

Article

"It's a Woman Thing": Africanfuturism and Intersectionality in Nnedi Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix* and *Who Fears Death*

Ayodeji Isaac Shittu¹, Oluwatamilore Daniel Anthony², Anya Ude Egwu³

¹Department of English, Redeemer's University, ORCID ID: 0009-0008-9164-742X, shittua@run.edu.ng

²Department of English, Redeemer's University, ORCID ID: 0009-0005-5558-7683, anthony4763@run.edu.ng

³Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3569-3479, anya.egwu@unn.edu.ng

Correspondence: Anya Ude Egwu, anya.egwu@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

This article explored how the intersectional oppression of the female protagonists in Nnedi Okorafor's The Book of Phoenix (2015) and Who Fears Death (2010) empowers them to resist (intersectional resistance) and transform (intersectional redemption) their respective worlds fundamentally. Using Africanfuturism and intersectionality as theoretical perspectives, it posits that Phoenix, being Black and female, represents both the Black race and the Black woman. Thus, her trouble with Western domination, sexism, and misogyny displays the struggle of Black women with these problems. This condition is also applicable to Onyesonwu as a woman, an Okeke, and an Ewu, who grapples with patriarchy, racism, and religion. Her intersectional oppression enables her to exercise intersectional resistance and intersectional liberation, experiences that provide her with special insight into systemic modes of injustice. These Black females' intersectional resistance and intersectional redemption represent the agency of Black women who have demonstrated time and again their ability to interrogate and dismantle ideologies and systems of domination wherever they find themselves. This shows that women in Africa possess experiential knowledge of suppression and exclusion, which makes them invaluable in achieving an unprecedented renaissance and "Africanfuture" in the continent.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Africanfuturism, Black women, patriarchy, Nnedi Okorafor

Introduction

Thanks to the rich debate initiated by the term Africanfuturism, it has become a critical idiom for exploring the futurist writings of African authors. Many scholars have examined certain works for their Africanfuturist aesthetics or attempted to broaden the concept's scope after it was propounded by Nnedi Okorafor in 2019 (Bryce, Bello, Koziel, Falola, Sunday & Akung, & Hanchey). As a result, Africanfuturism is a growing sub-genre of African literature which is likely to increase in popularity in the future. Africanfuturism was propounded by Nnedi Okorafor to distinguish her speculative writing (and perhaps, African speculative writings) from the African-American model popularly called Afrofuturism. She highlights the tenets of Africanfuturism in "Africanfuturism Defined": Africanfuturism being grounded in the culture, history, mythology, and perspective of Africa, decentres the West. (Okorafor). To buttress this point, she asserts that Africanfuturist works are set primarily in Africa but can extend beyond the continent to other locations occupied by Black people. (Okorafor). Next, Africanfuturism is temporally fluid, involving a critical reflection on the present, a projection of future possibilities, and a reconnection with the past, in a technologically advanced setting within or beyond Earth. Yet, it is not blindly

optimistic (Okorafor). Finally, Africanfuturism incorporates mysticism derived from African beliefs and worldviews. (Okorafor).

Beyond anything else, Okorafor emphasises the fact that Africanfuturism is unique to Africa. It is a term that the writer deploys to reclaim the creative agency of African speculative authors. Therefore, scholars who have examined Africanfuturism or further theorised it have linked it to African literary arts, experiences, political developments, and social conditions. For instance, Bello argues that Nnedi Okorafor rejects any Western influence on Africanfuturism by confining it to Africa. He sees the alleged confinement as a major limitation of Africanfuturism, proposing that it should be inclusive of African life worlds in their fullness (Bello 1-10). Opposed to this belief is Koziel, who makes a case for Okorafor's coinage, justifying the term and its significance for African people. The scholar highlights two effects of africanfuturist fiction on an African audience which happen simultaneously, using the metaphor of space, time, and expedition. The first expedition transports the reader, viewer, or listener to a geographical location dominated by African people with supernatural abilities, thereby encountering a different perspective on African society (Koziel 82). The second expedition, which is contingent on identity and metaphysics, immerses the audience in an imaginary world based on the idea of a pan-African community. This imaginary world blends mythologies, spiritualities, and myths of various ethnic groups in Africa (Koziel 82). It may be inferred from the preceding that Africanfuturism impresses upon the African readership optimism about Africa's potential, their cultural heritage, and the need for unity.

Although Falola makes no reference to Okorafor's usage of Africanfuturism, his work is germane to the philosophical, political, and ideological functions of Africanfuturism (his version is spelt "African Futurism"). As the scholar uses it, African Futurism is not directly concerned with literary productions but with the postcolonial conditions of African people. According to him, "African Futurism is an advanced stage of African decolonization." (Falola 597). Elaborating further, Falola states that African Futurism destabilises the hegemonic portrayal of the future through Eurocentrism. It re-envision the African past, present, and future in a bid to actualise a preferable future for people of African descent. Central to such an endeavour is the utilisation of indigenous modes of spirituality, myth, folklore, and techno-scientific inventions (Falola 597). In light of Falola's explication, African Futurism is not restricted to the aesthetic domain. It also suggests that, even as an aesthetic form, African Futurism is politically and ideologically capable of fostering black liberation.

There have also been feminist examinations of Nnedi Okorafor's speculative texts. As an example, Selvick reads Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* (2010) as a post-apocalyptic feminist critique of weaponised rape and racism. Deploying perspectives from pleasure activism and transformative justice, the scholar analyses how a group of youthful characters in the text (Onyesonwu, Mwita, Binta, Luyu, Diti; & Fanasi) reimagine and actuate a desired feminist future in the novel (Selvick

55). Selvick concludes that radical honesty, consent, and pleasure become vital models that the said characters adopt to heal from and resolve the legacies of racialized and gendered violence in their world. (Selvick, 55). In another work, Gafour examines the deconstruction and reconstruction of identity by Black female characters in Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti Trilogy* (2015-2018). Drawing from ideas of Womanism and Afrofuturism, the researcher develops an Afrofuturist Womanist Manifesto, which she believes facilitates self-discovery and empowerment, requisite for transformative growth. These assertions are situated in the *Binti Trilogy*, which is described as an odyssey into the domain of Black female identity. (Gafour IV). Other scholars, including Arit Oku and Marinette Grimbeek, have also considered crucial issues in Nnedi Okorafor's speculative fiction. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, none has explored intersectionality in Nnedi Okorafor's writings. Therefore, this study applies intersectionality to Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix* (2015) and *Who Fears Death* (2010) to understand how the intersectional oppression of the female protagonists in the selected texts empowers them to transform their respective worlds fundamentally as an Africanfuturist project. This suggests that socially conscious Black women are specially positioned to revitalise the African continent and even the world because of the intricacies of their subjugation, which enables them to understand the dynamics of injustice in their societies and thus transform them.

An Overview of Intersectionality

It is widely accepted that the critical term, intersectionality, was coined and popularised by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her two articles "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989) and "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" (1991). However, this creates the impression that the ideas which are subsumed under the term are mainly attributable to Crenshaw. A number of scholars still presume that the concept of intersectionality was first conceived by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Contrary to this view, the notion that Black women are subject to multiple forms of oppression in society due to their identities as women and Blacks (which intersectionality embodies) has been a core premise of Black feminism before the coinage of the term. Therefore, it may have been coined by Crenshaw, but the conceptualisation of the term includes many other Black feminists, some of whose works predate hers.

In view of the above, many have written on the multiple modes of oppression Black women are subject to, either before or at the same time Crenshaw theorised intersectionality. Prime examples are Anna Julia Cooper, Frances Beale, Combahee River Collective, Bell Hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins. The central idea in Bell Hooks' *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* is that black women are marginalised by the minority groups to which they belong in society: They face racial discrimination and classicism among white feminists, while they face sexism among black men. Hooks contends that black women are subdued by the sexist, racist, and

classist forces of American society (Hooks 14). White women and black men can play the role of oppressor or be oppressed: Black men are victims of racism but perpetrators of sexism against women; white women are victims of sexism but perpetrators of racism and classism against black people (15). This clearly indicates intersectionality, accentuating the multiple modes of oppression endured by Black women. It is noteworthy that the discrimination and exploitation endured by Black women empower them to challenge the predominant systems of injustice in their society. Hooks remarks that “It is essential for continued feminist struggle that black women recognize the special vantage point our marginality gives us and make use of this perspective to criticize the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony as well as to envision and create a counter-hegemony.” (Hooks 15).

Hill Collins’ nomenclature for the phenomenon under scrutiny is the matrix of domination. She asserts that additive models of oppression are flawed because they are rooted in the either/or binary of Eurocentrism and patriarchy, which relies on a hierarchical system, where one aspect of the binary is superior to the other (Collins 225). The hierarchical system does not recognise the interconnections between categories of exploitation that social groups grapple with. Hence, Collins substitutes the additive models of oppression with interlocking ones, which are inclusive of many kinds of oppression unrecognised or undermined in an additive model. In light of Collins’ distinction, black women are affected mainly by race, class, and sexism (Collins 225). This is in exact conformity with Hooks’ explanation of the oppressive forces that trouble black women. However, Collins goes further by acknowledging that other people of colour, Jews, white women, gays, lesbians, and the poor are affected by these and other forms of suppression linked to their identities (Collins 225). This comes across as more inclusive because it transcends the lives of black women, signifying that the matrix of domination applies to the interests of all oppressed groups in America.

Based on the above, intersectionality is best understood as a term traceable to Crenshaw’s seminal articles “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (1989) and “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” (1991), both citationally and genealogically (Nash 11). This recognises the contribution of other scholars to its conceptualisation by clarifying that it is a new term rather than a new idea.

Having said that, Kimberlé Crenshaw’s understanding of the subjugation of Black women in society is distinguished by its application to the experiences of this group in the American legal system. In “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (1989), she contends that the multifacetedness of black women’s social realities cannot be accurately explained with a single-axis analysis. The single-axis framework has theoretical limitations that distort feminist and antiracist analyses (139-140). Scrutiny reveals the similarities between Crenshaw’s proposition and Hill Collins’. The single-axis framework is relatable to the additive models of

oppression: both are thought to be reductive and presumptive systems that misinterpret the lived experiences of Black women. On the other hand, Crenshaw's intersectionality (the multifacetedness of black female experiences) and Collins' interlocking models of oppression both prioritise the interlinked categories that have promoted the oppression of Black women in society. Crenshaw then applies intersectionality to three cases: *DeGraffenreid v General Motors*, *Moore v Hughes Helicopter*, and *Payne v Travenol*, concluding that the cases prove that the mainstream political and theoretical approaches to tackling societal discrimination disfavour Black women. The courts, feminists, and civil rights thinkers neglect the unique complexities and centrality of their experiences among women and blacks (150).

African feminism constitutes a third major category of Feminism, besides Western feminism and Black feminism. African feminists have challenged the generalisations of Western feminists about the suppression and demands of women universally, citing the Eurocentrism, racism, white privilege, and stereotyping that are reinforced in the Western feminist framework. In like manner, they have criticised the misconceptions about Africa and the misappropriation of African culture by some Black feminists in their creation of a feminist model, which may account for the plights of black women globally. African feminists stress the necessity of understanding the local specificity of females' lives in each society, for the development of feminist frameworks pertinent to females of such societies. This seems like the rationale behind the theorisation of African feminism, and specifically, of views about intersectionality, in African feminist discourse.

OyEwumi holds that "African women and feminism are at odds because despite the adjectives used to qualify feminism, it is Western feminism that inevitably dominates even when it is not explicitly the subject under consideration." (1). It is implied that Western feminism is a product of Western cultural hegemony. Through slavery, colonialism, and neocolonialism, Western culture has dominated others, and Western feminism benefits from this. In agreement, OyEwumi contends that Western feminism and Western imperialism are alike. Just as the African continent was defined as the white man's burden, the African woman became the white woman's burden, an exploited, helpless, brutalised, and downtrodden victim who needed rescuing from the savagery of African patriarchy and culture. (OyEwumi 28). Tamale shares OyEwumi's perspective, noting that there is a need to omit aspects of Western feminism from Afro-feminist activism that are irrelevant to the experiences of African women for more meaningful and contextually sensitive methods of addressing these experiences. (Tamale 57).

Concerning African-American feminists' mutilation of African culture and history, OyEwumi protests the ignorance of some African Americans, to whom the continent has no tangible reality or meaning. Hence, they redefine the image of Africa to suit their political ends. In her words, " [...] the only way that Africa participates in this discourse about black identity is in its remaking in the image of whichever political grouping it is called upon to serve within this Diaspora

community.” (OyEwumi 14). Indicated here is the impact of Eurocentrism on African American feminists who have involuntarily imbibed the stereotypes about Africa in the West. This highlights the necessity for African feminists to lead inquiry into the predicaments of women in African societies.

As a solution to the distortion of female realities in Africa, African women have propounded Indigenous theoretical models which are founded upon an African cultural perspective, an African geopolitical location and an African ideological viewpoint (Nkealah 62). On these bases, models of African feminism including motherism, nego-feminism, femalism, and snail-sense feminism, have been formulated, mostly in West Africa. In relation to feminist activism in Africa, Tsitsi Dangarembga observes that black feminists have experienced the most repressive kind of injustice under most demographic categories without succumbing. They are empowered by the need to survive in environments bent on relegating them to a quasi-humanity. Hence, they are the most suitable for envisioning and creating a more equal society (Dangarembga 63).

African feminists are conversant with the social dynamics which contribute to the subordination of women in Africa. Their explication of intersectionality is connected with the culture, politics, economics, gender roles, religious organisation, history and current affairs in Africa. Illustratively, Nkealah proposes that African women are marginalised under the three-striped banner of culture, tradition and religion (Nkealah 136). This suggests that these social institutions, which have been weaponised against African women, coalesce to preclude female empowerment. In addition, it has been noted that any thorough dissection of decolonisation and decoloniality, besides race, must entail the complex intersections of oppression rooted in gender, sexuality, migration, poverty, religion and all other germane experiences (Tamale 63). This expands the scope of intersectionality to include any identity or social categorisation which might motivate the subordination of individuals. It also connects the concept to the decolonial struggles of Africa. Tamale adds that

So, while all Africans are adversely affected by enduring legacies of colonialism and its convergence with racism, our positioning within diverse social categories based on gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, religion, age, marital status, etc. means that we experience oppression differently (Tamale 63).

As it affects African women, it is argued that the intersectional oppression they experience is different from that of other groups, owing fundamentally to their gender, but other categories, such as those listed above, diversify their experience of oppression according to the relevance of the categories to their lives. Therefore, tackling female oppression in Africa demands an intersectional approach to female empowerment and liberation. It also demands that African women form alliances both locally and internationally (Salo and Mama 62). Dangarembga, in her *Black and Female*, displays cognisance with the intersectional subordination of black women. Even the title invokes the identitarian complexities that have become an

excuse for the subjection of black women to injustice. She declares, “[to] be a feminist while black and female in Zimbabwe is to live at the epicentre of structural racism and a brutal militarised patriarchy that has co-opted significant state institutions either in part or in their entirety.” (Dangarembga 60). The racial and gender identities of black women expose them to racism from Western Imperialism and repressive patriarchy, sometimes simultaneously, because the African state, in some cases, coopts the racist stereotypes about African women from the West. Therefore, the intersectional systems in the Western world and in Africa are both targeted at Black women. The writer further contrasts the objectives of white feminists and black feminists, among whom are African feminists: While white feminists envision a world where rewards are redistributed in conformity with white private ownership patriarchy, black feminists envision one in which all people who are marginalised under any system are liberated from them (Dangarembga 63).

Intersectional Oppression, Intersectional Resistance, and Intersectional Redemption in *The Deviant Duology*

In her creative corpus, most of Nnedi Okorafor’s protagonists are females who are at the centre of a serious conflict or are the main target of subordination due to their femininity, principally, and other identities that are stereotyped, stigmatised, and/or dreaded in their environment. Although in Okorafor’s major works, the multiple identities that motivate the social exclusion or oppression of the heroines are interwoven, one may argue that their gender is the most fundamental of these, because their femininity determines how their other identities are used against them. For instance, Ayodele (one of the protagonists in *Lagoon*) and Ejimafor Ugabe (the protagonist in *Shadow Speaker*) are both challenged essentially by the patriarchal figures of their environment. In Ayodele’s case, her husband is bent on imposing his authority as a husband upon her by dictating to her what she is permitted to do or otherwise. In like manner, Ejimafor’s father attempts to marry her off to an old man because she is female, as a way of preventing her from challenging his authority in the future. The heroines’ other identities only exacerbate the prejudice and hostility of male figures in their environment, who already view females as threats to their patriarchal authority.

Additionally, it is observed that the heroines in Okorafor’s major works are unwittingly enlightened and empowered by the intersectional subordination they encounter. It aids in their understanding of the cultural, political, economic, religious, and ideological flaws that catalyse injustice in their society or environment, because these are commonly connected to sexism and misogyny. Thus, the heroines are depicted in Okorafor’s fiction as the best equipped to deconstruct and erase salient forms of injustice in their world. The Africanfuturist works among these demonstrate how Black women are able to radically transform their society or change the trajectory of their people’s past and future. By inference, the liberation of the black woman in Okorafor’s works is tantamount to the

liberation of society. The African local colour, geographical locations, and highly impactful African characters are integrated into the world-building of *The Deviant Duology* to be examined in this study, and are amplified by advanced technology and futurism. It is believed that these produce empowering images of the future that relate to the present aspirations of Africans at the individual and collective levels. In the texts, Black women grapple with sexism and misogyny, within the broader contexts of culture, politics, economics, science, power politics, technoculture, and so on; such that, in liberating themselves, they liberate society as well. The selected texts, *The Book of Phoenix* (2015) and *Who Fears Death* (2010), are herein referred to as the *Deviant Duology* because the heroines are othered by the dominant cultural, social, political, religious, and racial institutions in their societies owing to their gender, history, appearance, and superhuman abilities.

The Book of Phoenix is a frame-story narrative which revolves around *The Great Book*, a transcription of the protagonist's audio-recorded autobiography, which she calls "The Book of Phoenix" (after which the novel is named). This recording is accidentally discovered by Sunuteel in a cave of abandoned computers sometime in a post-apocalyptic future. Phoenix is an accelerated biological organism (an ABO) who was created by Big Eye, an organisation that engages in unethical research and experimentation for creating genetically modified humans called speciMEN. After the supposed death of her lover, Saeed, Phoenix, who has been confined in Tower 7 (One of the branches of Big Eye) all her life, decides to escape. After the tower falls, Phoenix escapes, but the Big Eye, led by Bumi, is adamant about not letting her—and her companions, such as Saeed, Mmuo, and Seven-go. After she escapes to Wulugu, Ghana, Phoenix maintains a low profile, but not for long. The Big Eye agents track her to that location, laying waste to the town in the process. Influenced by guilt, grief, and the urge for vengeance, Phoenix returns to America with them. On the return journey, she learns how to manipulate time from another powerful being named Seven. Empowered by this knowledge, Phoenix, together with Saeed and Mmuo, determines to overthrow Big Eye by destroying the six towers of the gargantuan organisation. Phoenix learns more about the hidden atrocities of Big Eye, including her mother's horrible death at their hands. Sadly, the Big Eye finds her and her friends where they hide, kills Mmuo as well as speciMEN's children, and abducts Saeed. All these accumulate in her fury and the ultimate scourging of the entire planet.

If Phoenix's purpose is to "wipe the slate clean" (Okorafor 216) by razing the earth, Onyesonwu's purpose is to transform it. In the epilogue of the above novel, a powerful seer named Sola, who features in *Who Fear Death*, appears. He reveals that Sunuteel, the author of the Great Book, revered by many in the sequel, distorted Phoenix's account. Unwittingly, it "deformed the lives of many until the one named Onyesonwu came and changed it again." (Okorafor 227). Phoenix's cleansing gains importance only because Onyesonwu rewrites the Great Book, transforming the world in the process, and vice versa. There are two major races in *Who Fears Death*: the light-skinned Nuru and the dark-skinned Okeke. In the Great Book, it is claimed

that Ani, the earth goddess, punished the Okeke for exploiting the Earth by making them slaves to the Nuru. This is used to support the enslavement of the Okeke by the Nuru. A common atrocity in the new world is the rape of Okeke women by Nuru men who try to bear a special breed of children called the “Ewu”. Due to the manner of their birth, the Ewus are despised by both the Okeke and the Nuru. It is prophesied that a Nuru man, tall and bearded, will rewrite the Great Book, freeing the Okeke from the clutches of slavery. However, this mandate is eventually executed by Onyesonwu, an Ewu and a female, but also the most powerful sorcerer in the story.

The First Great Change: Exogenous Intersectionality in *The Book of Phoenix*

The main plot of *The Book of Phoenix* unfolds in the United States of America and Wulugu, Ghana. The setting establishes an association between Africa and the Western world founded on migration, power politics, economic exploitation, and racial identity. Illustratively, the major characters such as Phoenix, Mmuo, Saeed, Seven, and Bumi are Africans, and apart from Phoenix and Bumi, they were abducted from Africa. Phoenix is born in America by an African American woman named Takeisha Thomas; Mmuo (whose real name is Ikenga Emezi Nnachukwu) and Bumi are Nigerian; Saeed is an Arab Egyptian; and Seven is a Malian. Even Bunmi, a voluntary migrant, seems like a pawn to the “Big Eye”, who capitalise on her desperation to become an American citizen to make her do their bidding. According to her, “I’m legal, but not a citizen. Not yet. I will be. My work with you will earn me the pull I need.” (Okorafor 28). Apparently, the condition for her naturalisation is the success of her experimentations on Phoenix.

The identity of the above characters is crucial for the portrayal of ways the power politics and economic relations between Africa and the West continue to favour the latter. The characters are held captive by the Big Eye, which dehumanises them under the pretext of scientific progress. The most affected character seems to be Phoenix, the heroine of the story, whose gender indicates that the group most brutalised by Western domination continues to be Black females. To illustrate, Phoenix is not conceived naturally:

I was nothing but the result of a slurry of African DNA and cells. They constructed the sperm and the egg with materials of over ten Africans, all from the West African nations of Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Benin. Then they combined all that with DNA from Lucy the Mitochondrial Eve, the ten-year-old Ethiopian girl who carried the complete genetic blueprint of the human race. (Okorafor 147-148)

The genetic mix is implanted in an African American woman named Vera Takeisha Thomas, for whom the Big Eye assures the advantages of carrying the embryo, which would become Phoenix. They promise to take care of her university education, financial needs, and accommodation. They also affirm that the embryo

will immunise her against common diseases such as bird flu, Ebola, and river blindness. She is, however, not warned about the risks of carrying the embryo. She contracts cancer from the radiation Phoenix exudes in her womb. Consequently, Vera is abandoned in the Triple Towers Correctional Facility, where she dies. From her birth, Phoenix is separated from her mother, held captive, ruthlessly experimented on, and lied to about her history (the victimisation of her mother).

The fact that Phoenix's predecessors, Takeisha Thomas and Lucy (the core of her DNA) are brutally exploited for their biological or reproductive capacities is invocative of the violation, objectification and commodification of each generation of black women by Western systems and agents of suppression, from the age of the transatlantic slave trade to the 21st century, due to the commercialisation of their reproductive capability, the prevalence of sexism and misogyny. The categories, femininity and blackness, are marginalised ones that serve as justification for the abuse of Black women in Africa and the West. Their predicament is exacerbated by the struggle of the Black race with the impacts of colonialism, the presence of neocolonialism, underdevelopment, and oppression in Africa; with classicism, alienation, White privilege, and racial discrimination in the diaspora.

The West African nations of Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Benin mentioned in the previous excerpt share the experiences of European slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, migration, and the diaspora. Again, the core element of Phoenix's biology is Lucy's DNA; it is important to note that Ethiopia is one of two African nations that were never colonized by the West (the second is Liberia). Furthermore, scientific data support the view that Ethiopia is the cradle of *Homo sapiens*. Lucy's "...complete genetic blueprint of the human race" alludes to this fact. However, even a historically and evolutionarily significant location like Ethiopia is not spared from the present difficulties of the African continent. The country is ranked the lowest in key areas such as Human Development Index, Corruption Index, and Global Hunger Index (Senbeta 1). Finally, Phoenix's mother is an African-American, a member of the old African diaspora. In view of her genetic and geographical connection to the mother continent and the Black diaspora, it is believed that Phoenix is an embodiment of the Black race. On top of that, the pivotal role of females in Phoenix's creation and her femininity as well, stresses the pertinence of the Black woman to the Black race, and the interlinked forms of suppression, including sexism, racism, colonialism, neocolonialism, economic deprivation, sexualisation, and gendered violence, which are designed to suppress her.

Another critical location in the text is Wulugu, Ghana. It is to this town that Phoenix takes the alien seed stolen by Big Eye. The inhabitants of the town welcome her into their midst despite her strangeness. The seed leads Phoenix to this place, which seems to be its original location. She transplants it in a Shea tree farm at Wulugu, enhancing the plant life. The following harvest is abundant. Hence, the transplantation of the seed in its original location and the positive outcome therefrom allude to the need for African nations to harness their natural, human,

and cultural resources, as well as the combined resources and advanced expertise of the African diaspora, for the radical development of the continent. Phoenix's success in relocating the seed indicates that Black women cannot be excluded from this development campaign, given their distinct experiences, challenges, and perspectives.

In accordance with Taylor, overlapping forms of oppression, humiliation, and indignity caused by poverty, racism, and sexism encourage Black women to participate in radical and revolutionary politics (Taylor 11-12). In a similar vein, the dehumanisation, manipulation, violence, and intimidation of Phoenix by the Big Eye, prime her to resist the patriarchal, racial, and capitalist machinations of Big Eye. In the current scenario, her protection and relocation of the alien seed can be interpreted as the past, present, and future contributions of African women to the restoration of their continent, in spite of the setbacks they face constantly. Black woman actors have made remarkable contributions to various sectors, movements and goals of the global Black community including Ida B. Wells-Barnett, a journalist, educator and activist; Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist, and activist; Michelle Obama, a global feminist and political icon; Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim, "[...]one of the most outspoken feminists in Africa and the Arab world (Abusharaf 154), Nkiru 'Kiki' Mordi, an Emmy-nominated investigative journalist, filmmaker, writer, radio presenter and gender equality advocate (African Union Commission 49); Mariatu Kargbo, "[...]a China-Africa goodwill and cultural exchange ambassador[...] (African Union Commission 47); Melatwork Tibebe Mengesha, "[...]a scientist, writer, activist and a PhD fellow at Addis Ababa University (African Union Commission 42); and a host of others. Moreover, Wulugu's show of hospitality to Phoenix demonstrates that women of the new African diaspora should be readily integrated into African societies because the wealth of worldly experience and expertise they possess can bolster Africa's prospects.

Wulugu becomes a place of refuge for Phoenix, where she enjoys peace for the first time. But it is short-lived: Agents of Big Eye trace her to the town, wreaking havoc on the inhabitants in the process. However, the seed remains intact. An interpretation is that Western capitalism and neo-colonialism, represented by the Big Eye, still obstruct the attempts of African nations to grow. To reiterate, Phoenix can be viewed as an embodiment of the Black woman. Therefore, her recapture and its repercussions for the people of Wulugu signify that the exploitation of the Black woman by the Western world is to the detriment of Africa itself. It therefore behoves African societies to safeguard the girl child and woman in their attempt to safeguard themselves. That said, the fact that the head of the operation to recapture Phoenix is a Nigerian named Bumi complicates the oppressor-oppressed binary explained earlier. Before Phoenix escapes from Tower 7, Bumi was her handler. She supervises the painful experimentations and development Phoenix must endure. Bumi capitalises on her trust until Phoenix better understands Big Eye's (and Bumi's) hidden agenda. In light of the foregoing, Black women are sometimes implicated in the subordination of their fellows, resulting in the collective failure of

the group to attain justice and equity. Furthermore, Bumi's role in Phoenix recapture shows how some African actors are involved in the commodification of African people. In most African countries, the leadership, governmental institutions, mass media, cultural and educational bodies have failed their respective citizenry, conniving with the Capitalist West in the economic and cultural subordination of Africa.

The Big Eye is depicted as a symbol of malignancy. They are the primary cause of the injustice, enslavement, exploitation, and propaganda troubling Phoenix's world. The Big Eye conducts unethical experiments on humans, animals, and even aliens with special characteristics. The dreadful methods of experimentation and their disconnection from the urgent needs of society underline their negative implications; Big Eye weaponises scientific knowledge against Black humanity: Phoenix notes that most of the speciMEN they experiment on are African:

[...]the woman with the twisted spine who could turn her head around like an owl, the man with long-eyelashed expressive eyes who never spoke with his mouth but always had people speaking to him, the three women who all looked and sounded alike, the green-eyed idiok baboons who spoke using complex sign language, the woman whose sweater did not hide her four large breasts, the two men joined at the hip who were always randomly laughing, the woman with the lion claws and teeth... Only Saeed, the one who was not of African descent (aside from the lion lady, who was Caucasian), spoke to me. Well, even the lion lady was part-African because her genes had been combined with those of a lion (Okorafor 20).

The cacophonous scenery of deformity and bodily mismatch is the result of the damaging experiments that scientists of the Big Eye conduct aggressively. It should be recalled that Big Eye is managed by Westerners, the implication being that the Western world still leeches off Africa through exploitative mechanisms that are still active. Capitalism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and racism, which remain potent in the 21st century are/were devised to enrich the Western world. This is endorsed by Heller, who argues that colonialism is an offshoot of Western capitalism:

[...]colonialism has to be understood in dialectical fashion as an outgrowth of the dynamic development of capitalism within Europe. Its development[...] reflected the expansive drive of capitalism. It arose out of the quest for increasing amounts of bullion necessary to supply the rapidly emerging capitalist marketplace within Europe at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. The urgency to find fresh sources of gold and silver was admittedly increased by the simultaneous search for profit in the African slave trade and slave plantation economy[...] (Heller 166-167).

Capitalism, at its core, is profit-driven. This is a huge problem because the capitalist accumulation of wealth is often at the detriment of positive human values and human dignity. As a result, capitalism cannot restrict itself to one society; for the steady rise in profit, it must of necessity advance into other societies and continents

for the acquisition of natural resources and labour at the cheapest possible cost. The spread of colonialism can therefore be regarded as contingent on the spread of capitalism. Heller also associates the emergence of the transatlantic slave trade and the slave labour in the white world to capitalism, from which it may be inferred that capitalism has been the motivating force behind the Western oppression of African people. Although the scholar is retrospective in his exposé, his thoughts are germane to the current conditions of the 21st century, as suggested in *The Book of Phoenix*.

The events in the selected text reflect the flaws of Western capitalism. It is submitted that the impetus for the Big Eye's ghastly experimentation, exploitation, destruction, and deception is gain. Other than monetary gain, capitalism motivates the acquisition of knowledge and power by hook or crook. Thus, the Big Eye is wealthy, knowledgeable, and powerful, and they abuse these privileges. Africa is at the receiving end of the Big Eye's tyranny. They abduct and, when necessary, manipulate Black people for knowledge, profit, and power. Their purpose seems to be the perpetual commodification of Africa, given that they steal humans and resources from the continent ruthlessly. It may be recalled that when Phoenix transplants the seed to Wulugu, the people reap the benefits of an unprecedented, bountiful harvest, indicating that the Big Eye stole it for its high value. On top of that, in the text, the American government is aware of the illegal operations of the Big Eye. Phoenix confirms this when she discovers detailed information about the structure, activities, and funds of the organisation, as well as the speciMen, in the Library of Congress, recognised as "the main research arm of the U.S. Congress." (Hayden "About the Library"). A possible interpretation is that both Western governments and private organisations are complicit in the economic and political subjugation of African people.

Outraged by the impunity of the self-serving Big Eye, Phoenix perceives that the mission of destroying the seven towers is not enough. The rot created by the Big Eye—by Western superpowers and capitalism—has corrupted the earth. The organisation is headquartered in the West, but has branches in other parts of the world. This is reflective of colonialism, slavery, and neo-colonialism because it is through these branches that speciMen in other parts of the world are discovered, then relocated to the West, as though they were resources. As a solution, Phoenix scorches the earth: "Phoenix Okore blew across the earth. She burned the cities. Turned the oceans to steam. She was the reaper come to reap what was sown. Wherever those seven men lived. Let them die. Let everything die. Let that which had been written all be rewritten" (Okorafor 217).

Phoenix's destruction of the world represents the agency of Black women who have demonstrated time and again their ability to interrogate and dismantle ideologies and systems of domination wherever they find themselves. They play a pivotal role in the reconstruction of Black people's collective destiny, seeing that in their

campaign against patriarchy and sexism, they counteract the salient models of suppression and manipulation in their society. Arguably, patriarchy and sexism are among the fundamental ideologies that sustain all oppressive societies. This leads Beale to insist that “unless women in any enslaved nation are completely liberated, the change cannot be called a revolution” (121). Her view is consolidated by Hooks, who clarifies that the struggle against sexist oppression is not for the sake of women alone. Feminism is potent in liberating society from the sexist oppression and radicalising other liberation struggles (40-41).

These perspectives are in tandem with the portrayal in the selected text. From her feminine vantage point, Phoenix comprehends the intricate network of economic fraud, sexism, miseducation, enslavement, misogyny, racism, imperialism, and materialism which destabilises her world. In this regard, another pivotal event is Phoenix’s discovery of HeLa (named after Henrietta Lacks’ immortal cells), an accelerated biological organism like her, whose blood can grant immortality to humans. Seven billionaires purchase vials of her blood so that they can own the world eternally. Phoenix’s realisation of their malevolent scheme is the tipping point, which provokes her to start the apocalypse; she wishes for their death: “She burned the cities. Turned the oceans to steam. She was the reaper come to reap what was sown. Wherever those seven men lived. Let them die. Let everything die.” (Okorafor 217). The seven men, being faceless, ruthless, and greedy, could symbolise the overwhelming hegemony of patriarchy in the areas of government, diplomacy, economy, and globalisation in the modern age.

Phoenix has always been powerful, but it is after developing her self-awareness, by spending some time in Africa, learning from Seven how to manipulate time, and visiting the Library of Congress, that she is empowered. From this, it can be inferred that empowerment is a state of mind. To create a more equitable world, Black women must nurture confidence in themselves and their race, learning more about their past glories, present capabilities and future potentials; also, making themselves even more relevant in critical domains of politics, aesthetics, science, technology, agriculture, environmentalism, education, information technology, space exploration etc., in their countries and the global community. This engenders both Black female empowerment and Black empowerment. However, the vehemence Phoenix musters to destroy the earth implies that the creation of an equitable world mandates that Black women in their respective societies, disrupt patriarchy through resistance, activism, self-emancipation, and female solidarity, for without destroying these, Black people cannot be freed from Western hegemony.

The Second Great Change: Endogenous Intersectionality in *Who Fears Death*

Contrary to what may be suggested in the preceding, Okorafor does not restrict her critique to the West. Plausibly speaking, while her attention in the *Book of Phoenix* is

directed at the Western world, *Who Fears Death* is directed at the problems of Africa itself. Together, the two texts provide a holistic portrait of the global and local ills that inhibit Africa and the remedies to these. *Who Fears Death*, which depicts racial tension between the light-skinned Nuru and dark-skinned Okeke, was inspired by a 2004 news story of *The Washington Post* titled “‘We Want to Make a Light Baby’: Arab Militiamen in Sudan Said to Use Rape as Weapon of Ethnic Cleansing.” The article explains how members of the Arab-militia group, called Janajaweed, violate darker African women, as a means of growing the population of Arab people in the country. It is reported that “The crisis in Darfur is a result of long-simmering ethnic tensions between nomadic cattle and camel herders, who view themselves as Arabs, and the more sedentary farmers, who see their ancestry as African.” (Wax “‘We Want to Make a Light Baby’...”). The situation in Sudan is more extreme than in most countries anywhere in the world. Of the 163 countries ranked in the Global Peace Index of 2024, Sudan is ranked 162nd, one place above the bottom (Global Peace Index 2024 9). Thus, it could be erroneous to use the country as a general representative of the problems in Africa. Yet, as a source of inspiration for *Who Fears Death*, the situation in Sudan makes necessary the examination of the internal difficulties in Africa and remedies for them from an Africanfuturist viewpoint. The rewriting of the Great Book by Onyesonwu indicates that the true emancipation of African people cannot be attained without a revolution championed by Black people on the continent, in which women must be a part.

As depicted in *Who Fears Death*, intersectional oppression is a major challenge in Africa. It was revealed in the literature review that intersectionality is a conceptual model for explaining the interwoven processes of social systems that exert significant influence on individuals in society. Atewologun offers that intersectionality as a theory provides the crucial mindset and language for apprehending the interconnections and interdependencies between social groups and systems (Atewologun 2). The relationship between them determines the modes of discrimination and oppression of a given society. As stated in *Gender and racial discrimination: Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, intersectionality “specifically addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, economic disadvantages, and other discriminatory systems contribute to creating layers of inequality that structure the relative positions of women and men, races, and other groups.” (United Nations Gender and Racial Discrimination: Report of the Expert Group Meeting). It is deduced from the preceding that intersectionality concerns the interests of all social groups in society. Thus, even though the difficulties and interests of female characters are central in this section, the problems that ail their region will not be ignored.

A reading of the text shows that the most powerful social systems therein are patriarchy, racism, and religion, which together sanction the subordination of women, the Okekes, and the Ewus. Female characters in the novel are the most affected in the text. Illustratively, Najeeba (Onyesonwu’s mother) is sexually violated by Daib, a powerful sorcerer. He is part of a group of Nuru men and

women who ambush a defenceless Okeke village. Najeeba has joined the women of the village to pray to Ani, a distance into the desert. As they pray, they are found and abused by the Nuru men who desire to create Ewu children. In times of conflict and war, women are targets of sexual violence, humiliation, and gruesome deaths, as a result of cultural stereotypes, discrimination, and disempowerment in many African societies. This is illustrated in the scenario.

Furthermore, the violation of the Okeke women is motivated by racism. The Great Book teaches that “[...] the Okeke were born to be slaves of the Nuru. Long ago, during the Old Africa Era, they had done something terrible, causing Ani to put this duty on their backs.” (Okorafor 23). The Okeke, who are seen as cursed by Ani, are suppressed callously by the Nuru. The belief of the Nuru (oppressor) and Okeke (oppressed) in the Great Book justifies widespread genocide, apartheid, and racial cleansing against the “cursed people”. It is in this context that Najeeba’s misfortune can be better understood. As an Okeke, she is subject to racial discrimination. However, her gender identity is why she is subject to sexual abuse. The intersection of subordinate identities aggravates Najeeba’s persecution and abuse; the systems of patriarchy and racism shape her experiences as an Okeke (racial category) and a woman (gender category).

A third social category is the Ewu caste. They are easily recognised by their complexion and hair colour, which is “the odd shade of the sand.” (Okorafor 30). In both Nuru and Okeke societies, the Ewus are detested for the manner of their conception and birth. They are called children of violence, regarded as destructive and violent by nature. It is believed that when a Nuru man sexually assaults an Okeke woman, the most vicious of Ewu children is born. Thus, one suspects that the reasons for the animosity against the Ewus are two. First, the Ewus are offspring of the forbidden union between a Nuru and an Okeke. Second, the Ewu-born remind the Okekes in the south about the reality of their slavery to the Nuru’s: The Ewus upset the illusion of freedom and peace that complacent Okekes are accustomed to. This is confirmed when Najeeba, who becomes a desert nomad after the incident with Nuru’s military men, must seek medical attention for her infant daughter. Thus, she pays a visit to an Okeke town named Diliza, where she finds a healer. During a brief shopping trip at the town’s market, Najeeba and her Ewu daughter are nearly stoned to death, but she escapes. Most of the assailants are men, both old and young. They humiliate her with insults such as ““Nuru concubine!...” “Slave!” ... “Ewu carrier!”” (Okorafor 33). The narrator’s perception is noteworthy:

To these people, the murder of Okekes in the West was more story than fact [...]. These people didn’t want to know the truth. So they watched [...] As they watched, they stopped and talked with friends, speaking ugly words that grew uglier [...] They grew angrier and agitated. They finally accosted Najeeba and her Ewu child. They grew bold and self-righteous. Finally, they struck. (Okorafor 33).

Onyesonwu, in addition to being a woman and an Okeke, is also an Ewu and a sorcerer. Thus, she struggles with the patriarchy, racism, religious fanaticism, and paranoia of her region. A prominent sorcerer in Jwahir, Aro, rejects her request to apprentice under him at least thrice because of her sex. Even her lover, Mwita, believes for most of the narrative that the task of writing the Great Book should not be hers because she is a woman. Also, her biological father (Daib) attempts to kill her on several occasions because he sees her as a failure. When Mwita and Onyesonwu confront Daib, he divulges that her mother should have borne him a son. His disdain is evident in his words: “Why are you a girl?” (Okorafor 320) and “My only child, and this is what Ani gives me” (Okorafor 320). He insists that he will find her mother and make the woman bear him a son. In his eyes, Onyesonwu’s femininity is a disadvantage; mayhap, even a disability that disqualifies her for his aspiration of fulfilling the prophecy, which, according to him, is the absolute enslavement of the Okeke people.

On top of that, as an Okeke, the Great Book is seen as divine approval for Onyesonwu’s enslavement: “it was well known that the Okeke were born to be slaves of the Nuru. Long ago, during the Old Africa Era, they had done something terrible, causing Ani to put this duty on their backs. It is written in the Great Book” (Okorafor 23). Debunking this myth, Sola in *The Book of Phoenix*, divulges that Sunuteel, the writer of the so-called Great Book, distorted Phoenix’s story, fabricating and falsifying many segments of the tale. Sola states, “It reshaped what the people of the deserted lands knew and felt deep in their hearts. They were a wounded people, so these ideas were wounded, too.” (Okorafor 227). Consequently, the misinformation in the revered book “[...]deformed the lives of many[...].” (Okorafor 227). Therefore, the systematic slavery of Onyesonwu’s world is founded upon a racial myth that has evolved into a divine truth. The religious zest of both Okekes and Nurus blinds them to the loopholes of the “divine truth”, such that the oppressed group is resigned to their fate and the oppressive group is exonerated in their cruelty. Even Onyesonwu’s abilities as a sorceress is viewed as a threat by many in her world. This is exacerbated by her being Ewu-born. For instance, during her foster father’s funeral, Onyesonwu involuntarily attempts to bring him back to life. Understandably, this terrifies the people of Jwahir, but her status as an Ewu turns their fear into paranoia, owing to the belief that the Ewu are innately violent and, thus, will be more volatile if granted more power.

Although the protagonist’s identities are all relevant to her predicament, the preceding analysis suggests that Onyesonwu’s gender identity is the prime cause of her marginalisation. This implies that her other social identities exacerbate her subordination in the spaces she finds herself in. For instance, in Banza, a town which Onyesonwu and her companions visit, four men attempt to force themselves on her at Night. In the town, Ewu women are prostitutes. Thus, the sex offenders assume that Onyesonwu is a prostitute as well. When she refuses to oblige them, they force her into a corner with onlookers doing nothing about it. She is forced to subdue them through sorcery. Sexual abuse and objectification in the novel affect

women only; hence, it is postulated that Ewu women are sexualised in Banza mainly because of their femininity. However, their status as Ewu worsens their vulnerability because that group is seen as subhuman. Thus, the intersection of femininity and the Ewu identity affects Onyesonwu in this context.

Both Phoenix and Onyesonwu are compelled to use violence to change society. However, Onyesonwu goes further than Phoenix by eradicating the evil, substituting it with progressive ideas and the resources to activate them. Two symbolic scenes validate this assertion. In the first one, Mwita manages to disarm Daib with a lethal curse during a duel, but before it takes effect, Daib transforms into a tiger and mauls him. At Mwita's death, a bereaved Onyesonwu magically accelerates the conception of his child. Almost immediately after she conceives, all women in Durfa conceive, while all men in the town die. This suggests a collective rebirth. For the fictional world to experience peace, unity, justice, and progress, a radical transformation is unavoidable: it entails a replacement of the old regressive order with a new progressive order, the introduction of a new philosophy of life, and even the emergence of a new generation of reformers, as signified by the magical conception of the women. Consequent to the strange occurrence, there is chaos, sorrow, and confusion in Durfa, which degenerate into hatred directed against Onyesonwu. She has upset a familiar social order based on violence, abuse, and injustice.

It is submitted that Onyesonwu's intersectional subordination enables her to exercise intersectional resistance and intersectional liberation. She belongs to marginalised groups in the fictional world, including females, the Ewu, and the Okeke, giving her special insight into the systematic modes of injustice therein. Her understanding of society and mastery of sorcery empower her to resist these modes and provide a remedy to them as described above. This shows that women in Africa may possess experiential knowledge of suppression and exclusion, which makes them invaluable in achieving an unprecedented renaissance on the continent. Enlightened women, as members of perhaps the most downtrodden social category on the continent, understand the obstacles to social cohesion, equity, economic prosperity, and individual and collective fulfilment because they are challenged constantly by cultural, social, economic, and political practices, actors, or edifices that impinge upon their human rights, economic prosperity, careers, and the like. They may have solutions to Africa's predicament because they are used to negotiating their survival in social spaces, particularly hostile towards their existence.

Onyesonwu is an educated, enlightened, and empowered woman. Because of her identities as an Ewu, a woman, and an "eshu" (a shape-shifter), she is acutely mindful of the history, conflicts, prejudice, and possibilities in her world. Furthermore, she cultivates her talents and character under the tutelage of Aro, Sola, Mwita, and so on, preparing herself for her destiny. Without education, discipline, and empowerment through juju, it is doubtful that she would be capable

of achieving her destiny. Similarly, in the African context, the oppression of women does not enable them automatically to facilitate positive change in their respective societies. Women who stand a chance need to be acutely mindful of the history, conflicts, prejudice, social ills, possibilities, and current achievements of their people. They have to be educated, enlightened, and empowered, because the task of reviving the continent depends on the revolutionary Africans of the present and the future. Finally, men cannot be excluded from this endeavour because they have their own experiences and insights about Africa. Onyesonwu, for all her power, relies on others (men and women) at various points in time, including her mother (Najeeba), her step-father (Fadi Ogundimu), her lover (Mwita), her teacher (Aro), her mentor (Sola), her friend (Luyu), her sorceress friend (Ting), the chief of the Red people (Ssaiku), the Okeke rebels, and the twins who record her story before her persecution. Without support from others, Onyesonwu would have failed. This signifies a pan-Africanist approach, predicated upon partnership and mutual respect between all social groups in each African society.

The ultimate scene in the novel is the rewriting of the Great Book. Onyesonwu remarks that “This book was full of hate and that was what caused its sickness.” (Okorafor 330). To undo the sickness, the protagonist rewrites the book magically. Of higher significance is the full-scale impact it has on the people, as encapsulated in the following: “But this place that you know, this kingdom, it will change after today. Read it in your Great Book. You won’t notice that it has been rewritten... Everything has. The curse of the Okeke is lifted. It never existed, sha” (Okorafor 332). The immediate impact in Durfa and beyond confirms these words. All the women receive super abilities; Slavery ends; there is harmony, love, and hope in the post-slavery era. Onyesonwu’s act changes the world positively. There is an opportunity for humanity to nurture a more equitable world in which peace, comfort, and prosperity are enjoyed by all. The story’s resolution implies that the major problem with African societies is the mindset. Looking at the changes Onyesonwu makes to the great book, it is apparent that ideologies shape culture, and acculturation shapes mindset. Hence, Okorafor, in her work, contends that gender discrimination, disunity, violent conflicts, corruption, terrorism, injustice, dictatorship, gender inequity, and the other ills debilitating Africa are traceable to the defective ideologies firmly rooted in the collective consciousness of the people, which are derived from dogma, obsolete traditions, prejudice, and miseducation. The “Great Book” from which Africans read must be rewritten for them to relinquish prejudice and apathy towards their societies, and women must be involved in this rewriting of Africa’s future.

Conclusion

In this article, intersectionality was adopted to understand how the intersectional oppression of the female protagonists in *The Book of Phoenix* (2010) and *Who Fears Death* (2007) empowers them to resist (intersectional resistance) and transform (intersectional redemption) their respective worlds fundamentally. It was argued that Phoenix, being black and female, represents both the Black race and the Black

woman. Thus, her trouble with Western domination, sexism, and misogyny displays the struggle of women with these problems. Also, Phoenix's struggles under the colonialist, sexist, and misogynistic Big Eye primes her for intersectional resistance, where she challenges their patriarchal, racial, and capitalist machinations. Finally, Phoenix's scourging of the earth was read as a form of intersectional redemption, which represents the agency of Black women who have demonstrated time and again their ability to interrogate and dismantle ideologies and systems of domination wherever they find themselves. In like manner, Onyesonwu, as a woman, an Okeke, and an Ewu, grapples with patriarchy, racism, and religion. Her intersectional oppression enables her to exercise intersectional resistance and intersectional liberation. Onyesonwu's experiences give her special insight into the systematic modes of injustice therein. Her understanding of society and mastery of sorcery empower her to resist these modes and provide a remedy to them as described above. This shows that women in Africa may possess experiential knowledge of suppression and exclusion, which makes them invaluable in achieving an unprecedented renaissance in the continent.

Works Cited

- Abusharaf, R. M. "Narrating Feminism: The Woman Question in the Thinking of an African Radical." *Differences*, vol. 15, no. 2, Jan. 2004, pp. 152-71, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-15-2-152>. Accessed 10 Jan. 2025.
- Atewologun, Doyin. "Intersectionality Theory and Practice." Bambara, Toni Cade, and Eleanor W. Traylor, editors. *The Black Woman: An Anthology*. Washington Square Press, 2005.
- Bello, Damilare. "Africanfuturism – a New Commonsense? Apocalypse as Sense-Making after the Crises of Postcolonial Modernity." *Language, Literature, and Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4, 21 Sept. 2021, <https://ellids.com/research/volumesissues/archive-4-4/4-4-bello/>.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 1990. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2000.
- Cooper, Anna J. *A Voice from the South : By a Black Woman of the South*. 1892. University of North Carolina At Chapel Hill Library, 2017.
- Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Black and Female*. Faber & Faber, 2022.
- Heller, Henry. *The Birth of Capitalism : A Twenty-First-Century Perspective*. Pluto Press; Halifax, 2011, pp. 176-214.
- Hooks, Bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Routledge, 1984, funceji.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/bell_hooks_feminist_theory_from_margin_to_centebook-kzz-org.pdf.
- Kozieł, Patrycja. "From Afrofuturism to Africanfuturism: Contemporary Expressions within Popular Culture." *Hemispheres: Studies on Cultures and Societies*, vol. 36, 2021, pp. 69-82. https://www.iksiopan.pl/hemispheres/images/HEMISPHERES_36_2021_FINAL.pdf.
- Mama, Amina, and Elaine Salo. "Talking about Feminism in Africa."

-
- Meer, Talia, and Alex Müller. "Considering Intersectionality in Africa." *Agenda*, vol. 31, no. 1, Jan. 2017, pp. 3–4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2017.1363583>.
- Nash, Jennifer C. *Black Feminism Reimagined after Intersectionality*. Editorial: Duke University Press, 2019.
- Nkealah, Naomi. "(West) African Feminisms and Their Challenges." *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, Apr. 2016, pp. 61–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02564718.2016.1198156>.
- Nkealah, Naomi N. "Conceptualizing Feminism(S) in Africa: The Challenges Facing African Women Writers and Critics." *English Academy Review*, vol. 23, no. 1, July 2006, pp. 133–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10131750608540431>.
- Okorafor, Nnedi. "Africanfuturism Defined." *Nnedi's Wahala Zone Blog*, 19 Oct. 2019, nnedi.blogspot.com/2019/10/africanfuturism-defined.html.
- Okorafor, Nnedi. *Lagoon*. Saga Press, 2016.
- Okorafor, Nnedi. *Shadow Speaker*. Astra Publishing House, 2023.
- Oyeronke Oyewumi. *African Women and Feminism : Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*. Africa World ; London, 2003.
- Senbeta, Feyera. "The Paradox of Ethiopia's Underdevelopment: Endogenous Factors in Retrospect."
- Tamale, Sylvia. *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*. Daraja Press, 2020.
- Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Haymarket Books, 2017, pp. 15–27.
- Toni Cade Bambara, and Eleanor W. Traylor. *The Black Woman: An Anthology*. 1970. New York, Ny Washington Square Press, 2005.
- Toyin Falola. *Decolonizing African Studies: Epistemologies, Ontologies, and Agencies*. University of Rochester Press, 2021.
- United Nations. *Gender and Racial Discrimination: Report of the Expert Group Meeting, November 21–24, 2000, Zagreb, Croatia*. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/genrac/report.htm>.

Publisher's Note/Disclaimer: The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of NJH. NJH disclaims responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.