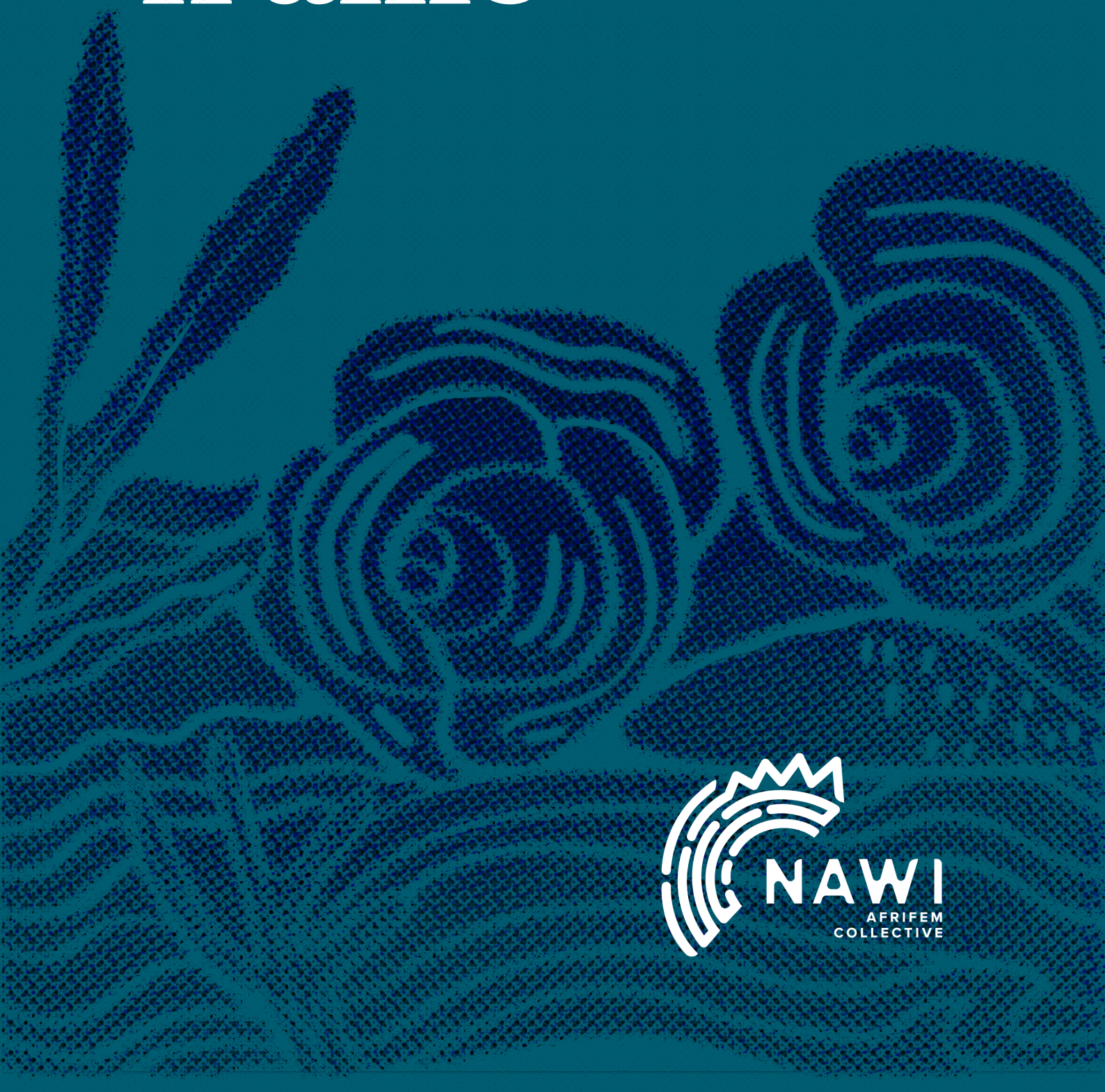
nawi strategic frame



NAWI
AFRIFEM
COLLECTIVE

Preamble

Our name is inspired by the last known survivor of the N'Nonmiton (meaning 'our mothers') who died after over 100 years of life in 1979. The N'Nonmiton were a powerful group of women soldiers who protected the Kingdom of Dahomey (modern day Benin) from attack and French colonization. In Turkana, a language spoken in Kenya, Nawi means 'home'.

Nawi is

Nawi is the memorializing of the name of an African woman.

Nawi is the recognition of history and of continuity.

Nawi is time – past, present, future - all together, all at once.

Nawi is an ode to an anti-colonial and anti-neoliberal struggle.

Nawi is a community of African women committed to understanding and critiquing

our current macroeconomic systems and who we've become as a result of them.

Nawi is an imagining for building fair, just and kind worlds.

Nawi is a home to commune, to nourish and be nourished, to dream, for joy, for freedom and for a mutual harvest.



Prayers for a Grief Stricken World

Strategic Guides

1. Who We Are

1.1. Our River of Liberation

1.2. Our Source

2. The Currents: Our Reading of this Present Moment

3. Our Estuary of Pan-African Feminist Economic Futures

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1 Who We Are

The Nawi Afrifem Collective (Nawi Collective) is an African Feminist Political Economy collective founded in 2020 with the purpose of building a community of African feminists and organizations working on influencing, analysing, deconstructing and reconstructing the political economy. As African Feminists, we work to "reclaim the rich histories of Black women in challenging all forms of domination, in particular as they relate to patriarchy, race, class, sexuality and global imperialism"[1] in the context of macro-level economic systems. We believe that the macro-level economic systems and policies guiding our countries, and the global economy, are fundamentally at odds with life. We see ourselves as a river, who, alongside the tributaries of feminist and social justice organizing, cultivate a *Pan-African feminist macro-level economics of life* as a form of resistance, healing and worldbuilding to transform the political economy through feminist alternatives. We nurture forms of contemporarity[2] that transform macro-level economic discourses, practices and ways of being, offering feminist alternatives to neoliberal capitalism, neo-colonial infrastructures and cis-heteropatriarchy.

To us, rivers symbolize healing, cleansing, movement and dynamism. They exist within and provide sustenance to the ecosystems they serve aligned to our understanding of a Pan-African feminist macro-level economics of life. Crucially, rivers exist within a broader community of diverse water bodies such as streams, tributaries, lakes, deltas, oceans, estuaries and basins, reflecting our commitment to weave a community of African women[3] researchers, writers, artists, creatives, healers and dreamers committed to analysing, giving language to, and influencing the narratives guiding our macro-level economic policies.

Informed by the African Feminist Charter, we reclaim "the right to theorize for ourselves, write for ourselves, strategize for ourselves and speak for ourselves as African feminists".[4] NAWI centres the lived experiences and knowledge production of African feminists and working women[5] in our analysis and framing, and influences local, national, regional, and international macro-level economic fora from this vantage point. Our African feminist politics are also expressed in our commitment to cultivate macro-level economic alternatives that are grounded in economic justice and liberation of African working women, and all those oppressed by unjust systems of power.

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1 Sylvia Tamale (2020) ***Decolonization and Afro-Feminism***. Ottawa: Dajara Press.

2 As coined by Patricia McFadden, contemporarity refers to "a framework for Black feminist resistances, by Black feminists for Black feminists - it explores reimagined lived realities as a crucial site for generation of new feminist epistemologies and alternative ways of being". Patricia McFadden (2016) Be***coming Contemporary African Feminists: Her-stories, Legacies and the New Imperatives***. The Feminist Dialogue Series. Maputo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Accessed here and Patricia McFadden (2018) ***Contemporarity: Sufficiency in a Radical African Feminist Life***. Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism, 17(2): pp. 415-431.

3 We use the term women here broadly, encompassing women in all their diversities, including trans, lesbian and bisexual women.

4 African Feminist Forum (2006) ***Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists***. Accra: African Women's Development Fund. Accessed here.

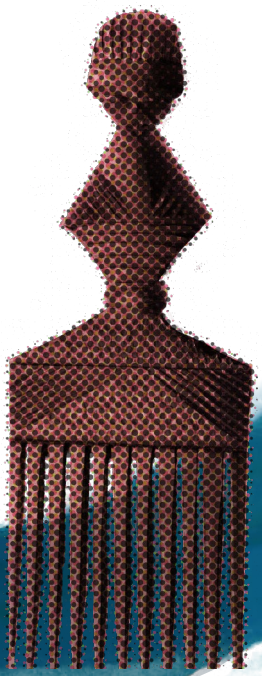
5 Our focus is working women, which encompasses women working in the home as home makers, domestic workers, gig economy employees, self-employed, informal workers, blue- and white-collar workers – engaged in some form of labor, whether or not that labor is compensated financially

1.1 Our River of Liberation

We exist to build and strengthen the foundation for an effective coalition of African feminists and social justice actors working collectively to challenge hegemonic capitalistic approaches in favour of approaches that are rooted in solidarity, equity, care, and justice. We are cultivating a delta that inspires new ways of organizing for social change and influencing macro-level economic policies. By doing so, not only do we transform our collective ways of working, but we also transform the political economy. Our work, more than being against a system, is at the service of life. Our work seeks to build a Pan-African feminist macro-level economics of life that enables us to exit unjust neoliberal extractivist orthodoxies. We cultivate collective liberation by:

> ***"... [Recognizing] that [the status quo is] absurd. Know that it doesn't have to be. Imagine a different way. Make it make sense. [Read the works of African women who have done the imagining, who do the work, who have the alternatives.] Listen to market women. Listen to the workers. Push our governments to restructure borrowing and debt in our favour. Push them to fund healthcare, to fund education and to fund the farmers ...Centre life. Eat in communion. Share what you have. Recognize when it's enough. Grow the food. Take care of the soil. Watch the bloom. Harvest the goods."[6]***

A Pan-African feminist macro-level economic analysis interrogates how interlocking systems of oppression shape global macro-level economic governance and the politics of everyday life. It names the prevalence of patriarchal and social violence against African working women and marginalized people and proffers viable feminist macro-level economic alternatives rooted in the rich histories and knowledge production of African women working to end all forms of injustice. NAWI specifically focuses on macro-level economic policy that influences



6 NAWI Afrifem Collective. NAWI's macro-level economics 101.

economic development,[7] and the impact it has on the lives, human rights, and dignity of African women and girls. Critically, this framing transcends the oft-narrow framing of macroeconomics and considers "efforts broad enough to have important aggregate or economy wide distributional and welfare implications".[8] We co-create and expand feminist approaches to macro-level economic policy in order to:

- **Democratize and decolonize economic decision-making,**
- **Centre equality, wellbeing and sustainability as the objective of economic activity,**
- **Decolonize knowledge production by centring cultural work that shapes, gives language to, and transforms macro-level economic narratives.**
- **Reprioritize the role of the state in ensuring that economy activity is in the service of life, and**
- **Recognize the central role of social reproduction[9].**

We believe that macro-level economic policy is a gender justice issue. We therefore leverage Pan-African feminist political economy approaches to understand, name, and expose the root causes of injustice and worsening inequalities. It also gives us language and frameworks to dream, re-imagine and advocate for feminist alternatives of the organization, management and distribution of resources in such a way that they are in the service of life. When macro-level economic systems and policies are in the service of life, they are rooted in equity, dignity, justice, solidarity, care and collective liberation. We dream of life affirming African feminist political economies that centre education, healthcare, housing, nutritious food, agroecology, community, love, reciprocity, beauty, and joy.

7 Our framing of macro-level economics is inspired by feminist economist Stephanie Seguino who coined the term macro-level economic decisions. Cited in Sarah Iqbal & Althea D. Anderson (2023) ***Things We Learned from a Year of Implementing our Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy***. Hewlett Foundation, 5 July 2023. Accessed here.

8 ***ibid***.

9 Gender & Development Network, The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) and the African Feminist macro-level economic Academy (2020) ***The Audacity to Disrupt: An Introduction to Feminist Macro-Level Economics***. Accessed here.

1.2 Our Source

Our source speaks to the starting point of our rivers of liberation. Our starting point is informed by the principles outlined in the African Feminist Charter and shapes our way of being in the world. It is also inspired by the rich engagements we have had with African feminists, children, working women and those organizing for liberation across the world.

Collective Care

Our engagements are rooted in a political and ecofeminist ethos of care. Care, kindness and compassion will remain at the core of how we interact with each other and our environment. **We intend to be robust in our politics and gentle in how we engage with one another.** We are intentional about exploring and embodying this tension as we transform the global political economy in community with others.

We see our role as a catalyst within a broader community of social change actors, which we refer to as tributaries. We navigate the world with an understanding that one actor cannot bring about the radical systems change that we envision. We therefore commit to centring the work of building community without becoming the centre. We aim to influence, and be influenced by the radical tributaries that catalyse the change we long to see through global solidarity. Our work, grounded in the nexus of care and community-building, enables a confluence of feminist alternatives in the political economy.

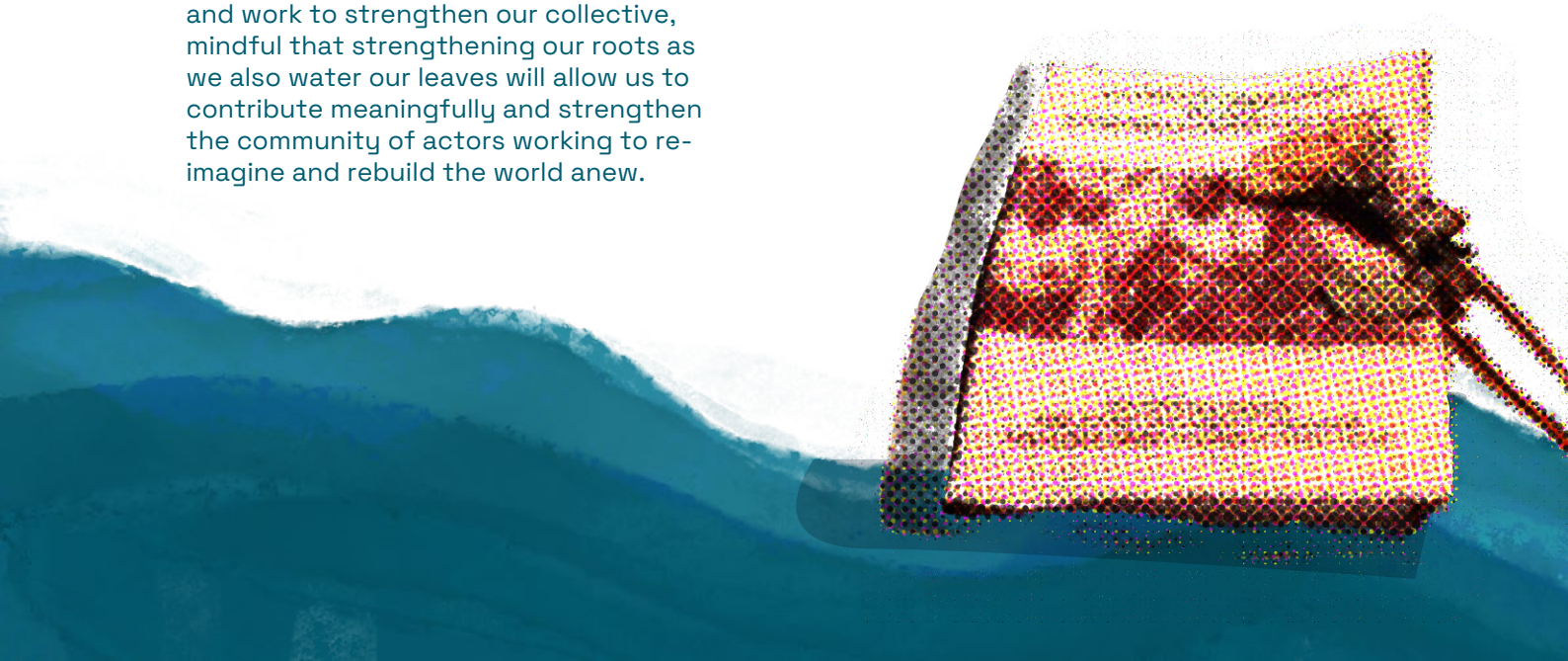


Curiosity & experimentation

As a learning organization, we are adopting an exploratory approach to visioning, inquiring and engaging this work in a way that honours the emergent nature of social change. While remaining bold in our Pan-African Feminist grounding, we commit to engage with an openness that enables us to explore varied channels of knowledge, experimenting, and producing rich bodies of diverse knowledge, curated by us for us.

Strengthening the Roots

This also means that we will be intentional about strengthening Nawi, as a collective, recognising that we can only do this work if we invest in ourselves and work to strengthen our collective, mindful that strengthening our roots as we also water our leaves will allow us to contribute meaningfully and strengthen the community of actors working to re-imagine and rebuild the world anew.



Audacity

We dare to be bold and audacious in our approach to transforming the global political economy. We are cognisant that challenging hegemonic economic systems is not an easy task. We acknowledge that even in moments of great backlash and fear, we will continuously choose audacity in spite of our fear, embodying the spirit of the N'Nonmiton.

Rigour

We are committed to being rigorous in our analysis, community-building, and influencing. We centre African Feminist individual and institutional ethics, as outlined in the African Feminist Charter, in how we conduct our work and build alliances with African feminists and organisations. Our attention to detail, at different levels of scale, supports us to embody the spirit of Nawi.

The Political Value of Imagination and Dreaming

We believe that dreaming is potent political work that is often neglected in favour of "low-hanging fruit", urgency addiction and pragmatism. We seek to water the barren dreamscapes of social change actors by cultivating dreaming spaces for African working women, Feminists, and collectives who work on, or seek to contribute towards, the transformation of the political economy. Our forms of engagement enable us to nourish individual and collective dreams. We invest in our capacity to dream by honouring and working towards African Feminist (re-)imaginations of the political economy across generations.

Consistency & Reflexivity

We commit to remain consistent in the interrogation, expansion, and embodiment of our values. We dare to demonstrate care, dynamism, accountability and integrity across our work.

Mutual Trust

We are committed to creating an environment that cultivates trust, where those marginalised by oppressive systems feel valued, heard and safe to contribute to, challenge, and advance Nawi's work. We seek to co-create cosmologies of mutuality in our engagements, ensuring that our work is beneficial to African working women, and the world-building commitments of African feminist, women's rights, and economic justice movements.

Intentional Adaptation

We are nimble and responsive to shifts in the ecosystem, and frequently adapt our analysis and ways of working. We evoke the language of intentional adaptation to speak to an agility that is rooted in our values and principles, and our understanding of the primacy of change.

2 The Currents:

Our Reading of this Present Moment

African working women are the hardest hit by prevailing, multiple and intersecting systems of oppression and exploitation. These are bred by a lethal combination of patriarchal, neoliberal, neo-colonial, racist and classist economic and social systems. An intersectional analysis of these prevailing systems is crucial to the agents of change committed to African feminist politics. It allows for a comprehensive articulation of the struggles we confront and a clearer roadmap of the strategies we need to employ across local, national, regional and global spaces if we are to achieve radical systems change.

Current macro-level economic models are particularly problematic for African working women. The orthodox obsession with market-based solutions and economic growth confines us to the fringes of what is considered the mainstream economy while exploiting our paid, underpaid and unpaid labour, bodies, knowledge, natural environment and communities. It is working women who are most affected by the austerity cult of structural adjustment, 'fiscal consolidation' and conditionalities.

It is working women, whose lives are turned upside down when we step in to subsidise failed public systems, particularly during times of cyclical health, economic, livelihood, and climate crises. It is African women traders in the informal economy who are pushed out of business when African markets are open for trade using a model that favours big business. It is African women smallholder farmers who produce the bulk of Africa's food with little to no structural support.

Similar trajectories are observed in the context of social justice organising. The industrialisation of social change, alongside the technocratic turn of the past half century has resulted in the neoliberal co-option of radical 'development' alternatives. The corporatisation of social change organising, expressed in the uncritical adoption of business models, language, and ways of working has stripped social justice organising of its political vision and ideological edge.

African feminist and women's rights movements, who are at the forefront of transformative social change, are underfunded and stretched thin, despite the rhetoric of investing in women's empowerment and gender equality. This is demonstrated by the Black Feminist Fund's research that reveals that a mere 0.1% - 0.35% of global foundation giving was distributed to Black organising led by women, girls and trans people in 2018.[10] Additionally, only 0.22% of human rights grant making was allocated to the economic and labour rights of Black women, girls and trans people.[11] These financing flows are mostly restrictive, onerous, and project-based; contrary to the enabling funding flows that support movements to flourish.

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10 Tynesha McHarris & Hakima Abbas (2023) Weaving the Threads, In H. Abbas (Ed.), ***Where is The Money for Black Feminist Movements*** (pp. 4–11). Black Feminist Fund. Accessed here.

11 Cynthia Eyakuze (2023) Through the Philanthropic Lens, In H. Abbas (Ed.), ***Where is The Money for Black Feminist Movements*** (pp. 12–42). Black Feminist Fund. Accessed here.

Furthermore, African women's rights issues and language have been co-opted in a number of national, regional and global spaces as well as by the private sector. This has meant that the meaning and political dimensions of this language have been skewed, watered down, co-opted and depoliticised, as demonstrated by the appropriation of frameworks and strategies such as gender mainstreaming, women's economic empowerment, and intersectionality. Strategies to address what amount to gross violations of women's human rights remain largely tepid and non-transformational. Many of them have been limited to building the capacity of individual women, supporting microeconomic interventions and 'women's inclusion' with minor tweaks, if at all, to deeply unequal and undemocratic structures. These interventions have relegated African working women to 'beneficiary' positions subject to prescriptive decisions arrived at by others.

Considering all these, there is a need for the dislodging, disrupting, and decolonisation of the unequal and hierarchical power dynamics around macro-level economic knowledge production as well as policy and decision-making. This can be done by placing the transformation of power asymmetries at the centre of our analysis and using an African feminist lens to foreground the rights and lives of African working women. This could be realised by building 'power within'[12] and investing in collective action that deepens power 'with'[13] amongst African working women and their progressive movements.



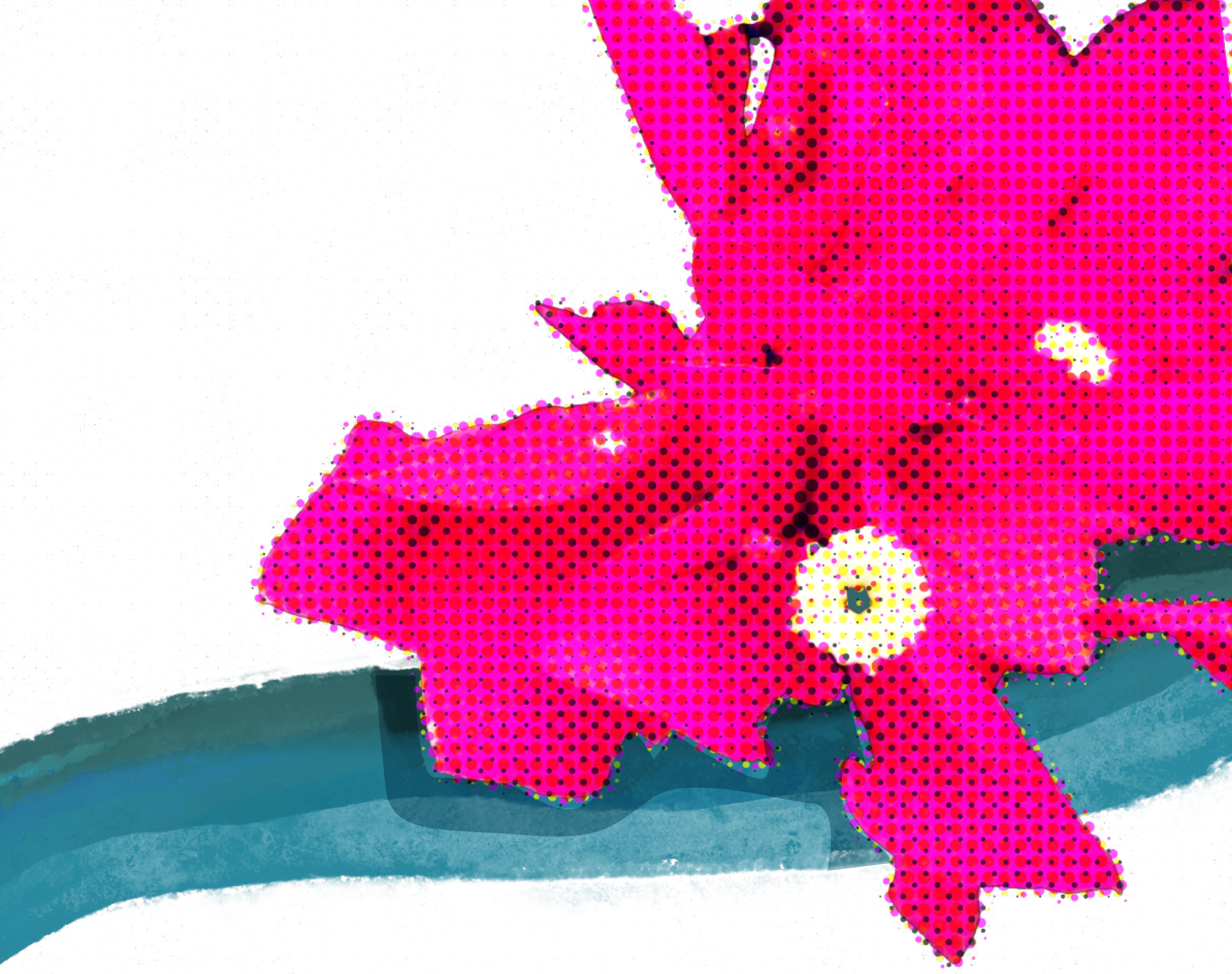
12 Power within, as expounded by Srilatha Batliwala, refers to the forms of power and agency located within the self. This inner source of power is one of five expressions of power, and can be influenced by a range of economic, human, knowledge, and intangible resources.

13 'Power with' refers to the collective power experienced in collaboration, mobilization and movement-building, often to end injustice and to co-create new worlds.

3

Our Estuary of Pan-African Feminist Economic Futures





“In a time not so far off, a time perhaps parallel to the one we are in now,

A new world is coming into being

An imagining, a struggle.

A light.

The next time you blink, stay there, keep your eyes closed for just a few more seconds

And you will see it

You will be it

The future coming into being”-

- Agazit Abate

2.1 Our Streams of Change

i. Pan-African Feminist Knowledge Production

Our knowledge production is grounded in Pan-African feminist political economy analyses and storytelling. We cultivate feminist macro-level economic knowledge production by centring cultural memory and knowledge through the curation of multimedia resources, crafting macro-level economic analysis in various artistic forms, mediating a repository of African feminist scholarship on the political economy, and centring diverse ways of knowing in our efforts to influence macro-level decision-making. We acknowledge that questioning is political, hence we aim to be engaged in policy analysis and critique, shaping narratives and debates, the development of cultural work, supporting our commitment to decolonise knowledge and overturn hierarchies of knowledge. The overall goal of this stream of change is to collate African feminist knowledge bases and increase the demand for African feminist analysis within the global political economy.

ii. Strengthening Collective Action for Macro-Level Economic Justice

We are committed to strengthening existing collectives, including our own, working on a range of feminist and social justice agendas within the political economy. We are also intentional about curating and contributing to spaces for learning and engagement in order to ensure that Pan-African feminist analysis is embedded in macro-level conversations.

iii. Influencing Social Change

Nawi seeks to influence different social change actors through its ways of being, its Pan-African feminist analysis, its forms of organising, and its vision for change. We seek to shape and influence political economy narratives and how collectives are thinking about the political economy in relation to their areas of focus. We want to influence critical actors, influencers and decision-makers in the social change ecosystem, including feminist and women's rights activists, organisations, economic justice organisations, resource partners, think tanks, and multilateral institutions, amongst others. We also envisage various social movement actors utilising our knowledge base as an advocacy tool in their engagements. Ultimately, we seek to build a river system of African feminist political economy scholars and activists who work towards the realisation of just worlds buttressed by African feminist economic solidarities.

2.2 Confluence: Our Ways of Working and Who We Work With

A confluence is where two rivers of liberation meet. Nawi is working to devote resources to building a community based on shared African feminist political economy analysis and trust. We believe this is a more sustainable approach because it supports us to reimagine and deconstruct the global political economy by centring African feminist narratives. In doing so, we will collaborate with existing economic and gender justice coalitions, communities and initiatives rather than being in competition with them.
By leveraging our collective 'power with', African women collectively breathe life into and redefine macro-level economic spaces, instead of conforming to their current logics and ***modus operandi.*** The Nawi Model provides an overview of our ways of working.

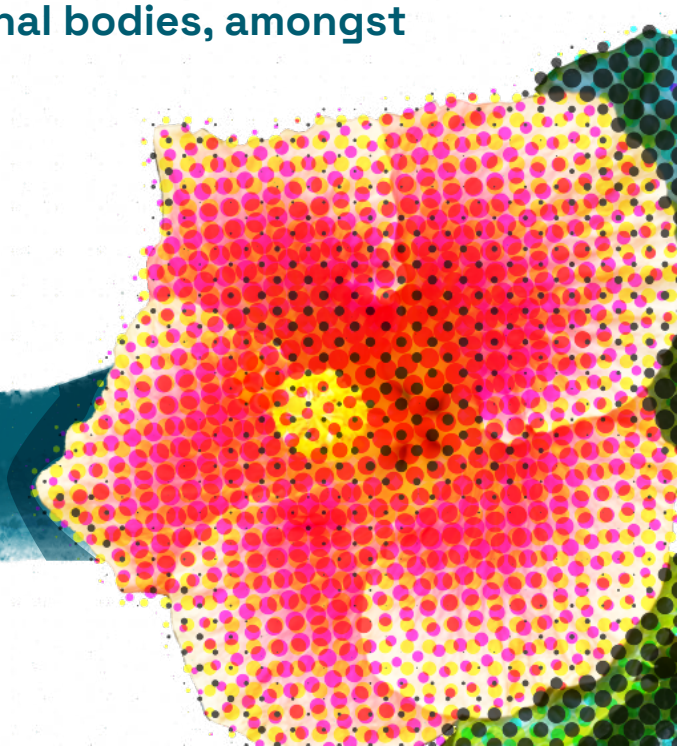
We are working to build a collective of African feminists whose passion and work is centred on macro-level economic justice. We see these strategic role-players as follows:

i. **Women's rights and feminist organisations working on a range of issues across the political economy.**

ii. **Mass movements and civic organising spaces that mobilise outside of the frames of the NGO-industrial complex.**

iii. **Independent African feminist thought leaders that are not aligned to any institution.**

iv. **African Feminists who work for mainstream organisations (including African civil society, economic justice organisations, think tanks, international NGOs, and regional bodies, amongst others).**



4 Our Channel of Transformation



3.1 Assumptions

We hold the following assumptions:

- **That the coordinated presentation and promotion of feminist alternatives, by African feminists and women's rights organisations, will shift the global political economy.**
- **African feminist alternatives will be embedded into African macro-level economic initiatives, processes, thinking and advocacy; and in turn will support adoption in global and regional spaces.**
- **African feminists and women rights organisations, as tributaries, will build a critical mass and shared understanding of feminist macro-level economic alternatives.**
- **Feminist organising will transform global and regional macro-level economic policy spaces.**
- **Tributaries will cultivate allies to influence and challenge the tokenistic and manipulative engagement with alternative feminist narratives.**
- **Our collective ways of working, as tributaries, will yield results in the long run - that the strategic intentions that we cultivate through our channels of transformation will yield emergent outcomes that expand our conceptualisations of macro-level economic justice that buttress the liberation of African women.**

3.2 Our Oath

Cumulatively, the Nawi Collective seeks to influence the diversity of social justice movements working towards the realisation of economic justice that promotes rather than undermines the achievement of African women's rights and gender justice.



On our honour and by our word.

We vow to honour life.

We will ask of the world, of our economic systems and policies, of our governments, of our work and of our relationships – Is it fair? Is it just? Is it kind?

We will be driven by curiosity, exploration, experimentation, and openness.

We will be wild, our throats open, screams and laughter, in our critique and our imaginings.

We will be daring and when we are scared or unsure, we will call on the help of our sisters, our ancestors and the spirits to guide us.

We will privilege language, colloquial everyday language. We will privilege, not terms, but description and stories and our senses.

We will ask questions like, how does it feel? What does it look like?

What are the stories?

We will stop to admire the flowers, the craftsmanship of a fine piece of furniture, we will take walks. We will do this to stay alive and with the knowledge that the systems and ways of being that we work to change are, among many things, at odds with beauty.

We vow that our lives and our work will be beautiful.

We vow to build worlds from our dreams and imaginations.

We vow to be open to change, including in the words we have written and spoken here.

We vow to work, always and primarily, at the service of life and for a mutual harvest.

NAWI
AFRIFEM
COLLECTIVE



Image credits: Nebila Abdulmelik, Agazit Abate, Fatimah Kelleher, Nzilani Simu