intersectionality and the experiences of Black women in her works. She emphasizes the importance of addressing the interconnected systems of oppression that affect Black women, including racism, sexism, and classism. hooks has been a role model through her deep understanding on Black women and feminism. Her writing has helped me navigate what it means to be a Black woman, that the existence of Black women has often been forgotten, and the means of feminism. In one of her works " \*Ain't I a Woman: Black Feminism & Self-Recovery,\*" hooks mentions the term "white feminism", which makes me question: How is feminism characterized or defined by a race? Isn't feminism the fight and support for all women?





Fig. 04

Beyoncé (\*\*Beyoncé\*\* Giselle Knowles-Carter)

Birth: September 4, 1981 | Occupation: Singer, songwriter, actress

Notable Contributions: A global icon known for her influence in music, fashion, and culture, Beyoncé has used her platform to advocate for social justice, particularly issues affecting Black women.

Through her music and public persona, Beyoncé often highlights issues of race, gender, and empowerment, particularly from the perspective of Black women. Her work challenges stereotypes and celebrates the complexity and strength of Black female identity. *Flawless* (2014) comprises two segments: “Bow Down” and “Flawless,” separated by a speech titled “We Should All Be Feminists” delivered by Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie during a TEDxEuston conference. It is a trap-infused track, featuring a gritty groove and dynamic beat. The title and lyrics of the song convey an assertive message advocating for female empowerment without apology.

Dorothy Hayes

Birth: December 1, 1935

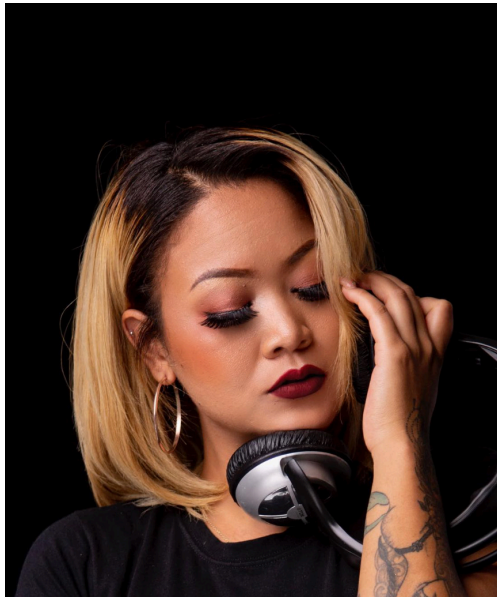
Death: July 31, 2025

Occupation: [Dorothy Hayes]([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy\\_Hayes\\_Sater](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Hayes_Sater)) began her career in graphic design after graduating in 1957. After relocating to New York City, she started her own commercial design agency called Dorothy’s Door. One of her best known works, in partnership with Joyce Hopkins, [“Black Artist in Graphic Communication”](<https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/risdposters/203/>), was an exhibit showcasing forty-nine black graphic designers including Dorothy Akubuiro, Josephine Jones, and Diane Dillion. The exhibit was highly regarded by both US and Canadian audiences. She invested her time into supporting Black creatives in a predominantly white and male industry.



Fig. 05

Dorothy Hayes’s impact on my research is significant as she represents a pioneering figure in the field of graphic design, particularly for Black designers. Through her career trajectory and notable achievements, she serves as a beacon of inspiration for aspiring designers, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds. My observations during my undergraduate studies at OCAD University, where I noted the dominance of white men in the design field and the lack of representation of Black designers in art history classes and textbooks, align with the sentiments that Hayes’s work seeks to address. As one of the Black designers featured in “The Black Experience in Graphic Design” (1968) by Dorothy Jackson, Hayes’s inclusion in my research serves as a reminder of the importance of acknowledging and celebrating the contributions of Black designers to the field. Through my research, inspired by figures like Dorothy Hayes, I aim to shine a spotlight on the often-overlooked presence and significance of Black designers, challenging existing educational frameworks and advocating for greater recognition and representation within the design curriculum.



Natsumi Miyata (DJ King Her)

Birth: I Occupation: DJ

Notable Contributions: King Her, formally known as Natsumi Miyata, is an Open Format DJ (who performs a mix or set based upon any given format of music of many genres). Born in Harare, dually of Zimbabwean and Japanese heritage, King Her discovered her talent for fine arts at an early age. While acclaiming honours for her paintings as well as completion in Diploma for Multimedia and Graphic Design, she also discovered her talent and craft in music and modern dancing.

I had been searching for a spirit animal throughout my adventure, and Nastumi was it. I got the pleasure of interviewing Zimbabwe's top Female DJ. She defied expectations of the traditional Zimbabwean woman with her skill on a motorcycle, elegant long nails, a hint of smoke trailing, embellished with tattoos, and her unique blend of half-Japanese heritage. She was proof of a life that was entirely her own, of a force that brought empowerment into all of her. Moreover, meeting Miyata, whom I had long admired on screen, was a transformative experience. In our conversation about her experiences within the male-dominated industry, Miyata, like Ammara Brown in a previous interview, highlighted the role of intersectionality in her life. As a coloured woman, Miyata's journey resonated deeply with me. Her free-spirited nature and unwavering drive to achieve accomplishments inspired me to pursue my own path with determination and resilience.

Fig. 06



Serena Williams

Birth: September 26, 1981

Occupation: Professional tennis player

Notable Contributions: Considered one of the greatest tennis players of all time, Serena Williams has broken numerous records and barriers in the sport, while also using her platform to advocate for gender equality and social justice.

Serena Williams has broken barriers in the predominantly white and male-dominated sport of tennis, challenging stereotypes and advocating for equal opportunities for women of color in sports. Her experiences highlight the intersection of race and gender in athletic achievement and representation. In 2009, Williams was docked and fined \$82,500 for an angry outburst. She was deemed the "angry black woman". The "angry black woman" stereotype, that black women are domineering and aggressive, can be traced all the way back to the late 1920s. \* Serena Williams's journey serves as a powerful example of resilience, determination, and advocacy in the face of adversity. By drawing inspiration from her experiences, I can explore important themes related to identity, representation, and social justice in my work.

Fig. 07

In conclusion, it is critical to acknowledge and celebrate the variety of experiences that make up the Black female narrative, as demonstrated by the dynamic and varied stories of these great women. The intricate nature of intersectionality and its significant influence on identity formation, resistance to oppression, and the pursuit of empowerment are reflected in their individual journeys, their work/achievements and its impact on others.

These women serve as inspiration to us, breaking down barriers of discrimination, debunking stereotypes, and working toward a more equitable and inclusive society. They are force multipliers and agents of change because of their tenacity, grit, and unshakable dedication to speaking up for themselves and their communities. As a Black female designer I aim to act as a role model for ..... by remaining resilient in an industry where I am frequently marginalized and by creating work that embodies a Black aesthetic.



# methods & rationales.

My research and projects have been more expressive and never pointed out a single target audience. By being expressive I wanted to encompass the various methods and mediums used to convey ideas, emotions, and messages effectively. These can include art, writing, film, or any other form of creative expression. Choosing an expressive approach allows for communication beyond mere facts or data, tapping into emotions, personal connections, and deeper understanding. The decision to employ an expressive approach can stem from several reasons:

- **Engagement:** *Expressive mediums have the power to captivate audiences and evoke emotions, leading to increased engagement and retention of information.*
- **Accessibility:** *Expressive means can make complex topics more accessible to a broader audience, including those who may not be familiar with academic or technical language.*
- **Connection:** *By tapping into emotions and personal experiences, expressive approaches can foster a deeper connection with the audience, encouraging empathy and understanding.*
- **Creativity:** *Expressive mediums provide a platform for creativity and innovation, allowing for unique and compelling ways to communicate ideas.*

Regarding specifying a target audience, while it's often beneficial to have a clear target demographic or community in mind, there may be situations where a broader approach is preferred. By not specifying a single target audience, the message or content can reach a wider range of individuals, potentially sparking interest and engagement from unexpected quarters.

However, in some cases, specifying a target audience can help tailor the content more effectively to their needs, preferences, and interests. It can also guide the choice of expressive mediums and communication channels to ensure maximum impact. Ultimately, the decision to specify or not specify a single target audience depends on the goals of the communication effort, the nature of the content, and the intended outcomes. It's essential to weigh the benefits and considerations of both approaches to determine the most suitable strategy for the given context.

# 1. target audience:

My approach is bold and inclusive, aiming to reach a diverse audience through the power of expressive mediums. While traditional marketing strategies often emphasize the importance of defining a specific target audience, your approach embraces the idea of casting a wider net to capture the attention of various individuals across different demographics and communities.

By prioritizing engagement, accessibility, connection, and creativity, I'm tapping into the universal appeal of expressive communication. This approach allows me to connect with people on a deeper level, regardless of their background or interests, fostering a sense of inclusivity and belonging.

Rather than narrowing your focus to a single demographic, you're embracing the potential of reaching a broader audience and sparking interest from unexpected quarters. This flexibility allows for greater adaptability and responsiveness to the diverse needs and preferences of your audience.

In essence, my research is intricately dedicated to shedding light on the experiences of Black women, delving into societal issues that often remain unaddressed. Initially, I adopted a calling-in approach, seeking to address problematic behaviours or attitudes through private, respectful dialogue. However, I later transitioned to a calling-out approach, opting for direct and public confrontation to hold individuals or groups accountable for their actions. Despite employing both strategies, I felt a disconnect from an audience that truly comprehended the depth of my research. It became evident that my subject matter, centered on the lived experiences of Black women, warranted a targeted approach specifically tailored to this demographic.

Ultimately, your unapologetic stance on not specifying a single target audience reflects a commitment to reaching as many people as possible through the power of expressive communication.

## 2. interviews:

I conducted one-on-one interviews with individuals relevant to my research, aiming to gather diverse insights, opinions, and personal experiences to enrich my qualitative data collection process. These interviews provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration of my topic, allowing for nuanced understandings of the issues at hand. In selecting interviewees, I sought out women whom I identified with and who shared similar backgrounds and attributes. Among these individuals were Natsumi Miyata and Ammara Brown, both of whom are Coloured Zimbabweans\* actively involved in the music industry. It's important to note that in Southern parts of Africa, the term "Coloured" is openly used and does not carry the same racial connotations as it might in other contexts. Here, "Coloured"" signifies a multiracial ethnic identity. Natsumi Miyata, of Japanese-Zimbabwean heritage, is renowned as one of the top female DJs in Zimbabwe. Her presence and contributions within the music scene offer unique perspectives on the experiences of women navigating the industry. Similarly, Ammara Brown, an Afro-pop artist and songwriter from Harare, Zimbabwe, brings her own rich heritage and familial legacy to her artistic endeavors. As the daughter of the late veteran musician Andy Brown, Ammara's music and experiences are deeply intertwined with her European heritage and Zimbabwean roots. Through these interviews, I aimed to capture the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of women of multiracial backgrounds in the music industry, shedding light on the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender within this dynamic and often complex landscape.

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\* Wikipedia contributors. (2024, March 8). *Goffal*. Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goffal>

# Ammara Brown

Ammara Brown, an Afro-pop artist and songwriter hailing from Harare, Zimbabwe, carries a musical legacy as the daughter of the late veteran musician Andy Brown. Raised in the United States of America by her mother, she later returned to Zimbabwe, infusing her work with a rich tapestry of influences. Ammara Brown's musical style is a vibrant collage of genres, ranging from Afro-jazz and pop to traditional Zimbabwean music. Her artistic expression seamlessly embodies the Afrocentric aesthetic, contributing to the cultural landscape with depth and diversity. In the context of my research, Ammara Brown's influence extends to various crucial aspects, including cultural heritage, identity, self-affirmation, empowerment, Pan-Africanism, and the Afrocentric aesthetic. Our discussions led to three pivotal themes:

**The Coloured Cultural:** This segment explores the historical context of the term “coloured” or “goffal,” once used to refer to people of mixed race, predominantly in the southern parts of Africa. The term, now considered a racial slur, reflects a progression from derogatory labels such as “slave” and “nigger” to the more inclusive terms “black” and “African American.”

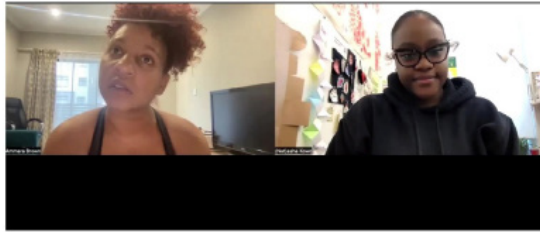
**Connection, Language, and Rhythm:** Ammara Brown emphasizes the significance of connection and the emotive aspect of music. Her insights highlight a reinvention of the modern-day African woman's experience. It extends beyond what is expressed to how it is expressed, tapping into a unique language and rhythm that encapsulates our distinct perspectives.

**Ubuntu:** Rooted in Southern African philosophy, the concept of Ubuntu is synonymous with values such as interconnectedness, community, and humanity. Expressed in the Zulu phrase “Umuntu, ngumuntu, ngabantu,” it encapsulates the idea that “I am because we are,” emphasizing the fundamental interconnectedness of humanity.

# Nastumi Miyata

King Her (Natsumi Miyata) is a Afro/ Electro/ Dancehall/ Trap DJ who has embarked on her majestic selections of EDM with Afro Sounds to the world. Born in Harare, Zimbabwe, she defied expectations of the traditional Zimbabwean woman with her skill on a motorcycle, elegant long nails, a hint of smoke trailing, embellished with tattoos, and her unique blend of half-Japanese heritage. She was proof of a life that was entirely her own, of a force that brought empowerment into all of her. Miyata was perfect for my research in looking at intentionality. I reached out to her via Instagram, and we connected over the phone, where we then scheduled to meet in the heart and soul of Zimbabwe, City of Harare. A few of my questions centered around the music industry and how intentionality fit into her daily living, especially looking at how the music industry is highly dominated by men.

# 01. THE COLOURED CULTURE



6/10

Fig. 08

Fig. 10

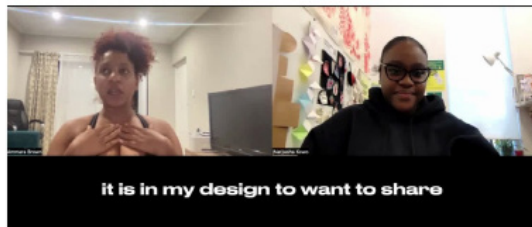
# 03. UBUNTU HUMANITY TO OTHERS.

The philosophy of Ubuntu has its roots in Southern African philosophy and is often associated with values such as interconnectedness, community, and humanity. Ubuntu is often expressed in the Zulu phrase "Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu," which can be translated as "I am because we are" or "A person is a person through other persons"

AMMARA BROWN:

00:58:22.359

It is in my design to want to share. Ubuntu is a concept of human respect. It's not a concept of black on black respect and love.



8/10

Brown: South Africa (Central African Time)

Kowo: Vancouver, BC (Pacific Time Zone)

VIA ZOOM

Dec, 2023

33

# 02. CONNECTION, LANGUAGE & RHYTHM



7/10

Fig. 09

Fig. 11

# ARE YOU A STRONG BLACK WOMAN?

The stereotypical image of the "strong" black woman was no longer seen as a dehumanizing, it became the new badge of black female glory.

AIN'T I A WOMAN - BLACK WOMEN & FEMINISM  
BELL HOOKS.



9/10





*Fig. 12*



*Fig. 13*

Miyata & Kowo  
Harare, Zimbabwe  
May , 2023

### 3. literature review:

In my research, reviewing the literature has proven to be an invaluable tool for understanding established knowledge, identifying areas that require additional investigation, and establishing the foundation for future projects. Examining academic literature about the relationship between feminism and black women has yielded information about the complex roles and experiences of black women in society. Furthermore, reading up on black feminism has provided me with insightful analytical tools and theoretical frameworks that I can use to interpret and put my research findings into context. It has given me the confidence to negotiate the difficulties of overlapping identities and promote equality and social justice in activist and academic settings. The literature review procedure has played a significant role in directing the course of my work by offering a strong framework for developing in-depth analyses and significant interventions. It emphasizes how crucial it is to interact with a range of viewpoints and give voice to the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups in academic research and social justice activism.

### 4. finding role models:

In order to acquire a comprehensive understanding, I desired role models with a range of experiences and viewpoints. Investigating the biographies of each role model entails delving into their narratives in search of valuable lessons and sources of inspiration. The two role models who have had the biggest influence on my work are bell hooks and Angela Davis. These women are excellent examples of Black feminists. bell hooks is widely recognized for her revolutionary contributions to intersectional feminism, which question established ideas about gender, race, and class. Angela Davis, on the other hand, has been a vocal advocate for women's rights, particularly within the context of Black feminism, which tackles the various forms of oppression that Black women face.

## 5. film screening:

On February 2nd, 2023, I successfully organized a film screening at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, especially at the Emily Carr Students' Union. The purpose of the event was to pay tribute to Black History Month, and I achieved this by showcasing a film featuring one of the Black artists, Jean-Michel Basquiat. The selected film for the screening was "Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child." I additionally crafted takeaway zines featuring a selection of artworks by Basquiat. The zine comprised eight pages and featured a poster on the reverse side, incorporating a notable quote from the artist.

## 6. zine creation:

Formulating my DIY approach, zines often follow a do-it-yourself ethos, allowing for creative expression and accessibility towards my work. Zine can be distributed in local communities, providing a tangible and personal way to share information. To effectively convey my intended message or concept, I try to incorporate design elements and principles into my compositions. I try to make compositions that are aesthetically pleasing, coherent, and powerful by carefully choosing and arranging visual components like color, typography, imagery, and layout. In addition, I make an effort to make sure that my compositions are pleasant, well-balanced, and visually appealing to the viewer by following design principles like balance, contrast, rhythm, and emphasis. In the end, applying these design concepts and elements improves my work's overall efficacy and aesthetic quality and makes it easier for me to communicate my ideas in an engaging and clear manner. Zine culture is a thriving and varied underground movement distinguished by its DIY (do-it-yourself) attitude, anti-capitalistic principles, and emphasis on counter-narratives. Zines are independently published, frequently on a shoestring, and cover a broad spectrum of subjects, such as art, politics, social commentary, personal narratives, and more. They provide a forum for underrepresented voices and viewpoints that the media may ignore or misrepresent. Jennifer



White Johnson is a figure who has made a significant contribution to zine culture.

Jennifer White Johnson: As an artist, educator, and zine maker, Jennifer White Johnson has been instrumental in advocating for diversity, inclusion, and social justice within zine culture. Her work often explores themes of race, identity, and representation, challenging dominant narratives and stereotypes. Through her zines, workshops, and community engagement efforts, Johnson empowers marginalized individuals to share their stories and reclaim their voices.

Zine culture, with its DIY ethos and grassroots approach, offers a powerful alternative to mainstream media and consumer culture. By prioritizing self-expression, community collaboration, and accessibility, zines challenge the commodification of art and information, promoting a more democratic and inclusive model of cultural production.

Key features of zine culture include:

- **Anti-capitalism:** Zine culture often rejects the profit-driven motives of mainstream publishing, instead prioritizing creative expression, personal empowerment, and community building. By embracing DIY methods and grassroots distribution channels, zines subvert capitalist structures and promote alternative modes of cultural production.
- **Counter Narratives:** Zines provide a platform for marginalized voices and perspectives that are often marginalized or misrepresented in mainstream media. From personal stories of resilience and resistance to critical analyses of social issues, zines offer alternative narratives that challenge dominant discourses and empower marginalized communities.
- **Community Engagement:** Zine culture is inherently collaborative and community-oriented, with zine makers often organizing workshops, zine fairs, and other events to share their work and connect with like-minded

individuals. These spaces foster solidarity, mutual support, and creative exchange, contributing to the vibrancy and resilience of zine culture.

Overall, zine culture represents a grassroots movement for social change and cultural transformation, offering a space for marginalized voices to be heard, celebrated, and empowered. Figures like Jennifer White Johnson play a crucial role in shaping and advancing this movement, inspiring others to join the struggle for a more just, inclusive, and equitable world.

## 7. community engagement:

Community Engagement serves as a cornerstone for building connections, fostering dialogue, and cultivating enriching experiences within shared spaces. My journey in community involvement began within the vibrant setting of Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Organizing events centered around Black History Month provided an exceptional avenue for connecting with the community, particularly within an environment dedicated to art and design. My goal extends beyond mere celebration; I aspire to delve deeper into the narratives of Black designers, exploring their creative journeys and unique artistic styles.

Through these endeavors, my aim is not only to commemorate Black History Month but also to ignite conversations, fuel creativity, and nurture a strong sense of camaraderie among both students and faculty at Emily Carr University. This initiative underscores the profound impact of community engagement, as it creates inclusive spaces conducive to dialogue, celebration, and collective learning within academic institutions.



# manifestation.

## field of practice:

My research delves into the expressive societal roles of black women, particularly in Western contexts, going beyond a narrow focus solely on their representation within the design industry. Given my background in graphic design, an inherent requirement in my field is the experimental approach. My creativity, expressed through design, serves as a reflection of my emotions and my chosen mode of communication. Typography, in particular, emerges as a significant player in the realm of exploration. Throughout my Master's degree journey, a focal point of my exploration has been experimental typography within editorial design. When I mention "editorial," I am referring to print media such as zines, posters, and booklets that visually encapsulate the current state of my research. Zines, in particular, have provided an unbridled platform for my self-expression, unencumbered by the constraints of traditional publishing. They afford me the freedom to share my thoughts, stories, artwork, and opinions. Historically, zine-making has been a vehicle for subversive or activist purposes. These DIY (do-it-yourself) publications can function as forums for debating current events, challenging the prevailing norms, or advocating for social and political change.

My cultural heritage pulses with vitality. As a visual designer, I infuse my work with the richness of my African aesthetic, challenging the prevailing Eurocentric design norms. Typography has become my medium for verbal and visual expression, allowing me to question and redefine. In the realm of experimental typography, I wield loud and bold typefaces, conveying powerful messages through the use of sans serifs and decorative type. This creative process becomes a dynamic exploration of my identity and a bold departure from the conventional design landscape.

# process work

2022

2023

2024

# 1. the strong black woman:

## WHO IS THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN?

a. The Strong Black Woman. Society has created this norm that “THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN” is intimidating, always mad never smiles, cannot be social, can not be themselves. As a black woman, I want to set something straight, we hate being called “THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN”.

## THE SYNDROME OF THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN:

b. In response to systemic racism, Black women and African American culture have for generations created the persona of the Strong Black Woman, a woman motivated by service and sacrifice, who handles, manages, and overcomes any problem, any obstacle. The syndrome expects Black women to be the primary problem solvers and caregivers for everyone in their lives, and never bother with their pain.

2022

### Kelsi 1 filled

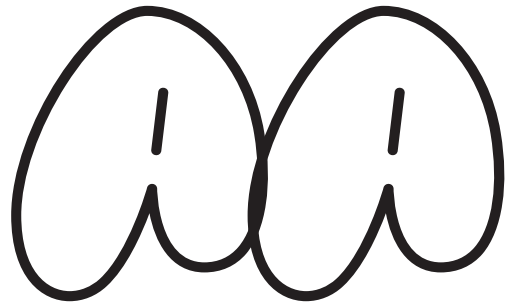
KELSI is a graffiti-inspired bubble style font available exclusively in uppercase letters. This font offers both solid and outlined version of the alphabet. It is freely available for both person and commercial use.



AA BB CC DD EE FF GG HH II JJ  
KK LL MM NN OO PP QQ RR SS  
TT UU VV WW XX YY ZZ

### Kelsi 1 outlined

KELSI is a graffiti-inspired bubble style font available exclusively in uppercase letters. This font offers both solid and outlined version of the alphabet. It is freely available for both person and commercial use.



AA BB CC DD EE FF GG HH II JJ  
KK LL MM NN OO PP QQ RR SS  
TT UU VV WW XX YY ZZ

### Forma DJR Display

Originally released in 1968, Forma was the Italian type foundry Nebiolo's answer to Helvetica. It was created by a team of eight designers, led by the legendary Aldo Novarese, that Nebiolo assembled to design a more mature and humane neo-grotesque. As a result, Forma's rationality is tempered by its warmth, and its trademark single-story a sets it apart from the rest. Adobe Fonts includes this family for both desktop and web use.



Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk  
Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz

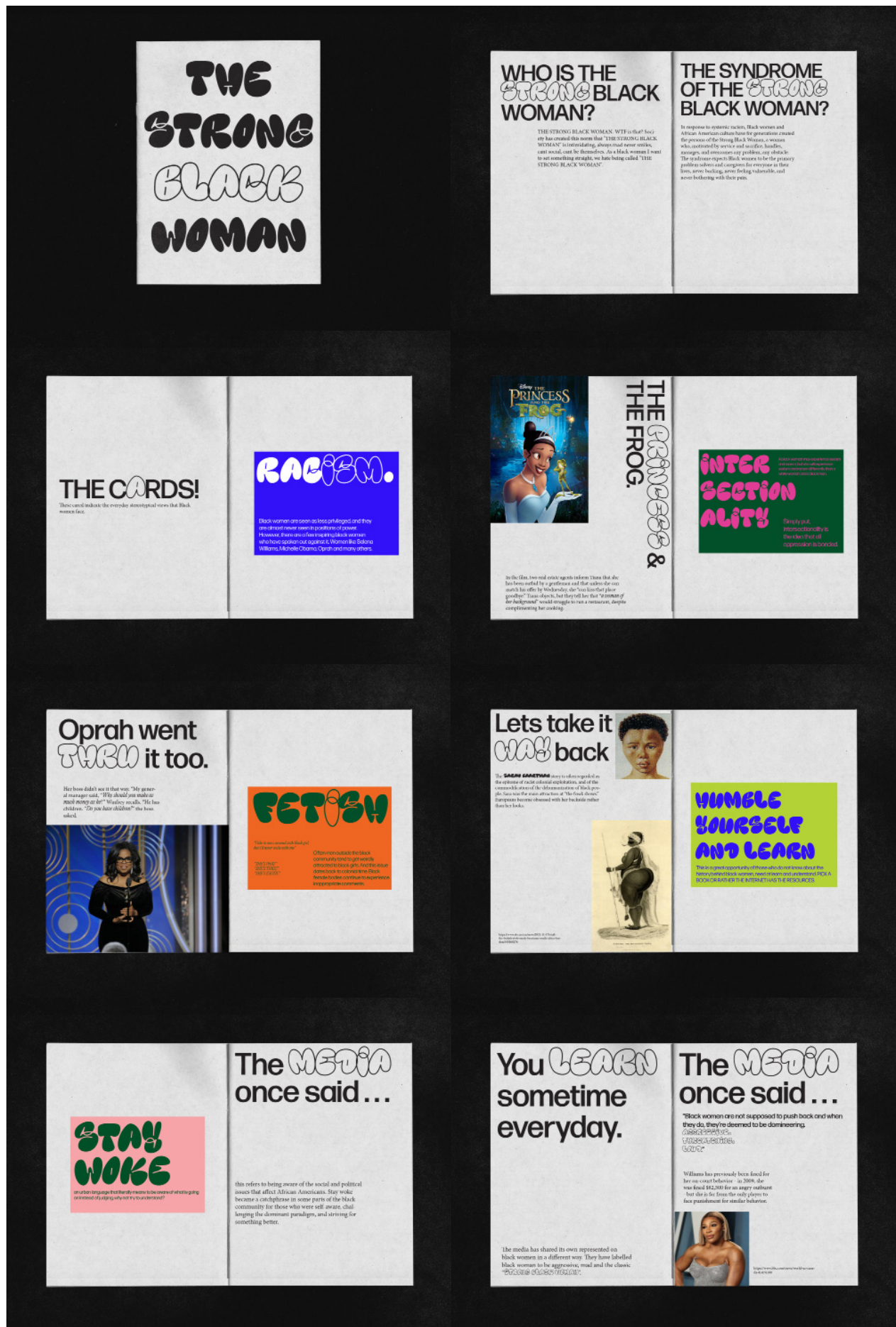


Fig. 14: The Strong Black Woman: Prompt 2: The Discourse (2022)



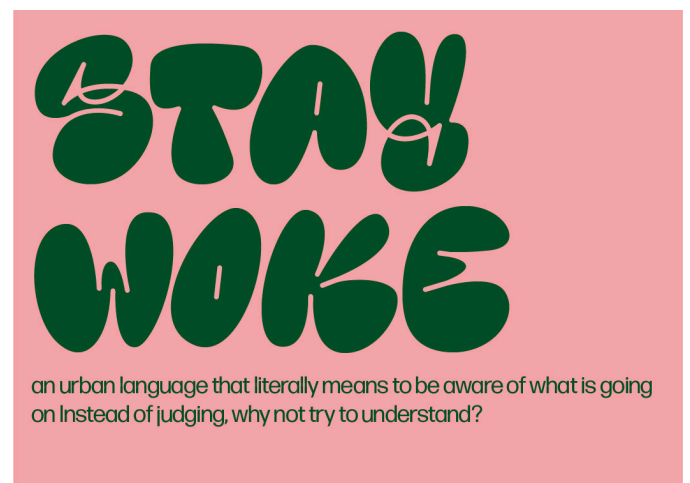
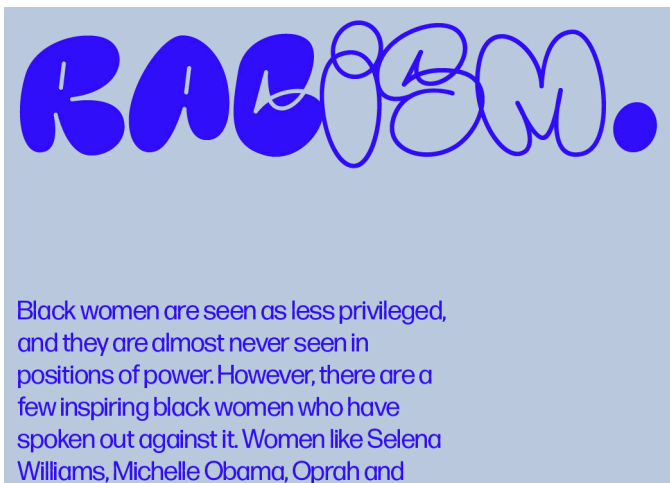
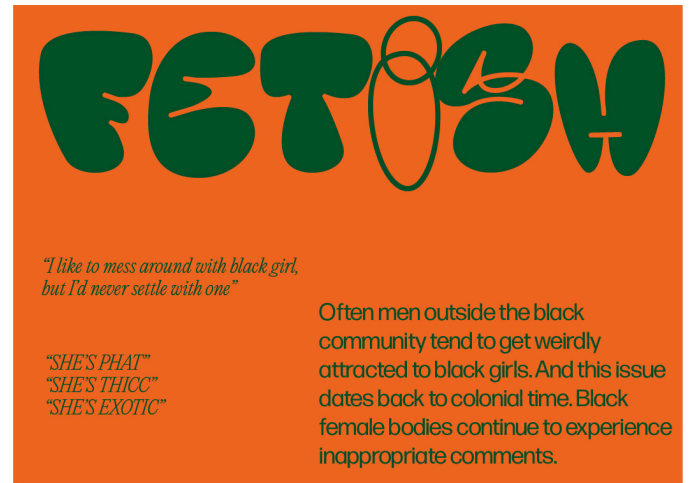


Fig. 15: The Strong Black Woman - 2-cards: Prompt 2: The Discourse (2022)

2. meet her.  
she is me.  
i am her.

2022

MEET HER. SHE IS ME. I AM HER. This is a zine that is a starting point for my thesis work. It is a representation of black women aesthetics like their hair and nail designs. My inquiry has been inspired by my previous prompt “The Strong Black Woman”, as well as a representation of myself, being a black woman.

The Process: I made this my zine to be editorial and aesthetic to the eye. I wanted to create a composition that consisted of both decorative type and sans serif typefaces. The zine concept was to experiment with imagery and typography. I did not want a lot of body text, but rather a flip-through zine with enough subject matter. The idea behind this zine is the beauty aesthetic of the black female. A great example would be Flo-Jo. Biased beauty standards never stopped Florence Griffith Joyner (Flo-Jo) from becoming the fastest woman in the world, running the 100-meter race in 10.49 seconds – a record that still stands today- while rocking her trademark long, colourful nails. Flo-jo’s look was a wink at outdated stereotypes about Black culture, the same culture that was once vilified but is now so often appropriated. Acrylic nails became a part of my identity, just as Flo-Jo’s did. Every nail appointment provided a new opportunity for me to express my creativity and honour my younger self, who’d been too afraid to perpetuate the ghetto stereotype prescribed to Black women who were too fabulous for stale basic naysayers to understand. I don’t wear my stiletto or coffin acrylic nails as an act of rebellion. But as a reminder that *Black women are the moment and will forever be the matter.*

*Aa*

*Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee  
Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk  
Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp  
Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu  
Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz*

### Aston Script Pro

Aston Script is a calligraphy script font that comes with very beautiful changing characters, a kind of classic decorative copper script with a modern touch, designed with high detail to bring stylish elegance. Aston Script is attractive as a typeface that is smooth, clean, feminine, sensual, glamorous, simple and very easy to read, because there are many fancy letter connections. I also offer a number of viable style alternatives for many letters.



**AA BB CC DD EE FF GG HH  
II JJ KK LL MM NN OO PP  
QQ RR SS TT UU VV WW  
XX YY ZZ**

### CHEEE - CHAARLEEE

Cheee is a display typeface designed by James Edmondson and Alexis Boscariol. Adobe Fonts includes this family for both desktop and web use





Fig. 16: Meet her. She is Me. I am Her Zine- Prompt 4: Inquiry(2023)



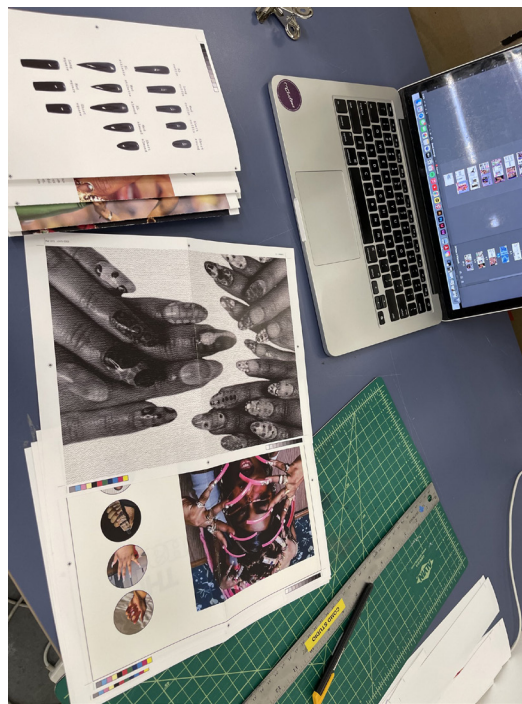


Fig. 17: Meet her. She is Me. I am Her - Prompt 4: Process Work(2023)





*Fig. 18: Meet her. She is Me. I am Her – Prompt 4: Inquiry (2023)*



### 3. typographic call & response

One of the projects I worked on over the term is called Typographic Call and Response. I was inspired by a book called *Strikethrough: Typographic Messages of Protest*. The graphic book showcases protest signs from the United States of America from the nineteenth through the twenty-first century. This project composition was in the form of a zine that was a collection of protest posters that have been typeset and given meaning, which I call the Typographic Call and Response. From the book I picked 6 graphic posters that reflect more with:

2023



Aa

### Editorial New Ultralight

Editorial New is a serif typeface designed by Mathieu Desjardins and published through Pangram Pangram in 2019. The design features condensed proportions and brings to mind the style of narrow serif that was popular during the 1980s and 1990s, such as Times New Roman condensed and Apple's version of ITC Garamond. The family is available in eight weights with matching italics.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg  
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq  
Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Aa

### Estrella Early

Estrella Typeface has a display font with expressive curves, so it looks playful and fun. This type is inspired by 70's typefaces with psychedelic touches and groovy vibes. Estrella is a new free display font designed by Uncarving Nation. Estrella Typeface is free for personal & commercial use.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii  
Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr  
Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Aa

### Degular Display

Degular is a sans-serif typeface designed by James Edmondson and published through OH no Type Co in 2020. The family is available in three optical sizes, each in seven weights with matching italics. Adobe Fonts includes this family for both desktop and web use

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj  
Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt  
Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz



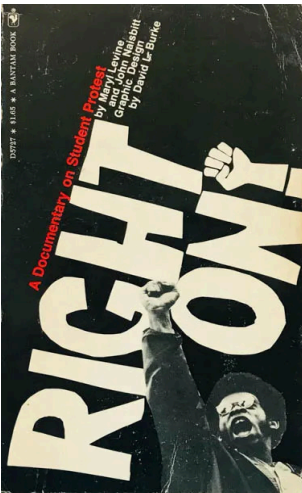
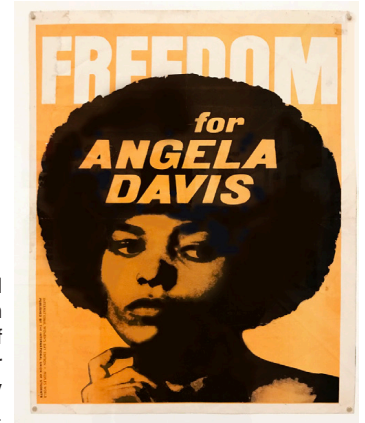
Fig. 19: *Typographic Call & Response*  
Zine(2023)





This poster champions natural hair using completely original lettering, with "BLACK" spelled out in an AFRO hairstyle and "is beautiful" rendered in letterform composed of repeating minimalist arcs.

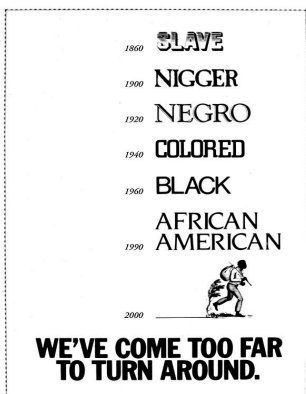
This poster was created for an International Women's Day issue of the socialist publication People's World. The poster urges the release of activist Angela Davis, who was imprisoned for over a year after guns she purchased were used by others in a courthouse shootout.



A dynamic typographic treatment - explores various word relationships in a tessellating op art pattern in the Black liberation colours of red, black and green.



RIGHT ON! reads like a documentary film in paperback form. The typesetting was assembled in a compilation that defied typographic norms and mimicked multimedia.



Archie Boston, a Black art director illustrates a typographic timeline of racial epithets. He uses different typefaces that were popular across U.S. history to set the names (often slurs) used by white people to describe Black Americans.

The four words visually scream a declaration and with it a demand. The text was set in Plain Gothic NO. 6243 (a wood type from the Hamilton Manufacturing Company), with "am" emphatically underlined.

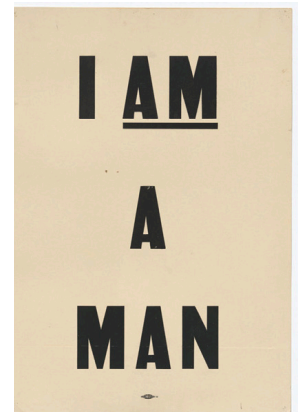


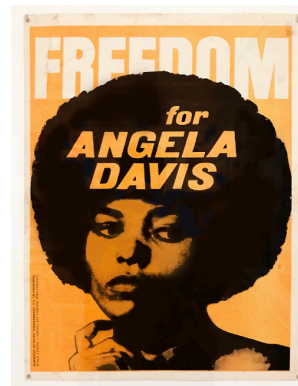
Fig. 20



*Resist!*

**José Vasquez Johnson**, *Black Is Beautiful*, circa 1971, offset, 23 x 17 inches (58.5 x 43 cm), San Francisco.

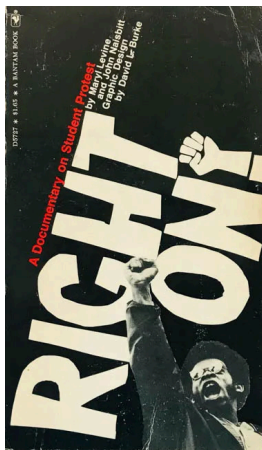
Fig. 21



*Resist!*

**International Union of Students**, *Freedom for Angela Davis*, 1971, offset, 22 1/2 x 17 inches (57 x 43 cm), San Francisco.

Fig. 22



*Teach!*

**David L. Burke (designer), Maryl Levine and John Naisbitt (authors)**, *Right On! A Documentary of Student Protest*, 1970, offset, 7 1/8 x 4 1/4 inches (18 x 11 cm), New York

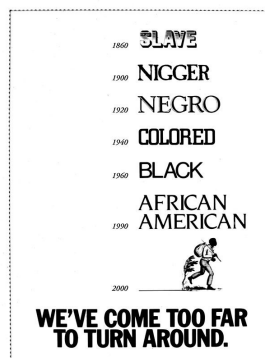
Fig. 23



*NOW!*  
*Demanding*  
*Black Liberation*  
*with Typography*

**Faith Ringgold**, *Women Free Angela*, 1971, screen print, 28 1/4 x 19 1/2 inches (72 x 49.5 cm), New York, Courtesy of ACA Galleries, New York.

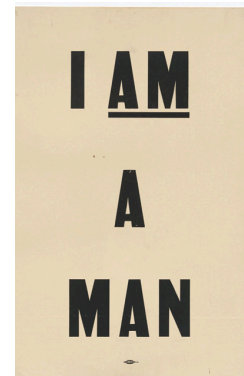
Fig. 24



*Resist!*

**Archie Boston**, *We've Come Too Far to Turn Around*, 1991, offset, 16 x 12 inches (40.5 x 30.5 cm), New York

Fig. 25



*Strike!*

**Unknown designer for the American Federation of State, Country, and Municipality Employees (AFSCME)**, *I Am a Man!* 1968, letterpress, 21 1/2 x 14 inches (54.5 x 35.5 cm), Memphis, Tennessee. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture



## 4. you so black

This project had me asking myself “Why do we use typography, what is the purpose of typography? Is there a purpose to typography, do people understand it? what does typography mean to me as a designer?” This project was inspired by Theresa tha SONGBIRD, a spoken word called “YOU SO BLACK”. From the spoken word, I hear the praise of being, I hear the praise of the colour Black, and I hear the presence of being Black. From the spoken word I captured 3 parts “Black is Touch, Black is Hard to do”, “Black is Beautiful, Black & Bless & Highly Favoured”. These words resonated deeply with me, sparking a profound reflection on how I want to portray Black women.

Inspired by these sentiments, I embarked on a creative journey to craft a series of posters featuring the iconic Angela Davis. Davis epitomizes the essence of blackness, embodying resilience, intellect, and empowerment. To amplify the impact of the message, I experimented with playful and ornate typefaces, aiming to foster greater engagement with the subject matter. I pivoted towards a mix of display typography, serifs, and sans serifs, accompanied by a vibrant color palette. The inclusion of a bold neon green hue in the typesetting introduced elements of repetition, rhythm, and cohesion. Against a backdrop reminiscent of a cloudy sky, symbolizing unity and liberation, the juxtaposition of Black and white elements in the composition evoked a sense of intrigue and contemplation. Through this visual storytelling, I endeavor to provoke thought and inspire dialogue on the multifaceted experiences of Black women in society.

# 2023

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg  
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz

Editorial New Ultralight

Aa

AA BB CC DD EE FF GG  
HH II JJ KK LL MM NN  
OO PP QQ RR SS TT UU VV  
WW XX YY ZZ

Cheee Conshread

AA

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg  
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo  
Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww  
Xx Yy Zz

Degular Display

Aa



ANGELA DAVIS  
1972 TRIAL

GRAPHIC DESIGN POSTER  
NATS STUDIO 2023

Angela Davis is an American political Activist, professor and author. Davis gained her international reputation in the early 1970s, when she was tried for conspiracy and imprisoned, and later fully acquitted, after being implicated in a shootout in front of a California courthouse.



# BLACK IS TOUGH BLACK IS HARD TO DO

SPOKEN WORD LINE:  
THERESA THA S.O.N.G.B.I.R.D

Angela Davis was brought up on several charges for her alleged part in the event, including murder. She went into hiding and was one of the FBI's "Most Wanted" before being caught two months later. There were two main pieces of evidence used at trial: the guns used were registered to her, and she was reportedly in love with Jackson. Her case drew the attention of the international press and after spending roughly 18 months in jail, Davis was acquitted in June 1972.



Fig. 26

*Black is Tough. Black is Hard, To Do-*  
*Poster. 11 x 17, date 2023*





Fig. 27

*Black is Adjective, Adverb, Colour &  
Noun Poster. 11 x 17, date 2023*



Fig. 28

*Black & Beautiful, Black & Blessed, & Highly Favoured Poster. 11 x 17, date 2023*



# 5. the fundamental guide to being a f\*ucking black woman

2023

My goal for this project was to write a 250-word story that closely related to the subject of my research. Choosing a lyrical style, I tried to craft a story that was closely related to both my personal experience and subject research. My narrative contained personal reflections that made it a moving illustration of the topics being studied. This story served as my inspiration, and I went on to create an 8-page zine with a format that was primarily written material and printed using a risograph. I avoided using any images and instead concentrated only on the text, using a variety of typographic styles to create an eye-catching composition. I embraced the interaction of sans serifs, serifs, and calligraphy in this project, with each typeface adding to the overall concepts of rhythm and balance. By means of cautious selection and placement of typographic components, my goal was to attain aesthetic balance, guaranteeing the reader's accessibility. In order to create a dynamic visual flow, I also tried to infuse the composition with a sense of rhythm by giving each typeface its own distinct shape and importance. Ultimately, this zine served as both a medium for storytelling and an exploration of typographic design principles. By engaging with diverse typographic styles, I endeavored to evoke emotional resonance and foster deeper connections with the thematic content of the project.



# the black woman.

*She keeps fighting the temptation to scream out her emotions. She is being so dramatic that she is unable to feel anything. She is being forceful or fairly loud, therefore she is unable to explain herself or talk in a high level. She chuckles as she perceives their fear of her. What exactly are they frightened of? Why are they so hostile toward me? They claim that I disturb them. I was unaware. How very dare you touch my hair. Did this girl truly claim that her race as a "POC" allows her to use the NIGGER? I may have misheard you, so repeat yourself. They hate seeing her stand firm. She never preys for pity because pity is a display of weakness.*

*She's been at work and got the badge of honour. She no longer desires conflict, preferring to exude confidence as the strong black woman that she is. They decided not to recognize my strengths. They opted to attack me first and pretend they were the victim. The fakes and pity seekers are all around her. Oh, how she loves just being a black woman. As Bell Hooks states in her 'Ain't I a Woman: black women and feminism,' "The stereotypical image of the "strong" black woman was no longer seen as dehumanizing, it became the new badge of black female glory." And I must say, I wear this badge proudly. It's the blood that flows through me.*

*So, yes, I am that strong black woman.*

# poem



Fig. 30: *The Fundamental Guide to Being a F\*cking Black Woman* – Open Studio (2023)



page 8

And I must say, I wear this badge proudly. It's the blood that flows through me. So, yes *I am that strong black woman.* 😊

page 1

NAT KOWO.

## THE FUNDAMENT GUIDE TO BEING A F\*CKING BLACK WOMAN.

ZINE VOLUME .01

page 2

Introducing an impassioned black woman as she candidly expresses her experiences and emotions as a black woman. Through her narrative, she delves into the challenges and essential aspects of simply being a black woman. She conveys her exhaustion with the situation.

page 3

She keeps fighting the temptation to scream out her emotions. She is being so dramatic that she is unable to feel anything.

She is being forceful or fairly loud, therefore she is unable to explain herself or talk in a high level. She chuckles as she perceives their fear of her. What exactly are they frightened of? Why are they so hostile toward me? They claim that I disturb them. I was unaware.

# WHAT TF?

How very dare you touch my hair.

Did this girl truly claim that her race as a "POC" allows her to say

# NIGGER.

I may have misheard you, so repeat yourself.

They hate seeing her stand firm. She never preys for pity because pity is a display of weakness.

page 4

She's been at work and got the badge of honour. She no longer desires conflict, preferring to exude confidence as the strong black woman that she is. They decided not to recognize my strengths.

page 5

They opted to attack me first and pretend they were the victim. The fakes and pity seekers are all around her.

Oh how she loves just being a black woman. As Bell Hooks states in her 'Ain't I a Woman: black women and feminism.' The stereotypical image of the "strong" black woman was no longer seen as dehumanizing, it became the new badge of black female glory."

page 6

page 7

Fig. 31: The Fundamental Guide to Being a F\*ucking Black Woman Zine Layout (2023)

## 6. black history month sticker

During the commemoration of Black History Month in 2023, I crafted a series of vibrant stickers infused with the symbolic colors of the occasion. Delving into the creative process, I employed the technique of risograph printing to bring these designs to life. The utilization of risograph not only added a distinctive matte finish to the stickers but also imbued them with a unique visual appeal. The choice of incorporating these colors and employing risograph was intentional, as it served to honor the rich heritage and significance of Black History Month while simultaneously elevating the aesthetic quality of the stickers.

2023

BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH

BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH

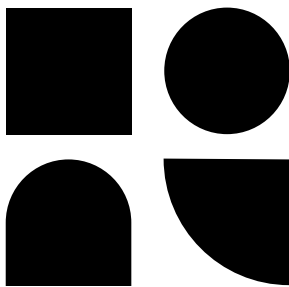


Fig. 32: BLACK HISTORY, ONTH STICKERS IN USE (2023)


## Neo Tetra Regular




All caps display font. Inspired by the extraordinary geometric abstractions of Bauhaus, Neo Tetra is a typographic study that reimagines 26 letters, 10 numbers, and 12 symbols as geometric forms comprised of primitive shapes. The Bauhaus is one of the most influential movements in the history of design. With a focus on structure and precision, its philosophy hypothesizes that clean lines and simple shapes of geometric forms can create a sense of order, clarity, and efficiency. Due to its abstract shapes, Neo Tetra is a display style font that works great for logos, large text display with short text length. Currently the font is free for personal use only.




The construction of the glyphs can be summarized in another way: Each character is divided into four parts, and each part contains and only contains one of the four following primitive shapes and their rotations:




Black is the color of the noble and distinguished race to which we belong



Red is the color of the blood which men must shed for their redemption and liberty



Green is the color of the luxuriant vegetation of our Motherland



The color yellow, from the Ethiopian flag, symbolizes justice, optimism, and equality.





7. hey! hey!  
it's our month:  
*black history  
month zine*

To commemorate Black History Month (February 1-29, 2024), I created a mini zine that highlighted a few Black women who have been particularly inspiring, especially in today's world. These individuals embody what I would characterize as the epitome of resilience—the Strong Black Woman. Their stories resonate with us, serving as powerful reflections for Black women everywhere.

I aimed to design a zine cover that strikes a balance between simplicity and intrigue. In crafting it, I delved into compositions that integrate playful decorative typefaces alongside bold sans serifs. This juxtaposition creates a dynamic interplay, fostering a sense of curiosity and making the cover visually captivating.

2024

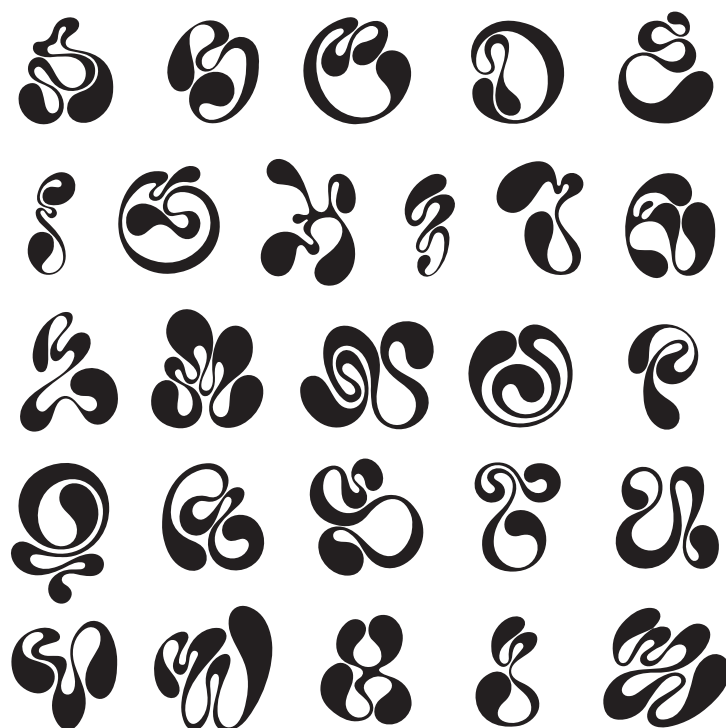


Fig. 32: Hey! Hey! It's Our Month Zine (Black History Month (2024))



Fig. 32: Hey! Hey! It's Our Month Zine Mock-up Print(2024)

### Rabbit Hole Display



A total glyph set of 26, all in uppercase letters.  
Rabbit Hole Display was designed by Tomasz  
Pawluk a.k.a. Boaff and released via Type  
Department in 2021.

### Humane Variable Typeface

**Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk**  
**Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu**  
**Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz**

Humane is a striking compressed, sans-serif display typeface by Rajesh Rajput. It is super tall, super narrow and has almost no contrast. Making it seem very confident, rational and loud.

**HAPPY BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

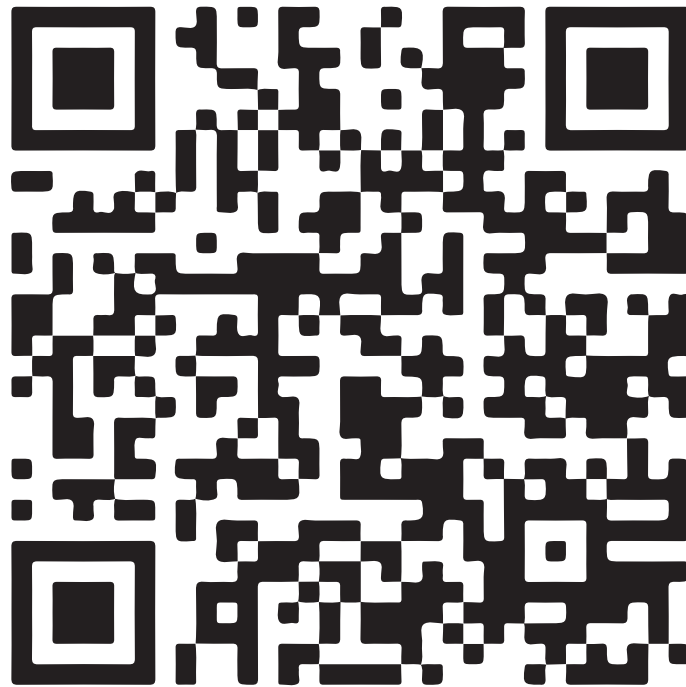
**H S V!**  
**H S V!**

**ITS OUR**

**MONTH**

**01 FEB 2024 - 29 FEB 2024**



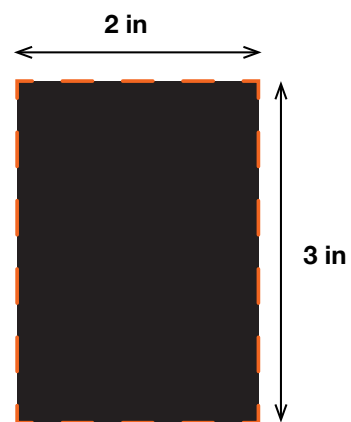
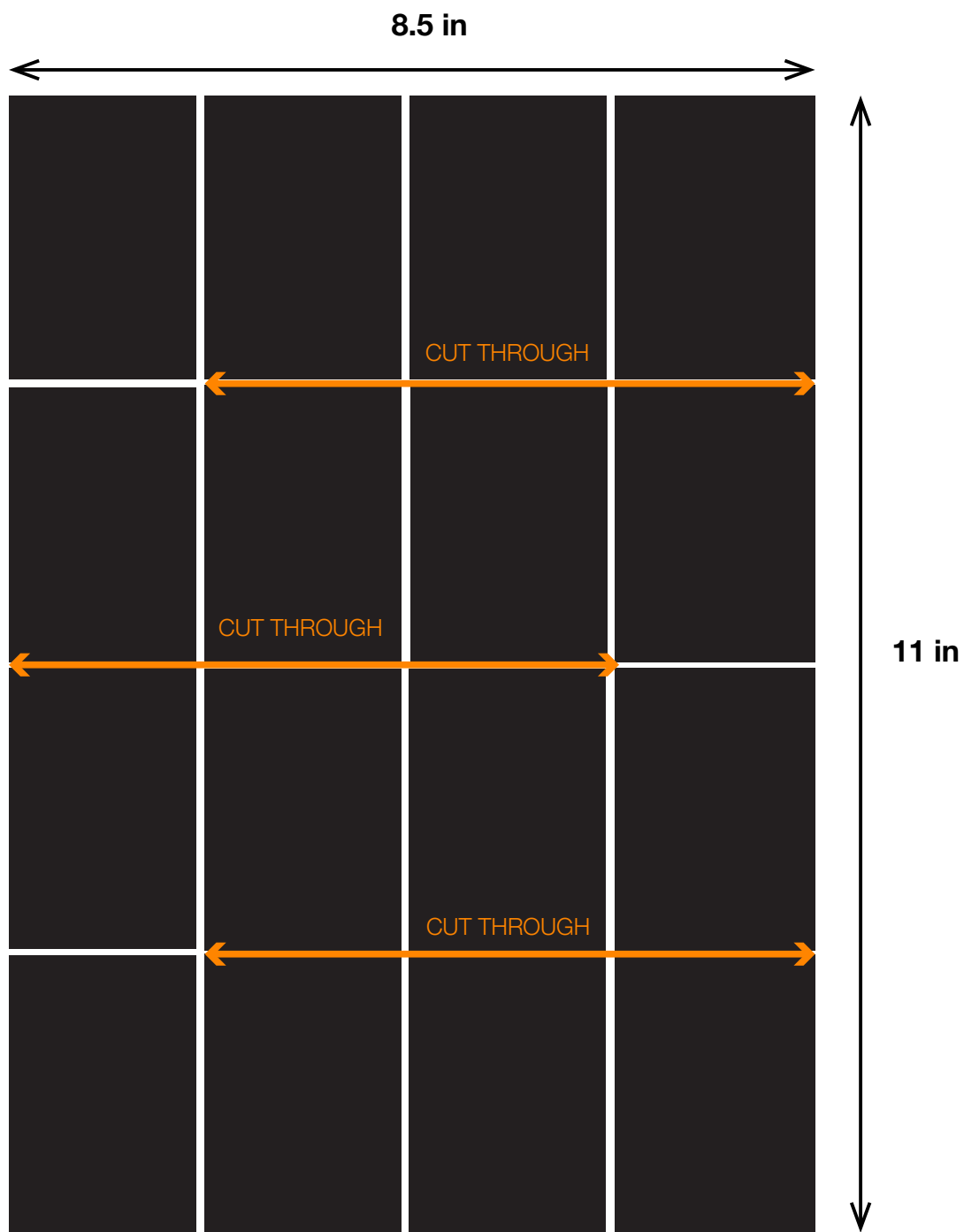


SCAN HERE TO READ MORE  
ABOUT THESE GREAT  
**BLACK WOMEN**

By scanning the QR code, you will be directed to a page featuring the women, detailing their identities and accomplishments.\*

- HEY! HEY! ITS OUR MONTH: HAPPY BLACK HISTORY MONTH. (2024). *Meet the Women*, 2024. <https://nkowo.myportfolio.com/meet-the-girls>





# type details

For design projects, decorative typefaces are typically selected to create a certain mood, tone, or style. However, there are other reasons as well. Decorative fonts, as opposed to more conventional or functional typefaces, provide designers the chance to add individuality and flair to their work, resulting in visually striking and memorable designs. These typefaces enable designers to express a sense of originality and personality because they frequently have distinctive and complex letterforms, ranging from sophisticated scripts to bold and fun styles. Decorative typefaces, whether employed in branding, advertising, or graphic design, can offer a unique touch to the overall visual composition, assist draw in the audience, and leave a lasting impression.

Additionally, decorative typefaces can strengthen a design project's narrative or topic by acting as effective storytelling instruments. As a designers I can successfully enhance the impact of the visual communication by carefully picking a typeface that is in line with the concept or message being expressed. By doing this, they can reinforce the intended emotions or concepts. The choice of decorative typeface is crucial in molding the overall aesthetic and amplifying the design's ability to communicate, regardless of the intended emotion - nostalgia, sophistication, whimsy, or any other combination of these. Using ornamental typefaces is ultimately motivated by the goal of producing designs that are both visually striking and emotionally stirring, drawing in viewers.

I employ san serif typefaces well in addition to using playful/decorative types.

San serif typefaces are popular because of their simple, contemporary, and adaptable appearance, which makes them ideal for a variety of design uses. San serif fonts have a simpler, more streamlined design with clean lines and consistent stroke widths, in contrast to serif typefaces, which have little decorative flourishes, or "serifs," at the ends of strokes. San serif typefaces are very readable and readable because to their minimalistic style, especially at small sizes or on digital devices. Because of this, they are widely utilized in print documents, computer interfaces, and signage where readability and clarity are crucial.



# conclusion

In my exploration, I have employed a diverse range of methods, including interviews, literature reviews, finding role models, precedence reviews, making zines, holding film screenings, and conducting workshops. This multifaceted approach has allowed me to gather information comprehensively and engage deeply with the subject matter. Through these methods, I have achieved a nuanced understanding that extends beyond conventional academic research.

My research journey has been characterized by a commitment to embracing diverse perspectives, historical contexts, and personal insights. By leveraging a do-it-yourself ethos and employing various mediums such as zines and film screenings, I have strived to make information accessible and engaging to local communities. This approach has facilitated meaningful dialogue and collaboration, enriching both my research process and the communities with whom I have interacted.

Furthermore, the exploration of role models and their life stories has provided me with invaluable lessons and inspiration as a designer. By examining the experiences and achievements of individuals who have navigated spaces where they are underrepresented, I have gained insight into the possibilities and challenges inherent in design practice.

Importantly, I recognize that I cannot separate other aspects of my identity from my identity as a student or a designer. The concept of intersectionality has been and continues to be an integral part of my learning journey within my work. By acknowledging and embracing the complexities of identity, I have deepened my understanding of how power dynamics, privilege, and marginalization intersect within design contexts.

As I move forward, I remain committed to centering intersectional perspectives in my practice and advocating for inclusivity, representation, and social justice within the design field. I am grateful for the insights, experiences, and relationships that have shaped my research journey, and I look forward to continuing this work in collaboration with diverse communities and voices.

# future direction

Going forward, I have a strong desire to further my research in order to increase the number of Black women who work in the design industry. My main focus will be on finding and putting into practice efficient ways to incorporate Black design perspectives into academic syllabuses, as well as on promoting their inclusion in course outlines and learning materials. This project is extremely aligned with my commitment to fostering inclusivity and diversity in the design community, and I am truly thrilled about the opportunity to drive significant change in this field. I also want to look into the possibility of designing a custom typeface that perfectly fits the particular needs and visual style of my designs. This project serves as an additional channel for my innovation and advancement of design practice.

Following my defense presentation, the feedback from my defense panel proved invaluable, offering a wealth of insightful questions and advice regarding my work. Among them, Terresa Moses, my external evaluator, provided particularly noteworthy insights into my topic. She emphasized the significance of delving deeper into the nuances of Black identity and the concept of Blackness, urging me to explore how capitalism intersects with the experiences of Black women. Additionally, she highlighted the effectiveness of my utilization of zine creation as a medium for communication and expression, prompting further exploration into its potential within my research context. The feedback and guidance received from Terresa Moses and the defense panel as a whole served to enrich my understanding and approach to my research, guiding me towards deeper exploration and refinement in key areas.

post-  
presentation



# appendix

interview with Natsumi  
Miyata (DJ King Her)  
(N = Natsumi, age 30, female; I = Interviewer)

I: Can you tell us about your experience as a female DJ in a male-dominated industry?

N: Sometimes the boys treat me differently because I am a lady, which works as a positive and a negative. In the positive sense, you're respected a bit more differently because you're a woman. But then on the other hand, the negative side of that is you have to constantly keep showing people that you know what you're doing, you're in control and you're able to handle someone who's uneducated about how things are run or how things work. So it has its pros and cons, in a sense that there is some male support, but then there's also that anti-support in a sense of, do you as a woman know how to handle yourself in such an industry? And it becomes tough. And why? I say that because women are put under a lot more pressure than men. From your skill, you're judged on whether you can showcase the skill or not, and you are also judged on your appearance. And then last but not least, you're judged on your character. As a woman, are you a more nurturing woman or are you more of a materialistic type of woman? Or is it ever enough?

I: Have you ever faced discrimination or sexism within this industry that you're in and how have you dealt with it?

N: You see, discrimination falls under a lot of different aspects, you've got discrimination in the same gender side of things, discrimination in terms of race, then you've got discrimination in terms of social class. Where are you in the industry? Underground artist, someone who is a popular face of discrimination.

I: I've been reading a book by Bell Hooks, she is a phenomenal author and feminist and she talks about the black woman and feminism. In her book, *Ain't I A Woman - Black Woman & Feminism*, she states "the stereotypical image of the "strong" black woman has no longer been seen as dehumanizing. It became a new badge for the black female glory". So my question to you....ARE YOU A STRONG BLACK WOMAN?

A: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mentioned the world at large will address me in this nature. And you are not wrong because my home mothers, my foo mothers, they were strong women. To love is to know. And to know is to understand these are my strengths which also happen to be my weaknesses. I am a strong black woman but we face our struggles but we keep going.

I: what ways do you draw inspiration from your cultural heritage and how do you see it come to a more diverse music industry?

A: So I, as I said in the beginning of the interview, the melting pots for me were just coming from everywhere. And Where language is concerned, where the of how production is happening. Some of the rhythmical accents. There's so much to draw from, you know, so. In this regard, it was just an inevitable, an inevitable part of how I create. There's an essence behind, the communicating and how we express it, right? I listen to the rhythmic accents and I'm just like, pick up the, take a cut. You're in polyrhythmic. I'm just like, these are very much African influences in how they approach the rhythm. That's the beauty of art. You know what I mean? That's the beauty of art.

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