

Research paper

## Push and Pushback: Feminist-Queer Tensions and African Diasporic Possibilities in #EndSARS Discourse

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### ABSTRACT

In October 2020, the #EndSARS uprisings against police brutality shook Nigeria and reverberated globally. As anti-feminist tensions formed within the resistance movement, LGBT Nigerians articulated the feelings of solidarity through #QueerNigerianLivesMatter. Editorialised in independent digital spaces, #QueerNigerianLivesMatter became a discourse which addressed LGBT Nigerian identities through an economy of intensified feeling. This study takes up #QueerNigerianLivesMatter within this contextual field of diasporic digital space, closely reading eight textual artifacts from three Nigerian digital magazines focused on LGBT visibility: *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries*. The #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse collated by these publications featured a digital witnessing of embodiment, intensified boundaries and bonds of identity, and historic desire for the African diaspora beyond the continent.

**Keywords:** queer Africans, #EndSARS, African homophobia, #QueerNigerianLivesMatter, global blackness

In October 2020, youth mobilised across Nigerian cities against the police violence of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) as part of #EndSARS. The events became globally significant, particularly after peaceful protestors were killed on 20 October 2020. Although the hashtag #EndSARS first appeared in 2017, the 2020 uprisings were monumental. In 2020, mainstream transnational news corporations considered reputable to Western audiences, like *BBC* and *CNN*, took notice, commenting on the movement's coalitional alliances. *The New York Times* labelled the Nigerian uprisings the largest 'in a generation' (Maclean, 2020). Even more, it was a feminist triumph; *BBC* reported that Nigerian women organisers, including the 10 members of the Feminist Coalition (known as FemCo), 'made history' during #EndSARS (Olaoluwa, 2020). Beyond the global mainstream, another sphere of international discourse described #EndSARS solidarity differently: the call for #QueerNigerianLivesMatter.

Already, friction had contoured solidarity within the #EndSARS movement. Feminist organizers faced targeted backlash. In October, FemCo raised over \$150,000 in days from supporters around the world (Amaize, 2021). FemCo created an infrastructure to help protestors across Nigeria, operating 24/7 telephone help and coordinating volunteer legal support. Later, FemCo members described feeling fear as they learned of 'being watched [and restricted] by security agencies' (Feminist Coalition, 2020c). Online, FemCo were trolled by vocal anti-feminists, 'men determined to spread misinformation' (Feminist Coalition, 2020c). For instance, business consultant Segun Awosanya declared #EndSARS had been hijacked (Okanlawon, 2020). Awosanya, considered by some to be 'the face of #EndSARS' on social media since 2017, claimed FemCo was 'threatening the integrity of [the] nation'

(Okanlawon, 2020). Marking these heightened conflicts in their ‘own words,’ FemCo later commented that the attacks were ‘not only damaging but dangerous’ (Feminist Coalition, 2020c). Tense feeling surrounded FemCo’s #EndSARS solidarity due to dominant nationalist politics.

#QueerNigerianLivesMatter expressed the intense feelings of queer resistance within the fraught circumstances. The 2014 Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) legalized police violence against LGBT Nigerians by criminalising homosexual relationships and identities. This homophobic ideology was used to justify the arrest and incarceration of the Egbeda 57 at a 2018 birthday party. Advocating against homophobic policing, people used #QueerNigerianLivesMatter to document street protests online (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). In cities like Enugu, Abuja, and Lagos, protesters photographed themselves hoisting placards with slogans of solidarity like ‘Na Lesbian I Lesbian, I No Kill Person’ (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). In other reports, queer protestors in Abuja had their placards and pride flag ‘torn and seized’ in protesting SARS (*Kito Diaries*, 2020b). Queer microcelebrity activists, like Matthew Blaise and Amara the lesbian, posted about their protest experiences on social media, filming themselves in the moment (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). These visible microcelebrities significantly contributed to queer digital discourse.

I study #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse through examining a network of digital publications dedicated to representing LGBT Nigerian issues: *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries*. During October 2020, these outlets published commentaries from LGBT writers and activists. As tensions rose within #EndSARS resistance, these digital publications globally platformed LGBT perspectives on #EndSARS beyond the mainstream.

These LGBT-focused digital outlets witnessed the fractures in the #EndSARS coalition. On 18 October 2020, FemCo tweeted their coalition was ‘inclusive of the LGBGTQ+ [sic] community’ (*TheCable Lifestyle*, 2020). This statement was immediately met with derision; Awosanya claimed FemCo were impersonators, importing an LGBTQ+ ‘agenda’ to the movement (Alabi, 2020). The @feminist\_co post was quickly deleted and replaced with generalised statements addressing solidarity for ‘all’ and ‘every Nigerian’ (2020a). As the Feminist Coalition implored protesters to ‘remain focused on our SINGLE goal’ (capitalisation in original) to shut down SARS, queer issues were figured as distractions to the national movement (2020b). Refusing to ignore the deletion, queer Nigerian publications witnessed the backlash. Then, Pink Panther from *Kito Diaries* recounted the FemCo events, commenting on the ‘push and pushback over the recognition of queer lives’ (*Kito Diaries*, 2020b). In *The Rustin Times*, Victor Emmanuel recognised Bayard Rustin as a queer historical figure, likening his erasure in the Civil Rights Movement to #QueerNigerianLivesMatter. #QueerNigerianLivesMatter provided an identificatory link between queer African erasure and African American struggle through the histories of gay diasporic ancestors. #QueerNigerianLivesMatter was a discursive site of intense feelings about solidarity in #EndSARS.

I analyse the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse that circulated within a distinct network of LGBTQ-focused Nigerian digital magazines. I ask: how did queer Nigerians communicate the collective feelings of tension and solidarity in #EndSARS coalition? I focus on written commentaries on #EndSARS from *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries* – all digital outlets founded by gay Nigerian men. During the 2020 #EndSARS uprising, these three outlets published eight digital posts about the resistance. I read these texts through the ‘contextual field’ (Ono, 2020) of queer Nigerian digital space, which informs my focus on social-cultural contours of visibility. I argue that #QueerNigerianLivesMatter circulated opportunities for digital witnessing, intensified boundaries and bonds of identification, and imagined longings for diasporic connection.

My analysis of #QueerNigerianLivesMatter contributes to scholarship on #EndSARS as a transit of transnational feeling. Scholars of #EndSARS have identified the central significance of global digital communication to the politics of solidarity in October 2020 uprisings. People who used Facebook and Twitter to learn about the #EndSARS street protests were more likely to report joining in – social media was a ‘solidarity vehicle’ (Uwalaka, 2020). In addition to transnational media, ‘Nigerians in diaspora’ were significant to the movement, perhaps due to ‘the Nigerian government’s inability to silence people outside of Nigeria’ (Dambo et al., 2022). For some, #EndSARS proved the ‘connective power of Twitter to link people together in [the] shared experience’ of emotional connection (Akerle-Popoola et al., 2022). Protesters ‘aspire[d] to be empowered’ and ‘cherish[ed]’ belonging, demonstrating the force of collective feeling (Akerle-Popoola et al., 2022).

My study of #QueerNigerianLivesMatter shows how the discourse invited digital witnesses, revealed intense fractures and connections, and hailed the diaspora. These insights add texture to Nwabunnia’s (2021: 352) framework of simultaneous #EndSARS ‘tensions and solidarities,’ by investigating how public communicative messages shaped intense feeling. In describing ‘tensions and solidarities,’ I refer to both the frictional feeling of tension and the intensity of upset feeling, because these are overlapping rhetorical descriptions of visceral affective states that emerge through collectives. Tension refers to how polarising feelings co-exist in messy and unpredictable intimate formations, both fracturing and binding collectives. #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse is the mediated expression of the feeling of queer tension within solidarity. Ultimately, these intense frictions and connections exemplify the frottage of contemporary Black diaspora (Macharia, 2019). By examining the circulation

of intense emotion across queer Nigerian digital space, I demonstrate how the ‘affective conflicts and practices of difference that suture the black diaspora,’ function through and beyond continental African cultural belonging (Macharia, 2019). In this digital space, the inferred symbol of the ‘Black body’ communicates meaningfully in the diasporic possibility of #QueerNigerianLivesMatter (Towns, 2018).

## QUEER NIGERIAN DIGITAL SPACE: VISIBLE IDENTITIES AND CONTEXTUAL FIELDS

*The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries* exemplify a cultural form unique to post-Web 2.0 media: the digital magazine. As such, they do not provide breaking news; instead, they represent LGBT identity through Nigerian cultural context. Their material circulates beyond their websites to multiple platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp; additionally, these digital publications often directly reference each other. People who engage in these digital networks often connect intimately online and offline. I term this cultural context of media discourse ‘queer Nigerian digital space,’ as it comes into being through the complex visibility of shared self-disclosure. Below, I describe how *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries* are digital sites of queer Nigerian visibility. Then, I discuss my critical rhetorical method within queer Nigerian digital space. To understand the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse, I construct a ‘contextual field’ of the #EndSARS texts published in queer Nigerian digital space, moving beyond the ‘formal elements and ideology’ within written digital texts to consider the ‘multiple dimensions of cultural identity’ that are used to interpret meaning (Ono, 2020).

### Visible identities: *The rustin times*, *minority Africa*, and *kito diaries*

Committed to media visibility for queer Nigerians, documentary filmmaker Harry Itie created *The Rustin Times* in 2017 (Itie, 2019). *The Rustin Times* is housed on its own domain, with affiliate social media pages. It aims to ‘[elevate] conversations around LGBT+ issues across Africa and the African diaspora’ (*The Rustin Times*). *The Rustin Times* weaves personal narratives with commentary on current events. The home page features recent articles and posts with vibrant thumbnail images. Reports like ‘Uganda’s MPs Want Anti-Gay Bill Reintroduced in Parliament’ and ‘Why Atlanta Has Become a Sanctuary for Black LGBT+ People’ demonstrate the publication’s commitment to global Black LGBT affairs. The publication is named for, though not legally affiliated with, Bayard Rustin, who is a historical figure due to his influential role in the Civil Rights Movement as a gay Black man. *The Rustin Times* interprets Rustin’s absence from the public eye as the sort of erasure which reflects the ‘plight of many LGBT+ Africans living in Africa and worldwide’ (*The Rustin Times*). Bearing the Rustin name, the publication weaves a visible relation of belonging to gay African American struggle.

Launched in November 2019, *Minority Africa* is a digital news magazine that publishes feature stories about social marginalisation across Africa. *Minority Africa* managing editor and co-founder Caleb Okereke is a Nigerian journalist with *Al Jazeera*, *BBC*, and *CNN* bylines.<sup>1</sup> Okereke’s cross-African migrations from Nigeria to Uganda parallel the publication’s international, yet continental, focus. *Minority Africa* writers often cover issues related to African women, queer people, and disabled people. *Minority Africa* stories cover multiple axes of African marginalisation, but the publication is committed to LGBT stories. On the website’s menu, ‘About’ is followed directly by ‘Sexual Minorities,’ before other categories like ‘PWDS,’ ‘Women,’ ‘Culture,’ and ‘Voices.’ In “[We] Are Ready,” Botswana Decriminalized Gay Sex’ and ‘Ghanaian Lawmakers Propose Draconian Anti-LGBTQ+ Bill,’ *Minority Africa* writers investigate the varied effects of homophobia across African countries. Differently, articles like ‘African Spirituality Makes Space for My Divinity and Queerness’ and ‘What Can African History Teach Us About Queer Belonging?’ express queer African feelings of desire across social contexts. *Minority Africa* stories reflect a journalistic commitment to human-interest stories that make marginalized Africans visible.

Third, *Kito Diaries* is a blog that exposes homophobic blackmail violence and provides an intimate digital hub for queer Nigerians, particularly gay men. Unlike *The Rustin Times* and *Minority Africa*, *Kito Diaries* is a colloquial space where an active community submits and comments on blog posts. *Kito Diaries* began as a WordPress blog in 2014. The blog contained anonymous ‘*kito* stories’ about hookups and betrayals, often warning about serious subject matter or adding fictionalised detail. Non-*kito* erotic stories like ‘The Naked Truck Driver’ and ‘National Cake’<sup>2</sup> also appear. The blog also noted global gay ‘happenings’ in posts like ‘Ugandan Scientists Agree: Homosexuality Is Natural,’ and ‘Ahem! Cristiano Ronaldo Seen Fondling Hot Male Friend’s Crotch,’ which were direct copies from other websites. Beyond erotic stories, editorials are often brief, reliant on external links. By 2020, *Kito Diaries* had grown and moved to its own internet domain. Pink Panther, anonymous founder and editor,

<sup>1</sup> I extend thanks to Caleb Okereke, a friend whose input enriched this article. I highlight him because he is Nigerian and the only Black African co-founder. While co-founders Deepshikha Parmessur and Shameer Ramdin focus on fellowships and entrepreneurial growth, Okereke’s role as managing editor reveals his direct influence on *Minority Africa*’s stories.

<sup>2</sup> Here, the term ‘national cake’ references the Nigeria-specific idiom about the wealth from natural resources like crude oil. However, the sexual metaphor here analogises ‘cake,’ to mean one’s behind. ‘National cake’ is one example of the allusions that are culturally meaningful in queer Nigerian digital space.

insists *Kito Diaries* is for queer people to self-express while remaining ‘incognito and away from prying eyes’ (*Kito Diaries*, 2014).<sup>3</sup> Pink Panther’s ‘Editor’s Desk’ posts demonstrate that *Kito Diaries* reflects the ‘desires...[and] fears’ of gay Nigerians (*Kito Diaries*, 2014).

Taken together, these publications produce visibility for LGBT Nigerians. These outlets published a total of eight articles or blog posts about #EndSARS during October 2020: in *The Rustin Times*, ‘SARS Might End, but for Queer Nigerians, This is Just the Beginning,’ ‘None of us are Free,’ and ‘How Queer People are Using #EndSARS Protest for Self-Liberation;’ in *Minority Africa*, ‘All Lives Matter in Nigeria, Except Queer Lives’ and “‘We Don’t Have a Body to Bury” Families of Nigerians Missing in Police Custody want Closure;’ and in *Kito Diaries*, ‘#QueerNigerianLivesMatter: Queer Nigerians were Allegedly Attacked by Fellow #EndSARS Protestors in Abuja,’ ‘#EndSARS: The Inclusion of Queer Lives in the Protest Continues to be Debated,’ and ‘Nigeria Should #EndSARS for EVERYONE.’ Using a critical rhetorical methodology, I construct the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse from these texts within queer Nigerian digital space as contextual field. Below, I describe how my reading of these texts critically appraises context.

### Reading a queer Nigerian contextual field

I read the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse through the rhetorical contextual field surrounding it: queer Nigerian digital space. A ‘contextual field’ is an inferential lens that guides critical focus toward ‘the situating elements,’ specifically, the ‘synchronic social-cultural’ factors of communication that contribute to ‘textual meaning, influence, eventfulness, or force’ (Ono, 2020). In reading the eight texts that curate #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse, I focus on symbols, signs, allusions, and metaphors which point to the embedded social-cultural context and influence. These contemporary factors concerning LGBT Nigerian digital culture are the ‘imagined relations and phenomena’ which guide my analytical discussion of the texts (Ono, 2020). I use these contemporary ‘vectors of cultural identity’ in queer Nigerian digital space to read the eight texts published by *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries* about #EndSARS during October 2020 (Ono, 2020).

I have ‘consciously chosen and constructed’ the contextual field of queer Nigerian digital space based on how *kito* violence affects digital visibility (Ono, 2020). In Nigerian slang, ‘*kito*’ refers to a type of blackmail in which perpetrators rely on institutional homophobia to victimise people, often gay men. The process of *kitoing* – targeting, blackmail, and extortion – is often initiated and reinforced through digital means. That a form of digital blackmail has been distinctly termed by the Nigerian gay community signifies the commonplace nature of *kito* violence; according to Nigerian nonprofit The Initiative for Equal Rights, in 2018 (12-13) and 2022 (18), anti-gay blackmail is one of the most widely reported human rights violations against Nigerian LGBTQI people. *Kito* violence reveals the complex dangers of digital visibility for queer Nigerians, particularly gay men. Digital visibility occurs when people go public with identifying information and experiences, producing intimate self-disclosure (Tufekci, 2013). Visibility remains complex for queer Nigerians; often, being public about one’s identity online shatters any illusory separation between physical presence and virtual anonymity, potentially inviting homophobic threats (Onanuga, 2022a). The embodiment of gay Nigerian men online must be read within this sociocultural context. In my later analysis, I reflect on how Blaise’s femme presentation functions as a subversive sign of digital queer visibility.

In constructing queer Nigerian digital space as contextual field, I attend to the signs of self-disclosure and global outlook. I consider the recirculated images of microcelebrity activists and written personal testimonies to be signs of intimate self-disclosure. Digital visibility results from ‘dense’ networked flows where microcelebrity activists ‘become means of [the] flow of attention and visibility’ (Tufekci, 2013). Through practices of ‘self-affirmation’ and communal identity, visibility in queer Nigerian digital space is intimate (Onanuga, 2022b). Queer Nigerian microcelebrities have emerged through digital self-disclosure, including Amara (Amara, the lesbian, 2020) who vlogged her experience of harassment at a protest as an out lesbian in Nigeria. Blaise is another digitally visible person; videos and images of Blaise, wearing a cropped shirt and hoisting a #QueerNigerianLivesMatter sign in the middle of #EndSARS crowds, went viral (@Blaise\_21, 2020). These two, well-known in queer Nigerian digital space, anchor the shared nodes of #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse. I assess how the images of these two are interpreted in the written discourse, noting textual descriptions of their visibility.

Finally, my critical reading of queer Nigerian digital space attends to its underlying global imaginary. Queer Nigerian activists using digital platforms often advocate with a transnational ‘outlook,’ gesturing to an African queer imaginary beyond borders (Onanuga, 2022a). This outlook guides me to assess how signifiers of international meaning, such as the ‘lives matter’ heuristic or the names of African American gay figures, reinforce the ‘imagined relations and phenomena’ constituted by this contextual field (Ono, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Pink Panther’s visibility is complicated – he is no longer as anonymous as he used to be. Still, he maintains consistent use of his anonymous tag. His identity will not be publicised in this article.

Although these publications represent LGBT Nigerian experiences, I situate the context of queer Nigerian digital space here in terms of discourse, rather than organising. This curated discourse involves the editorial production of meaning for anticipated feminist-queer audiences. Differently, Ololade Faniyi's (2025) research on 'Nigeria's feminist/queer organizing around #EndSARS' looks at the tensions of coalitions through Twitter data and interviews with interlocutors. Her networked ethnographic method provides a perspective concerning the behind-the-scenes dynamics and 'the complex relationships between online and offline resistance' (Faniyi, 2025). However, in addressing online publics, digital magazines produce collective identity through discourse, imagining intimacies on a broader socio-cultural level.

## **(UN-)AFRICAN FEELINGS: TENSION IN FEMINIST-QUEER SOLIDARITY, ANTI-ESSENTIALISM, AND DIASPORIC POSSIBILITY**

#QueerNigerianLivesMatter was a discourse of feminist-queer tension and solidarity. In this section, I elaborate on concepts relevant to these 'tensions and solidarities' within the cultural context of #EndSARS coalition (Nwabunnia, 2021). Solidarity is produced through the unifying feeling between parties who bond together to accomplish shared goals. I am distinguishing solidarity, which describes this connective sentiment against repression, from intersectionality, which is a framework to understand the reality of interlocking oppressions like racism and sexism. Where intersectionality is a feature of structural oppression, solidarity describes the practice of relation and response to such structural oppression through collective organisation. In coalitional relationships, solidarity contains contradictory, tension-fraught politics of emotion (Faniyi, 2024). In the later analysis, I assess tension in solidarity by analysing the boundaries emergent from fracturing tensions and bonds built through affective ties. Now, I expand on the significance of tension in solidarity.

In my theoretical framework, I first build from critical scholarship on the politics of emotion, focusing specifically on Sara Ahmed's notion of emotional intensities (2014). Then, I engage queer and feminist African communication scholarship to describe the cultural contexts that impact the politics of emotion for LGBT Nigerians. African feminists often mobilize through digital media networks, advocating for feminist liberation in overlapping local and global circuits of discourse (Nwakanma, 2022; Mohammed, 2022). Bridging these expansive concepts allows me to consider how points of African identity 'un/belonging' emerge from economies of intense feeling (Asante, 2020b). From a critical feminist perspective, tension is a 'shared feeling' of heightened emotional intensity in which 'the very experience of intensities' marks bodily surfaces and identity groups (Ahmed, 2014). These intensities are a function of the 'unstable, tension-fraught cultural politics of emotion,' wherein marginalised bodies 'may be assigned value one minute, [then] shifts in affective transmissions can trigger...desubjectivizing responses against them the next minute' (Faniyi, 2024). Queer African eros (Asante, 2020b) offers a 'deep affection' with emancipatory potential. These articulations are decolonial and anti-essentialist imaginings of a humanistic transnational African feminism (Pindi, 2020). Further, I locate these queer subversive possibilities beyond the 'linear, genealogical logics' underlying traditional concepts of Black diasporic belonging (Macharia, 2019). Thus, I consider how the transnational terrain of emotion provides new opportunities to articulate diasporic belonging.

The collated expressions of #QueerNigerianLivesMatter form a landscape of intense emotional circulation of solidarity, which exposed #EndSARS fractures and bound LGBT Nigerians as a collective. By 'tension,' I mean intensified states of visceral upset such as pain or anger, and the unpredictable nature of these polarising feelings as they intensify. Following Sara Ahmed (2004), I consider feelings 'economic,' meaning that emotions are socially produced through the discursive circulation of signs to create the 'binding' effects of collectives. For some signs, 'the more they circulate, the more affective they become,' allowing individual subjects to bond as a collective and bound social differences against others (Ahmed, 2004). Put differently, 'what attaches us, what connects us...is also what we find most touching' (Ahmed, 2014). Tension, or intense feeling, happens when the frictional emotions which produce social discrimination, like fear and hate, are 'at stake' for identity groups (Ahmed, 2014). Tension, the intensification of frictional emotion, both fractures and binds. There is a 'sociality' to pain which also foments relationship, or a 'contingent attachment of being with others' politically (Ahmed, 2014). The #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse foregrounded these fractures and connections, contending with delineations of social identity through emotional tension.

I connect the contradictory boundaries and bonds of emotional tension to the formation of queer identities in postcolonial Global South national contexts. FemCo's tweet deletion reveals how tension emerges alongside the hopeful 'desire of identity,' pulling certain postcolonial feminists toward normative nationalist politics (Lowe, 1991). Thinking with Faniyi (2025), I consider how FemCo may have been so 'caught up in the euphoria of their hypervisibility and conditional legitimacy that they overestimated their...ability to reform anti-queer attitudes.' As the precarity of FemCo's own visibility heightened, and tensions rose, collective euphoria may have quickly transformed to cautious fear, producing 'fractured intimacies' between feminist and queer groups despite good intentions (Faniyi, 2025). As dual expressions of intensity, these feelings of euphoria and fear shaped the contradictory boundaries and bonds.

In discourse, intense feeling shapes how queer identities are reproduced through binary oppositions between signs which split national subjectivities into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ native subjects (Rao, 2014). Still, queer activists may foreground these fractures, reframing ‘bad’ subjectivity to bind together as a collective. Below, I describe how ‘good’ and ‘bad’ subjectivity frames LGBT Nigerians as ‘un-African.’ I turn to African communication scholarship to understand the context-specific fractures surrounding LGBT activism. Often in normative African nationalist contexts, LGBT identities are troped as ‘un-African,’ a bad postcolonial subject. As ‘un-Africans,’ LGBT Africans are fractured from social and historical belonging.

Engaging African queer and feminist communication studies, I ground my critique within an anti-essentialist framework that deconstructs these normative identity discourses *and* the strategic rebuttals to nationalist homophobia. The un-African trope emotionally aligns LGBT Africans as cultural outsiders by constructing queerness as a threat to national cohesion, ultimately producing feelings of generational disconnection from a coherent identity (Asante, 2020a). These normative nationalist desires have affected some African feminist spaces, which constitute queer un-Africanness through the continued omission of LGBT human rights topics in their discourses, such as through ‘evasive’ language (Mohammed, 2022). The #QueerNigerianLivesMatter witnessing of FemCo’s deleted tweet foregrounds the conflicting intense desires between queer solidarity and normative recognition. The discourse gestures to the exclusion of ‘un-African’ identity.

Queer African communication scholarship explores anti-essentialist theoretical frameworks beyond the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ African binary. Elsewhere, I have described the complex deconstruction of cultural essentialisms through constructing and (dis)placing ‘historical place’ (Olaniyan, 2021). Recognising queer African histories ‘must be followed by the recognition of multiplicity within postcolonial reality,’ through ‘a critique of borders’ and ethnic, national, and continental identities (Olaniyan, 2021). Moving through African feminist-queer tensions requires deconstructing the essentialist binaries that align desire toward ‘good’ postcolonial subjects and away from the ‘un-African.’

I connect queer African communication studies of identity to African feminist communication to theorise the anti-essentialist production of African cultures beyond the continent in #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse. This strategy is anti-essentialist. By enacting solidarity in multiple realms, African feminist organisations model anti-essentialist cultural praxis. Gloria Nziba Pindi (2020) suggests that African feminists build a deconstructionist consciousness, apprehending the interlocking nature of power and oppression in (post)colonial contexts to value multiplicity. Wunpini Fatimata Mohammed (2022) highlights how solidarity can build feminist accountability as mutual parties work ‘together ... while striving to improve our politics every day.’ This multifaceted anti-essentialism is also sustained emotionally. Mohammed’s perspective enhances my theorisation of how the normative ‘desire of identity’ fractures postcolonial queer identities (Lowe, 1991). True feminist accountability to queer people in solidarity requires removing the ‘desire to be liked by our oppressors’ and the ‘desire to perform’ an acceptable politic for the patriarchal gaze (Mohammed, 2022). Such accountability reveals ‘the lines of dis/connection and...un/belonging’ *and* creates the foundation for ‘alliance[s] based on a deep affection...that offers the possibilities for...resistance’ (Asante, 2020b). More than brief support, the practice of shifting desire toward queer people reflects a deeper decolonial praxis.

This anti-essentialist approach to African sexual cultures shifts global knowledges on/about the continent of Africa *and* Blackness. Pindi (2021) argues that African feminist thought contributes to decolonising African sexualities and decolonising the homogeneity of Blackness. Disrupting this colonial homogeneity of Black identity means practicing ‘a respect of cultural differences between African[s] and African American[s],’ where the ‘goal is not to delineate a shared history,’ but to ‘emphasize how the peculiarities of each cultural group inform our readings’ (Pindi, 2021). In my interpretation, decolonizing the homogeneity of Blackness includes deconstructing diasporic intimacies while recognizing peculiarity. For ‘un-Africans’ in global discourse, national or ethnic origins do not overdetermine cultural belonging; instead, they strategically negotiate claims of pre-colonial identity across multiple national contexts. The Nigerian claim to Black American inheritance is risky because the neocolonial dominance of U.S. representation has produced outsized visibility of African American historical narratives – that LGBT Nigerians are intimately familiar with American figures marks this dominance. Still, representing African Americans as forebears to Africans functions as strategic, both risky and rewarding, identification. The diasporic contours of #QueerNigerianLivesMatter are not the delineation of a shared history, but the invention of an ancestral relation where Africans inherit from the diaspora beyond the continent.

My anti-essentialist approach to Black global difference informs my understanding of the ‘lives matter’ phrasing in #QueerNigerianLivesMatter as a form of Black diasporic witnessing. Tension provides the discursive foundation for events to be witnessed by collectives, even in digital space. Sara Ahmed (2014) asserts that the social experience of pain is a ‘witnessing’ which grants ‘pain the status of an event, a happening in the world,’ giving the feeling ‘a life outside the fragile borders of...[one’s] body.’ I extend this to consider the Black digital and diasporic sociality of pain, where visceral feeling may also circulate outside the body through virtual means. The curators of

#QueerNigerianLivesMatter digital discourse bore witness to the tension in #EndSARS solidarity, giving life to pain beyond embodiment.

Although digital witnessing circulates real-world pain beyond the material of the body, the body matters inferentially. The #QueerNigerianLivesMatter hashtag relies on the ‘lives matter’ heuristic, which implicitly bears witness to victims of U.S. police brutality remembered by Black Lives Matter. Rhetorically, #QueerNigerianLivesMatter connotes a likeness to the ‘matter’ of Black humanity in the Western world, because of the wording and the represented African ‘bodies.’ Armond Towns argues that ‘the Black body’ materially communicates as a medium through which the white self-conception of humanity takes form (Towns, 2018: 354-355). In my analysis, ‘the Black body’ is inferred digitally, yet still communicates as a medium to anchor #QueerNigerianLivesMatter in connection to a sphere of diasporic Black relation, a complex expression of humanity outside the dominant white self-conception. Even though bodies are physically absent online, embodied Black presence is symbolised in digital discourse. The bodies of queer Nigerians linked to #QueerNigerianLivesMatter signal the subjugation of Blackness on the African continent. #QueerNigerianLivesMatter was coherent as a digital site of Black identification, sustained by a binding desire to connect with the diaspora.

#QueerNigerianLivesMatter is an expression of feminist-queer tension and Black diasporic intimacy in #EndSARS. Solidarity is an emotional relationship constituted through the heightened intense feelings that construct marginalized identities; solidarity contains tensions which fracture and bind. In the LGBT Nigerian discourse on #EndSARS, these coalitional tensions led to a queer diasporic desire that ultimately subverts traditional notions of cultural belonging. Following KegMacharia (2019), my perspective on diasporic intimacies problematises the figuration of the Black diaspora as a linear, heterosexual relation of genealogical kinship. In #QueerNigerianLivesMatter, diasporic intimacy emerges through the ‘lives matter’ heuristic and the veneration of African American gay forebears to continental African solidarity.

## #QUEERNIGERIANLIVESMATTER

In this analysis, I demonstrate how #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse revealed simultaneous ‘tensions and solidarities’ during the #EndSARS movement (Nwabunnia, 2021). *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries* represented the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter responses to homophobia within #EndSARS resistance, ultimately cohering the intense collective feelings circulating in digital queer Nigerian space. These heightened feelings drew digital witnesses to circulate LGBT visibilities, exposed tense fractures and bonds surrounding queer Nigerian identity, and gestured longingly toward queer, Black diaspora. Below, I demonstrate the signs of digital witnessing, tension in solidarity, and Black diasporic desire which made #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discursively significant.

### Digital witnessing: Intensity beyond bodies

#QueerNigerianLivesMatter was an emotionally intense expression of collective pain and desire during #EndSARS solidarity. The witnessing prompted in this discourse demonstrates the sociality of intense feeling; #QueerNigerianLivesMatter was a locus of LGBT ‘happenings’ connected to #EndSARS solidarity. Among these events were the mass arrest of the Egbeda 57, Blaise’s street protest, and Amara’s protest experience. Further, queer writers made their own identities visible by detailing personal experiences with Nigerian police violence. Absent physical bodies, #QueerNigerianLivesMatter sustained digital witnessing.

The curated #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse bore digital witness to queer suffering. In an October 15 post titled ‘#QueerNigerianLivesMatter: Queer Nigerians Were Allegedly Attacked By Fellow #EndSARS Protesters in Abuja,’ Pink Panther circulates Amara’s experience by reposting the text of her tweet, ‘a lady brought a rainbow flag and our fellow protestors turned on us...I’m leaving,’ and summarising a video in which Amara describes being ‘attacked’ and having materials torn (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). Writing that Amara’s tweet ‘awakened an outrage’ on Twitter, Pink Panther supplements this commentary with several screenshots of other Twitter accounts empathising with Amara’s experience (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). Thus, the empathetic tweets represent a collective response to Amara’s experience as Pink Panther places these interactions within digital proximity. These expressions of queer Nigerian witness contributed to an emotional ‘attachment of being’ with others across digital, not physical, space (Ahmed, 2014).

This attachment of being through digital witness is also exemplified in the remembrance of other victims of police violence across queer Nigerian digital space. On October 11, *Kito Diaries* emphasised #EndSARS as a queer issue because the police victimise LGBT people ‘like those who went to a party that was raided by the police who arrested them, claiming they were in a homosexual cult’ (*Kito Diaries*, 2020c). This implicit reference to the Egbeda 57 prompts an emotional attention to queer pain. *The Rustin Times* editorial on 14 October also invites digital witness of the Egbeda 57, clarifying their victimization as collective pain: ‘Let us remember the 57 innocent men who were unlawfully arrested by the Nigerian Police at a birthday party in Lagos two years ago’ (*The Rustin Times*,

2020). Here, readers in queer Nigerian digital space are the ‘us’ who remember the happenings of ‘two years ago.’ Then, on October 15, *Kito Diaries* quoted *The Rustin Times*: ‘As we remember those who have lost their lives to assault by SARS, let’s also remember LGBTQ+ persons...who have been killed by state actors’ (*The Rustin Times*, 2020). By repeating this quotation alongside Amara’s protest experience, Pink Panther identifies *Kito Diaries* readers as part of the ‘we’ who must remember’ violence. This echo of digital witness demonstrates the emotionally intense proximities within LGBT Nigerian digital space.

Additionally, #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse circulated digital witness through the testimonies of visible LGBT Nigerians, including microcelebrities, who testified to intense experiences with repression. In *The Rustin Times*, On October 14, media personality Eniola Adeoluwa (2020) insisted that LGBT ‘voices [be] heard’ in Nigeria. Beyond the voice, Adeoluwa digitally witnesses embodiment, describing Blaise’s viral video tweet as an example. ‘It takes a lot of courage not only to be dressed as what many Nigerians would perceive gay but to publicly chant... “Queer Lives Matter,”’ Adeoluwa surmised. In describing the ‘courage’ to dress as what people ‘perceive’ to be ‘gay,’ Adeoluwa locates the potential for homophobic violence on the bodily surface of femme queer presentation, recirculating this externalisation through digital means. In the digital, the body is absent, yet its intensities are witnessed. Victor Emmanuel’s ‘All Lives Matter in Nigeria, Except Queer Lives’ (2020) in *Minority Africa* also reproduces digital witness of Blaise. Emmanuel (2020) retells an experience wherein, months prior, Blaise ‘was arrested by the police on suspicion of looking “gay”...[based on] looks and mannerisms,’ and then comments that ‘[Blaise’s] case is not an isolated incident...57 men were arrested at a birthday party in Egbeda.’ Absent physical presence, these descriptions of Blaise’s embodiment anchor Emmanuel’s witnessing of queer violence in digital space. Emmanuel, and readers of *Minority Africa*, are drawn to remember the painful happenings that shape queer Nigerian life.

In an October 2 opinion titled ‘None of Us Are Free,’ legal practitioner Timinepre Cole (2020) vividly recounted past experiences with Nigerian police officers as a gender-nonconforming person. In one example, they were ‘harassed by policemen...[for supposedly being] dressed like a man’ (Cole, 2020). In another example, they experienced a ‘front-row seat’ to police violence as a passenger in a cab when a police officer murdered the young driver next to them (Cole, 2020). Cole provides signs of embodiment in the face of violence, such as their style of dress, as perceived by police, and their seated position beside a murder victim. Cole (2020) details the rising conflict through an explosive climax: ‘what started out as a slow, cold morning became charged and explosive...The policeman felt insulted... The driver challenged the policeman in response... A sound of the gunshot immediately went off, and everything became still for a moment.’ In Cole’s recollection, the ‘sound of the gunshot’ is heightened by the affective gravity as ‘everything became still.’ In attaching the sound to the moment ‘everything became still,’ Cole recirculates the intensified feeling for readers to witness the pain as an event (Ahmed, 2014). These signs of tension define the contours of their body and mark the events for the digital witness. Here, intensified feeling moves beyond marking the individual body to prompt digital witnessing of embodiment through feeling. Below, I explore the contradictory nature of these emotional intensities.

### **Tension in solidarity: Boundaries and bonds of queer Nigerian feeling**

#QueerNigerianLivesMatter prompted the recognition of emotional tension *in* solidarity through simultaneous boundaries, meaning frictional limits, and bonds, or connective ties. The diffuse response to FemCo’s deleted tweet exposed the ‘tension-fraught’ politics of solidarity (Faniyi, 2024). *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries* illustrated the struggle by circulating affective signs of emotional intensity and heightened boundaries of identification. Through tension, #QueerNigerianLivesMatter demonstrated how LGBT identity is ‘at stake’ in the struggle against police violence (Ahmed, 2014). In this section, I show how the discourse delineated boundaries around LGBT Africans, binding the group imaginary through collective emotion. I examine these articulations of intensified emotion to show the circulation of collective queer desire.

The #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse intensely delineated African queer identity through affective signs of disconnection and anger. In one *Kito Diaries* publication, Pink Panther summarises Amara’s video about an Abuja protest on 14 October and then adds multiple screenshots from Twitter accounts in solidarity with #QueerNigerianLivesMatter. In curating these tweets for *Kito Diaries*, Pink Panther layers Amara’s account of homophobic harassment with queer echoes of frustration toward the homophobic backlash, signalling progressive fractures and queer connection. Amara’s story is a sign of what #EndSARS *felt* like for queer Africans – Pink Panther binds his experience to Amara’s as a witness to the ‘happening’ (Ahmed, 2014). Pink Panther establishes #EndSARS as a site of solidaristic feeling amidst righteous anger at the state, commenting that ‘Nigerians have finally had enough’ (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). ‘The past few days have... [demonstrated]...the unity of Nigerian voices,’ Pink Panther wrote (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). He adds, emphasising the bond, ‘Queer protesters have joined their voices with the larger public’ (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). ‘However,’ he interjects, ‘in Abuja yesterday, protesters allegedly demonstrated the hypocrisy of their cries for an end to the oppression’ (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). By contrasting ‘hypocrisy’ with ‘unity,’ Pink Panther metonymically constructs ‘voices’ as a terrain of identity formation, where

harmony and discord are both possibilities. Then, Pink Panther echoes Amara's experience as evidence of this discord. 'In the video... she said they were "attacked",' Pink Panther states, directly quoting Amara to emphasise the dangerous stakes of the conflict. This framing highlights the intense fractures in #EndSARS resistance; an 'attack' revealed 'unity' to be 'hypocrisy.' Describing the furore, Pink Panther opines that Amara's story 'awakened an outrage... as people took to... #QueerNigerianLivesMatter to express the pain, anger and sadness' (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). This deeply felt reaction revealed the 'lines of dis/connection' within #EndSARS politics (Asante, 2020b); I read the *Kito Diaries* description of collective 'outrage,' 'pain,' and 'sadness' as a form of African feminist accountability against the 'desire to perform' acceptable politics (Mohammed, 2022). In this way, tension fractured #EndSARS through intensified disconnection *and* bound #QueerNigerianLivesMatter through intensified pain.

Within this discursive expression of intensified pain, #QueerNigerianLivesMatter also enabled a postcolonial critique of the normative desire of identity in Nigerian culture. This critique subverts the binary of 'good' and 'bad' postcolonial subjectivity to bind a queer identity through collective pain (Rao, 2014). Pink Panther's curation of screenshotted tweets, all of which bear the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter hashtag, directly follows the summarisation of Amara's experience. These curated tweets delineate queer identity by making the fractures in #EndSARS visible, circulating tense feelings within an economy of collective queer emotion (Ahmed, 2004). In one tweet, 'LGBTQ people are protesting too because they are also major victims... peeps at Berger, Abuja attacked them. You became the animals you are protesting' (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). This opinion on the attack reframes the #EndSARS fractures along the opposition between 'victims' and 'animals,' where queer activists are righteous 'victims' and homophobic activists are condemned 'animals,' no different from the SARS monsters hired by the state. These curated tweets articulate intensified emotion to reorient postcolonial value toward LGBT people as righteous political subjects.

A separate tweet containing tense feeling reads, 'YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NOW THAT OPPRESSION JOLLOF IS TURN BY TURN and you'll surely get your just desserts' (capitalisation in original) (*Kito Diaries*, 2020a). The capital letters suggest queer activists feel a passionate frustration within the #EndSARS coalition. I read these food metaphors as situating elements within the contextual field (Ono, 2020). 'Jollof' signifies a shared rice dish for a large gathering, an implicit symbol for national unity. Yet 'oppression jollof' suggests that the collective meal dished out 'turn by turn' is the experience of suffering at the hands of the Nigerian nation-state. For homophobic activists, the oppressive jollof will be 'just desserts,' or the deserved result of the attacks on queer activism. In connection with 'just desserts,' the jollof metaphor frames Nigerian politics as festivity; this party metaphor may be implicitly contrasted to 'national cake,' a colloquial Nigerian term referring to the wealth wrought from the country's crude oil industry as it spreads (or not) to the masses. This statement subverts cultural desires of collective jubilee to feature intense pain. #QueerNigerianLivesMatter was a discursive expression of tension in solidarity that exposed the fractures and bonds surrounding LGBT African activism.

More than disconnection and pain, the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter expression of tension in solidarity demonstrated subversive desire beyond heteronormative nationalist belongings. In this complex way, alliances 'based on deep affection' with possibilities for resistance may grow from fractures of 'un/belonging' (Asante, 2020b). Although there is little mention of direct feminist-queer alliance, *The Rustin Times* editorial team (2020) sharply rejects heteronormative longing: 'There is temptation to... centre the heterosexuals, centre being liked, to shrink yourselves... No!' This notion of 'shrinking oneself' connotes Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 'We Should All Be Feminists' TEDx speech. Yet the writers reinterpret the popular feminist idiom to allude to queer struggle. The 'no!' resounds as a forceful denial of the 'temptation' to acquiesce to normative African cultural expectations; *The Rustin Times* (2020) exposes the 'desire to be liked' and 'perform' which fractures African feminist-queer accountability (Mohammed, 2022). 'We will also continue to tell our stories, "The writers promise, "not in relation to, or in comparison to heterosexual stories, but as full, whole stories that they are' (*The Rustin Times*, 2020). In *The Rustin Times*' articulation of #QueerNigerianLivesMatter, affective desire flows beyond pain toward 'full [and] whole' queerness. This African *eros*, queer affection in solidarity, exposes and reaches beyond postcolonial fractures of un/belonging. Tension *in* solidarity foments a deeper desire for connection through a subversion of disconnection and pain. #QueerNigerianLivesMatter was a site of digital witnessing in which intense feelings of pain circulated, exposing the boundaries and bonds constituting LGBT Nigerian belonging. Next, I demonstrate how curated discourse across *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries* represented collective queer longings beyond the national sphere of belonging.

### **Lives matter: Diasporic desire and queer solidarity**

In alluding to global belonging, the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse aligns with Black American struggle. The discourse across *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries* gestured beyond the boundaries of the Nigerian nation-state to claim belonging. This discourse reproduces connective bonds to historical figures like Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin and reframes logical premises about the 'lives' that 'matter.' The 'lives matter'

framing across digital space analogises #BlackLivesMatter, revealing a longing toward Black American queer ancestors.

*The Rustin Times* bears the name of Bayard Rustin as a sign of identificatory desire. The digital publication is not Rustin's work, but it wields his memory in its organisational ethos. The name 'Rustin' beckons readers beyond the African continent, likely in connection with Black American culture. Cole's 'None of Us Are Free' and Adeoluwa's 'How Queer People Are Using #EndSARS' appear in connection with Rustin's name and memory. Also, Bayard Rustin is named in *Minority Africa*. Victor Emmanuel's (2020) editorial in *Minority Africa*, stated that the Civil Rights activists 'wanted Rustin's support in the fight for Black liberation but also wanted to distance themselves from queerness as much as possible.' Emmanuel continues, 'why should queer people suspend the fight for their own life?,' using Rustin's legacy as a narrative lesson for queer struggle during #EndSARS. Emmanuel also hails James Baldwin as a queer ancestor whose life bears historical lessons. Quoting Baldwin, Emmanuel (2020) writes, 'You always told me it takes time... How much time do you want for your "progress"?' Emmanuel connects the present struggle to the history of queer erasure in the Black American struggle. This claim performs an 'a-chronological movement' of Black diasporic connection (Macharia, 2019: 28), locating desire for identity outside heteronormative genealogical traces.

'I know from history,' Emmanuel (2020) writes, 'that it is not the first time a community has been told to wait for their time.' By repeating Baldwin's first-person perspective in his own words to signify what he 'know[s] from history,' Emmanuel strategically links his experience to Baldwin's as an heir of Baldwin's legacy. In asserting that #QueerNigerianLivesMatter is 'not the first time,' Emmanuel interprets Black American LGBT erasure as a precursor to the #EndSARS tension. This anti-essentialist interpretive move constructs a 'historical place' for Baldwin and Rustin for queer African belonging, locating queer African histories beyond the continent (Olaniyan, 2021). Here, Emmanuel bears witness to the Black American past from the Nigerian present, (dis)placing continental belonging to recognise African identity beyond (Olaniyan, 2021: 311).

Further, the 'lives matter' frame invoked across the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse produces a diasporic link to Black American struggle. The hashtag was used in varied ways in the curated digital posts, editorials, and testimonials published on *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *Kito Diaries*. Often, the 'Nigerian' descriptor was dropped from the lengthy hashtag, so the digital space also circulated #QueerLivesMatter (Emmanuel, 2020; Adeoluwa, 2020). Yet the discourse did not mention potential entanglements or conflicts with non-Black LGBT audiences; only Nigerians and Black Americans were signified within the discourse. 'Black' is clearly implied within the discourse's framing of 'Queer Lives Matter.' This slippage is more evident in the title of Emmanuel's (2020) editorial, 'All Lives Matter in Nigeria, Except Queer Lives.' Where 'all lives matter' would normally be an anti-protest response to the material claims that 'Black lives matter,' Emmanuel's provocative claim that 'all lives matter in Nigeria' avoids these connotations. Instead, the idea that 'all lives matter in Nigeria' seems intentionally absurd, given social consensus on national life expectancy, poverty and violence. One implication is that even if one accepts the farfetched ideal that life is precious in Nigeria, queer life remains excluded from this utopic vision. Here 'all lives matter' is set off by the exception of 'queer lives,' underscoring how homophobic violence functions alongside other national structures of violence that make Nigerian life hard, from poverty to patriarchy. This meaning of 'all lives matter in Nigeria' is possible because 'all' is assumed to mean 'Black' – it goes without saying. That Blackness undergirds these interpretations in #QueerNigerianLivesMatter signifies an alternate relationship between Black 'peculiarities' across and beyond the continent; in fact, the delineation of a 'shared history' is a nonlinear interpretation of diasporic belonging (Pindi, 2021). The 'Black bod[ies]' of African activists communicate as media (Towns, 2018: 354), contoured through digital witness, without the descriptions 'Black' or even 'Nigerian.' The discourse of Black life as *matter* (Towns, 2018: 350) is inferred in Black queer diaspora.

## CONCLUSION

LGBT Nigerians constructed #EndSARS through an alternate framework of solidarity in the discourse of #QueerNigerianLivesMatter. *The Rustin Times*, *Minority Africa*, and *The Kito Diaries* organise the topical responses by queer activists to #EndSARS solidarity to invite digital witnesses, document collective tensions, and imagine diasporic belonging. This discourse reveals the intense emotional alignments that surround queer African identities, creating anti-essentialist possibility for cultural belonging beyond normative nationalist politics. In witnessing queer-feminist tensions, #QueerNigerianLivesMatter maps a transformation of African LGBT solidarities through diasporic longing. By locating queer African identity within African diasporic histories, the #QueerNigerianLivesMatter discourse reinvents Black diaspora through intense feelings of friction and longing. Instead of presuming Black cultural belonging through a 'shared genealogical imperative,' my work demonstrates how 'difference is produced and negotiated' within the discursive formation of diaspora collectives (Macharia, 2019).

In this study, I distinguish between the rhetorical production of tension in public discourse and the relational dynamics of tension in offline resistance or 'behind-the-scenes' organizing (Faniyi, 2025). My work complements

Faniyi's (2025) participatory work on Nigerian feminist-queer tension in #EndSARS by considering the curation of resistance for audiences across borders. I offer a portrayal of the contemporary Black diaspora as a digital discursive site of identity negotiation and historical imagination. In this sense, the curation of tension is seen as productive for diaspora. Future scholars may consider other ways that visible digital curators rhetorically produce tension in discourse to make claims about African diasporic bodies, identities, and histories.

My study of #QueerNigerianLivesMatter enriches scholarship on #EndSARS discourse as a site of solidarity and feeling, adding that this tense terrain is uniquely diasporic. Diaspora is produced in and through the narratives of national politics to global audiences. The Black diaspora is increasingly digital. Queer Nigerian digital space 'constitute[s] a decentralized nodal advocacy that "links the nation across borders and oceans"' (Onanuga, 2022a). In this space, I read queer Nigerian discourse as a strategic engagement with Blackness as inferential matter. As the Black and African diaspora remakes itself through global networks, Blackness matters as a mode of communicating queer solidarity, however tense.

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