

SEAN SAIFA WALL: All right, Hans. You wanna let the folks in? Let in the hordes?

HANS LINDAHL: We're letting in the waiting room!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Adeyanju -- Adeyanju? Adeyanju. Okay. Adeyanju, bet. Obioma, Olivia, Yezenia. Right. Right. We letting the people IN! Getting ready to have a conversation!!

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Let's go.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Getting ready to do THIS! Hello, everyone. Hello, welcome. Welcome into the space. Hello, hello. Thank you for being with us. Ah, if it's on your lunch hour; if it's in the morning time; if it's in the EVENING time! Welcome. Welcome, welcome.

Um, okay! Let's... let's get it started!

Thank you all for being on time. I will be moderating this beautiful panel. I'm wondering, uh... can I pin the folks; I'mma pin the folks! Oh, wait. Oh, maybe -- isn't there a way to pin... multiple people? I forgot how to do that. See, you would think...

two-plus years, three-plus years of doing Zoom.
I'm like, hehh??

All right! I, um. Before we get started,
I wanna open with some... very clear -- oh,
spotlight! Thank you!! You know, the chat's
gonn' be lit. We want the chat to be LIT!
Um, okay. Spotlight, boom! Okay! Ah, but
how do you spotlight multiple people...! This
is, ah...!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: I think it depends on
who is talking!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Really??

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: I don't know.

OLIVIA HUNTE: It looks like you're doin'
it!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: All right. I am doin'
it! Making it happen. Boom boom boom.

Okay, everybody's spotlighted!! Got my
people spotlighted!!

Before -- I am really excited for this
panel, obviously. Anybody who knows me knows
that I love the Black people. So I am very
excited for all this brilliance that's going to
be on, on display for the day.

I wanna open up with some, like a foundation. Right? Um! The African diaspora resulted from the transatlantic trade? And theft of Africans, from what we now understand? As West and Central Africa. Although Africans might have been traded from as far away as East Africa. Prior to European -- I'm talking about Portuguese, British, French, and Spanish -- trading Africans, Arabs dominated the trade of sub-Saharan Africans, which brought enslaved Africans as far as to what we now consider India. (clears throat) People of the African diaspora speak many languages that include English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, tribal languages, pidgins, and creoles. Following the African slave trade, colonization and war continued and have continued to displace people of African descent to Western countries, as well as to more stable governments on the continent. Um, empire-building through Chinese expansion, U.S. and European companies, and wealthy monarchies in the Middle East have sought to create their OWN spheres of influence on the continent,

which has resulted in endless war and looting of valuable metals and precious minerals.

However, Africa is the center of innovation, and anywhere that Black people go we contribute to the cultural, spiritual, and economic wealth of any place we inhabit. These panelists today are a small cross-section of queer and trans intersex experiences in the diaspora. Lend an ear to their brilliance, experience, and insight.

Um. So... just -- I'm just -- I'm not gonna introduce people; I'm gonna ask you to introduce yourselves! So, I would like to start with Adeyanju. If you can introduce your --

AUDIO: Recording in progress.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Okay! It's being recorded! Okay. Um, if you can start by introducing yourself. And please pass to the next panelist.

ADEYANJU AIYEBUSI: Of course you would ask me to go first. (soft laugh)

SEAN SAIFA WALL: You know, baby! I love you! So that's why I want you to go first.

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: I appreciate you.
Hello, everyone. My name is Adeyanju
Aiyegbusi. They/them pronouns. I'm a
Nigerian based in the States. Ah, was it 2023,
I was part of interACT's, um... intersex youth
fellowship? So, during that time, my focus was
on advocacy for... trans AND intersex, but
mainly intersex or DSD athletes. About a year
later, I was really lucky to contribute to a
podcast called Tested that... details like the
hundred-year history of sex-testing in sports?
Um. That was hosted by CBC and NPR.
Multi-award-winning, so I'm very proud of that.

I think Hans was the one that referred me
to -- anyways. (soft laugh) It WAS Hans,
right? Yeah! Thank you so much. Period.

Um...! I am a Pan-Africanist. Scientific
socialist. I'm very passionate about the
struggle against anti- -- or. The struggle
against imperialism, rather. And zionism, and
I think... that struggle is... IS, and SHOULD
be, central to... the advancement of intersex
people. Because if we are... improving the
material conditions of the African continent,

we are also improving the material conditions of intersex people.

So, that's me...!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: ...Pass it along, Adeyanju!

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: You know I have to give it to Obioma.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Oo!! The Nigerians are heavily representing!

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Yes! The Nigerians, okay?!

OBIOMA CHUKWUIKE: Thank you so much, Adeyanju, and. Hello, everyone. Wow. So, um, super excited to be here. But I'm trying to... think of how, summarize and introducing myself, but I'll try.

My name is Obioma Chukwuike. My pronouns are they/them. I'm from Nigeria, and I live in Nigeria. I've lived in Nigeria all my life. (soft laugh) I don't wish to leave, in as much as a country can sometimes not be as much as you want it to be, but I still love my country. I am the founder and executive director of Intersex Nigeria. And I'm also the board chair

for the African Intersex Movement. I've been doing this advocacy work for the past, um -- since 20-- 2018, officially. That's close to -- 9 years, 9 years. 8 years, going to 9 years. And before then, I would say that I was lost. As most intersex persons would be. And also being a Black person, living in Nigeria, with all the laws, policies, and social injustice that happen to... particularly youths and Black persons. I'm talking about living in a Black country that does not address the human right of people! It made it very difficult for me to even understand who I WAS. And that also came, also from my family, because my family too did not understand who I was, in Tutu. So, growing up was quite challenging, and difficult? And I walked through the path of self-discovery myself, in a sense that I had to discover who I was and understand that's the word for... my experience, and reality as a person, was intersex. And that was through meeting a mutual friend on Facebook in 2016, 17 -- I think 2016. And we were chatting about my experience there in Nigeria. And they live

in Austria, and we were chatting on Facebook. And they started telling me that, well, they might know someone who would understand my experience. And that was how they connected me to an intersex activist, back then in, that lives in Austria called Luwan. And I met up -- (clears throat) And we started talking about my experiences, how I was not developing the female sex characteristics that was needed as, you know. As at that time. And how -- because I went to an only secondary school girls' in Nigeria. And that was one of the most difficult things I have done in my life. Because my name, Obioma, is mainly a male-dominating name in Nigeria. And I used that name for six years at the school. So once I say Obioma, people know it's me. Because people were questioning me in that six years I stayed at that school. Because I was masculine; I wasn't developing female sex... sex characteristics. I wasn't seeing my period -- a lot of things were happening with me. And I was having challenges even the medical school knew about; they had to call my

parents repeatedly.

So the whole challenge took me into constantly questioning who I was? So, when I discovered after my university, just after my university, meeting the person I met online and them introducing me to Luwan, and I came to realize that -- and I went to that medical examination. Then I discovered I have the testes, you know, variation in the gonad. And that was also what led to why my sex, female sex characteristics were not developing as it was. Then recalling back the medications that I went through -- a whole lot of journey. You know, I started, I started having my life flashing in front of me. That was when I realized and discovered what I went through as a child and adolescent.

So when I discovered all those things... I said to myself that I have to do something. It's a long story, I'm sure, I'm excited, I have to do something. That was how Intersex Nigeria started. And fast forward, we are here. And I'm meeting all these beautiful, amazing persons. And thank you to Saifa.

Since I met you, you've always, always held my hand. And a lot of amazing activists I also see on the screen.

So, that is it about me, and I'm happy to share more in the course of our conversation. And I'll be passing to...! Yez- -- Yezenia!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: Hey, thank you, everyone! Oh my god, I'm just overwhelmed by the fact there's like 82 people in this, and I'm just like what...!

So, um, yeah. First of all... happy Black Negro Month to all of us! Like, not gonna lie; I'm sorry! Like, 365, of course? But, especially right now, I see everyone's going... like, out and about?

My name is Yezenia. I was born -- like Yezenia León Mezu, to go full in the thing. I was born and bred in Colombia. I'm an, like, an AfroIndigenous person. Again, I was... yeah. My ancestors, um, are Indigenous... to the Kuna land, which is like northern and midwest of Colombia. But also, again, my ancestors are also... from the African, probably West African continent, ah, part.

I am based in Berlin, right now, where I started... It's very much connected to my self-discovery? Was, ah... I'm a late bloomer, so to speak. I always knew something is different with my body. I can connect a lot to what you just said, like, this part of the self-discovery? Because... yeah. Late periods; late, always was something unspoken, also, in my family about? Even though I had the privilege of having... a family who was very aware, THROUGH the fact that we have an Indigenous connection... through the fact that there is no sex binary. So I, I got that privilege, to be raised in that idea, and. I think that's also important to highlight that. Especially as you were list- -- giving the introductions, Saifa. I was thinking about all the lost knowledge that is gone throughout the -- (clears throat) The enslavement of Black people. Because, we knew... that gender binary was just some bull.

Um, I'm a political educator, since... god. Almost 15 years? And, I... worked, um... throughout my -- my self-discovery was always

connected to my advocacy? Um. I worked as a counselor and -- here in Germany, specifically in Berlin, and trans intersex. And then I left? (soft laugh) Because, ah -- well. Racism. And, I think that is also why these room is a so very important room. Not only because it's Black History Month, but it's -- our Black Ourstory Month, as *I* do... call it. It's more about the fact that we are still in the beginning, depending upon our geographies, to acknowledge that intersex, being intersex is not connected to whiteness? And I think depending on where we are, that conversation is something that gets, gets lost... entirely? There is... and, I'm not talking only about race as a construct, but in general -- as an Afro-pessimist, that I am? I don't believe... Olivia's just laughing. Um...! I am, I am still at the, at the beginning -- living in a country that is in a, in a majority white-centered. We are still fighting for the basic acknowledgment of gender, and specifically in trans and intersex advocacy in terms of the connection -- that it HAS to be

connected to race.

So yeah. That's been part of my work since... yeah, almost... now, in the advocacy and counseling, um... yeah, context, it has been more than 5 years now. Um, what else what else what else? No, I think I'm just going to pass to Olivia. Thank you for being here. And yo, shout-out to Saifa for always organizing and inviting me to shit. Most of the things that I learned? Especially in my self-discovery, was because of listening to Saifa talking before we even had met. And to Hans, who is also in here. So very much shout-out and love to the both of you. You're in my heart always. Thank you.

OLIVIA HUNTE: Hi, everyone! I'm gonna echo shout-out to Saifa. As Yezenia mentioned, my name is Olivia Hunte. I use she/they pronouns. I am originally from the Caribbean island of St. Lucia. I found out last year that I have directly ancestry to Haiti so. That has me very excited to think about -- like just creole and those sorts of things? I am currently based on the ancestral lands of the

Cheyenne, Ute, and Arapahoe folks, also known as Denver, Colorado. And I am a Ph.D. candidate! At the University of Denver. I saw we had some social workers in the room, so shout-out to social work! (soft laugh) I am -- currently, my research is on Black queer and trans sense of belonging? And so I am working to build a... framework! Really kind of articulated belonging, not just as a psychological phenomenon, but also the politics of belonging as well? And so really understanding THAT piece. And like in my research, really kind of like using the... almost full acronym of LGBTQIA+? And for me, I've been very intentional with including the I and the A, because of the invisibilization of intersex people, and like people who don't ascribe to like gender or sexuality. And so that's been really big for me.

Um... what else. My intersex journey, for me, has been connected to really understanding PCOS? I was diagnosed when I was 20, and just have been in the dark about what that... meant? Until recently, and. You know, with the

diagnosis, the doctor was like, yeah! Like, you have polycystic ovaries, and never really explained what that WAS? But for me, when I think about, just, development, from like being a young child in St. Lucia, just, hair was such a big thing. So starting to develop, and having hair everywhere. And even transitioning from St. Lucia to the U.S., which I lived in Atlanta; we moved to Atlanta. And like, you know, going to school having my hair natural, and having people asking me, like, "are you a boy or a girl?" And so, it's been my experience of being intersex has been more so a social experience? In that, like if you look at -- for me, like, my body... is just like, um, just as far as gender...! People typically assume -- even with keeping my hair short! It's interesting, like, sometimes when I'm driving, and people can't see below my chest! They're like, oh, sir! And then they'll correct themselves when they hear me speak? And so, it's been very interesting to move through that process, and just really understand that component of my queer identity

a little bit more.

So, that is me!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Thank you ALL, for the introductions? Ugh, again! SO heartened by all the brilliance on this panel.

You know -- you know how *I* get down. I love to center! And I love to center with Black people! And people... ALL peoples! So we gonna do a centering practice. This is a brave space. People can consent to this or NOT? So if you are consenting, I'm gonna ask you to be with your cameras on -- or off; whatever feels good to you? Um. And I'm gonna ask people to kinda sit in a way that aligns their body, where you can take in a little bit more breath. (clears throat) Because so much about being Black is our bodies! Right? Especially for those of us who have been displaced in a diaspora; those of us who are descendants of enslaved Africans. So much of our body was used for labor. And I think somatic awareness is bringing us back TO the body.

So, I'm gonna ask people to breathe? If

you wanna know where your center is, it's about two inches below your belly button. So if it helps to put a hand there, put a hand there, or bring your awareness there. Um.

And... you know, I'm gonna ask people to do a scan from the crown of your head to the sole of your feet. ...And, you know, for people who are not participating in the practice, you know, feel free to turn your camera off. As to... take care of yourself? But. For the people who are participating, let's go.

We center in three directions! (clears throat) We center in our length! Which we associate with dignity. We center in our width, which we associate with expansiveness and boundaries. And, we center in our depth, which we associate with ancestry and with legacy.

...So, from center I'm gonna ask you to center into your length. And really FEEL into the length of your body. And if you want a visualization, I'm gonna ask you to visualize your feet... as the roots of a tree; your body as the trunk of the tree; and your head as a

canopy. That tree can be planted anywhere; it can be planted in the most beautiful place you've been; it can be in your backyard; it can be in your country of origin. But plant that tree! Root yourself in that place.

For people of African descent, we have had MULTIPLE attacks on our dignity, to say that we do NOT belong. To say that we are not human...! So in this moment, I'm gonna ask people to really center into your dignity and allow yourself to FEEL...! The length! And really take up more space. And really allow your spine... to stack in a way to allow you to breathe a little bit deeper.

From center, I'm gonna ask us to center in our width, which we associate with expansiveness and with boundaries. So really feel the space between your feet... between your knees... your hips... your shoulders... and your ears. Really allow yourself to feel the edges of your body. Where you end and someone else begins.

...You know, and really, in feeling in your width, feeling into your boundaries, really

allow yourself to feel BIGGER! Right? To really FEEL...! To really feel the, the expansiveness of yourself. When you were told to be smaller, when you were told that you were less than, allow yourself to widen out. Widen so much as to feel these wings... coming out of your back... that are able to hold you; to hold your home, your city, your state... and your nation! Maybe even this world.

...So, from center, I'm gonna ask us to center into our depth. Which we associate with ancestry and legacy. You know, we have very complicated relationships to ancestry. There may be ancestors we know, ancestors we don't know; ancestors who have loved us, ancestors who have harmed us. But for this moment, I'm gonna ask you to feel at your back ancestors -- an ancestor or ancestors that have LOVED you! That advocate for you on the other side of the veil.

...And as we move toward our legacy, with a heart that never stops beating... lungs that expand and contract, taking in air; a stomach that churns food and information for the

nourishment of our bodies -- let us be reminded that we will die. We will perish. And one day we will become ancestors. We will join the pantheon... the superhighway, of ancestors.

So, in feeling into your OWN death, your own legacy! What do you CARE about? What do you LONG for? What do you desire? And let that fill you up.

...So if you went on a journey... I'mma ask people to come back into the space. Um. Bring more attention... to your eyes, to your body, to the people who are with you and who are around you.

And, yeah! You know, for the panel -- ah, for people who are not the panelists, I'm gonna ask you to sound off in the chat. I'm telling you, we like a lit chat! We like the chat to be LIT! And you know, to my panelists, I'm gonna ask you to just come as you are? To come with your heart, your energy, your spirit, as we move through these questions.

You know, I had to -- you know, I have some questions for y'all!! 'Cause I know y'all in different respects. Um.

I just wanna open up. And we're gonna popcorn it. The big general question -- so I have big general questions, and then specific questions. So, the general question I wanna start with is that, what does it mean for YOU? YOU...! To be Black and intersex?

...I know it's a big one! So, you know. Kinda work it out.

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: I can go. Um... I'll say like, more specifically like, as an intersex non-binary person... especially as a Yoruba, like. It -- I would say, it helped me, um... connect to my culture on a deeper level? I think, like many African languages, Yoruba, we don't have gendered pronouns the way that English does. Um. So in a way, it felt like... returning to -- and not to, you know, not to romanticize... precolonial Africa. 'Cause, you know, there's a whole host of issues there as well? But it felt like I was returning to like a truer sense of myself. Um.

And then as a Black person, it's just like. We are already... outside of the norm? You know, like, living in white supremacist,

cisheteronormative society. So that's another layer.

And then being an African, like... 'Cause you know, like, not all Africans are Black. And I'm a firm believer -- I'm, I'm a Pan-Africanist through and through, from north to south. But you know, it's Black History Month, so I'll focus on Black Africans right now, but. As an African... I don't know, I'm just a very, VERY proud African. And my intersex is part -- my intersex, my BEING intersex is part of that. And... feeling, like, so connected to the entire diaspora. 'Cause also when I say "African," I mean Africans in the Caribbean; I mean Africans... ah -- everywhere! You know. Even in the places that you wouldn't expect -- like, in Latin America. You know. I'm thinking Africans... ah, even in West Asia. Like, we're EVERYWHERE.

So. Yeah. I hope that suffices.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Anybody else wanna weigh in? On the -- all right, Olivia! C'mon!

OLIVIA HUNTE: Yeah!! I think, for me, I

am relishing in like the inherent... like, DEFIANCE and expansiveness of me being? In both being Black and being intersex? In just like Western society, white society, cannot contain me in any WAY? And like my body is proof of that. And so for me... just really like embracing it. I'm really in AWE. Again, of like the expansiveness and just the depth to Blackness, and just. You know, how we've been innovative, and. I just finished reading the book, um... by William Katz, called Breaking the Chains, and it was just really highlighting the history of resistance, in the United States specifically? Just the history of rebellion? And, just really talking about Blackness in a way that we don't necessarily get in mainstream, and it's just like, you know, from the jump! Like, we were saying, like, NO.

And so for me, really... indulging IN that? And just like knowing that, like... no matter how much, like, this society tries to contain me within my being? That there's an impossibility TO that, because I'm Black, and I'm also intersex, so. Yeah.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: ...yes! Yes!! You know -- Obioma, did you wanna say something?

OBIOMA CHUKWUIKE: No, I was going to... say that that's, ah... quite in-depth? You know? And, for me... my experience, as Black and intersex person, is... I think it's kind of intertwined with a lot of things. When you asked that question, a lot of things came to my mind. Because, as a Black person, one of the things that we do not have opportunities TO -- especially here in Nigeria -- is a lot of privileges and opportunities. So, and when you have an identity or an experience, that sort of... you know, keeps you away from assessing... necessary social infrastructure. That is when you realize that... you are either a blessing or a curse, but it also depends on how you view yourself. And for me, I had to make that bold step, of how I want... myself to be viewed.

Ah, because I understood from an early age, from my father, what you cannot allow people to define you; you have to define who you are.

So, when I realized that being an intersex

person -- and a lot of people around me not understanding, including my parents! As at the time when I first told them, they're not -- they're like, what am I saying! I realized that there is a huge gap, you know, in Nigeria, and even in Africa. 'Cause every section. So being a Nigerian, a Black person, growing up with limited opportunities and privileges... being intersex and Black was more like, how do I center myself for people to see me for who I am. So I had to first of all accept myself, because that was the first thing I did for myself, was to -- even before I heard the word intersex. I had already made up my mind that this is happening. This is who I am; I cannot fight it. Because the medications tried to fight it, but. It didn't work. So, all I have to do is to embrace myself? And see what I can do, and contribute to society.

But when I said it, you know, getting into activism... when I finally decided to quit my job. 'Cause I am an environmental conservation expert. But I decided to quit, to focus on this. And I started to know intersex people

from across the world. That was when I found more essence of how to position myself as an intersex person who is Black. Because I have a perspective that I can bring to the table. I have experience, a context that other people might not -- it might be similar, because one of the things that I love about intersex experience is that you are always going to find commonalities, no matter where that person comes from. No matter the variation the person has. So in as much as that is happening, I was able to realize that... MY story is unique in its purpose, and my story can actually change someone's life and also empower more African intersex persons to become who they -- who they actually authentically ARE! So they became my purpose!

So I think becoming -- being Black and intersex... with, with, it's like being a tiny, a tiny drop in what is happening. I realized that I could actually stay. Because -- no matter what, once you drop a little portion of something else, it changes the context of that water. So that was how I saw it, like a body

of water that can flow into the stream of other bodies.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Mm!

OBIOMA CHUKWUIKE: And there was something about my tradition as an Ibo person that really helped me, because where I come from, it's a very versatile culture. But they don't realize that the word is intersex. And I was in conversation with Saifa when he came to Nigeria, and I was saying being intersex is in our culture. It's also what they call the, the deities! There are deities that actually are intersex in the explanation that were given to us. So that means that my reality and my experience is valid! So, it means that whatever that I have experienced as a Black and intersex person is just a part of an experience that I need to carry to showcase that... it is actually an embodiment that I am.

So that was how -- it wasn't easy to discover all this about myself; it had to do with a lot of... At some point, I locked myself away from the world, because I wasn't sure? But when I actually tapped into that

light, or into that -- because I believe that you have to be in darkness, for you to come out to the light! So in that moment, I was in darkness. But that darkness gave me the purpose of where I have to be. And that is also where I found myself positioning.

And I think that has also been a center for me for everything that I do, around the work I do for advocacy. So, that question is really deep. Or... it's, it's important.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: You know, I -- oh!
Yezenia.

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: I was like, yeah! I, I, the last -- just to add to that. Because for me, what you just said, it's not only about the expansiveness? But also like, being the blueprint! Like, if you look at nature? Like -- and I'm not talking -- because we use it a lot, like in context to... Blackness always being the, the blueprint, as in the FIRST. But it was, to me, the connection between Blackness and intersex -- especially as someone who terrorizes out of the flesh? Which is a very... Afro-pessimist thing to do, of me?

But, terrorizing out of the flesh also means being -- and that is what I mean by being Black and intersex, what it's like. There is no way that, as a Black and intersex person, I am not the blueprint IN relationship to the land! In relationship to nature; in relationship to, um...

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Mm...!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: To everything that has been created! If you look at nature, you will figure out how much -- how...! How, even, gender itself as a construct doesn't make sense!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Mm.

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: So. And so for me, when I was listening to you, Obioma, I was like... exactly, like water. We flow.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Mm!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: We go, we go into the expansiveness, the fulfillment, the -- and, and not only as joy, in terms of as in resistance, but we embody that! Like, that knowledge, that ancestry, the... the being -- someone is writing "water has no enemy." Listen: Facts!

Exactly! So -- and that's what I mean by being the blueprint. Like, you know?

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Yeah.

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: So I also assume everyone who's Black is -- I also generally assume everyone is intersex? Like, not gonna lie. Unless you tell me different, to me, you're intersex. Like! How am I supposed to know if you're not; like, eh?? Do I know your chromosomes? Do I know your hormones? That's none of my business! So in my world, everyone is intersex unless they tell me differently. Saifa, you've been always giggling about this, but it's a fact!

And again at the same time, especially in connection to... to Blackness! It's the embodiment, out of the flesh, into relationship to everything that has been created! People, spiritual people can call it "divinity."

(silent pause) ...Be my guest.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Mm...! Yes.

Well, you know what I'm gonna... do. I'm gonna bring it down to the person -- 'cause I had another big question, and we can get to it.

But I wanted to bring it down to the personal. 'Cause I know y'all individually. And I wanna start with Adeyanju. Because, if y'all DON'T know...! Adeyanju has the most beautiful voice. Like, it's like an ANGEL. I have never heard such beauty? Such mastery. In a voice! Um, and... yeah. Like, I was just like, OH, yes. The world needs to hear more Adeyanju?

So, my question to you is this, like... why music?

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: ...Saifa. (softly laughing) I appreciate you.

Um...! Why music. I mean, I come from a musical family. Um. You know... as a Yoruba, like, our language is tonal. You know, so like, the music is in our language; it's in our culture. Um. My mother sings. So I got it from her. Um.

Yeah, I don't know, like. Some things can't be put to words? And, I feel very blessed to... ah, have the gift of music -- someone said -- "Water No Get Enemy." Ah! Even Fela said, music is a spiritual thing;

it's not a casual thing. You know?

So yeah, music has been something I've...
turned to, um. To make sense of the world?
And try to... get a better sense of myself?
Um. Yeah.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Can you give us an
example?

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Oh my goodness...!
like, what do you mean! (laughs)

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Can you, ah, can you
just sing us a little something?

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: OH my god??

SEAN SAIFA WALL: I know, I know! And
this is a brave space, so you can say no!

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: That is crazy...!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: This is a brave space;
we love to see it. Um, but I think, I think I
would like to get a little bit of a flavor for
Black History Month, for the Black History
Panel...

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Okay.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: All right!

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Wow, that's WILD.
You definitely could have asked me before to

prepare?? But that's okay!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: (chuckles) Yo!

ADEYANJU AIYEBUSI: There's a song... um. I don't know if you guys know the artist, Aşa. I know Obioma will know -- yeah, yeah, yeah. So Aşa is a Yoruba artist that I really like... ah, up to, I suppose I can say. Um. Wow, this is crazy. Should I do THAT, or should I do my go-to...??

(singing the song Iya by Aşa)

Ugh...! Yeah. That's all.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Yes; yes!! Yes; yes!!

Who!!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: Baby! It's gonna be a long line at the end today, huh?? I'm just telling you!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Yes! Yes!! My god!

MY god. Thank you. Thank you.

I was like! I was getting misty! I was like, ugh! Just, like. Start to, you know... get a little wet around the eyes!

Um...! All right! Thank you, Adeyanju.

So my next question is for Olivia. So for those who don't know, Olivia is a brilliant

mind. You probably have heard some of their brilliance today, in the way they speak. They are -- they create zines; they create art; they make collages that are fucking dope; they center Blackness, spirituality. And, you know, as they sort of shared in the introduction, it was about belonging. Right.

So, you know, Olivia, I wanted to know if you can... talk to you about why it's so -- why is belonging to important to you?

OLIVIA HUNTE: Yeah! Ugh, great question. Um... on a personal level, for me, just my... journey, from... really, like, being uprooted in St. Lucia when I was 10, and moving to Atlanta. And when I moved to Atlanta, I moved to like South Atlanta. If you know South Atlanta, you know like the hood. Like, Cleveland Avenue. Like, 445 Cleveland Avenue! And so, it was a very jarring experience. And then for me coming to Colorado, like, 12 years ago, that too was a different experience?

And so, for me... like. Personally... like, being uprooted, and coming to Atlanta, and like before I could even reestablish a

sense of belonging? Like, I had the door shut on me. Where it's just like, you're different; you don't belong. Like, your Blackness doesn't look like my Blackness?

And for me, like I tell people my experience of belonging -- um, OF like racism, was internalized racism. By like the hands of people who look like me. And I've since thought back, and it's just like I was in middle school. So I was starting sixth grade. So nobody was above the age of like 13. And so for me, it was just really... heartbreaking, and very painful, that like... you know. These kids -- we were KIDS! We were young! And so the fact that they learned that from such a young age, and when I entered the space, being able to like... like, teach ME that, as well.

And so for me, I have always felt like an outsider? And I didn't always LIKE that? Um, but I've come to like really appreciate how I'm situated, just within any given space. But more on a intellectual level: Belonging -- because I have really -- like, for me, I -- and I'm like. I need a better way to say this, but

like. I love all things power, privilege, and oppression? And how it shapes our realities within our identities. And so, this world is socially constructed. You know, everything from gender to race. But, you know, they're real and there are consequences. And so for me, I kept asking myself: Okay, like, what is this ABOUT? Like if I were to like, you know... you know, get rid of gender! You know, get rid of race; get rid of like, you know, socioeconomic status. You know, like, just really... Oppression is about doing DIFFERENCE. And... if I were to take away, like, the fancy jargon, not even use the word "oppression" and those sorts of things, on a very elemental level... oppression -- it's about belonging! (little bright laugh) And society creates laws, policies, practices, ideologies, that says what bodies can and cannot BELONG? Right? In a given space.

And not only that, it's just like the inherent violence of it, where there's like -- you know, you're telling me how I SHOULD belong. And if I don't belong -- if I, if my

body does not conform on contort...! Like, I'm punished for it.

And so for me, really highlighting, like, just the abusive nature of it! Like, we're in an abusive relationship WITH this society! You know, particularly I think about the violence that is the United States, but like. The violence that is colonialism! 'Cause you know, I go back to St. Lucia, and when we talk about, you know, Caribbean islands, or like other African nations, and like, how we've internalized like whiteness in that -- you know, whether it's through religion, and like really -- again. The violence that we are... TAUGHT! And like we inherit, and we do to each other!

And so for me, there's nothing quote-unquote "normal" ABOUT that. And like, you know, having difference be our baseline, what would it look like for us to move from that place? And for me, it's like. Every body would be able to belong, because there's no right or wrong way to BE? Um.

And belonging, because when I think again

at the intersections of identity for me -- gender, sexuality, race -- society communicates an inherent WRONGNESS. And for me pushing back and saying "there's nothing WRONG with me!" Right? But like for me, if I think about the 10-year-old child that's like, you know, doesn't have access to, you know, the foods that I was familiar with! Like, the things that brought me comfort, when I moved to Atlanta. Being... communicated -- like, for me, getting the message that there is something inherently wrong with me? And I don't belong. Right. And if I don't belong in my BEING? Right? Where the hell do I belong!

And so for me, it's -- you know. It's layered, but it's so important, and. Again, like, people like to say, you know, difference of opinion! And just, like, the shit -- oppression is about belonging. And let's, let's talk about that. Right? And so, THAT is why I do belonging. And Black queer and trans people, because, I mean. We're, we're incredible! Like, just very innovative, and like... literally just for being ourselves,

like, the world is just trying to kill us. And all we were trying to do is like breathe, and just like... just LIVE!

And so for me, like, just -- I am in awe of Black queer and trans people? And, um... yeah! Those are my people! That's my community! And so. Long answer short: That's why I do belonging work! (giggles)

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Yes!! Yes!! YES.
YES.

Whoo!! Just the fire! The FIRE...!!

So, I'm gonna go to Yezenia. So, Yezenia... African, Indigenous, from Colombia. You know, Latin American Blackness, it gets real... complex! You know? Um, and I really appreciate how, since I met you, you have been very... just, firm! In being like, I am Black; I'm from Colombia. Like, these are my people. These are the languages that I speak?? PLEASE don't sleep on Yezenia! Yezenia is multilingual...! Um...! And, I feel like, you know... you're also an immigrant! Too! Right? You immigrated -- without your people! Right? You immigrated TO Berlin. Without

your folks, right. And I feel like... you know, I know that you were doing -- you were an intersex educator, when Germany sort of rolled out their... laws. Um, supposedly to protect intersex children.

I just wanna hear more about your experience. Because, basically, when we were last on the panel, you were talking about having PCOS. You know, um... You know, talking about intersections of fatness, Blackness, intersexness. So, yeah! I just -- we can go in so many directions with this? But I think I just want you to update us on what's going on for you NOW? Um. And... yeah!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: Okay! Where do I start? That was, like -- that's a typical Saifa thing? You ask ONE question...? In -- but it's actually ten. And I'm like, huh. Where I do start.

Okay, ah, yes! I was just, like, listening, and I immediately picked up my passport?? I always have my passport with me! I don't know. So it's still a Colombian, ah... it's still a Colombian passport. That's, um...

Without no respect for, ah, Colombian country who has, ah -- and I'm saying this very, very firm! As you said. That I am, I... Who still... ah, claims to be, right now, in their -- (clears throat) There is this disclaimer -- who has one of the first, first of all, Black vice presidents in Latin America, since after... 1578 or something? Um...

I'm gonna say this as, as, as -- you know, nation is a concept; I don't fuck with it? But... because -- but at the same time, being as an immigrant, that passport is, it's a duality that is... that is important to me. Because it's a part of my identity.

And I never, in the 20, almost 26 years that I've spent in Germany? Who I came, first as a political refugee, and then later -- and I was not based in Berlin. So, it's a whole trajectory itself. But I'm not gonna get into that. But now still, being able to, I, to... um.

(chuckles) Someone's quoting, and I'm just like yeah, I don't fuck with nations. And it's like, I have -- speaking of it, I had the

chance! To get my... German passport, and I never did. 'Cause! Ey, yo. There's no way I'm, like... G- -- I have enough problems in my life than just become German. So at this point, I'm like. Just gonna stay a resident, and it's gonna be fine. But a German?? That's not a shit that I want; I'm sorry.

And, I say this like with a laugh, but at the same time it's with, um... given the fact that not only I'm not -- I... I'm not recognized, as a human, again? But also as someone who does not belong. So I could also connect a lot to what you said before, Olivia. And it's given to the fact that I am Black. And I am fat. And, I'm intersex.

And, I already know what is expected for me. So that has always been, and, like -- and I was, as a child, I was a tomboy. Before I was very femme. Um, I -- I still have, like, most of the times, I'm actually very tomboy. Like. That's the thing?

Being an immigrant, in this country, has -- especially in connection to the work that I do, is. It was the base, basically, why I became,

first of all, a political educator with the focus of -- with a focus on race and gender. Because, on the one side, um... being utterly visible as, as a Black person, and then being assigned female at birth, right, assigned female at birth... there is a vulnerable, vulnerability that comes with it! In an extreme way, especially in a country that is majority white -- that supposedly says it's majority white. Again, whiteness is another construct itself; I don't believe also in whiteness.

So -- I also don't believe in white people. I'm, like, not gonna lie; that's not my shit.

Um, that's another thing? But especially what shaped me was this intersection of being Black, fat, and later discovering that I am intersex. Because... I've never had -- like. I was just having this conversation with a friend, that I -- first of all, I want to be Black in every lifetime that I, that I am gonna be. Like, eyy! That is not -- I don't want to be anything else. First of all. And even it comes with the, the terror and the horrors

of being in a system? There is nothing more terrifying to me than being Black.

And it comes, at the same time -- and being as a Black, an immigrant... upscaling class, who has access to university and reading theoretical concepts. That I also -- that also gave me a sense of, of access and understanding to my work? And that was also the only WAY to survive... white supremacy, as it is realized in this country. And I say "realized," because it's a praxis that is, like, depending on your socioeconomic status and your race, it's either... you are getting through the system or you're NOT.

So, I would say I'm, yeah! Someone said it before, about like -- I think it was you, Olivia, about the abuse? Of this? And it's, it's like... it's like, yeah! It's, it's being a survivor, literally, in that term! And, being on top of that a fat that is already a, a body that takes already so much SPACE. Right? And then comes being intersex! Which is... at the same time, like, that's like -- okay. That's, for them it's like too much. Right?

And so, your question was about how that shaped me, and how that, um, how that continues to shape me. It's my life! It's, it's every day, wherever I go! It's, it's everywhere; it always defines, ah... the, the body defines -- the flesh defines, basically! Everything I DO... Whether connected to, to the fact that, yes! I, I AM an AfroIndigenous person, very connected to a very specific territory. And I am not THERE! And so, and it's a constant, it's a constant reminder that my body is not only... too much? For others, but also... it's in the wrong place.

And, I claim every space that I go, because, first of all, I'm just like, I'm -- like, if white people can colonize everything, *I* can do that shit too. Like, I'm sorry! Like! And it's just colonizing this small place like here! Like, saying things that -- you know? Like! Of course, it's not connected to the POWER of, of the structure of the project of colonialism, right? It's more like... I take that space. And, um.

We're living in a time where... where

specifically fat people, and Black fat people, are targeted! Add to that gender, and we are targeted in terms of, like... slimming down. And we know there is research on how being thin and, and being -- is connected to not -- to the, to the desire! The inherent desire of non-Black people to... you know, to have the less proximity to Blackness!

And *I*! The more people lose weight? Ha. I, um... I, I try to eat more. (chuckles) I wanna have more space. You know? That's why I'm always jealous when Saifa is posting food! And it's a way of resisting. You know? Not -- and it's always connected to health! Because when we talk about the connections of, ah... fatness, Blackness, and being intersex, it's always connected to the idea of something is not only inherently wrong, but also it's about your supposed "health."

And, I've never been the most -- I've never been this healthy! Like... quote-unquote "healthy." Like, I was just having today -- I'm going for an EKG? And, ah. So today I have, like, my blood results come back -- I was

like, bitch! I've never been this healthy!
Like, you know? And I've, and I've hungered!
Like. I've hungered... BECAUSE the need of,
like... of not only shrinking myself, but not
being perceived. Like, this intersection of
being hyper-visible and UTTERLY dismissed! And
utterly...! Not only undesirable? Because I
work a lot also with the terms of desirability?
But it's connected to, to not only a political
resistance, to me? But also like, not
shrinking anymore to something I was never
supposed to... experience in the first place!
Which is this abuse, of -- we were talking
about... when it's connected to, um... yeah, to
be -- and, and especially, like, that's
something that I encounter also a lot in my
work! Like. Especially working, of course,
most of the, most of the... I was the, like,
German-wide! Eh? I am still the only Black
intersex counselor! Not only the Black FAT --
like, the only -- just, take away the fatness?
Which you can't, of course! But. You know?
I was still German-wide, I am the ONLY Black
intersex counselor. So what does that MEAN?

To be, ah, in this position? It means I bring, again, not only an embodied knowledge, but I had to basically... go around all of the things that my colleagues, or, that they were trying to -- in terms of "visibility" and "representation," to work through, and say, stop! This doesn't work for, for -- it's a work on invention. I always have to, basically, not only go the extra mile, but also invent the space where Blackness, being fat, and being intersex, IN relation to bodily autonomy, can exist.

And, um... and that is, that is, it's... I had to stop...! At some point, working in this field! Because I -- there is only so much you can do, as one person. And, when you're not only -- like! Like when you are the only person, it DOES something to you. I've, I've discovered lately now that a LOT of my friends -- because I talk to them, you know, about everything, and. That, um... being -- that now, they ARE figuring out, they are going to endocrinologists and figuring out. And they come to me with the blood levels, and I'm just

like, yeah, bro! You know, I can show you, and I can explain the framework to you? Especially Black fat people! And then they're figuring out... they're intersex.

And I feel like... maybe there is gonna be a time where I, as a Black fat immigrant, can go back to this space? But right now, what Germany lacks is not only... I mean, Germany lacks a lot of things. But specifically! The, in terms of the intersections of it! It lacks... a HUGE amount...! I, I couldn't...! You know? I couldn't make it WORK, at some point!

So now I do it for my friends! (chuckles) And for everyone who reaches out to me. Like, parents, I had a young Black mother who, who was like... who was like, yo! Tell me something: Do I have to... do I have to take this test, to figure out if my kid's gonna be intersex or not? You know? And I was just like hell no! You don't have to. You know, so I try now not to work on the wider scale? I try to work in the communities. And it's -- and I do it in my free time, and it shouldn't

be that way, but I prefer to do it that way than working alone against the system. Because it shouldn't be that way, but that was the fact. And working that way -- it DOES something to you.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Totally. Whoof! Okay! Thank you!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: There's a lot of things to say. Someone was writing about -- yo, Afro-pessimism, that's a whole other thing! No, I'm going -- my ADHD -- no, if I go into Afro-pessimism, give me an hour!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: No, you -- no, I know, you gonna need an hour! But let me get to Obioma. Let me get to Obioma, 'cause I got a question for Obioma. For those who don't know, Obioma -- Chukwuike -- Chukwuike -- ah!! Always the last part of your surname.

OBIOMA CHUKWUIKE: Chukwuike.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Chukwuike. All right. Chukwuike -- ah! I just gotta practice more.

When I think of Obioma, I think of Kwame Nkrumah; I think of so many African leaders. Who, in history, have been committed to the

decolonization of... Africa? Different countries in Africa. Who, in their passion, and in their commitment to their people, have been murdered. By, you know, the French; by the British. Because they were actually committed to their people.

So when I think of Obioma, I think of someone who's ACTUALLY! Committed to their people. Actually committed to the uplift, to the dignity, of their people.

And, yeah! So I think... Again, there's so many questions that I can ask you, Obioma. But, I think the question that I'm landing on: You are, like, in leadership? As part of the African Intersex Movement. Um. And... it's, it's like...! It's like, pan-African! Right? And so, the thing is, is like... why do you feel it's important to center African intersex people? 'Cause I've seen it, you know. Everything you put out for Intersex Nigeria; everything that... that AIM puts out? Centers the African intersex -- which is a myriad of experiences! Right? But why do you feel that's important, to center African intersex

folks?

OBIOMA CHUKWUIKE: Yeah, thank you so much, Saifa, for that question. (clears throat) And thank you so much, my fellow panelists, and our attendees.

I think today is one of -- actually, tomorrow is my birthday. So I feel enlightened, being here. Because I feel like I'm sharing from my heart? And, I'm also with my people. So I feel really, really, you know, happy. Every time my birthday comes around, I feel -- I feel joyful; I don't know why. (soft laugh) I should feel joyful, but there's a special feeling I have, like something is going to evolve about me. Which is not like necessarily physical?

So... shining light on African... contexts and reality, is important. Because like everything everybody has shared here, most times... Africans are forgotten. We are always at the back bench. It has always been like that. It's STILL like that! We are always at the back bench. And it doesn't mean that our experiences are not, you know, valid? They are

not important; they don't contribute -- but because of the same thing that we have been sharing, colonization has even made us, as Africans, to forget our own Africanism! You know.

So that's, sometimes, when I speak with people I'm like, do you know who you are? Or, do you know the embodiment you carry? I understand that the privilege and opportunities are only so much. And, they say that the root of all evil is money. And I understand, because our people have been trapped in that circle of you always have to have a standard for you to say that you are about and part of whatever that decides, or made decisions, or. You know, tell your stories, or make it valid.

So for ME, centering African realities, as an intersex person, means that we have to connect it to our roots, to our EVERYDAY life! Because for me, if I can not connect my activities in my advocacy to an everyday life of an intersex person, what am I doing? If I'm just writing about or speaking about what is happening in another place that I don't have

history about, what am I DOING? The point is to also connect from different parts of the world the experiences that we all share.

So African, centering African issues, as an intersex person, is one of the things that drive me as a leader. And I'll keep reminding every intersex person that I meet... that in whatever you're doing, that your story that you think does not matter is what matters the MOST. So tell it; be proud of it; carry it. Sometimes it's painful? Sometimes it's courageous; sometimes it's sweet? It has a mixture of all of them. Carry it and tell it with all your heart. Because that is who you are!

Because, like I shared in the beginning, in my earlier remark: If you do not carry yourself, who is going to carry it for you? You have to tell your story. But at the same time, you also have to bring in something to the table. Because most times...! From experience, what I have experience is that people think African persons, or African people, do not have a lot to bring to the

table! But when you go back in history, a lot of innovations that have been done were actually rooted to Africa. Right? But because! Whenever there is a, there is a conversation, because we don't speak the English the way it is and all that, we try this thing that we are not part of what matters. But we are part of what matters. Because we have original languages. I speak Ibo. And I speak Ibo very well. And I also write it. Right? And I also speak English. And I wish to know other languages. But that does not measure intelligence. That does not measure who you are, as a person.

So in whatever form that you can actually bring out your, your authenticity about what your experiences are? Share it! People will understand it. And use it as a shining light to say there is a reason why I have to do what I'm doing.

And, to also share! I have come to realize that, most times, African intersex persons that I've met over the course of being a leader -- especially for the African Intersex

Movement -- have a lot to say. But they're dying in silence, because they have this concept in their head that they are not enough. And, what I'm enjoining right now is to make them realize that they are enough to share their story, whether they are on the continent or outside the continent, and they can actually contribute at every given time. Because! I believe that the uniqueness of every individual is a fact that none of us have the same blueprint. And for the fact that none of us have the same blueprint, it means that whether you are African, whether you are, whatever region you are coming from, Latin America, European, wherever you're coming from, you have something meaningful to contribute.

And that is why we also have to realize that IF we're not actually as good as people think we are... we wouldn't have experienced colonization. Colonization wouldn't have come to us. It's because there was a potential that was seen in Africa! That was why, when the first persons of whoever discovered Africa discovered Africa, they were like, you see

these people? I need to harness what they have. The skin color; the brilliance; the way we are able to do our architecture, our lookout context.

So, we have innovation that is ours. And I feel the world is yet to see what Africans -- but one thing I love about the reality of what's happening now is, a lot of Africans are waking up. Are discovering their path, are telling their truth, are living their reality. And that is also the same thing that I want to see in the African Intersex Movement space. And that is part of what is driving me in whatever I do. So, being an African is... Someone shared here that if I come to this world again, I would always want to be an African. Maybe! I might go to another country. But I always want to be an African. Maybe I want to experience another African country. Because Africa! Is the root of everything, to be honest. Africa is the mother of EVERYTHING. And everybody knows that! That is the truth. Everybody knows that.

And I also think that is why structures

sometimes are put in place to limit us from, you know, attaining to that height. Because... if we are given all the opportunities and privileges other parts of the world have, imagine the type of Africa we are going to have.

So that is part of what is driving me, in the work that I do. And... sometimes I feel like my actualization might not happen in my lifetime. Or it might happen. Because I know that change is something that takes a whole lot of time? And energy. So I'm happy with that; whether it happens in my lifetime or not, I know people are going to speak about some of the things that I did in contribution of that realization.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Adeyanju! What's up!

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Yeah, no, that was incredible. Um. To the point of... the potential of Africa. It's -- this is an incredible time, to be an African. It's ALWAYS been? But... Saifa, earlier you mentioned Kwame Nkrumah. And you know, that's a man that's very special to me, as a Pan-Africanist.

The things that we're seeing on the African continent right now really give me hope that... there IS a future where... Africans everywhere will be liberated? And I'm a firm believer that... for that to happen, like, we need to be unified! There needs to be unity. On the continent, and in the diaspora.

You know, the first places that come to mind is... you know, Burkina Faso. Mali, Niger. They've kicked the French out. They're nationalizing their resources. You know, they're developing... in ways that we've, we've not seen in a long time. You know what I'm saying, like. Paris does not have lights, without the uranium in Niger! None of us here have the devices that we're sitting on without the cobalt and, and the minerals in Congo.

A lot of places in the world, I will say specifically the United Arab Emirates, don't have gold without the gold from Sudan. You know? AES today; free Africa tomorrow. And I'm a very firm believer... in Pan-Africanism or perish. Like. It's our homeland or death. Like, that's -- there is no, there's NO

compromise.

You know, so I feel -- you know, what Obioma said, like, really... hit me in my spirit, and like! You know, put a battery in my back, you know.

I believe Kwame Ture -- there's two things that Kwame Ture said that, you know, I wanna bring to the fore. One: Pan-Africanism is the highest expression of Black power. Number two -- oh my gosh. My, my memory. What, what was the other thing that I wanted to say. Um. Ugh, my gosh! ADHD is a bastard. Anyways! (laughs) Um... yeah. I'll yield there, but. Ah, god, that second thing was gonna! That second thing was more important than the first one -- oh, yes!

To the point that Obioma made that like, you know, we might not see the thing that, you know... we're pushing for, in our lifetime. But, it's such a privilege to be here today to play OUT a part. You know, to lay that brick? To lay that foundation? For the Africans of tomorrow.

So yeah, it's such a privilege, and it's

such a beautiful thing. To be an African, and despite... despite EVERYTHING that we've been put through -- and I'm about to start crying...! But, despite everything that we've been put through as a people? I would never choose anything other than being an African. And I LOVE our people...! (wet and teary) And, um...! The enemies seem so powerful, guys? But... U.S. imperialism, European imperialism, is a paper tiger. Um.

LISA: I'm listening to a web --

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Huh? Oh, I thought someone was talking! Um! We are so powerful, and we're more powerful united and together. Um. And... yeah. I'm... I feel so much hope. I, I feel very inspired. I'm really grateful... that I was able to be here with you guys today. I'm gonna yield, because, ugh! I love being African!! I love all of you Africans! (chuckles)

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Yezenia?

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: And I wanted to say, in connection to what you just said, like. When I look right now... at Colombia,

specifically? And, I see the way... the younger generation? I know I look very young, but trust me, I'm a bit older than you will all think. Um. And when I look at the centering...! Yeah? On our roots! And I'm not saying not only as, as, in terms of body -- like, of the, of the land? I'm talking about, like, where we actually come from. It is the most beautiful thing to say and to be... OH...! You know, I'm not Latino. There is always the African before. Like, that's -- when you look -- and I feel like this, this thing has been -- like, the continuity? Of, when I see not only youth, but also like literally people not only from my generation; the literature that has always been there? But, specifically the expression! The bodily expression, and the outstanding connection... to look -- Europe is not our center. The United States are falling. Eh; I cannot WAIT! Listen! I'm, like, I'm not sorry; I cannot WAIT! But looking, the center is always connected to the African continent.

And it's not this -- and I think we have to

be also mindful of, of not gate -- like, we also need to protect, in terms of like gatekeep, because, you know! As the colonial project is always a bit, eh, slicker? Supposedly, than we are? But I feel like there's that, there is this... strong connection, again, going back to where we came from, and what was stolen from us? And that is what -- even as an Afro-pessimist -- give me hope. To see that, I might not see to it? But whatever we are doing right now is... gonna be a base of it! As you said, Obama, some people... you know, will at some point speak -- definitely about you! I don't know about me; I also don't care about fame. But definitely about you! Because it's going to be also the understanding, again, between... what means to be BLACK...! It's ALWAYS connected to being African. That -- you know? And that's on that! Like, it's coming. Also, in terms of like... the connection to a revolution! How many -- I see that, like, a lot of... like, quote-unquote "Latin America"? I use the term Abya Yala, which is the Indigenous term for it.

And it's based on the first language that I learned, like, my first Indigenous language. It was, um -- yeah. It's from the Kuna Yala, which is like the Kuna language of the people. So Abya Yala is connecting, in their fight, to... the African continent. Because it's, it's clear! That that is not only the past, but also the future.

And that is something I wanted to add to that. Because when you look at history, we tend to forget... this also, quote-unquote, "distant connections"? And it's not; it's happening? And it, again! Might not be in our lifetime. But, we THERE...!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Ugh...!! You know, I feel like this is sort of, like... you know, almost like the closing remarks! Like, just -- I mean, Obioma, you lit a torch! And now, the panel's on fire! You know?

So I would like Olivia to come in and sort of grace us with what has been percolating for you, with all of this passion and this fire that has emerged in this conversation around centering Blackness, Africanness. Africa being

a place of innovation. You know, do you have any thoughts?

OLIVIA HUNTE: I have SO many thoughts, and even more feelings. Um! But, yeah!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: We love the feelings!

OLIVIA HUNTE: (laughs) But... yes! Yes, and I think, again, St. Lucia, and I think about the Caribbean in general, where... imperialism, colonialism, has like fed us the lie that we're nothing without the British, without the French? And it's just like, y'all -- they're still very much so extorting us! Right? THEY'RE nothing without US. Right, not just our labor, but they're literally nothing without us. And, for me that's so important. But I really appreciate you all talking about, you know, possibility, innovation, and futurity! Like, that is where my, my work on sense of belonging is GOING. Like, a society within which Black queer and trans people have unconditional access to belonging... is not a society that exists. And so for us to access belonging! 'Cause it's a basic need. We're, like -- like, we are using

our imagination! We're using spirituality!
We're like really creating that! And like
building worlds and dimensions outside of this
socially-constructed reality. And I'm very
excited to work to try to articulate that! But
I love what you all are saying, because like,
that is IT. And like, for us to continue to
divest from like Western ways of knowing and
being! 'Cause, I tell my students all the
time: It's a scam! (soft laugh) And, so
really, how do we IMAGINE? 'Cause, look at the
world whiteness built. No imagination. Why
am I working a 40-hour workweek, can't pay my
bills and have a credit score. Right? It's
like, that was built from some white
imagination? And like I said, Blackness,
intersexness, being queer -- like, queerness is
so expansive? What does it look like for us to
like, you know, stop waiting for the space to
be GIVEN to us and actually take up that space
and really bring what we've been practicing in
our private lives to the forefront.

And I can't remember who said it, but
there's like, I think it was you, Obioma, just

as far as we're -- the blueprint, our footprints, we're ALL unique, and we each have something to offer? And you know, I really believe that we're here, in this lifetime, in this moment, definitely for a reason? And how do we continue to really relish in that? And have that be both our place of arrival and departure.

So, that's all I got to say. (soft laugh)

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Yo! YO!!

I am just so humbled by like all of... the brilliance. The fire. And... you know, I think for me... you know, 10, 15 years ago, when I started talking about being Black and intersex? Um. I... you know...! I think I was -- I was bold? And I was defiant. And, I feel like... there was just so much racism! Within the intersex movement! That did not create a space FOR me. And, I am -- speaking of lifetimes? I am so humbled? That God has given ME... enough life to see this panel today. Because, if I die tomorrow? I know that this march will march onward for... years! Decades; centuries. Because of, like, the

brilliance, the heart, the passion, that exists on this PANEL.

And, now I can just sit back and grow old! Because like now, I'm just like, oh...! Y'all got it! Y'all GOT it. Y'all -- y'all are here; y'all have arrived? Y'all HAVE it! Um. And may this world be infinitely more better with ALL of you... IN it! You know? And may we ALL know...! Just the passion, and the fire, and... May we be our ancestors while this dreams? Um, and may we avenge the suffering of our ancestors.

...And SO...! With THAT!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: You're making me cry on a panel! I cannot forgive you!

SEAN SAIFA WALL: I know! I was like tearing UP!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: You know -- like, you KNOW there wouldn't be me without, sitting here without you. Like, you know this; I tell you this all the time. Like, it's like a continuity. There is no me being on a panel if it wasn't for you, talking, 5, 6 years ago somewhere. And your defiance! So I think

also, like! You have to also acknowledge that fact? Please also do not say you die, because you cannot die right now?

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Haha! Well, you know, one day we will perish. You know, that's what the centering was all about. You know, we will die! We will leave this place!

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: That's a discussion we will have to continue private, because I have to disagree. But, um! ...Yeah! I want to say, Saifa, without you, it would -- many of the things -- I'm gonna speak for myself? But I know it affects a lot of, EVERYONE who is sitting here. Without you, it, it -- that shit wouldn't have worked. Especially at the intersection of being Black AND being intersex. And that defiance that you brought always to the table, and still bring -- like, don't retire? But please, also rest. Don't retire. Because, you know...! So thank you.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: I mean, y'all give me! Y'all just give me the, the... you know. Just, I'm just! When I was -- when I was in Nigeria, I was literally crying! Like, Obioma circled

up the folks, and I was just crying looking around the circle, seeing all of these, like, Nigerian Black beautiful faces with different intersex variations! I was like...! I was sobbing. You know? And I was just like, this is...! You know, THIS is! THIS is... This is life. You know? This is life; this is living.

Um... I feel like so greedy. And, again! This is a brave space...! We love consent. Faaji, can -- you know, Adeyanju, can you... can you take us out with a little something? Can you just take us out, please? Just.

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Oh my gosh. Um?

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Just, just with a little exit music. You know.

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: There's two songs that I'm thinking about. I have to look at lyrics.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Okay.

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Um... okay. Let me not even do that to myself.

YEZENIA LEÓN MEZU: Just, your face like -- I cannot with you, Saifa.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: You know? Just a little something. Just a --

ADEYANJU AIYEGBUSI: Saifa, you are SO...! I'm gonna call you; we're gonna talk! No, I appreciate it, though.

I mean, Bob Marley said: (singing)
Africa, united...! 'Cause we're moving right out of Babylon... And we're moving right INTO the Promised Land...

(speaking) We're moving forward, guys. We have to unite; we have to unite. We have to take our land back; we have to take our resources back. Um. And we, we ARE gonna avenge our ancestors. We gettin' that lick back the LONG way. So. Thank you so much, Saifa.

SEAN SAIFA WALL: Yeah. Yo! And, on that, you know, we wanna keep it... as -- what, what's that influencer said? We wanna keep it pimpin', but keep it brief? You know, thank you to everyone who showed up today, who stayed with us until the end.

Please follow these illuminous! Figures, on TikTok and on Instagram. Please, you know,

follow Adeyanju's music. It's brilliant; it's beautiful. You know, follow Olivia's brilliance. Obioma. Please follow the African Intersex Movement. And please keep up with Yezenia. Thank you all for your time, your energy, your passion.

Um, links! Links will follow! Me and Hans will talk about the links. As well as the recording.

Ah, Adeola, I see you. Shout-out. See you. Yo, thank you all so much. And... yeah! Thank you all for coming! And, you know, showing up.

OLIVIA HUNTE: Thank you all. Take care, please! (giggles)

AUDIO: Recording stopped.

(CART captions ending)