

FEMINIST AFRICA



Call for Submissions

**Feminists' Archives Against a Common-Sense: Narratives and Experiences
within the Postcolonial Order**

Deadline for Abstract Submissions: 30 September 2026

All **submissions** and enquiries should be emailed to: **contact@feministafrica.net**
and copy **info@feministafrica.net**

Issue Editors: Hanan Sabea and Korka Sall

Introduction

In 2002, Achille Mbembe argued that only certain documents are archivable, most of which are related to the work of the state. This issue starts with the question: What about feminists' documents that have different careers outside the "work of the state" and are therefore not deemed archivable? Do other narratives that are not formal written documents tell us different stories and histories about the experiences of feminists in making life possible after formal independence? What about the "non-secular" and the invisible, the ephemeral and the affective that have shaped the lives of these feminists yet remain outside the stories we tell and treat as common-sense about what happened after formal independence?

This issue hopes to explore the nexus between silences, archivability and postcolonial common-sense in feminists' histories in different parts of the continent. Our focus is on the postcolonial period and what struggles were waged to realise the aspirations for liberation, equality and freedom. How did feminists contend with the postcolonial order and its suturing with colonial legacies, as well as proclamations of freedom and equality that often sidelined questions of gender equity and liberty in the name of building the nation and consolidating the state. Was this sidelining part of the postcolonial common-sense that traverses the past and the present? How was such a common-sense constituted? What passed as "everyone knew it," and what was "not yet articulated" or "what could not be said"? How and in what registers did feminists challenge the postcolonial common-sense, and how did they practice what could not yet be articulated? What could they not say, but nevertheless enact through their ways of living and being? And what did they say that, despite being spoken, remained unheard?

We argue that feminist methodologies are particularly well suited to question the silences and absences that constitute the postcolonial order and its archives. We start with the assumption that neither archives nor knowledge are neutral and that the domains and forms of knowledge extend far beyond formal writing. Feminist archives are central to revealing what happened and continues to happen in the postcolonial order we inhabit. In particular, they enable us to engage with the everyday and the affective as sources for producing different narratives of what happened, opening space to question and reveal what went unsaid or remained unarticulated.

Questions to be addressed:

This issue invites scholars, artists and storytellers to engage with the questions above about the feminist archive and the postcolonial common-sense. Specifically:

1. How does such a feminist reading of the aftermath of formal independence contribute to the contemporary making (and unmaking) of feminist practices, particularly at moments when violence, war, genocide, and fascism seek to consolidate new forms of common-sense and orders of meaning?
 - a. How can feminists' experiences and stories after formal independence tell us different histories of life after so-called liberation and sovereignty, and of how these experiences have shifted over time?
 - b. Who was considered a feminist, and how were boundaries drawn to exclude certain figures from feminist frameworks and epistemologies?

- c. How are contemporary feminist practices shaped by the traces of what happened, and not only by what is said to have happened, in the aftermath of independence?
2. How does a focus on the everyday and the affective provide us with a different entry point into postcolonial predicaments and how have these shifted across time and space?
 - a. What challenges are posed by the common-sense of the postcolonial order, as well as by the common-sense embedded in feminist practices and methodologies?
 - b. Can the creative arts channel some of the ideas and experiences that could not be uttered, narrated or documented? If so, how?
 - c. How do we translate that which goes without saying into singular experiences and connections that speak to and challenge the common-sense?
3. What do different methodologies and perspectives offer for revisiting feminist archives and their critical contributions to histories of what happened?
 - a. How do different language zones in Africa shape the practices of archiving and of making sense of the postcolonial common-sense?
 - b. Do the arts and creative writing provide pathways towards different understandings of what happened, opening space for more nuanced readings of the past and present?

Deadline for abstract submissions: 30 September 2026

Notification of selection and acceptance: 15 October 2026

Submission of full papers: 31 March 2027

Direct all enquiries and submissions to: contact@feministafrica.net and copy info@feministafrica.net

Please specify that your submission is for **“Feminists’ Archives Against a Common-Sense: Narratives and Experiences within the Postcolonial Order.”**

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