



Commentary

The Art of Response: Crafting Meaning in African Women's Reaction Videos on Black American Issues

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Abstract

Black women vloggers use social media to advocate for justice while modeling intentional self-care to sustain this work through its successes and challenges. These digital practices have also provided a model for Black women worldwide, specifically African women, who respond to the calls of their Black American sisters by sharing their stories on social media in kinship and solidarity. This paper examines the distinctive “call and response” dynamics between Black American women vloggers

and women from African countries. Its analysis of current vlog rhetoric identifies varied expressions of Black women's social justice practices and outlines a possible blueprint for women across the African diaspora as they use their talents to make "calls" to their sisters internationally and receive support in the pursuit of equity.

Keywords

Vlogging, Black women, African women, YouTube, Intercultural Communication

Introduction

On November 24, 2024, Kenya Hunter of the Associated Press (AP) released an article "Feeling Betrayed by Increased Minority Support for Trump, Black Women Say They're Stepping Back." Hunter wrote:

After Trump was declared the winner over Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris, many politically engaged Black women said they were so dismayed by the outcome that they were reassessing — but not completely abandoning — their enthusiasm for electoral politics and movement organizing... Those Black women often carry much of the work of getting out the vote in their communities. They had vigorously supported the historic candidacy of Harris, who would have been the first woman of Black and South Asian descent to win the presidency. Harris' loss spurred a wave of Black women across social media resolving to prioritize themselves, before giving so much to a country that over and over has shown its indifference to their concerns... Politically engaged Black women said they don't plan to continue positioning themselves in the vertebrae of the 'backbone' of America's democracy. The growing movement prompting Black women to withdraw is a shift from history, where they are often present and at the forefront of political and social change... Nicole Lewis, an Alabama-based therapist who specializes in treating Black women's stress, said she's aware that Black women withdrawing from social impact movements could have a fallout. But she also hopes that it forces a reckoning for the nation to understand the consequences of not standing in solidarity with Black women.

@TabithaSpeaksPolitics is among the Black women who removed their “superwoman” capes and expressed a desire to “rest with the 92%,” a reference to the majority of Black women who voted for Harris (Gonzalez). Although she joined YouTube on September 10, 2019, her channel only recently began appearing in the author’s recommendations. Her videos received over 128 million views, and her channel has more than 389,000 subscribers; by these measures, many would consider her a social media powerhouse (TabithaSpeaksPolitics). By using her platform as a public voice, @TabithaSpeaksPolitics exemplifies the politically engaged Black women Hunter describes as having served as the “backbone” of American democracy.

@TabithaSpeaksPolitics uses her social media video blog (vlog) to present counter-discourse, personal narratives, and a perspective that may receive little attention in mainstream media. Her work reflects David Kline and Daniel Burstein’s discussion in *Blog!* of blogging as a then-new digital channel that allowed people to communicate with others despite geographic location. Kline and Burstein assert that “blogging allows the ‘ordinary citizenry, on a national and global basis, to re-engage in the lost art of public conversation’” (xiv). Kline and Burstein continue: “with the growth and expansion of regular citizens having access to technology, those in power in the areas of ‘information, knowledge, and policymaking,’ continue to be members of an ‘elite class of experts and professionals’ disseminating their own agendas in media platforms, other than the Internet” (xiv). In this context, some audiences have come to regard mainstream media, once considered an important democratic check on power, as biased and untrustworthy. This paper therefore refers to the @TabithaSpeaksPolitics video blog as a vlog. Dr. Nisha Talukdar defines a vlog as “a video log, which could include any kind of content” (749).

Black women vloggers such as @TabithaSpeaksPolitics use vlogging as a form of protest rhetoric by publicly sharing their perspectives (Harris). Through this work, they have inspired other vloggers, especially African women. As more @TabithaSpeaksPolitics videos appeared on the authors’ YouTube recommendations, the authors began noticing her image in thumbnails for reaction compilation videos posted by Black women influencers they had not previously encountered, including Esther Natkunda, Belinda Strnad, Twins Hangout Kenya, and Queen-Penguin. In this essay, reaction videos are defined as a popular YouTube

genre in which vloggers respond emotionally to another creator's posts, stories, or content.

As Intercultural Communication researchers, the authors identified this phenomenon as a form of digital "call and response." In addition to traditional African music, work songs, and spirituals created by enslaved Africans in America, call and response occurs when "a lead vocalist sings a phrase and is then echoed by a chorus" (Pizà). In its digital form, the lead vocalist becomes the rhetor who sends messages into the digital space via YouTube; the chorus consists of reaction-video creators who listen and respond in their own innovative ways. This paper examines the call-and-response dynamic between Black American vloggers such as @TabithaSpeaksPolitics and women creators with popular YouTube channels in Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda.

Black Women and Communication

Dr. Brenda Allen's work on emancipatory communication research of Black women provides the theoretical foundation for this paper. Allen encourages scholars to conduct research that places Black women at the "center" and generates "practical wisdom that can help to emancipate Black women in our various public and private roles" (26). Drawing on Allen's approach, this paper examines current vlogs, such as @TabithaSpeaksPolitics, to examine the varied expressions within the Black women's vlogging community and how vloggers negotiate Black identity and womanhood in everyday discourse.

Allen also offers a detailed framework for studying Black women's communication. She describes this work as "emancipatory research" with several goals: emancipating Black women; challenging essentialist notions of Black womanhood; studying diverse groups of Black women, as well as domination and oppression; identifying Black women's skills and strategies; generating practical wisdom; and using procedures and methods that honor this purpose across "rhetoric, interpersonal, organizational communication, mass media, health communication and intercultural studies" (25). Rather than accepting the expectation that Black women should serve as "sheroes" responsible for remedying society's injustices, @TabithaSpeaksPolitics steps away from the leadership role she is expected to assume. In doing so, she challenges "essentialist notions of Black womanhood," a pattern Allen urges researchers to examine and Hunter describes in her Associated

Press article. Moreover, Allen urges researchers to explore the full gamut of possibilities in Black women's communication research.

Black women use inexpensive alternative media to share their stories, including documentaries, video diaries, Substack newsletters, and traditional blogs. The internet has enabled women living far apart to form communities where they can exchange views and lived experiences. These communities include the women discussed in this article, and similar exchanges have also emerged elsewhere in the African diaspora: recent TikTok interactions between Black Americans and Black citizens of Scotland, whom users describe as newly found "cousins," offer one example (Abdur-Rahman).

Vanessa Kanbi is one creator who actively encourages digital cultural exchange. On her YouTube channel, she recounts stories of growing up in Scotland with her Scottish mother and Ghanaian father; her videos have received more than 24 million views. Kanbi also provides her audience with details about how they can travel around Scotland, and Ghana, using her family of six, including four children, as examples; she encourages followers to engage with her videos so that they will not have "any reservations about family travel" (Kanbi).

Communications scholars Marsha Houston and Olga Davis argue that it is important to use both Black feminist and womanist theoretical frameworks in research that places African American women at its core. In their anthology, *Centering Ourselves: African American Feminist and Womanist Studies of Discourse*, they explain why they included both theoretical frameworks in their book:

Despite tensions between African American feminism and Womanism, they remain interrelated ideologies. Like Holloway and Collins, we consider ideological labels to be less important than the questions authors raise and the methods by which they pursue their answers. We have encouraged authors to eschew abstractions and to produce contributions that illumine how African American women use to negotiate gendered cultural identities, affirms sisterhood, build community, and confront, demystify, and overcome oppression. Such as experientially grounded approach to research is not only consistent with the traditions of Black Feminist and womanist thought, but also with the tradition of 'practical wisdom' in the discipline of Communication. (12)

Following Houston and Davis, this paper uses both womanist and Black feminist frameworks to focus on communication dynamics and characteristics of Black women in Africa and the United States within the context of vlogging. Houston and Davis also cite Patricia Hill Collins's description of womanism and Black feminism as sharing a "culture of resistance." This paper relates that resistance to Black women's use of digital space to make their personal concerns political.

In the context of communication and media studies, Janice Hamlet observes, "Within the parameters of African American rhetoric, there has always existed a rich and diverse women's rhetoric that has traditionally been devalued, if not ignored" (213). Hamlet then defines womanist thought as follows:

An area of study that combines race, gender, and class in critically assessing the historical, cultural, intellectual, socio-political, and spiritual consciousness of African American women. Its focus suggests a more holistic understanding of African American women, their history, culture, and lived experiences thereby instilling and/or enhancing a rhetoric of self-affirmation and self-healing. (213– 214)

Before analyzing the rhetoric of Susan L. Taylor, the former editor of *Essence*, Hamlet, in her research, identifies connections among Black women across different social locations. She identifies "core themes" found within the "commonality of experiences" that Black women share that "shape African American women's rhetoric and rhetorical behavior" (215):

(a) legacy of struggle against racism, sexism, classism and other 'isms'; (b) the search for voice as African American women battle their invisibility and fight to Erase the controlling images that denigrate them; (c) the interdependence of thought and action whereby Intellectualism and political activism are conjoined; and (d) empowerment in the context of everyday life. (215)

In her Womanist analysis of Susan L. Taylor's "In the Spirit" columns in *Essence*, Hamlet (2006) identifies seven themes: "(1) spirit power; (2) harmony and balance; (3) self-affirmation; (4) cultural history and ancestral reverence; (5) love; (6) collective power; and (7) self-destruction" (219). Interestingly, these were the same themes

noted in the rhetoric of @TabithaSpeaksPolitics' vlog postings. Patricia Hill Collins and Jacqueline Bobo similarly argue that Black women share collective concerns rooted in a common history while expressing those concerns in various ways.

Bobo writes, "In the face of a commonality of oppressions, Black women do possess aspects of a common history, but there are different and varied expressions of these commonalities" (205). The numerous identities that comprise an individual Black woman's social position contribute to her overall experiences; examining any one of these identities in isolation cannot fully or accurately explain that experience (Bowleg 312). This study incorporates intersectionality by examining Black women vloggers' discourses and content curation within their sociohistorical and cultural contexts (Crenshaw 4).

Collins further asserts that Black women's varied expressions come from differences in class, region, age, and sexual orientation, which shape individual Black women's lives. A shared "Black women standpoint" can therefore encompass diverse forms of expression. Researching Black women's expressions within the rhetorical space of the vlogosphere can help identify and document these varied perspectives.

In addition to topics such as images of Black women in politics and popular culture, Black women's vlogs address portrayals of African-American women in the news, as well as issues affecting marginalized groups globally. Digital culture has also generated terms for Black women's online presence and expression. One of the most popular phrases is "Black Girl Magic," a phrase that recognizes Black women's bold self-expression in digital spaces. Black women have embraced the social media movement #BlackGirlMagic, a term that describes a cross-platform gathering of empowered Black women who uplift each other and shine a light on the impressive accomplishments of Black women throughout the country. Black Girl Magic (#BlackGirlMagic) was originally coined by CaShawn Thompson in 2013 as #BlackGirlsAreMagic. "I say 'magic' because it's something that people don't always understand," Thompson told the *Los Angeles Times* (Thomas). She went on to explain how "Sometimes our accomplishments might seem to come out of thin air, because a lot of times, the only people supporting us are other black women" (Thomas). At its core, the purpose of this movement is to create a platform where women of color can stand together against "the stereotyping, colorism, misogynoir and racism that is often their lived experience" (Thomas). Originally inspired by a

speech by former First Lady Michelle Obama, ‘Black Girl Magic’ was intended to be an online dialogue centered on the achievements of Black women. #BlackGirlMagic can now be found around the world, not only on numerous social media sites, including on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, but also on clothing and in mainstream media (Thomas).

Led by Cheryl Grace, Andrew McCaskill, and Rebecca K. Roussell, the Nielsen’s 2017 Diverse Intelligence Series Report, *African-American Women: Our Science, Her Magic* examines Black women’s broad cultural influence, especially on social media, with Black women being “the driving force behind “Black Twitter” (or the platform now referred to as ‘X’)” (Nielsen). Feminista Jones defines Black Twitter in her 2013 *Salon* article, “Is Twitter the underground railroad of activism?”:

Black Twitter can be described as a collective of active, primarily African-American Twitter users, who have created a virtual community that participates in continuous real-time conversations. When they work together, this collective is proving adept at bringing about a wide range of sociopolitical changes. (Jones)

Nielsen similarly reported that “on average, 14% of Black women say they spend at least three to four hours a day on social media... They are leveraging digital spaces as virtual townhalls to galvanize fellow citizen consumers around political movements, economic empowerment and social protest” (Nielsen). Moreover, Nielsen found that Black women’s YouTube use indexed at 122% more than any other racial group or gender. Because each creator discussed in this article publishes on YouTube, the analysis draws on content from their channels.

Who’s the “Caller”?

Vloggers such as @TabithaSpeaksPolitics lead discussions and “tend, almost by definition, to comment only on news and information that they personally deem worthy of “public” note. They have a following of “friends” that visit on a daily basis and are curious about their perspectives on current events” (Safko and Brake 167). Vlogs also create an interactive space in which visitors can engage whenever they return. By combining images, text, links, and video, they may connect viewers to related content on other vlogs or platforms, including YouTube and TikTok (Safko

and Brake 167). Safko and Brake identify audience interaction as an essential feature of the medium:

[Audiences'] ability to interact with the author through comments [or, in this case, reactions]. While most vlogs are made up of text, many vloggers prefer to add art (creating an art vlog), photographs (a photo vlog), sketches (for a sketch vlog), music (for a music vlog), audio (creating an audio vlog...) or a podcast vlog, all of which can enhance their sites and attract more visitors. (167)

The variety and endless possibilities of a vlog further distinguish this communication medium from mainstream media outlets. MacDougall argues that the “near-real-time open accessibility of vlogs makes them a collaborative form of news and information quite distinct from a newspaper’s letter to the editor or op-ed piece” (576). Ananda Mitra (2008) similarly observes that “the location of the author becomes irrelevant in this process which has allowed people to maintain vlogs from anywhere in the world. Yet the updated information becomes immediately available to the global audience” (470).

These features distinguish vlogs from local news stations, which generally report events within a specific market or locale. MacDougall also suggests that “participation on news vlogs might function constitutively in the identity-building process for a fast-growing part of the population today” (590).

@TabithaSpeaksPolitics includes links to external sites as evidence, much as journalists consult sources to establish a story’s credibility. She also encourages viewers to investigate the stories and reach their own conclusions. This may help readers to feel empowered, knowledgeable, and able to evaluate current events critically. Her use of digital resources also suggests that Black women vloggers recognize the importance of supporting stories with credible sources. Some viewers later create reaction compilations supported by their own “citations and sources,” with @TabithaSpeaksPolitics guiding them toward topics they may wish to explore further. The next section examines this process in greater detail.

The analysis identified three Black rhetorical dynamics in @TabithaSpeaksPolitics’s vlog posts: *signifyin’*, creative language, and call and response, as African American rhetorical scholars define these concepts (see Table 1). *Signifyin’* appeared

most frequently. In *Talkin and Testifyin*, Geneva Smitherman defines *signifyin'* (also called *siggin*) as a culturally accepted form of verbal indirection in which a speaker humorously insults, needles, or talks about a listener. Speakers may use it to make a point or simply for amusement, and the person targeted is not supposed to take it to heart. @TabithaSpeaksPolitics also uses nonverbal forms of *signifyin'* with sound effects in the background of her posts.

In *Talkin and Testifyin*, Smitherman also contends that “signifyin can be a witty one-liner, a series of loosely related statements, or a cohesive discourse on one point” (121). One practice this paper classifies as *signifyin'* is @TabithaSpeaksPolitics recurring use of the 92% as a label for the majority of Black women who voted for Vice-President Harris.

Moreover, in *Talkin That Talk*, Smitherman examines the different linguistic codes, styles, and communication dynamics in African American speech across historical and contemporary periods, sacred and secular spaces, and Black communities (see Table 1). She identifies call and response, rhythmic patterns, spontaneity, concreteness, and *signifyin'* as communication styles rooted in the African American experience. Interestingly, this research found many of these styles in Black women’s vlogs.

A brief analysis of a small sample of @TabithaSpeaksPolitics identified themes corresponding to those in Daryl Cumber Dance’s anthology of African American women’s humor. The present study draws on six themes from Dance’s work: “The Black Woman’s Physical Image,” “The Black Community,” “The Black Church and Churchgoers,” “Courtship and Good Loving,” “Problems with Husbands and Lovers,” and “Dealing with a Racist and Sexist America” (see Table 2). The analysis indicates continuity between Black women’s vlog posts examined here and African American communication practices. Harris found a similar dynamic in her study of “Glamalectuals,” Black women in digital spaces who critically discuss the “glitz and glam of Hollywood,” popular culture, and politics.

Table 1. Explanation of Characteristic Categories Found on the Digital Video Channel Via Smitherman's Concepts

<i>Signifyin'</i>	Use of culturally specific labels, slang, or verbal indirection, such as the 92% for Black women who voted for Harris
Creative Language	Language with a distinctive style and grammatical structure
Call and Response	A communication pattern in which the sender invites a response from the receiver

Source: Adapted from Smitherman, Geneva. *Talkin That Talk: Language, Culture and Education in African America*. Routledge, 1999.

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Through her creative use of humor and text message language, @TabithaSpeaksPolitics has formed a rhetoric and ideology grounded in Black women's lived experience and realities. Like the womanist perspective that Houston and Davis discuss in relation to feminism, her rhetoric grounds Black women's experiences; viewers' responses in the comments section of her YouTube posts indicate that it has also inspired others.

By claiming her space and identifying as a Black woman, @TabithaSpeaksPolitics captures the essence of both Black feminism and womanist traditions, placing Black women in the center of informal conversations with viewers. Some videos depict her at home in a bathrobe, sipping tea, as if inviting viewers to engage in "kitchen table talk" or gossip. This domestic setting creates a sense of

comfort that allows viewers to bond with her and feel like “friends,” even though they have never met in person to discuss current events or joke together.

Table 2. Explanation of Themes Comprising African American Women’s Humor

The Black Woman’s Physical Image	Posts focused on a celebrity’s physical appearance
The Black Community	Posts focused on issues affecting African Americans or portrayals of African Americans in media and society
The Black Church and Churchgoers	Posts focused on a religious leader or institution that serves as the story’s setting
Courtship and Good Loving	Posts presenting a positive view of celebrities who are dating or in a relationship
Problems with Husbands and Lovers	Posts focused on the negative effects of a relationship, typically during its dissolution
Dealing with a Racist and Sexist America	Posts focused on celebrities who address social injustices or issues rooted in racism or sexism in the United States

Source: Adapted from Dance, Daryl Cumber, editor. *Honey, Hush!: An Anthology of African American Women’s Humor*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1998.

@TabithaSpeaksPolitics creates daily YouTube posts that “boldly and audaciously” engage themes similar to those discussed by the womanist scholars cited above. Her channel caters to a distinct audience and represents and reflects how contemporary women of the diaspora can express their voices and tell stories publicly. Through this public discourse, these women may change their present realities and influence the future.

This paper therefore proposes “Women-of-Words” as a new genre of communication performance for analyzing African American women’s vlogging. This idea of “Women-of-Words” in the vlogosphere is comparable to Roger D. Abrahams’s *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies*, a study of Creole men’s everyday

communication practices and performances in the Caribbean. Just as Abrahams observed, analyzed, and reported these patterns, Black women's communication patterns in digital spaces deserve comparable scholarly attention.

Open letter formats, *signifyin'*, and slang appear frequently in the alternative-media content on @TabithaSpeaksPolitics's YouTube channel. These features connect the posts to informal speech and Black vernacular, forms of expression that can bring people together, even in online communities. The remainder of this section organizes the analysis of the channel's posts by theme, many of which adopt an open-letter or op-ed format.

Two examples related to "Dealing with a Racist and Sexist America" are "Black Women are Tired and we are Taking our Rest" and "Where is Kamala Harris?" In the first video, @TabithaSpeaksPolitics appears on the right side of a split screen and watches a man on the left present facts and statistics about Black women's role in advocating for equality in the United States. He then asks who will support Black women in return.

The video echoes the sentiments in Hunter's article: @TabithaSpeaksPolitics commits to resting and encourages Black women to care for themselves instead of expending their energy on others. In "Where Is Kamala Harris?," she follows a similar reaction format but focuses on the expectation that Black women should exceed their workplace responsibilities, including by performing work beyond their assigned roles.

Applying this point to Vice President Kamala Harris, @TabithaSpeaksPolitics responds to people who ask, "Where is she?" and expect Harris to come and "save the day" when they become disenchanted with events in the country. @TabithaSpeaksPolitics reminds viewers that voters did not elect Harris president; therefore, Harris is not obligated to perform the duties of an office she does not hold or to serve them as their "Superwoman."

In "With Love, Meghan, The 92%, Le Creuset and Threads," @TabithaSpeaksPolitics presents rest as a form of resistance and discusses how the 92% may adjust to performing less labor for others while devoting more love and care to themselves. She highlights the joy she felt at seeing so many Black women online engage with activities inspired by Meghan Markle's Netflix cooking program. In particular, she enjoys seeing women showing off their newly made floral arrangements at home and meals prepared in colorful *Le Creuset* cookware.

@TabithaSpeaksPolitics celebrates Black women finding fulfillment in these healthy activities instead of continuing to invest their energy in a world where they may feel unsupported. Moreover, she expresses excitement while waiting for her own cookware set, which she was inspired to purchase after seeing projects other Black women shared on social media.

Another of Dance's categories represented in @TabithaSpeaksPolitics's posts is "Courtship and Good Loving." In one video, she reflects on the Obama family's first time in the White House and celebrates the beauty of their official White House portraits. By contrast, she invokes "Problems with Husbands and Lovers" when asking whether viewers "wanted the tea," meaning the latest gossip, about reports that the wife of the White House Deputy Chief of Staff, Steven Miller, was allegedly leaving him for Elon Musk.

She addresses "The Black Woman's Physical Image" in the video "Representative Jasmin Crockett Verzuz Marjorie 3-Toes Green!," which includes footage of a viral congressional exchange about what language is appropriate in discourse about personality or appearance. The exchange began when Green made a disrespectful comment about Crockett's eyelashes; Crockett responded by referring to Green's hair and body shape.

A final category, "The Black Church and Churchgoers," appears in a post featuring Rev. Dr. Howard John-Wesley of Alfred Street Baptist Church speaking publicly against injustice in the United States (Boulware). Several of these events resonated strongly with African women who created reaction videos responding to @TabithaSpeaksPolitics, and their responses corresponded to themes from Dance's *Honey Hush*.

African Women Storytellers in Media

My analysis suggests that retellings by black female authors and storytellers are more innovative and demonstrate more resistance to patriarchal structures than those by white authors which may have been influenced by the idea of a traditional European folk or fairy tale. Folktales have the potential to effect change in dominant attitudes, and to encourage critical awareness of embedded ideological patterns. To this end, female African

storytellers show an ability to retell stories and mold characters in ways that contest the traditional gender roles found in many African folktales.

~ Dr. Judith Inggs, "Weak or Wily? Girls' Voices in Tellings and Retellings of African Folktales for Children"

The epigraph emphasizes the importance of African women storytellers and their capacity to challenge patriarchal structures and conventional gender roles. This focus parallels the work of Black women communication scholars and Darryl Dance discussed earlier. Moreover, Inggs' perspective corresponds with the work of African media leaders such as Catherine Gicheru, director of the African Women Journalism Project Fellowship and Yemisi Akinbobola, co-founder and chief executive officer of African Women in Media. African Women in Media offers resources, products, and conferences to equip African women with the tools they need to become successful journalists and share powerful stories grounded in their experiences and perspectives.

Both leaders have worked in traditional journalism and media organizations, giving them first-hand-knowledge of gender disparities and constraints on African women's freedom to tell their own stories. Veronica Fynn Bruey, editor of *Patriarchy and Gender in Africa*, amplifies African women's experiences in academia through work that Allen might characterize as emancipatory communication.

Fynn Bruey advances this work as co-founder and chief executive officer of Tuki-Tumarankeh, a nonprofit focused on transnational indigeneity, displacement, and patriarchy; through her work with the *Journal of Internal Displacement and Displaced Peoples*; and as a faculty member at Seattle University School of Law.

The breadth of Bruey's work reflects the power that this article associates with the 92%, the Black women in the United States who voted for presidential candidate Kamala Harris and whom @TabithaSpeaksPolitics encourages daily. Together, Fynn Bruey's work and the accomplishments of Gicheru and Akinbobola embody the spirit of African women digital storytellers who recount stories of injustice to their audiences.

Similarly, Vivian Serwanjja, executive director of African Center for Women in Journalism (ACWJ), combines journalism training with a commitment to distributing women's content digitally to the masses so they can reach decision-

makers capable of advancing social change. More specifically, her organization's website mentions:

ACWJ was established with the clear purpose of transforming journalism into a more effective tool for gender justice and women's empowerment. Our theory of change is simple but powerful: we empower the storyteller, the female journalist, to amplify the story, the woman's experience. We exist to equip female journalists with the skills, resources, and platforms necessary to center women's stories in African media, ensuring these vital narratives reach audiences and decision-makers who can drive change. ("About ACWJ")

Furthermore, the analysis also found that the online African women content creators discussed here cite @TabithaSpeaksPolitics and other sources in their videos. *SourceHer*, for example, maintains a database of African women experts who can contribute informed perspectives and greater depth to journalistic stories.

Responses to @TabithaSpeaksPolitics

Maren and Maureen, who host @TwinsHangoutKenya on YouTube, have accumulated over 24 million content views and over 250,000 subscribers (Twinshangout Kenya). They often begin their videos with clips from other YouTube or TikTok creators, selected according to the episode's topic. Before discussing the topic, the twins greet their audience: "Hi guys, welcome back to our channel. In case you're new here, I'm Maureen, and my name is Maren. So into today's episode..." (Twinshangout Kenya).

The twins usually record in what appears to be their home, but they adopt a manner as if they are television news anchors: they take notes while playing videos from their sources and then discuss the material conversationally with one another. They also invite viewers to respond with their own perspectives in the comment section.

@TabithaSpeaksPolitics sometimes appears in these compilations as a "subject matter expert." One example is "61% Latinos for Trump Regret Their Votes, Ask Black Folk to Join Them," which the twins connect to Dance's category, "Dealing with a Racist and Sexist America." The video discusses Latino voters who,

after rejecting guidance from Black Americans before the election, seek Black support and labor in responding to actions by the president for whom they voted.

Ugandan YouTuber Esther Natukunda (@essynatukunda), whose videos have received more than 13 million views and whose channel has 53,700 subscribers, features @TabithaSpeaksPolitics in a reaction video that corresponds to Dance's category "Problems with Husbands and Lovers."

In "Angry Whyte Woman Believes Black Men Are Meant for Whyte Women. Bring Back SEGREGATION," Natukunda appears on the right side of a split screen, responding with sarcastic facial expressions as a woman on the left argues that Black men and White women belong together. Natukunda then comments that Black women are not "out in a panic" over this "new" phenomenon and includes a video in which @TabithaSpeaksPolitics addresses the same topic.

In that video, @TabithaSpeaksPolitics quotes former Alabama Governor George Wallace's infamous 1963 inaugural declaration, "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." She uses the line sarcastically, not to endorse segregation but to indicate that she will not expend energy disputing the woman's support for romantic relationships between Black men and White women.

@TabithaSpeaksPolitics also displays screenshots of a recent court case involving a Black man who had expressed a disdain towards Black women on social media and was later killed by his White girlfriend; according to the video, all charges against her were ultimately dropped.

@TabithaSpeaksPolitics then displays a photograph of a salad she made that day with fresh vegetables from her garden, illustrating Natukunda's point that Black women are not preoccupied with the romantic choices of Black men and White women but are instead focusing on themselves.

This response illustrates a practice common among Black women: refusing to center divisive discussions, including debates about interracial relationships, that are rooted in historically racist structures and position Black men and Black women against one another. By highlighting her garden rather than engaging in online vitriol, @TabithaSpeaksPolitics models disengagement from these divisive engagements. Natukunda then returns to the screen, introduces herself and her channel to viewers, and encourages them to subscribe to a channel whose vlog posts have received over 10 million views.

Nigerian YouTuber Belinda Strnad opens one reaction video by greeting her audience: “Hi Lovelies, welcome back to my channel” (Belinda Unfiltered). Her channel has attracted over 18 million views and 55,000 subscribers, and the video also features @TabithaSpeaksPolitics.

One vlog in particular, “REPUBLICANS SENDS A STRONG MESSAGE TO B}■KPE. BUT WAS SHOCKED BY THE NO RESPONSE FROM B♥PE.PLE,” includes American creators responding to @TabithaSpeaksPolitics. Strnad appears on the right side of a split screen and reacts nonverbally to @TabithaSpeaksPolitics and other creators shown on the left. The influencers are encouraging Black Americans to stay home rather than protest outside when news stories about injustices are released as “bait” intended to play on the emotions of Black people in America.

More specifically, @TabithaSpeaksPolitics urges Black people to choose actions that protect their peace instead of exposing them to harmful repercussions. One example is participating in a protest march that may become violent.

A final African woman creator whose reaction videos feature @TabithaSpeaksPolitics is Queen-Penguin (@Gracie-Dee), a Ugandan YouTuber whose channel has approximately 62,400 subscribers and whose reaction videos have received more than 12 million views (Gracie Dee). Her work corresponds most closely with Dance’s category “Dealing with a Racist and Sexist America.”

In the opening teaser for “Karen CrashOut after her criminal Recs sent Door 2Door 2 her voters for calling ice on Korean Workers,” Queen-Penguin includes a clip of @TabithaSpeaksPolitics. The video links a Georgia political candidate, who has a criminal record, to reports that women contacted U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement about Korean workers at a Hyundai Plant in Georgia (Bedigan).

Queen-Penguin sits in what appears to be a desk chair and wears light-blue headphones, positioning herself to the audience as though she is viewing the content with them. She reacts nonverbally, introduces herself, and then comments on the selected topic while playing clips from other vloggers that support her perspectives. At nearly 23 minutes, the video resembles a video essay; it introduces viewers to current events in the United States, supplies context, and considers their broader global implications.

These reaction videos correspond with Orbe, Drummond, and Camara's scholarship on Black women's "everyday encounters." The researchers report that African American participants "shared that their interactions with other African American women were like 'communicating at a different level'; it often involved 'comforting talk,' 'mutual respect and admiration,' 'being completely honest,' and 'a sense of acceptance'" (134). They describe these interactions as examples of African American sisterhood that is "unconscious, yet undeniable" (135).

The present analysis suggests that comparable forms of sisterhood can extend across national boundaries, as African women creators engage with Black American women's discourse and amplify their ideas to mass audiences, via vlogs. When these creators play clips from @TabithaSpeaksPolitics and others in their reaction videos and offer their own commentary during or after the clips, they communicate recognition and support: "I see you, and understand your perspective."

By explaining issues that may be unfamiliar to their viewers, these vloggers inform audiences about issues, in the same way a teacher would provide context while helping students gain understanding of potentially new concepts; they also serve as global interpreters of American politics.

African women YouTubers who curate content about issues affecting Black American communities, especially Black women, demonstrate courage and sophisticated journalistic skill while resisting patriarchal forces that seek to deny them a public voice.

Their work continues the tradition of emancipatory communication encouraged by Black women communication scholars working from Black feminist and womanist perspectives. It also advances the aims of African women media leaders who create opportunities, provide guidance, and support African women in sharing their perspectives and stories. Together, these traditions help contextualize the work of every African woman digital creator mentioned in this paper, as well as that of @TabithaSpeaksPolitics.

Although @TabithaSpeaksPolitics encourages rest for women of the African diaspora, especially the 92% of Black women in the United States who voted for presidential candidate Kamila Harris to fight for justice and equity, she still continues to balance protest with peace.

In balancing these aims, she passes the torch to women around the world, inviting them to support her message and work towards a more equitable future for

subsequent generations. Together, the women discussed in this paper provide a blueprint for women who follow them, especially innovative leaders across the African diaspora. Through their talents, these women make “calls” to their sisters around the world and receive responses that affirm they are seen, valued, supported, celebrated, and recognized as powerful storytellers.

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