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A message from the Editor

The topic of black women’s excellence has been on my mind for a number of years. I have witnessed colleagues of mine and other women leaders take up their workplace and leadership roles with authenticity and a solid sense of self. These black women represent distinction in their work and, although their numbers have not yet reached projected equity goals, they serve as important role models to a younger generation of South African women who are to meet these goals in the near future.

Black women have participated in paid work over a number of decades, also in a democratic South Africa, and in forced unpaid work for millennia. Yet, the work roles which have stereotypically been associated with blackness in South Africa, and our own biases, have often blurred our ability to view black women’s professional and workplace leadership success with admiration and appreciation.

Working in the field of diversity studies, I am primed and reminded to consider my own social positioning in relation to the topics that I write about. I am classified as white, and recognise that my lived reality is different from that of the women who are presented in this year’s Women’s Report. It is for this reason that I did not contribute a paper in 2020. I nevertheless feel excited at witnessing the unfolding of black women’s workplace prominence -- a new face of leadership that may yet reach a stable footing amongst men who feel vulnerable and some women sceptics.

With the backdrop of global groundswells for change, the conviction to propose that three black women write papers about black women in South African workplaces is appropriate. True to her own spirit of positivity, Phumzile Mmope ignites our thinking by positioning ubuntu leadership in relation to Black Girl Magic -- does it have a place in the workplace?

Nastassja Wessels anchors our thinking in her paper about black women’s societal placement, which she likens to a twice-black bind. She highlights aspects of discrimination and misinterpretation that women often endure due to their societal positioning.

The papers in the report are concluded with a reflection on the unleashing of black women’s entrepreneurial power. An entrepreneur herself, Christine Kere’s paper provides practical advice with many helpful links in order to encourage black women to seek self-determination through entrepreneurship.

A celebration of excellence would not be complete without words of wisdom and encouragement to the next generation of women. Twelve black women of note -- women who have excelled in their respective fields -- have graciously narrated their life stories and views about their success. A must-read for inspiration and strength for all women, irrespective of colour or creed.

Anita

Professor Anita Bosch
USB Research Chair - Women at Work
Associate Professor: Leadership and Organisational Behaviour
Paper 1: Unleashing black women’s entrepreneurial power

by Christine Chichi Muduviwa Kere

WWW.WOMENSREPORT.AFRICA
Unleashing black women’s entrepreneurial power

by Christine Chichi Muduviwa Kere

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship can be a lonely journey at times, but it has the potential to be a very fulfilling career. As much as entrepreneurship is fast becoming the first choice for economic and social development across the world, South Africa is still facing challenges in growing this much-needed sector of the economy as a contributor towards job creation and poverty alleviation.

Here, entrepreneurship is often not celebrated as a viable career, but is, rather, considered a back-up plan in case of unemployment, particularly for and by women and youths, who face the highest unemployment in the country.

The significance of the progressive impact of female entrepreneurship on economic development is widely recognised and supported by research. Sadly, women more often resort to necessity entrepreneurship rather than opportunistic entrepreneurship, mainly to survive, without much preparation or knowledge about the intricacies of business and the managerial competencies required to run a successful enterprise.

The choice of necessity entrepreneurship is exacerbated by the universal cultural and historical inheritance challenges surrounding women, which resulted in the United Nations adopting Sustainable Development Goal Number 5 (SDGs #5), which advocates gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. It has therefore become paramount to engage government and private-sector organisations in supporting various forms of business training for black women entrepreneurs, who still account for the largest self-employed segment of the population in South Africa.

The insights in this article are based on academic, evidence-based information and reflections by women, some of whom I have worked with, and others who have received accolades for their achievements. These insights are important in shaping how we understand, support, and enable the growth of women entrepreneurship and the journeys of these women, particularly black women, who are continually hampered by gender inequality and business management challenges. Some of the insights shared may be useful to entrepreneurs, and HR practitioners could apply these as part of their change management and social responsibility initiatives.

WHAT IS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

For the purposes of this article, an entrepreneur is considered “a person who perceives an opportunity and creates an organisation to follow it”, while a woman entrepreneur is defined as “a confident, innovative and creative woman capable of achieving self-economic independence, individually or in collaboration, who generates employment opportunities for others through initiating, establishing and running the enterprise.” This definition is aligned with the scholarly definition of entrepreneurship as “the process of creating something different that has value by devoting

1 UNCTAD 2004.
6 http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=11375#:~:text=The%20rate%20of%20unemployment%20amongst,higher%20than%20that%20of%20males.
the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychological, and social risks, and receiving the resulting monetary rewards and personal satisfaction”\textsuperscript{10}. Mbhele notes that factors that distinguish entrepreneurs from other businesses include "recognition, opportunity, innovation, process, and growth in a business through the employment of strategic management practices in the business”\textsuperscript{11}.

Scholarly research has identified another form of entrepreneurship, known as intrapreneurship, which is employees of an organisation exploiting opportunities by creating new ventures within existing organisations. These employees identify challenges, gaps, and opportunities, and respond with innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking\textsuperscript{12}.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP MINDSET SHIFT

Our education system is not equipped to support entrepreneurial growth. Universities still offer highly theoretical degree programmes in an economy that is experiencing high unemployment, especially of black women. Mindset is one of the challenges faced by black women entrepreneurs, which, I believe, requires foundational programmes to support their transition of thought from entrepreneurship being a back-up plan to one of employment that creates jobs and contributes to the country's economic growth. This would entail the integration of social and emotional skills\textsuperscript{13} critical in building a reputable entrepreneurial brand, including competencies such as financial and resource management.

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LANDSCAPE

Vuyisa Qabaka, a tech entrepreneur and co-founder of the South African Black Entrepreneurs Forum (Sabef), believes more angel investors are needed, particularly investment in talented black entrepreneurs. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), women entrepreneurs account for between a quarter and a third of all businesses in the formal economy worldwide, with a larger representation in developed economies. Formal businesses are more structured, have specific goals, and aim to make a profit, while informal businesses are more orientated towards human psychological needs, and are responsive to market changes that could arise from necessity or opportunity, with less structure, often emerging as self-employment\textsuperscript{14}.

In South Africa, formal entrepreneurship is on the increase through programmes focused on encouraging black women to take on entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial initiatives. According to a survey conducted by Facebook in partnership with the World Bank and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), only 34% of small to medium enterprises in South Africa are led by women\textsuperscript{15}, implying the need for more awareness, including HR practices within the workplace that are more inclusive and innovative in nurturing intra- and entrepreneurship. This, supported by various models of business incubation, could ignite the development of this sector. It could also contribute towards women’s self-confidence to enter previously male-dominated sectors such as construction, medicine, and engineering, to name but a few\textsuperscript{16}.

One success story is that of Nneile Nkholise, founder of iMED Tech Group. She founded the group in 2015 while studying engineering, and today is a member of Harambee, a group of entrepreneurs leading ventures to unlock the full potential


\textsuperscript{13} Das, A. (2018). What do women entrepreneurs need to build successful careers? To encourage women entrepreneurship at the grass-root level, it is imperative that women adopt a ‘lean-in’ style of methodology. https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/310126

\textsuperscript{14} https://smallbusiness.chron.com/difference-between-informal-formal-organization-18282.html

\textsuperscript{15} https://smesouthafrica.co.za/the-truth-about-being-a-female-entrepreneur-in-south-africa/

\textsuperscript{16} Global Entrepreneurship Index 2021.
of African people\textsuperscript{17}. As part of the entrepreneurial journey, black women are making great inroads, and are taking it upon themselves to create networking groups such as Black Women in Science (BWIS), which aims to deliver capacity development interventions that target young black women scientists and researchers. Another example is Women in Science and Engineering in Africa (WISE Africa), which provides leadership role models for young people wishing to enter the fields of science and technology\textsuperscript{18}. Such mentoring and coaching initiatives are emerging because of the lack of programmes offering formal entrepreneurship-specific support, while others are embedded in cultural or social contexts, within webs of personal and institutional networks. South Africa thus requires social relations that allow enlargement of new entrepreneurs’ access to opportunities, resources, and aid in overcoming challenges\textsuperscript{19}.

Some private-sector companies have strategically positioned entrepreneurship as an access-to-market strategy that allows their core human capital to focus on the mainstream business while leveraging innovations and disruptions brought by entrepreneurs, by onboarding them as employees. They then become intrapreneurs and make a career of taking the company through innovative developments. Other intrapreneurs are developed within the company, through the company encouraging innovative thinking within business processes by those responsible for executing the tasks, with employees identifying opportunities for development to the benefit of the employing organisation.

Businesses streamlining and retrenchment may offer employees the option to provide outsourced services to the company. This tends to have positive downstream effects, with some employees enjoying the rewards of having become necessity- or opportunity entrepreneurs. Some private-sector companies have implemented planned business streamlining for employees closer to retirement, whom they assist in starting entrepreneurial careers in, e.g., consulting. With the global Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and technology demands, large innovative organisations have adopted intrapreneurship as a concept that allows them to integrate experience and utilisation of existing resources by onboarding talented, skilled individuals as entrepreneurs within the organisation or, alternatively, through:

- start-up acquisition and alliances, such as Makro’s acquisition of WumDrop, a courier service, in 2017, and the purchase of Entry Ninja, a sporting event platform, by Computicket\textsuperscript{20};
- accelerators and business incubators; a number of entrepreneurial businesses have emerged in South Africa to support and scale start-ups to market, housed in various business incubators\textsuperscript{21};
- venture capital\textsuperscript{22}, such as the SA SME Fund, capitalised to R1.4 billion, and FNB’s Fundaba; examples of venture capital investment include funding for start-ups such as Snapt, Aerobotics, Lumkani, and LifeQ, as well as exits, such as Skyrove and Matribe, which were acquired by MXII\textsuperscript{23}.

This support for various entrepreneurial businesses adds immense value through the creation of new products and business units with new offerings, all while creating employment\textsuperscript{24}. One of Accenture’s 4IR divisions is headed by a young black woman intrapreneur responsible for their Open Innovation for the Africa region, which links start-ups with Accenture’s corporate clients, thereby bridging the gap between innovation and skills training and development, while delivering on its core consulting business\textsuperscript{25}. Such strategic initiatives ensure the success of young black women, as they can develop the business- and managerial competencies that would have taken them longer, had they been entrepreneurs outside of such established organisations.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18] https://www.w24.co.za/Work/Jobs/meet-south-african-most-successful-black-women-in-science-20180821
\item[21] https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/137566#:~:text=Here%20are%20the%20most%20important%20things%20you%20should%20know%20about%20South%20Africa%20and%20its%20business%20environment
\item[22] https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2015/02/big-business-start-ups-innovation.pdf
\item[23] https://ventureburn.com/2019/08/are-these-six-sas-most-important-venture-capitalists/
\item[24] https://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/626/2659412.html
\end{footnotes}
The Liberty Group partnered with Lionesses of Africa in 2017 to create Lean in Circles, to assist in building businesses for women entrepreneurs by developing leveraging networks across Africa²⁶. To date, Lionesses of Africa has impacted many women entrepreneurs across Africa through partnerships with companies such as VW South Africa, creating pivotal intrapreneurship opportunities for these businesses. The Department of Trade and Industry²⁷ and various affiliated organisations offer networking sessions in association with various stakeholders, such as the European and German Chambers of Commerce²⁸, to further entrepreneurs' understanding of global business, enable them to forge personal and business relationships, inform them on the different business- and management approaches applicable to specific markets, and to teach them to benchmark against other entrepreneurs²⁹. Enterprise Supply Development (ESD)³⁰ offers a variety of programmes, e.g., in preferential procurement, supplier diversity, supplier development, and enterprise development, for mastery of competencies across industry sectors.

From the above, it is clear that it is critical to create a culture of training and education beneficial to all stakeholders in the multi-layered entrepreneurial sphere.

Below are some suggestions to advance the success of women entrepreneurs for both businesses and prospective entrepreneurs.

**PROMOTING INTRAPRENEURSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN YOUR ORGANISATION**

**Engagement to identify talent**

Organisations need to create lines of communication through which employees can make suggestions, and they need to create platforms such as open forums or online organisational chatrooms in which employees can brainstorm and exchange ideas, followed by engagement with management. This will stimulate intrapreneurship and assist the organisation in identifying talented individuals and gaining insight into their specific competencies. Even the smallest of organisations could benefit from the insights gained into processes through open communication and then build on these gains.

Another consideration is the loss of knowledge through retrenchment. Retrenched individuals constitute a valuable talent pool to tap into in developing entrepreneurs. HR practitioners should maintain ties with these individuals, and when the opportunity arises, facilitate skills transfer from the organisation and offer mentorship, to ultimately create a business from which the organisation could benefit.

**Talent development**

Once talent has been identified, it must be developed. HR practitioners should formulate initiatives to develop and groom talent for future intrapreneural and entrepreneurial activities. The type of development required would be situation-specific, but HR practitioners can construct a broad framework to identify opportunities and methods of development specific to their organisation and budget. Such initiatives require an understanding of how to promote intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship on different levels. Interviews I conducted with some black women entrepreneurs who had held executive roles in business organisations and had been nurtured indicated that the support of their organisations had contributed immensely towards their intrapreneurial journeys, as they had learnt, while still employed, through venturing into unknown territory, taking guided risks, and celebrating successes.

Larger organisations with an extensive supply chain would have many more options, both within and outside the organisation. This offers the opportunity to enable talented black women to start up entrepreneurial ventures as a link in the organisation's supply chain. Examples of such endeavours are in-house travel agents and event organisers.

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²⁷ www.dti.gov.za
²⁸ https://suedafrika.ahk.de/en/
³⁰ https://www.enterprisesupplierdevelopment.co.za/what-is-esd/
requires that HR practitioners implement focused support for these women so that they can gain the skills, experience, and financial acumen necessary to venture into business. Training could start in-house, through job shadowing, technical upskilling, financial management training, and mentoring, and, if the candidate shows promise, be followed up with greater investment in formal training and start-up assistance. Successful black women entrepreneurs have noted that working in a corporate entity in management and team-leadership roles had developed their skills in team management, motivation, performance appraisal, training, and customer service, all critical for making a business successful.

**Getting help**

Many organisations aid existing and prospective entrepreneurs on every level. Individuals and HR practitioners need to determine their needs and financial means, to identify what type of help they need and can afford. HR practitioners need to inform themselves regarding these organisations and facilitate appropriate contact for talented employees. Below are examples of sources of support on various levels, both formal and informal, for individuals and HR practitioners to consider, depending on the situation, including business needs and financial resources. The list is by no means complete, and interested parties are encouraged to do their own research.

*Microsoft South Africa* runs programmes that develop and support innovative tech start-ups and small to medium enterprises with access to finance, technology, markets, information, skills, and services and innovations that can improve organisations’ competitiveness, and often partner with start-ups in this industry. Offering research opportunities in partnership with universities could be another way of promoting the development of women entrepreneurs.

*The Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA)* assists small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs), including cooperatives, as well as potential entrepreneurs, in developing a business idea. *The Business Women’s Association of South Africa (BWASA)*, through seven branches countrywide, supports and connects women in business, helping them build a career. *First National Bank’s Fundaba* telephone app provides holistic business advice to assist entrepreneurs in building a successful venture. *Investec’s The Business Place* offers emerging and existing entrepreneurs a cluster of affordable service providers. It is a business advice centre that advises entrepreneurs on how to proceed, or refers them to a service provider. *The Sasol Foundation* promotes entrepreneurship awareness and offers start-up support. *Future Females* is a platform where women entrepreneurs connect, collaborate, and assist each other in gaining access to resources.

*The African Women Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum* holds annual conferences where entrepreneurs and businesswomen gather to learn from each other and find solutions to entrepreneurship issues and challenges. *Lionesses of Africa* is an online community forum that showcases women's businesses and shares information and advice, creating conversations around the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Africa.

Below are examples of organisations that offer support at various levels of entrepreneurial development. Individuals and HR practitioners are urged to familiarise themselves with these organisations' offerings, that they may find appropriate assistance.

**Associations**

[Chamber of Commerce](https://www.microsoft.com/africa/4ofrika/entrepreneurs.aspx)

[NSBC](https://www.microsoft.com/africa/4ofrika/entrepreneurs.aspx)

[SATSA](https://www.microsoft.com/africa/4ofrika/entrepreneurs.aspx)
Associations (continued...)

SiMODiSA

DEMO Africa

FASA

SABEF

Lionesses of Africa

Small Business- and Entrepreneurial Development Centres

Silicone Cape Initiative

22 on Sloane

Silulo Business Incubation

AlphaCode

BlockStarters

Tshimologong

Riversands Incubation Hub
Social Media Networks

Brownsense

GirlCode

Shingler Connect

#SistaHoodHour

#PRChatAfrica

Seminars & Conferences

The Business Show

AWIEF

Leaderex

Non-profit Organisations

CiTi

The Hope Factory

TEA

JoziHub

Shanduka Black Umbrellas

Tony Elumelu Foundation
The above is only a glimpse of the resources available. What is needed is considered and concerted efforts to develop black women intra- and entrepreneurs by identifying talent and then developing it through organisational resources and the facilitation of appropriate network development.

CONCLUSION

Despite the spotlight on gender equality intensifying, the mindset of entrepreneurship as a career has yet to be embraced and promoted. Human resource practitioners could do more to empower women, particularly black women, who constitute the majority of the previously disadvantaged South African population. More women need to be recruited and trained for leadership positions, and organisations should take a holistic approach to the development of talented black women, one that includes experiential learning. Training should be based on enhancing their understanding of various business functions in preparation for and development of intra- and entrepreneurship.

As part of an organisation’s corporate social responsibility, supporting both intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship would be more than meeting a social need, it would be a sustainable investment in the economic welfare of both individuals and the country — it would be teaching black women to embrace and unleash their entrepreneurial talent.
About the author

Every year, we are privileged to have some of the foremost experts in their fields contribute to the Women’s Report. Their insights, research, and thoughts on topics provide fresh perspectives on the advancement of gender equality at work. Experts come from the ranks of practitioners and researchers, and topics span women at work and the spill-over of perspectives on gender, at home and in society, on paid work.

Christine Chichi Muduvwa Kere

Christine Chichi Kere is a practising coach consultant who holds an MPhil Management Coaching from the University of Stellenbosch Business School, an MBA Strategic Marketing (Hull, UK), a Diploma in Adult and Vocational Education, and a Bachelor of Technology Management (Hons), and has completed several certificate courses in team building and emotional intelligence.

She has extensive management consulting experience in education and training, entrepreneurial development, hospitality, telecommunications, and property development.

In a career spanning 25 years, she has consulted in countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania, and South Africa, and established a social enterprise, Coaching Mentoring Education Africa (CMEA).
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Black Girl Magic — does it have a place in the workplace?

by Dr Phumzile Mmope

The advancement of professional black women continuing to be a priority has made it possible for these women to move beyond the racialised and patriarchal constraints that subjected all women to a subordinated status, onto a path towards positions of leadership. The rationale for continuing gender equality initiatives and women's empowerment in the workplace has progressed from meeting diversity quotas in order to comply with statutory requirements towards promoting women's economic development.

Based on empirical research, several authors have concluded that, while an increasing number of women of colour occupy leadership roles in the workplace, they continue to be confronted by challenges. In keeping with the theme of this year's Women's Report, the focus of this article is senior- and executive-level black African women professionals and leaders between the ages of 35 and 65 years.

Faced with the persistent overt and covert biases of racism, sexism, and stereotyping, professional black African women in the workplace are often compelled to develop coping strategies, such as assuming identities — evident in their dialect and behaviour — that are closer to what is considered the norm in organisations that were historically dominated by white male leadership. To avoid or diminish the negative consequences of such discrimination and be assimilated into the organisation, academic literature and documented memoirs confirm this, but also bring to the fore the alternative: that some of these women have chosen to embrace their authentic self and, in so doing, influence and reshape organisational cultures with values from the ancient African philosophy of ubuntu — a deep concern for others and upholding sound morals.

Based on anecdotal accounts, press articles, and academic literature, it would seem that there is a surge of professional black women who are positively embracing their authentic self. They are affirming themselves in their work roles and career progression in self-assertive and empowering ways that bring about attention, change, and inclusion. These women's authenticity, resilience, and accomplishments amplify #BlackGirlMagic, a movement that celebrates the beauty, career progression in self-assertive and empowering ways that bring about attention, change, and inclusion. These women's authenticity, resilience, and accomplishments amplify #BlackGirlMagic, a movement that celebrates the beauty, power, and resilience of black women.

In this article, I give a literature review of the concept of ubuntu from a management perspective and argue that professional black women practise leadership that is shaped by ubuntu values, which are aligned with the philosophy underpinning Black Girl Magic in practice. This is followed by an elucidation of the construct Black Girl Magic in relation...
to traits of professional black African women who embrace ubuntu, to investigate the potential of Black Girl Magic in creating more humane workplaces and engaged workforces.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

African scholars and authors offer various meanings of the word ubuntu, a term widely used throughout sub-Saharan Africa, according to how it is lived in different contexts. In South Africa, the origin of the word was traced to the Zulu and Xhosa expression Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu — I am because we are, and, because we are, I am — meaning that a person is dependent on others to be a whole person. Ubuntu is a philosophy and worldview that manifests in shared values, norms, and practices that are based on the notion that, in meeting one’s own needs, one also has duties towards others.10,11,12

In its simplest form, ubuntu means ‘humanness’, which implies warmth, tolerance, understanding, peace, and humaneness. The concept is understood to mean that every individual’s well-being is intertwined and interconnected with that of others. This then means that healthy relationships are critical for community well-being. The ideal is that a responsibility towards each other flows from a deeply felt connection to others. Ubuntu is understood to reflect primary African values of compassion, caring, reciprocity, harmony, sharing, respect, and dignity, in the interest of building and maintaining community. From a relational and ethical perspective, ubuntu has come to imply reciprocal relationships between people and how those relationships should be conducted. “If people live by the spirit of ubuntu, they will display characteristics such as being caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature and sensitive, and virtuous.”13,14,15,16

Archbishop Desmond Tutu offered this explanation of the traits of a person who upholds ubuntu:

“A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished when others are tortured or oppressed.”

Ubuntu can be considered a universal moral ethic; its validity is not limited to traditional familial relations. This notion of humanness, interconnectedness, being part of a collective, and making decisions with a view to both individual and collective well-being, undertaken in a manner grounded in ethical considerations, suggests value in understanding ubuntu from a practical management and leadership perspective.

**UBUNTU IN THE WORKPLACE**

Professor Lovemore Mbigi, a South African consultant, entrepreneur, philosopher, academic, and author of the book Ubuntu: The African dream in management, is widely considered the founder of the ubuntu philosophy for management practices. He argues that, within an organisational setting, leaders should consider the wisdom contained in the philosophy of ubuntu to improve the effectiveness of leadership, adding that the values of ubuntu must not be seen

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as African values, but as human values. Mbigi conceptualized five values of ubuntu as a management philosophy: survival, solidarity, spirit, compassion, respect, and dignity. Mbigi believes that ubuntu enables managers to facilitate the development of spirited and caring organizations, where people enthusiastically align themselves with organizational goals without sacrificing their own goals.18

A recent study on the extent to which ubuntu can be used to engage employees, and thereby improve organizational performance, found a significant overlap between ubuntu and servant leadership, as servant leadership is characterised by moral authority, humility, service, and sacrifice, which bring about trust and respect.19 The study further found that leaders displaying ubuntu and servant leadership behaviours is closely related to their perceived effectiveness. Of specific importance is the finding that fostering a spirit of solidarity — one of Mbigi’s five dimensions of ubuntu — influences organizational performance positively, through increased employee engagement. The results endorse the proposition that leaders who practise the principles of ubuntu connect employees, promote team spirit, and enhance employees’ involvement in their work. In turn, these employees experience a sense of meaning, significance, inspiration, and pride in their work.20

Ubuntu is already both an unconscious cultural behaviour and a lived experience for most black African women leaders, particularly professionals, as set out in the article “I am because we are”: Exploring women’s leadership under ubuntu worldview. The article was based on a qualitative study of black African women leaders who found that ubuntu in leadership and employee engagement is widely practised by black African women leaders. The study highlighted that women’s desire for leadership is fuelled by a sense of having a higher purpose or calling, a conviction that they need to engage in order to change the status quo. These women leaders’ view of leadership was found to be based on deeply held spiritual and ubuntu values that focus on achieving goals through unity and collective action. The women viewed leadership, not as a role to achieve personal goals or wealth, but as an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. The women noted that they upheld these values through interdependence, and advocated having a high regard for every individual, irrespective of identity or social standing, and engaging in collective action and collaborative problem-solving. Ubuntu behaviours, for these black African women leaders, included “being tolerant, non-judgmental, acceptance, respect for humanity, compassion, building authentic and genuine relationships.”

Some studies found servant leadership behaviours of black African women leaders to be rooted in motherhood. Mothers are protectors, pillars of support, and community builders who are invested in the welfare of their communities. These studies identified the behaviours of these women leaders as monitoring, identifying, building, and nurturing talent; empowerment; foresight and planning; approachability; flexibility; relationship-building; multitasking; listening; managing relationships; altruism; compassion; and fairness.22,23,24

These women’s ubuntu behaviours were rooted in their belief in the importance and value of three aspects: spirituality and resilience, interdependence, and unity and community-building.

Spirituality and resilience: Whether employing religious terminology or not, the participants in the study linked their spirituality with a desire to serve others. These women's spirituality enabled them to be strong and courageous in the face of difficult circumstances, gave them a sense of purpose and a calling, and was their source of practical wisdom. Spirituality powered their resilience — their ability to bounce back from adversity — and to manage the challenges inherent in leadership. The women drew strength from their spirituality in times of struggle or in the face of challenges to their authority as leaders.

Interdependence: The participants explained that interdependence is about working together — leaders and followers alike — to meet collective goals. Interdependence for the leader involves delegating both power and authority to others, so that they are empowered to act in the interests of the greater good. This includes recognising the need to ensure a pipeline of others to be trained, mentored, and supported to take on leadership roles, by recognising and utilising the talents of others, and by gaining their support. To these women, interdependence means self-sustenance through collective action and the sharing of resources to solve community problems.

Unity and community-building require the ability to see the value in each person and to help everyone live a life of dignity. These women saw value in every human being, and were able to transcend ethnicity or tribal affiliations, to bring about harmony and build their communities.

Based on the above insights, it can be argued that rekindling humanness or the spirit of ubuntu in organisations should perhaps be considered one of the most significant features that professional black African women contribute to an organisation to improve the effectiveness of leaders and, consequently, enhance organisational performance.

Professional black African women who have triumphed over trials and hardships, and established themselves as effective leaders who are universally celebrated, are said to possess and personify Black Girl Magic. University of Cape Town Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng and former first lady Michelle Obama are two of the many black women said to have given a human face to Black Girl Magic. In paying tribute to Michelle Obama, Sonita Ross wrote26 that Michelle was not just the first lady, she was the first black first lady. ‘I was in awe of her beauty, grace and accomplishments. She came from a working-class family and worked so hard that she was, at one time, her future husband’s boss. She is notable because, in addition to her many accomplishments, she became the First Lady and transgressed obstacles that limit black women’s access to the fullness of womanhood and, indeed, humanity. Michelle stopped the world when she reluctantly stepped into the role, and she dazzled us, inspired and reminded so many black girls of our own possibility. Michelle is our Black Girl Magic’27.

FROM UBUNTU TO BLACK GIRL MAGIC
The first reference to the hashtag #BlackGirlMagic dates back to 2013, when it was used on Twitter, a social media platform. The hashtag was adapted by Cashawn Thompson from the original phrase “Black girls are magic”, coined by American blogger and influencer Auntie Peebz28,29,30. This modern-day social and political phenomenon emerged as a collective voice for black women and girls to celebrate who they are. #BlackGirlMagic is part of an emerging sphere of social experiences where thoughts and ideas, communicated via a hashtag, act as a catalyst for building communities and influencing change. The representation of black women by the hashtag is not considered to constitute a monolithic group, but to consist of all black African women diaspora, inclusive of all classes, levels of education, and religions31.

Vast evidence of the hashtag found on other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram and in anecdotes, press articles, and literature shows that the hashtag has gained considerable universal traction. The #BlackGirlMagic phenomenon soon permeated organisations and prominent institutions, where professional black women identified with the contemporary movement and publicly posted their stories attributing their ubuntu-inspired leadership traits such as resilience, their accomplishments, and their triumph over adversity to Black Girl Magic.

A review of #BlackGirlMagic stories and Twitter posts shows that there is power in the narrative. The movement sought to amplify the voices of black women, celebrating what black women deem particularly inspiring about themselves. #BlackGirlMagic grew through women posting their own and others' stories of accomplishment using the hashtag. Through this sharing of stories and experiences, these women grow, learn, and encourage others to persevere in their own lives and to continue advocacy for inclusion, change, and defying the odds. Since its emergence, as revealed by a Twitter search of the hashtag, key themes of #BlackGirlMagic have been sisterhood, self-love, black beauty, power, resilience, accomplishments, and everyday positive affirmations from the voices of black women, in narratives about black women. What is considered 'magical' is diverse. Recently, #BlackGirlMagic has been the subject of criticism and push-back. Critics against the philosophy of the hashtag identified it as having the potential to overemphasise the strengths of black women and preach an unreachable level of womanhood — which will become expected — a level that denies black women permission to be human. In response, Ford contends that this is not the case, and suggests that, rather, #BlackGirlMagic transcends the ideology of strong black women by offering a conceptualisation of black womanhood that is multidimensional and that celebrates black women in all their glory, a narrative of pain, strength, vulnerability, and, ultimately, triumph. As Ford puts it: "Being magical has never been about being in possession of superhuman mental or emotional strength. In fact, every magical being we read about has moments of weakness, powerlessness, and obstacles outside their control. What makes black girls magic is not an inherent access to some form of super strength. Magic is about knowing something that others don’t know or refuse to see. When a black woman is successful, and the world refuses to see her blood, sweat and tears behind the win, what does it look like? Magic. It’s not for them. It’s for us."

Thompson agrees, and adds that black women use the word ‘magic’ because others do not always understand the ways in which black women and girls create, achieve, and excel, despite the multiple odds they face. "This rallying cry serves not only as an inspiration to black women but also as a way to pay homage to many black women and girls who are defying the odds, day in and day out. That is Black Girl Magic.”

Over time, in countries like Brazil and South Africa, #BlackGirlMagic has run into tricky terrain. The movement has received some push-back from the very women it seeks to represent. These women argue that the phrase implies that black women being able to succeed in systems that were never meant to accommodate them takes supernatural strength. Furthermore, they...
claim that the hashtag has been gobbled up by the mainstream, and has begun to privilege mainstream black women, at the cost of women who do not conform to the traditional persona\textsuperscript{39}. This unintended consequence is not the hashtag’s fault, nor is it the truth behind its intent. In reality, the black women who continue to associate positively with the hashtag, use the hashtag, and feel proud of it far outnumber the dissidents.

I prescribe to the predominant view that Black Girl Magic is an affirming phenomenon that resonates deeply and perhaps amplifies the traits professional black women embrace when they practise leadership that is shaped by ubuntu values. #BlackGirlMagic appears to have given prominent professional black women who practise ubuntu-inspired leadership notable legitimacy through their public sharing of their stories and celebration of their accomplishments. #BlackGirlMagic both acknowledges and connects black women. Black Girl Magic could be a powerful force in the South African workplace, because its power lies in uniting black women and establishing a collective voice among black African women leaders who are all striving for the same thing — to challenge the status quo and create humane workplaces. In reality, black African women should be supported to reach their full potential through community, while they, simultaneously, protect each other from the world that often views them as ‘others’.

CONCLUSION
This article was based on an extensive literature review, during which it became clear that research and theorising on women and leadership in the African context is limited, and that Eurocentric leadership development and training approaches continue unabated. The concept of ubuntu-based management, specifically in the context of its application by black African women through Black Girl Magic, provides a foundation for leadership development that is more contextually and culturally relevant in transformed and diverse South African organisations.

I submit that professional black women who embrace their authenticity, affirm themselves in their leadership roles through ubuntu values, and thereby promote the creation of humane and caring organisational cultures remain in the minority in South African organisations. The authentic relationships resulting from genuine ubuntu-infused leadership remind leaders that people — employees, constituents, students, and community members — are human beings, not just human ‘doings’ for the achievement of organisational or community goals. People want to experience a sense of community, a sense of belonging\textsuperscript{40}.

The magic of black African women leaders who operate from an ubuntu worldview will contribute to sustaining such healthy relations and will help to build community. This should be promoted and entrenched through contextualised leadership development programmes. By understanding these women’s impact, organisations can begin to adapt and tailor their inclusion programmes and initiatives around the unique needs of professional black women and ubuntu-infused leadership, capitalising on Black Girl Magic. This could influence the organisational culture towards higher employee engagement, productivity, and profitability.

TAKE HOME
Human resources practitioners should consider mentorship strategies to foster a welcoming environment for professional black women, one that facilitates their application of Black Girl Magic through ubuntu-infused leadership.

Training and development opportunities geared towards African women need to be enhanced, and should focus more on utilising existing studies on ubuntu as a management concept, to ensure that these programmes are culturally and contextually relevant.

\textsuperscript{39} Msimang, S. (2017). All your faves are problematic: A brief history of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, stanning and the trap of #blackgirlmagic. Journal on African Women’s Experiences, 8 (December

\textsuperscript{40} Ngunjiri, F.W. (2016). “I am because we are”: Exploring women’s leadership under ubuntu worldview. Advances in Developing Human Resources, 18(2): 223-242. DOI: 10.1177/1523442316641416
Mentoring is critical to the career success and retention of professional black African women. Human resource practitioners should pay more attention to enabling leaders in the workplace to set up systems that identify and eliminate discriminatory practices. They should report experiences of perceived bias that may impede professional black African women in advancing in their roles or that compel them to assume identities as a coping strategy, thereby causing a loss of self-esteem and the ability to live out, share, and teach others Black Girl Magic.

About the author

Every year, we are privileged to have some of the foremost experts in their fields contribute to the Women’s Report. Their insights, research, and thoughts on topics provide fresh perspectives on the advancement of gender equality at work. Experts come from the ranks of practitioners and researchers, and topics span women at work and the spill-over of perspectives on gender, at home and in society, on paid work.

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WOMEN’S REPORT 2020

Paper 3: The twice-black bind

by Nastassja Wessels
The twice-black bind

by Ms Nastassja Wessels

Maimouna Youssef, aka Mumu Fresh, an American singer-songwriter and rapper, wrote and performed the feminist anthem Never Bring Me Down in 2017, in resistance to the industry’s disempowerment of women. She raps, “Sometimes being a woman is like being black twice”, a lyric that went viral as women across the globe identified with the sentiment. In this article, social studies form the foundation for understanding the double bind black South African women experience in the power relations of today’s workplace.

The lyrics of Mumu Fresh echo the words of Senegalese author Awa Thiam:

“Women are the Blacks of the human race.’ Can they tell us then what or who are Black Women? The Blacks of the Blacks of the human race?”

The suggestion in both instances is that being a woman is a shade of blackness in a racist world, and that being a black woman is the darkest hue – one where race discrimination intersects with gender discrimination. Understanding this double-bind provides a lens through which we could review the invisible barriers black women face in the workplace.

Political power was lost to black people in 1994, but, normatively, the social power white men historically possessed remained intact. This is particularly evident in organisations’ structures and operations showing little consideration for the realities of women, making it very difficult for women to build a long and successful career. Add to this the undertones of racism in interpersonal interactions, and the extent of the double bind black women have to operate under becomes evident.

Post-apartheid South Africa was supposed to be the era of equality. However, it has become clear that equality is neither immune to power relations, nor disconnected from history, and that white male domination did not simply vanish the day South Africa became a democracy. There is still much evidence today of South Africa’s history of white domination and black subordination, and patriarchy rather than gender equality.

HISTORICALLY NORMALISED SUBORDINATION OF BLACK WOMEN

To make sense of the double-black bind, it is important to understand the historical context. Kwamwangamalu outlined four eras in South Africa’s history: Dutchification or Dutch colonisation (1652–1795), British Anglicisation or British colonisation (1795–1948), Afrikanerisation or Apartheid (1948–1994), and democratisation (from 1994 to the present). All these eras involved oppressive, violent, and painful social processes, which resulted in groups of people conceptualising and constructing their identities over time. Colonialism had one major consequence in the form of cultural appropriation.

Rogers reconceptualised cultural appropriation as more than just the exploitation or ‘stealing’ of stereotypical cultural activities or artefacts, and outlines four categories of cultural appropriation, namely Cultural exchange, Dominance, Exploitation, and Transculturation (cultural transformation through an influx of new cultural elements and the loss or changing of existing ones), which can easily be located in each of South Africa’s historical eras of social change. It could be argued that each era of change was imposed through dominance structures, but not to better society. Rather, it imposed power struggles that would last for generations.

DISCRIMINATION HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT
Robin DiAngelo, author of White Fragility, explains that supremacy is more than the idea that one group of people is superior. It is also the notion that the norms associated with those persons are the standard, and that anything different is a deviation. This is applicable to both race and gender, and the manifestation or expression of these feelings is sometimes very subtle or disguised.

DiAngelo quotes Omowale Akintunde, African-American scholar and filmmaker:

“Racism is a systemic, societal, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that pervades every vestige of our reality. For most whites, however, racism is like murder: the concept exists, but someone has to commit it in order for it to happen. This limited view of such a multilayered syndrome cultivates the sinister nature of racism and, in fact, perpetuates racist phenomena rather than eradicates them.”

In his study, titled Non-conformity Among Four Contemporary Black Female Managers in South Africa, Hugo Canham states, "Standards and competence is a recurring theme in contexts where employment equity is discussed. This was the case in most of the interviews he conducted. He notes, "Many black people feel under constant scrutiny of the white gaze".

This feeling is explored in Jennifer Harding and E. Deidre Pribram’s paper "The power of feeling: Locating emotions in culture", in which they use Alison Jaggar's concept of emotional hegemony — dominance by one group in viewing emotions. Jaggar argues that ideology-based discourses on emotion keep members of the dominant political, social, and cultural groups in dominance, where they are almost invariably considered reasonable, while subordinate groups are associated with irrational emotions.

Through this association, people of colour, and especially women, are viewed as more subjective, biased, and irrational while, at the same time, as an ideology-conforming practice, they may be culturally and socially required to express emotions more openly, as it is considered 'feminine.' This assignment of reason and emotion, as Jaggar calls it, "bolsters the authority of dominant groups and discredits subordinate groups, constituting a process of emotional hegemony. However, as in other hegemonic systems, the possibility of resistance is always present”.

BEE statistics do not reflect the lived experiences of black women. They usually relate their experiences outside the presence of dominance, creating a false sense of ‘relative discursive freedom’ for themselves. Canham would agree. His study included testimonies from participants whom he considered "outsiders within”.

By non-conforming in this context, I refer to those black women who identify themselves as located outside the organisational culture and who see themselves as unassimilable or unable to integrate to the dominant culture. Even though these women do not seek to be radicals, the act of being themselves at work marks them as radical and non-conforming and leads to their further marginalisation. While not necessarily identifying as feminist, they might also exhibit feminist sensibilities.”

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LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN BEING BLACK TWICE

Tinyiko Ngwenya, a young, black, female chartered accountant, related her personal experience on LinkedIn, after resigning from her workplace in 2018. She detailed her reasons for leaving Cape Town’s boardrooms for those of Johannesburg in an emotional post that garnered widespread media attention in South Africa. She described “a tragic sense of loneliness” and “an identity crisis” in her former workplace. Read from the perspective of cultural studies, Tinyiko was negotiating her place in the workplace in the face of systemic racism. Incidences ranged from colleagues constantly mispronouncing her name — to the point where she hated introducing herself — to being the only black person in her investment group, a clear sign of the slow progress of transformation. Her name was also reduced from Tinyiko to ‘Tiny’, which could be read as micro-aggression, metaphorically reducing her to a lesser-than.

To understand why she represents the growing number of young black female professionals, we can again turn to Harding and Pribram’s paper:

“Our cultural analysis of emotions attempts to show how power, as a web of unequal relations, works through specific articulations of emotion. We view emotions as culturally constructed and permeating all levels of personal and social experience and, in this sense, as undermining any clear and fixed division between the public and the private”.

Tinyiko’s story reflects instances of systemic racist practices, an invisible force that is difficult to prove, but enough to push black women out of the organisation. Canham’s study provides evidence through similar testimonies. He criticises traditional organisational theory for its limitations, and locates the women’s testimonies “within a paradigm of work which centres the body’s expression of emotions and affect”, which is a concept in psychology that deals with the nuances and productive outcomes emotion can have on a social process. “Seen in this light, emotions are not solely for reading the subject, but are capable of generating new relations and worlds”.

“Sarah”, a participant in Canham’s study, related her origins and formative experiences, including the loss of her son and father, and her divorce — each an occurrence that had shaped how she experienced her work environment. The subject of Sarah’s testimony was a poor performance appraisal riddled with criticism about her emotional expression and lack of resilience, and innuendos of her having poor leadership skills. Sarah’s tears were seen by her superiors as her expression of non-conformity. Yet, Canham notes that Sarah’s narrative appears to be one of compromised dignity and loss of meaning:

“The tears streamed down Sarah’s face. These were in part a manifestation of her humiliation... Later she told me a story of healing but in that moment, it was her pain that was important for her... She seemed to be telling me that her work identity is not bound up in time and space. If I am to hear her... I have to read her sobs, pauses and her voice, references to books and emails that she will send me. These co-constitute her story.”

Sarah’s tears made her white colleagues uncomfortable, and “cast a shade of unhappiness.” To explain this reaction to Sarah’s tears, Canham quotes Johnson, who argues that “white bodies have been corporeally and discursively...”

normalised as the universal standard. Thus, it is white rules that govern the everyday life of black women.

Sarah’s white colleagues’ complete disregard for her emotional expressions is indicative of emotional hegemony in the workplace. This is evident in her colleagues politicising rather than attempting to understand her emotions. Canham notes the following about women like Sarah in the workplace:

“They are submissive and unable to play by the aggressive rules that their counterparts appear to thrive in. At the other extreme, they are cast as oversensitive and shrews that see abuse, racism, and sexism everywhere.”

Until South Africa truly transforms, heals, and overcomes racial inequality, emotional hegemony will continually fuel resistance. For parity to be realised, systemic racism, domination, and the associated imperceptible hindrances to social cohesion need to be addressed. This calls for a cultural approach to organisational matters and orienting efforts specifically to enhance communication in the workplace, especially where black women are concerned.

“Cultural approaches help us locate individuals in a social context in which their values, aspirations and associations are formed and in which their choices are given meaning. It also allows us to bring in emotional forms of action not easily explicable in the calculating language of rational choice.”

If emotions are not addressed, the affected woman will seek work elsewhere, and the organisation will have lost one of the too few professional black women. The women would give a vague reason for their departure, while the truth is concealed, for fear of being typecast as described above.

This may have been the case for one of Canham’s key participants, ‘Lulu’, who was seen as the “champion of transformation” at the company. She left abruptly, under a cloud, before Canham could interview her and after signing a non-disclosure agreement with the company. Because she could not participate, her experience was described through the testimonies of five others. She was the most senior of all the participants and also the line manager of some. “Lulu left an indelible mark on her former division. In some ways, she lives on in the division in the form of disappointed dreams, aspirations, and silences”. It seems she was typecast as ‘an angry black woman’ who relied heavily on her subordinates, but, due to pressures from the top, was typecast as pushing her own agendas on transformation, to the detriment of the organisation, and as having succumbed to hostile means to achieve her desired ends.

Other participants’ stories revealed an underlying need to belong. ‘Nomonde’, one of only about 100 chartered accountants in the country at the time and the most senior black woman in her department, was considered to be in need of diplomacy training. Canham deduced that this was the result of her managers succumbing to “Colonial tropes of success, moderation, and restraint, [which] elevate this type of diplomacy to global competence”. It is therefore no surprise that “she saw herself as a visitor in a white world in which she [had come] to be tolerated”. It appears as if Nomonde wanted to escape the white gaze when she expressed her desire to return to a black company, where her competence would not be questioned and where she could ask “the most stupid question to anyone, knowing that the person is not going to judge you for your stupidity.”

Other participants shared how they exercised their non-conformity. ‘Lerato’ explained how she disengaged at social gatherings, although, “To some degree then, Lerato plays along with the script of displays of goodwill at the expense of her true feelings”. In analysing this behaviour, Canham19 says:

“The moderate, measured, polite, competent, liberal, black professional who can leverage white capital and is able to make friends with white people is the preferred black of corporate South Africa.”

HOW DISCRIMINATION IS PERPETUATED

Acculturation occurs in both passive and active ways. In the workplace, it would take some form of appropriation. Exchange, the first of Rogers’s20 categories of cultural appropriation, involves “the reciprocal exchange of symbols, artefacts, rituals, genres, and/or technologies between cultures with roughly equal levels of power”. Incoming employees are forced to exchange their knowledge with the company, and their years of experience essentially become an asset of the company, while new structures, rituals, and technologies are adopted by the new employee. In the accounts related earlier, this ideal was not pursued, resulting in unequal power and Cultural dominance, the second category.

Cultural dominance “is characterised by the unidirectional imposition of elements of a dominant culture onto a subordinated culture”. The way Sarah’s tears were interpreted by colleagues is an apt example. Rogers21 asserts that “this does not mean that members of subordinated cultures do not negotiate this imposition in a variety of ways, manifesting at least limited forms of agency in how they appropriate the imposed cultural elements”. Black women’s refusal to attend social gatherings, i.e. non-conformity, is one such form of resistance to dominance. Rogers22 notes that dominance disturbs the ideal conditions for exchange, which are “ethical standards by which other types of appropriation should be judged (i.e. reciprocal, balanced, and voluntary).

The women’s experiences could be interpreted in terms of racism being viewed as binary, rather than systemically acculturated and socialised into the workplace. DiAngelo constructs racism in terms of the good/bad binary23, which, in its simplest form, applies judgement as a good or bad person as measured by racism — “You could not be a good person and participate in racism; only bad people were racist,” she says. Against the backdrop of the apartheid era, it seems reasonable for South Africans to view the world this way. People, upon hearing these accounts, may classify themselves, as DiAngelo24 did herself, as non-racist, which then manifests in an internal dialogue such as DiAngelo’s25:

“...what further action is required of me? No action is required because I am not racist. Therefore, racism is not my problem; it doesn’t concern me and there is nothing further for me to do.”

Outwardly, this manifests as inaction, which ultimately supports systemic racism, because, as DiAngelo explains26, “the good/bad binary certainly obscures the structural nature of racism and makes it difficult for [people] to see or understand.”

The inaction caused by the good/bad binary also creates a false sense of harmony in the workplace by subverting the appropriative effects that conflict and openness can have on organisational culture. By making topics of emotions, race, gender, and inequality taboo, miscommunication, hidden means of resistance, and tension prevail.

Ultimately, the good/bad binary prevents the positive impact that appropriation could have on a workplace. Rogers\(^{27}\) views Transculturation, his final category, as the long-term outcome of cultural appropriation. It is that which "points to culture as a relational phenomenon that itself is constituted by acts of appropriation"; a direct contradiction to the resulting inaction caused by the good/bad binary. Transcultural processes thus involve "a variety of potentially effective agencies", which means that positive outcomes can be reached if exchange, dominance, and exploitation are managed.

In the South African workplace, it is precisely because the idea that racism is something that must happen to a person, or that it is "limited to individual intentional acts committed by unkind people" that it is "at the root of virtually all-white defensiveness on this topic\(^{28}\) and the reason why systemically racist practices are reinforced and preserved. Furthermore, in reference to the difficulties workplaces have in championing more inclusive recruitment practices, Carrim\(^{29}\) found that black employees\(^{30}\) are undermined by gossip in the workplace, an occurrence that would validate the feelings of scrutiny that the black women in Canham's study intimated.

It is therefore plausible that challenging the good/bad binary belief system while eradicating white defensiveness on the issue of race would improve social processes in the workplace dramatically. This requires engagement in reciprocal communication. Canham's study\(^{31}\), for example, showed the importance of seeing, reading, and listening to that which is not being expressed by black women in one's own workplace. In other words, instead of invalidating uncomfortable topics, emotions, and conflict as 'anti-rainbow' and therefore anti-progress, be receptive to the what, how, and why of a view being expressed.

Inaction ultimately supports systemic racism, because, as DiAngelo\(^{32}\) explains, "the good/bad binary certainly obscures the structural nature of racism and makes it difficult for us to see or understand. Equally problematic is the impact of such a worldview on our actions."

**SYSTEMIC RACISM**

From the aforegoing, it is safe to say that, unlike overt forms of racism and sexism, such as the use of derogatory terms, systemic incidences are hard to prove. The experience is subjective, complex, and nuanced, because it is culturally, historically, and emotionally constructed. Systemic racism and gender discrimination are deeply personal and painful experiences for black women. These women are still subjected to apartheid-era systems and social norms that are yet to be fully dismantled.

Joubert notes that, when there is lack of diversity in the workplace, "Employees cannot reach their optimal work potential", which is counterproductive to performance. Conversely, positive diversity management recognises diverse resources within diverse demographics, and may lead to "improved organisational health and well-being", as it "enhances organisation competitiveness, primarily by reducing conflict", allowing for "fresh viewpoints to advance the organisation's market performance".


RECOMMENDATIONS
Providing mechanisms for opening up conversations about race, systemic racism, and the twice-black bind, while practising positive conflict management and creating a feedback loop to measure the success of these mechanisms, should be a priority in creating a socially well organisation. This will prevent black women employees suffering in silence and eventually exiting the company. Companies should also promote awareness and sensitivity around these issues, and encourage self-reflection by every individual within the organisation.

To counter emotional hegemony in the workplace, organisations should be aware of social interactions in the workplace, manage normalised covert or hidden resistive practices, and facilitate meaningful communication among culturally diverse people, to protect the interests of all, to build trust among colleagues by legitimising their lived experiences, to promote understanding, engagement, and social cohesion, and to eradicate invisible powers exerted by dominant social identities.

Until South African organisations transform by actively dismantling inequality in the workplace, the damaging effects of dominance will continue to erode their social cohesion and the retention of talented black women. If organisations want to realise true parity, they will have to actively address systemic racism and the associated imperceptible hindrances to the empowerment of black women through a cultural approach.

About the author

Every year, we are privileged to have some of the foremost experts in their fields contribute to the Women’s Report. Their insights, research, and thoughts on topics provide fresh perspectives on the advancement of gender equality at work. Experts come from the ranks of practitioners and researchers, and topics span women at work and the spill-over of perspectives on gender, at home and in society, on paid work.

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Her thesis, #FeesMustFall: Discourse hidden in plain sight, highlights various aspects of the social processes at play in South African society – from digital culture to decolonisation of education in South Africa.
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