

African Feminisms as Method: A Methodology for African Feminisms in the Digital Age

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Abstract

“African Feminisms” is the collective label given to the various approaches to demanding equality for African women in the face of the unique oppressions and restrictions they endure because they are African and women. This essay argues that African feminisms exist in the plural because women on the continent experience a variety of oppressions owing to their contexts and identities, and this gives rise to a multitude of approaches to equality. However, these multitude of approaches are united by three core characteristics – African feminisms are networked, intersectional and decolonial. Drawing from my own research into digital technologies and human mobilities, I propose one approach to using African feminisms as a method to conduct political analysis and develop political theory more broadly.

Keywords: Africa, African Feminism, Methodology, Intersectionality, Decoloniality

Introduction

The goal of this article is to contribute to moving our conversation on African feminisms away from the “what” and “why” questions, towards “how” questions. How do we turn African feminisms from an idea or an ideology, towards a practical programme of work for thinkers and practitioners? How do we turn all of this tremendous momentum around defining African feminisms towards the application of the theory? This work arises from my own reflection on what being an African feminist means to me during the course of my research on digital technology and human mobility. The paper argues that African feminisms

are a fundamentally different rationality. It expands on the idea of feminism as an intellectual practice fuelled by love as a political and personal value, driven by a desire to make the world a better place for current and future generations, as well as an improved relationship with the natural environment. This paper therefore outlines some of the ideas and experiences that have emerged during the course of trying to shape this intellectual practice, hopefully, to inform some of the work that others are doing so we can continue to build together.

The idea of an African feminist epistemology is not new. Feminists of the global majority have argued that the methodologies of hegemonic liberal feminism reinforce inequalities of global power relationships and, particularly, the imbalanced economic relationships of neoliberalism (Mama 2011; Mohanty 1984; Ahikire 2022). Similarly, feminists of the global majority have challenged the idea that an agenda can be labelled “feminist” simply because it deals with issues facing women. Within gender studies, for example, Amina Mama (2011) noted that while there was a great impetus in the early 2000s to support gender studies departments in Africa owing to the perception that such departments brought in funding for universities, this impetus rarely translated into doing critical feminist work. This fuelled the creation of the African Gender Institute in 2002 at the University of Cape Town with the explicit agenda to advance feminist approaches to pedagogy and methodology, while “reaffirming the radical and transformative intellectual traditions of the continent” (Mama 2011, 7). The concept of African feminism contains within it an imperative to work towards the liberation of African women from the various oppressions that intersect through their lives, not simply to make reference to African women. The idea was to move away from the Women in Development approach of “add women and stir” towards pushing African women’s political agendas of challenging the systemic and structural drivers of gender injustice (McFadden 2007).

Nonetheless, it is important to restate the foundations of “African feminism” as a possibility and to resist the idea that things must be novel for them to be important or worth reiterating. The act of reiteration is an affirmation that the work is incomplete. It is important to reframe that sometimes academic work is not the pursuit of endless novelty but sitting and grappling with complexity and communicating that complexity to lay audiences so that they can find something

useful to do with it in the world. This is doing the tedious, but necessary, work of making knowledge live beyond the walls of the academy.

By way of background, for the last decade and a half, the focus of my intellectual energy has been on two things – the role of technology in society and the contemporary experience of human mobility. These may seem like disparate areas of work, but both originate in the same series of events – witnessing the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya and the subsequent social transformations that it created. On one hand, there was the unprecedented uptake in the use of digital technologies and social media in public life, and, on the other, hundreds of thousands of people were seemingly permanently displaced overnight. I wanted to understand both these things better. In 2018, I published my first book, *Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics: How the Internet Era is Transforming Politics in Kenya* not just to draw attention to the Kenyan experience of the rise of digital technologies, but also methodologically to challenge those of us working as researchers in digital technologies on the presumptions we have about where knowledge is generated from and in which direction it flows (Nyabola 2018). Following this, in 2020, I published my second book, *Travelling While Black: Essays Inspired by a Life on the Move* to explore African mobilities through travel, migration and displacement (Nyabola 2020).

At the time of writing in 2016, academic and policy literature on digital technologies was dominated by “developmentalism”, or the fundamentally neoliberal idea that merely giving people technology would be enough to lead to economic growth, and that economic growth was the primary outcome that made the adoption of this technology worthwhile. There were notable exceptions, particularly African feminist work that critically explored the questions of agency and how African women were shaping their digital lives, rather than simply being reformed through digitalisation (e.g. Sanya 2013). What I felt was missing, was the analysis that this was not a uniquely African experience, and that Africa had many lessons to teach the world – and not just the global majority – about how agency at all levels of society was having both a constructive and a destructive influence on the role that digital technologies were playing in politics and society.

Had I written a book with the United States, United Kingdom or any other Western nation at its centre, it is likely to have been read as a general observation on how digital technologies are affecting life all over the planet. But a text with

an African community as its centre is almost always received as presenting niche concerns or as an “area studies” text. I wrote the book intentionally to place an African community at the centre of an emerging area of research that deals with modernity and innovation, and other buzzwords, to invert that intellectual power dynamic and place the putative periphery at the centre. Getting the book published as such was a difficult process. Many publishers in Africa and other parts of the world passed on the text for this very reason: a common question I got from publishers was “why didn’t you write a book about Africa”? But this was a deliberate choice to write against the idea that African communities, even at a national level, do not warrant a measure of specificity. This reflects what African feminists have restated several times – that there is no single way to be an African woman and that our stories deserve to be understood within their individual contexts (Nnaemeka 2004; Decker and Baderoon 2018).

My research centred on an African country without the idea that what happens in Africa is somehow removed from what happens elsewhere in the world. Rather, it proceeded with the explicit idea that Africa is also a place where theories about how the world works can be developed. This is about more than positionality. Positionality is a central research concern for African feminists, and feminists more generally, because it allows us to illuminate the power dynamics that shape the terrain of so much of our research. But positionality can easily be presented as a purely reflexive concern rather than a simultaneously outward-looking, epistemic one (Ahikire 2022). Thus, instead of only thinking about my positionality, I wanted to interrogate the situation of African thought within the terrain of theories of digitalisation more broadly: to insert an African mode of thinking into contemporary discourse as a valid framework that is applicable and has great utility beyond the continent and its diaspora. A central concern for my research was “would the terrain and concerns of global research into the agency around digital technology look different if the central referent object was an African woman in an African country?” The purpose was not just to look inward at the experience of African women, but to shift that gaze outwards into the global trends of globalisation, digitalisation and the political transformations created through the uptake of digital technology, and to explore what questions were illuminated for the collective through this shift in central referent object.

Kenya was the first site for my research, not just because I am Kenyan, but because of the unique historical circumstances that have made the country a leader in both the positive and negative experiences of digitalisation. At the time of writing, Kenya is not the biggest by most metrics – a mid-sized economy in Africa with a mid-sized population – yet it was for many years the number one market for mobile money (Nyabola 2018). Kenya hosted the first fully digital election and is one of the few social media communities that managed to bully their president off social media networks (Nyabola 2018). Kenya was also interesting as a site for research because, like other countries of the world, it is on the cusp of a fundamental transformation in its relationship with technology, or rather technology is changing the power dynamics in just about every society in the world and Kenya is an excellent place to study this dynamic. The dramatic uptake of digital technologies by the state has yielded several positive and negative outcomes that are indicative of the broader challenges with which all societies will have to contend. Technologies, like digital identity, are impacting marginalisation, mobile money is reshaping financial inclusion, social media is transforming politics, and search engines are reshaping our relationship to knowledge.

Yet the central referent object when we think about, discuss or build technology remains White, middle- or upper-class, able-bodied men, mostly living in the Global North. This is particularly evidenced in the assumptions we make about what kind of help is available to people when technology goes wrong – our assumptions about the extent to which those who wield power in any given society will mobilise or act in defence of those who are harmed by technology, or the extent to which the levers of knowledge and power within a society are available to those who are harmed by it. An example of this is in digital identity projects. These projects encourage governments to create large datasets containing highly detailed information about citizens across various domains with the promise that more data will lead to more efficient government. But these operate on the presumption that the state always has a positive relationship with its citizens and always acts in their best interest, a presumption that feminist thought, through our engagements with reproductive rights, LGBTQIA+ activism and indeed historical approaches to national identity systems, tell us that we cannot take for granted. In Kenya itself, the national identity card is based on the colonial *kipande* system – a gendered biometric colonial identity system whose

foundations have never been questioned even years after independence leading to systematic injustices like vetting, a violent process through which people from specific ethnic communities are required to prove their identity (Weitzberg 2020). There is significant evidence that citizens do not have equal access to restitution if they endure violence from the state through such identity systems.

In the digital age, the identity of an average internet user has shifted dramatically, not least because of demographics. While women are still far more disadvantaged, in terms of access, than men, there are a significant number of us online, using digital technologies to transform our social and personal lives. African studies theories of how power was constructed in African societies imagined African women as being without agency because of the absence of Western structures (van Allen 1972; Byfield 2016). In this digital age, our inability to imagine how groups identify, organise or relate beyond the structures imagined by those who build our technology results in a crisis of imagination and an inability to appreciate fully the resulting lacunae. As the demographics of who the internet is for transform, we will also have to change our ontological and epistemological ideas about how best to regulate it. This is why we have to understand how the internet behaves beyond the presumed user that dominates our philosophical approaches today. People of the global majority are online and using technology and this raises the question: what does an African feminist internet or digital era look like?

African feminisms have been, and remain, the guiding light or the key instrument for shaping my own conclusions about this question. They are not just the what and the why, but also the how, and in this essay, I specifically want to focus on African feminisms as a how, as an invitation to imagine a different way of doing political science more broadly. Essentially, what are the methodological imperatives created by embracing African feminisms as a methodology during the course of conducting research on digital technology? How must we structure our research and outputs to respond to these imperatives?

Out of Many, One

From the outset, it is important to affirm that there is no singular way to be an African, even in the feminine. The plural “African feminisms” is deliberate and necessary. While feminism is fundamentally the idea that all people, regardless of their gender identities, are made equal, the factors that cause inequality between various societies differ considerably (Mekgwe 2010; Geiger et al. 2002; Kanogo 2005). Sara Ahmed writes that feminist theory is work that we do in the world, “the intellectual and emotional work that happens once we experience gender as the restriction of possibility and what we learn about worlds as we navigate these restrictions” (2017, 7). To do feminist theory is therefore to turn the experience of gender as a restriction into knowledge about the world, and knowledge that is specifically refracted through the process of navigating restrictions that arise through the question of gender.

African feminisms are postcolonial in that they originate in the experiences of women of Africa in the shadow of the continent’s colonial interruption. Emmanuel Eze (1998) argues that a philosophy is considered “African” when it contains philosophical material from Africa and its diasporas. For feminisms to be African, however, I argue that they should be intimately connected to the goal of freedom for African women, or a theory that allows us to understand the world through the lens developed by overcoming the restrictions that gender places on African women (Mekgwe 2010; Ahikire 2022). This also makes the plural form necessary. Meanwhile, “postcolonial” broadly refers to the period after the historical interruption of colonisation. Although, given that some of the impacts and practices of colonisation are still underway in much of the global majority, including Africa, the notion of “post” remains the subject of great debate (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013). If “coloniality” implies an ideological system designed to maintain power differentials between the core and the periphery, then “postcoloniality” refers to the state of being that should exist after those practices are undone, which arguably has not been attained anywhere (Tamale 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013). Either way, Mekgwe (2010) reminds us that the “post in postcolonial” is by definition plural because of the varied ways in which colonialism was experienced in different societies. Colonial power was organised differently in various societies because the objectives of domination

in the various geographies were different – indirect rule for sites where prestige or merely blocking colonisation by other forces was the objective, and direct rule where extraction was the primary goal (Letsa and Wilfahrt 2020). So, if the post- is defined by what came before, then there will always be, by definition, a multiplicity of “postcolonialisms.”

African feminisms are networked because they weave together these diverse experiences of African women into a single framework, and because the work of African feminists needs to operate across the plurality created by a vast geography, diverse locality and the multifaceted colonial interruption. Oyèwùmí (1997) reminds us that appealing to the idea of “African feminisms” is not about flattening the experience of African women. It is not about platitudes that reach towards empty promises of singular sisterhood. African feminism as an intellectual practice is so much more demanding than that. It asks for a solidarity that crosses both time and space, histories and geographies. It is about allowing for the specific in the general, and finding that which is human in the other, while protecting it against the ravages of patriarchy in all its guises. African feminism is hard work.

Finally, African feminisms are intersectional because women have, over time, experienced patriarchy in different avenues, either in the domestic or the public domain, across generations, religions, race, class and sexual orientations, and each of these experiences also intersect uniquely. Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1988) theory of intersectionality sums up the refrain of Black women in the United States through their experience of second wave feminism alongside the militancy of the civil rights movement: some of the black people are women, and some of the women are black. As varied and insidious as patriarchy is, so too are the responses and resistance to it, and this necessitates African feminisms in the plural rather than the singular. The work that African feminists like Stella Nyanzi or the Rhodes Must Fall movement have done to incorporate the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ Africans in their theories of revolution is illustrative of the intersectional ambitions of African feminisms: not just to liberate women but to use the experiences of African women to liberate everyone (Nyanzi 2013; Ndelu et al. 2017).

Doing the Work

With these methodological imperatives in mind, the primary goal of doing feminist research in the digital age has been tracking women's work through various digital platforms both in front of and behind the internet. What are women doing in the digital age? Why are they doing it? How are they doing it? With whom are they doing it? Enyinnaya and Arthur's (2024) "African technological feminist theory" presents a framework for exploring how African people use new media while preserving their traditions and their unique experiences of gender and power. This approach examines the intersection between African cultural systems and new media technologies to illuminate how Africans use these new technologies (Enyinnaya and Arthur 2024). While critical, this is a theory that centres on the affordances of the various technologies in relation to African women's experiences rather than what African women's agency reveals about the technologies as a whole. On the other hand, I argue that mapping women's political agency can help us understand digital technologies as a whole and African feminisms offer a methodology for understanding the social and political impact of digital technologies for everyone, not just African women. It is about finding women's work and developing a consciousness as a researcher to understand it properly in its own context, and then applying that consciousness to understanding digital technologies as a whole, not just in relation to women's experiences.

In the context of *Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics*, there were three key methodological choices that underpinned the research. First, the research tracked women's political agency in Kenya through the analogue and the digital era, shifting the central referent object away from the masculine towards the feminine and deliberately seeking out where women's work lives. How do women use mobile money? Who are Africa's small- and medium-sized enterprises if not the market women who drive so much of the demand for mobile loans by borrowing daily to sustain the small businesses that they run in order to avoid punitive fees on accrued debt (Nyabola 2018)? How do African women define and practise community online? How do African women build and sustain political movements online? Second, referencing practice as African feminist research and practice – whose voices are sought, whose voices are amplified? Whose concerns

are prioritised? There was a deliberate choice to decentre the voices of the Big Men of Kenyan politics, looking outside institutions towards the way people self-organised. One question that shapes my own academic work is whether it is possible to write about African politics as an African feminist without treating women's lives as marginal. Is it possible to write an African feminist perspective on electoral or contested politics without solely looking at the experiences of women? Is it possible to write about all these things – democracy, voting, conflict, peace and more – with women at the centre? Finally, I relied upon oral methods and life histories as explicitly feminist methods – storytelling as an African feminist practice, because understanding power is not just about observation but interpretation as well (Nadar 2014). How do people understand the way power acts on them? How do they navigate that experience of power – what do the oral histories of specific hashtags reveal about how people understand power?

This approach yielded several interesting conversations that connect to a different way of thinking about African women's political work. It reaffirmed the significance of complaint as a political device used by women. There is significant political potency in complaint because women have had little room to raise their voices in formal political spaces on issues that matter to them. But the digital discourse in Kenya – and indeed several African communities – is heavily characterised by the political work of women, far more so than offline activity (Nyabola 2018). Why? In part because the digital lends itself to the political practices that institutions do not see, of which complaint is one. In this vein, I am reminded of the Women of the Kenyan colonial Thuku Resistances of 1922. After the arrest of Harry Thuku, a leader of the anti-colonial movement, protests erupted outside the chief's office (Wipper 1989). The men were ready to capitulate, but women, led by Mary Nyanjiru, refused to submit, resorting to complaint, abuse and baring their bodies to the young men present – a taboo in Gikuyu culture – to raise the alarm (Wipper 1989).

Women's work has also historically happened outside formal institutions because of the endemic nature of patriarchal exclusion. Digital technologies continue this tradition as women are using them to organise beyond the boundaries of the institutions that dominate their work and disciplines. Many of the leading initiatives to deploy digital technologies in Kenya are spearheaded by women, including the contributions of Ory Okolloh whose blogging contributed to the

original idea for the crisis mapping platform, Ushahidi (Nyabola 2018). The platform began as an app where people could send text messages pinpointing the location of violence in their neighbourhood during the post-election violence, allowing crisis responders to get a sense of the national scale of the violence and the locations requiring a response. To an ear that is accustomed to hearing about African womanhood through flattened tropes of dependence and weakness, this can be hard to reconcile (Geiger et al. 2002).

Yet an African feminist postcolonial rereading of African history reminds us that working outside institutions is, in fact, deeply rooted in African women's political actions of the past (Nnaemeka 2004). For example, the first documented major resistance to colonisation in Nigeria was led by women. The Aba women's protests of 1929 objecting to excessive taxation and the violence of British warrant chiefs against market women lasted four months (Uchendu and Okwonkwo 2021; Byfield 2016). It is poorly researched and understood outside academia precisely because it was the work of women operating without the charismatic male leader that theorists of African politics are accustomed to seeking out. More importantly, the British colonial officers sent to end the unrest were themselves confounded by the idea of being bested by women and downplayed the seriousness of the revolt in their own reports. CLR James (2012, 2) rightly observed, "the only place where [black peoples] did not revolt was in the history books of the capitalist historians." Similarly, the only place where African women did not organise against colonisation is in the masculinist imagination of where political work happens (Tamale 2020).

African women's work is also radical. Here I am using the formulation created by Ella Baker, a cofounder of the Student Non-violent Coordination Committee and other key organisations during the civil rights movement, in which radical means "returning to the root", as in addressing problems at their root instead of doing so at a superficial level that focuses on secondary concerns (quoted in Ransby 2004, 18). When you track women's political agency in the digital age, you get the sense of a constant yearning towards the fundamentals – how do we take apart this problem at its most fundamental level and address it there? An example of this is in the building of Ushahidi which began on a blog post. This idea of breaking down a problem to its simplest unit and then addressing that is integral to what makes African women's political work so

potent and, ironically, so invisible. Masculinist politics is founded on visibility and playing the game properly – being seen to do work as opposed to actually doing work – which can be a disadvantage for women who are oriented towards simply doing the work.

I think about this in relation to the way in which women have instrumentalised shame online. The #JusticeFor campaigns that I outlined in *Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics* use social media to draw attention to individual women's experiences of systemic violence when confronted by inaction by the state and are fundamentally about shaming institutions and individuals into action (Nyabola 2018). Shame is a powerful political instrument in Kenya. It moves institutions to action. It is also a weapon that is most potently wielded by the radical African feminists who dominate the online space in Kenya and beyond. This has echoes in the past as well. The Anlu practices of Cameroon, for example, used shame as a method for engendering compliance with social mores (Shanklin 1990). Women would mobilise to use vulgar speech, display genitals, wear men's clothing and other socially transgressive practices to make life untenable for the person and to force them to apologise. When you are unable to access the formal institutions of power, shame is a powerful political tool and Kenya's digital cultures have proven that it still works for women.

Finally, love is a crucial dimension of Black feminisms that is often under-explored in political theory but that I try to centre in my own work. United States theorist, bell hooks wrote that love as a political practice allows us to see "the divine touch" in each other (hooks 2000, 75). A loving life, she notes, is not about self-actualisation but about ending domination and oppression, and a conscious effort to unite the way that we think with the way that we act (hooks 2000). This is a crucial element of African feminisms that I use to move away from developmentalist and neoliberal approaches to understanding political phenomena. Through what other ways can we understand motivation or impetus, or frame the need for collective action towards the greater good? Love offers such a political alternative because it broadens the scope of what it means to be a political human to include the desire for the wellbeing of others. The function of theory rooted in love cannot stop at debate or self-aggrandisement. It is an invitation to action that is attuned to the struggles of those who are most abstracted from power and oriented towards liberation for everyone. Theory

and praxis anchored in love are always looking for the ways to make visible and relieve. They see those who are most abstracted or negatively affected by exercises of power – in my case, through digital technologies – or at the border and seeking out pathways to our shared liberation.

Theory in Practice

Amina Mama (1995, 8) reminds us that “Feminist theory has always been derived from feminist politics.”. Feminism, she continues, is a new way of understanding the world. Mama invites us to reject the post-enlightenment fallacy that theory is finished, and that disciplinarity is the only way through which meaningful knowledge can be generated. These are the three key characteristics of Kenyan feminist politics in the digital age that have emerged from my work that I think serve as a theoretical grounding for this particular African feminism as a method:

1. African feminisms are Networked – instead of the charismatic male figure, there is a group of women working towards a political outcome.
2. African feminisms are Intersectional – inviting particularly LGBTQIA+ Africans into mainstream political discourse in a way masculinised postcolonial thought on the continent continues to resist (Mutua-Mambo 2020).
3. African feminisms are Decolonial – rather than simply ‘post-’, which implies stasis, they are actively involved in efforts to remove colonial ways of thinking from the political sphere (Tamale 2020).

What makes all this analysis “African feminism” is not that I am African, even though there is nothing inherently wrong with one inserting subjectivities into one’s work. Again, I would point back to Amina Mama. What makes this work African feminism is that it uses African women’s political work as a starting point for developing a theory about how power behaves. This is useful for many reasons, most notably that it operates beyond disciplines. Disciplinarity, I found, has marginal utility when you are shifting the central referent object of your study away from the White man as your presumed subject and audience of study. So much useful knowledge is generated outside the lines that disciplinarity has drawn in our lives, and it is useful to be able to look over the fence and see

what others are doing in order to return to the fundamental goal of knowledge production – to move society forward, not just to achieve the aspirations of the silo in which we exist.

In this vein, African feminisms are not just defined by the fact that they are done by African women. Rather, they constitute and can be an approach that can be used by everyone but that is explicitly grounded in the political experiences of African women as a lens for understanding how power and social relations are ordered and reproduced around the world. African feminisms begin with the way power shapes the lives of African women and then build out ideas of how power behaves from that. All political theory is about making sense of power relationships and disparities. But power relationships are not static or constant and are also shaped by subjectivities.

This is particularly clear in the digital age, where the same action or the same phenomenon can have a completely different impact when rolled out in a different social context. The same technology that makes misinformation endemic in one political context makes revolutions possible in another. It all comes down to how the technology interacts with the way the society is structured. Understanding this fundamental idea of disparate impact is central to the utility of Africa feminisms as a method because African women are almost never the builders of or seen as the primary users of technology, even though they are and have always been present. African feminisms allow us to contemplate disparate impact efficiently.

So African feminism is fundamentally an approach that theorises power relationships within a society refracted through the experiences of African women. This is what I worked to do with both *Digital Democracy* and *Travelling While Black*: inserting African women's subjectivities into the way we theorise power in technology and in human mobility to build a theory of power and social relations out of this. In *Digital Democracy*, I use Kenyan women's experience of social media and related technologies to point out that the need to regulate these technologies must contemplate the extremes of potential and violence that they make possible. In *Travelling While Black*, I complicate both the notions of home and the border from the perspective of Kenyan womanhood that tells women from birth that they are not at home until they have a husband and a home. Can we take the protections of home for granted when we begin with the experiences

of those for whom home itself is a tenuous idea? This approach is about shifting the central referent object of the work – changing where we assume politics and power happens – and, when African women become the central referent object of the work, our ideas of how to do the work will also shift. They must.

Conclusion

What then is African feminism as method? What is the “how” of African feminisms? It is the approach of theorising politics and society that begins with the understanding that not only is power networked, but it is also diffuse and not always situated within formal institutions. It is an intersectional approach that always considers how power impacts those who are most removed or abstracted from it, seeing their lived experiences as equally potent sites for analysis. Finally, it is a decolonial approach that always seeks to theorise and understand in a way that undoes the disparities of knowledge production and social organisation that colonisation has introduced into the world, not just in Africa. As stated, there is no one way of achieving these outcomes – rather these are the qualities that unite the various methodologies of African feminisms that are emerging across the different social and political contexts in which African women are doing theory.

African feminism is a method that can see the through line from the Thuku Resistances, Anlu in Cameroon and the Aba Women’s revolt to Wangari Maathai’s nude environmentalism, the queer visibility of Rhodes Must Fall and Stella Nyanzi’s embrace of the vulgar (Wipper 1989; Shanklin 1990; Bosch 2017; Makoni 2021). It is a method that deconstructs institutionalism and formalism in favour of utility and meaning, without compromising rigour and generalisability. African feminism as method offers a potent way of theorising power, particularly as the sites for its reproduction become more removed from the formal institutions with which traditional political theory is accustomed to dealing.

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