

Decolonising the Internet East Africa



Podcast e-zine





Credits

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Gratitude

Much gratitude to the amazing African feminists who made the gathering magical, to our feminist rafikis at FEMNET for the co-thinking and dreaming, and to Global Fund for Women for the generous support.

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**GLOBAL FUND FOR
WOMEN**



About the podcast



Nearly 40 African feminists gathered for two days in Lusaka, Zambia, for **Decolonizing the Internet East Africa (DTI-EA)**, a convening organized by Whose Knowledge? and The African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET), as a pre-event to #FIFAfrica2022.

Through the gathering, we reflected on the silencing of African knowledges online: Africa contributes 1-2% to global knowledge production, and 85% of research on Africa is conducted outside Africa. Knowledge injustice is not accidental – it's a consequence of colonialism and oppression.





Amongst the challenges outlined are:

- Spoken languages not being reflected online
- Poor or non-existent internet connections and infrastructures;
- Stereotypes and discrimination offline that spill online

But some opportunities include learning from marginalised communities on the continent (like sex workers), creating code in different languages (like Swahili), and creating more feminist research by Africans for Africa.

Telling our own stories in our way, centering Black, African history and feminism is how resistance and liberation begin. This podcast series was borne from the feminist fires lit in Lusaka and deepens these conversations in a fun, informal and engaging way.



Listen to the season on
Whose Voices?, our
podcast website

Meet the hosts



Kerubo Onsoti is currently working as the Digital Media Officer at FEMNET. She has been in the digital space for close to 5 years and has a vast knowledge and experience in how to manage diverse online community platforms. When she is not working, you will find her exploring different cuisines, reading and most importantly, sleeping.

Pronouns: She/her

Len Appasamy is the Communications Co-lead at Whose Knowledge?, a charou who writes well and a friendly neighbourhood feminist zinemaker. Len has a Masters in Political Studies from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and when not working, you'll find them beading.

Pronouns: Len/she/they



Meet the guests



Memory Kachambwa is an intersectional feminist, a women's rights activist with over 18 years of experience working on issues of gender and development, women's empowerment and human rights at national, regional (Africa) and international levels. As a dynamic pan-African feminist, thought-leader and strategist, Memory is passionate about making a difference in the lives of women and girls using diverse approaches grounded in social justice, feminism and gender equality analysis and practice. Memory values deep relations that are empowering and timeless.

Pronouns: She/her

Twitter Handle: @Kachambwa

Esther Mwema is an artist and digital inequalities practitioner with expertise in internet governance, digital transformation, and innovation. She has over ten years of commitment to social impact at the intersection of youth, technology, and gender through her non-profits Digital Grassroots and SAFIGI Outreach Foundation; and her extensive work with the UN. Esther was recipient of the 2022 Mozilla Creative Media awards, the 2023 C/Change Creative R&D Labs and 2023 Interledger Foundation's Future|Money Creative grant. She is an Open Internet leader who prioritises African feminist and decolonial practices. Esther graduated with an MSc in Inequalities from the London School of Economics.

Pronouns: She/her

Twitter Handle: @digigrassroots





Chipasha Mwansa is an experienced Public Health Researcher and Management Consultant with over nine years of experience in the Social Development sector, and a demonstrated history of working in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Malaria, and HIV/AIDS programming. She is passionate Pan-African Feminist and women's rights activist who has volunteered as well as worked in feminist movements and organizations in the last 10 years.



She holds an undergraduate degree in Adult Education in Sociology from the University of Zambia and a Post-graduate master's in public health from the University of Lusaka. Chipasha currently works at Akina Mama wa Afrika as Project Liaison on an Intersectional SRHR project being implemented across five countries.

Pronouns: She/her

Twitter Handle: @akinamama

Sandra Kwikiriza is a feminist who has several years of experience in human rights advocacy and activism, specifically focusing on LGBTQ and Women's rights. As a result of her expertise, community-mapping and research, Sandra identified issues and gaps affecting (W)HRDs and the need for spaces and resources to promote the digital rights, safety and security needs of LBQ womxn and female sex workers, thus founding HER Internet. HER Internet is a womxn led feminist organisation that advocates for the digital rights and internet freedoms of structurally silenced womxn focusing on LBQ (lesbians, bisexual and queer) womxn and female sex workers.

Pronouns: she/her

Twitter Handle: @sand-riza, @herinternet





Meron Estefanos is a Swedish-Eritrean human rights activist and journalist. She's a mother of two boys. Her father was a political activist and she first became known in the Eritrean refugee community in 2011 for helping people who had been kidnapped and tortured by the human traffickers on their way to Israel in order to extort ransom money from their relatives, exemplified in the 2013 documentary film 'Sound of Torture'. In 2022, Süddeutsche Zeitung called her "the lone huntress of human traffickers". Estefanos has been a regular writer for the exile Eritrean news site Asmarino and been active in the human rights organization Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights. She co-founded the International Commission on Eritrean Refugees (ICER), in Stockholm.

Meron has received awards from Dawit Isaak Award, 2011 from the National Press Club in recognition for her commitment to imprisoned journalist Dawit Isaak and Engel-duTertre Prize from ACAT Foundation, 2015.

Āryā self describes as a human being who exists as a transgender woman, loves as a lesbian and fights as a feminist. She worked as a journalist and a fellow with openDemocracy, currently is doing global narratives change work at the nexus of queer rights & feminism, and is number one fan of Whose Knowledge?.

Āryā is a storyteller, is a community organiser in the LBQ-transgender and non binary activism space in Kenya, a UX researcher (in a past life) and an ideal dinner guest.

Pronouns: She/her/hers

Twitter Handle: [@AryaKarijo](https://twitter.com/AryaKarijo)





Lena Anyuolo is a writer, poet, feminist, and social justice activist. She has participated in political education and community organising at Mathare Social Justice Center, and Ukombozi Library.

She has written a poetry collection titled 'Rage and Bloom' which is a diary of an activist in the human rights space. It is based on Anyuolo's experience as a social justice activist. It boldly confronts capitalist super exploitation, patriarchy, sexism, the internal contradictions of leftist political organising, and celebrates the joy of friendship borne from community work.

Additionally, her articles, short fiction and poetry appear in Jalada Magazine - After+Life Anthology, Writers Space Africa - Rejuvenation Issue, ROAPE, Africa is a Country, and Ukombozi Review. Anyuolo is also a reliable, competent, and creative digital content creator, content strategist, and freelance copywriter.

Pronouns: She/her/they/them

Twitter handle: @LAnyuolo

IG: ragebloompoetry

Irene Mwendwa is a lawyer by profession. She is a Pan-African feminist who advocates for women and girls' rights with a focus on political participation. She provides her knowledge and expertise in women in building data skills among women leaders. Irene is currently the Executive Director of Pollicy.

Pronouns: she/her

Twitter Handle: @pollicyorg





Rachel Kagoiya is a feminist, passionate about social justice and transformative leadership. As the Communications & Information Lead at FEMNET, she leads teams in developing communication strategies and co-creating knowledge products that contribute to increasing the visibility and significance of African women and girls' voice and agency towards claiming their rights and equality.

She has 15+ years experience in project management; information & knowledge management; editorial & content creation; and is a passionate trainer on women's leadership and digital communications.

Pronouns: She/ her

Twitter handle: @rkagoiy



Anasuya Sengupta is Co-Director and co-founder of Whose Knowledge?, a global multilingual campaign and feminist collective to centre the knowledges of marginalised communities (the minoritised majority of the world) online. She has led initiatives across the global South, and internationally for over 25 years, to collectively create feminist presents and futures of love, justice, and liberation. She is committed to unpacking issues of power, privilege, and access, including her own as an anti-caste savarna woman.

Pronouns: She/her

Twitter handle: @Anasuyashh



Ep1
Knowledge
justice

DTI Ep9
journeys

Ep8
Language
exclusion
online

Ep2
Digital
Colonialism

Mapping the Season

Ep7
Community
Libraries

Ep3
SRHR
Online

Ep5
Refugee
advocacy

Ep6
Queer
utopias

Ep4
Queer
Safety

Episode 1



What would a decolonized internet look like in the African continent? How do African feminists reimagine and want to rethink what the web feels, sounds, and reads like?

In this conversation with Kerubo and Youlendree, Memory Kachambwa, executive director at the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), reflects on the erasure of African women's perspectives and contributions, what decolonization means, and the need to center African stories and imaginations in the digital space. As Memory points out, the internet as we know it is far from neutral. "We need to start really thinking: what are we consuming? Why are we being fed what we're being fed? Where are the women? Where are the African women, where are the women of color? Where are the voices – who are they?"

She brings some of her learnings and musings from the sessions held at DTI-EA, and what the convening meant for her. "For me, what I like about it is: we're doing something. You know, it's beyond just doing a protest, but I

think it is how we move forward saying ‘yes, we’re going in, we’re going into Wikipedia, we’re going in, we’re going to change’ [...] If we want to have solutions, this is what the solution should be like, and then we code it, and then we use it.”

[Listen to episode](#)



Episode 2



The future of internet governance is as diverse as its users. As the internet continues to evolve and become increasingly ingrained in our lives, the need for effective governance becomes more apparent. However, given the global nature of the internet and the wide range of users it serves, achieving consensus on internet governance can be a complex and challenging task.

Digital colonialism refers to the dominance and exploitation of digital platforms, services, and technologies by powerful entities, typically from

developed countries, over less developed regions or communities. It involves the control and influence over digital infrastructure, data, and communication channels, often resulting in economic, cultural, and social inequalities. This episode features Esther Mwema, an artist who questions Big Tech (like Facebook and Google) in Africa, through literary fiction, abstract art, and poetry.

“The African continent is surrounded by undersea cables owned by these big tech companies. And what is even more amazing about that is actually the audacity of Google taking the name of the Nigerian abolitionist, Equiano, and using that to name their undersea cable,” she pointed out. “For me, it is how these corporations can co-opt and also appropriate colonial knowledge and try and present themselves as liberators.”

Esther explores imagination as a starting point of decolonization, her activism around girls’ safety in online spaces, and how corporations perpetuate colonial structures and histories. “It’s about changing the narrative that the continent [Africa] needs to be saved, but recognizing the imbalance that exists — where big tech corporations from another continent can have so much power over the infrastructure that we are using.”

[Listen to episode](#)



Whose Voices?

Whose data?

Whose language?

Whose memory?

Whose tech?



Episode 3



“The internet, by and large, is not made for African people, for African girls. It is not safe, it is not friendly”. When COVID-19 hit, Chipasha Mwansa and the projects around sexual and reproductive health and rights in which she worked had to shift drastically. The online spaces became central to grassroots work and the effort to reach girls and women in Africa.

In this episode, our hosts Youlendree and Kerubo invite Chipasha Mwansa, a feminist and activist working for [Akina Mama wa Afrika](#), a Pan-African feminist organization. Listen as they explore whether the digital space can adequately accommodate and serve African women by implementing [sexual and reproductive health and rights \(SRHR\) through an intersectional lens](#).

From her point of view, key considerations and approaches for implementing SRHR with an intersectional context need to bear the following points in mind [among others!]: understanding how intersectionality functions in specific contexts, analyzing power strategies, and having inclusive policy and program development.

Chipasha also speaks about knowledge production, in conjunction with her reflections on how to apply that knowledge on the ground.

“Our experiences, the lives that we live, our telling of ourselves in itself is knowledge, and it’s being transmitted from one generation to another,” she said. “No one can say we have not contributed to the world of knowledge, continentally or globally.”

[Listen to episode](#)



Episode 4



The digital space has undoubtedly provided valuable opportunities for the queer community to connect, express themselves, and advocate for their rights. However, there are still several gaps and challenges that exist for the queer community in the online world. Some of these challenges include online harassment and hate speech, lack of representation and data privacy.

In this episode, Sandra Kwikiriza, founder of Her-Internet joins Youlendree and Kerubo to explore knowledge gaps in terms of digital space and challenges faced by the queer community while using the internet.

The discussion reminds us of the shrinking civic space and the crackdown on queer communities in Uganda through legislation like the Anti-Homosexuality Act, which has had significant consequences for queer knowledge production, the safety of LGBTQIA+ people, and much more.

According to Sandra, addressing these gaps and challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving platforms, policymakers, and society as a whole. Efforts should focus on combating online harassment, promoting inclusive representation, ensuring data privacy and security, bridging the digital divide, combating algorithmic biases, and fostering safer online spaces for queer individuals to connect, express themselves, and find support.

Listen to episode



Episode 5



Meron Estefanos is a Swedish-Eritrean activist who, in this episode, recalls how her activism work unceremoniously kicked off in a bid to rescue fleeing Eritreans as a result of the compulsory military recruitment. Under this policy, individuals between the ages of 18 and 50 were subject to mandatory military service, which was initially supposed to last for 18 months. However, in practice, many conscripts were forced to serve for extended periods, sometimes indefinitely, with reports of service durations reaching over a decade. This has resulted in a severe restriction of personal freedoms and opportunities for Eritrean citizens.

The mandatory military service and its associated hardships, including limited rights, harsh living conditions, and lack of economic prospects, have led many Eritreans to flee their country in search of better opportunities and a chance for a more secure future. The prolonged conscription has been a significant driver of irregular migration, with Eritreans undertaking dangerous journeys across borders and across the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe or seeking asylum in neighboring countries. The documentary 'Sound of Torture' follows Meron as she tries to help Eritreans who have fled through Egypt's Sinai desert and been captured by human traffickers.

Meron notes achieving knowledge justice requires systemic changes in education, research, publishing, and policymaking. It involves transforming existing structures and institutions to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in knowledge production and dissemination.

[Listen to episode](#)



Episode 6



Queer people deserve to enjoy the same rights and privileges as everyone else, although we see time and time again their rights being eroded by conservative politicians. In this episode, join Kerubo and Youlendree as they have an open and thoughtful conversation with Arya Jeipea Karijo, a transgender woman and a lesbian who views life through a young, African feminist lens. If you want to understand more about the LGBTQIA+ community and how decolonization of the internet and online spaces influences their well-being, this is the ideal episode for you.

The availability and accessibility of information online about queer people, especially queer African activists, ancestors, and traditions can vary significantly depending on factors like geographical location, cultural context, and internet surveillance and censorship. While the internet has undoubtedly provided a platform for sharing and disseminating information, it's not immune to limitations and biases.

In the past, oppressed groups – including the queer community – have had a challenging time recording their history and getting access to reliable information. According to Arya, measures can be taken to preserve historical information on the internet and social spaces for young queer Africans to access. “A lot of our cultures have been erased, but it’s possible to pick bits and pieces [...] it’s okay in shaping our Kenyan, African futures,” she says.

Documentation and archiving which involves collecting oral histories, digitizing existing materials, and establishing community-led initiatives to record and safeguard historical information are some of the options she provides. Arya affirms that the online space can and should function as a queer utopia – a space that is community-led and where cultural sensitivity, participation and queer freedom is enacted and embodied.

[Listen to episode](#)



Episode 7



In this episode, podcast guest Lena Anyuolo speaks to our hosts Kerubo and Youlendree about political organising in Kenya, leftist community library Ukombozi Library and how the future of the internet looks very, very queer. Plus, we end with some poetry from Lena's poetry chapbook 'Rage and Bloom' [available to purchase].

The work of Ukombozi Library as a hub of feminist, leftist, and Pan-African literature is deeply woven into grassroots organizing - including setting up study groups and cells for radical consciousness-raising in places "where people live hand to mouth," says Lena.

They explain further: "To actually ask someone to sit down and read, let's say, Angela Davis, is just so tough. Even when you have the time to go through all that, to interpret - some of that work can be difficult. Our aspect of decolonizing is to understand that context and when we go out to the community it's not a didactic exchange."

Lena's work cuts across art, activism, literature and on-the-ground mobilising. Their experiences are vital in crafting online worlds that are safer for artists, activists and queer people. Reflecting on their time dreaming at Decolonizing the Internet: East Africa, Lena says: "I would like to see a lot more queer content [online], queer beyond personal expression – queerness as political expression, queerness that subverts any oppression."

[Listen to episode](#)



Episode 8



Language exclusion in digital platforms refers to the practice of excluding or marginalizing certain languages on digital platforms, such as websites, applications, or online services. This exclusion can manifest itself in various ways, such as limited language support, language filtering, language bias in algorithms, and inadequate translation or localization.

In this episode, Kerubo and Youlendree, alongside Irene Mwendwa, the Executive Director of Pollicy (a feminist civitech based in Kampala, Uganda) explore the limitations and challenges faced by individuals or communities who speak languages that are not adequately supported or represented in online platforms, applications, or services. It encompasses discussions on the lack of language options, limited translation or localization support, and the impact of such exclusions on communication, access to information, and inclusivity in the digital realm.

Language exclusion in digital platforms can have significant implications, including the perpetuation of linguistic inequalities, limited access to

information and resources for speakers of excluded languages, and the marginalization of communities. Digital platforms need to recognize and address these issues to promote linguistic diversity, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all users.

[Listen to episode](#)



Episode 9



Our last episode is a special one, hosted between two friends. Rachel Kagoiya [FEMNET Communications Lead] and Anasuya Sengupta [Whose Knowledge? Co-founder and Co-director] sit down to speak about the journey from the first **Decolonizing the Internet in Cape Town**, to **Decolonizing the Internet: East Africa** and so much more!

Reflecting on 2018's DTI, Rachel says: "Being in that space and being deeply reflective, thinking and saying 'Yaaa, this is the fire!' This was the fire being lit for me in Cape Town and I kept thinking how do we keep fanning this fire until we're able to have these conversations multiply." The dream is to have these conversations for and about a feminist internet moving across different regions in Africa.

Anasuya walks us through some important terms, looking at why "feminist" and "decolonizing" are the words used to describe the work being done by and through the [DTI gatherings](#) Whose Knowledge? has convened yearly since 2018.

"The internet is not one of those, you know, fabulous breaks with history as many people make it out to be. It's a continuation of the histories and structures of colonial capitalism," she says. This makes an anti-oppression lens compulsory when looking at how digital infrastructure and structures of power make themselves known.

Read the post-gathering summary report from the [2018 DTI](#) and the [2022 DTI: East Africa](#).

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