

# FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

## Introduction

"According to the logical conceptions of truth, only one of two contraries can be true, but in the reality of life as one lives it they are inseparable ... the unity of contraries is the mystery at the innermost core of dialogue." Martin Buber

## Introduction

By way of introducing this document I would like to introduce myself, as this research/thesis represents both the product of, and the process for, my learning, growth and development. It has grown out of me, and my engagement with it over the last seven years has very much influenced the person I am today. I do not believe this to be a unique experience, Phillida Salmon (1992) talks about the need to acknowledge that research projects are often the product of students' personal process, and of the personal – social interaction. I have found this to be true, so in order to evaluate properly what I did, and to understand the choices I made it is important to get to know me, and the world in which I live and operate, in some way.

I am an African Caribbean woman strongly committed to my growth and development. I am actively engaged in exploring my possibilities, and identifying the blocks to being able to be all that God has given me the potential to be. I am married to an African man who is engaged on his own journey. In, and out of, our connection has emerged two lovely children, with, through and for whom I am discovering what it means to effectively parent Black children in a system that holds within it deeply embedded negative notions of Black people. My parenting role has in the last four years re-engaged me with the education system, and my understanding of the challenges of effectively educating Black children in this system has moved from conceptual to experiential. This has prompted me to become more actively involved and, despite the numbers of roles I already play, two years ago I added that of school governor!

Ten years ago I founded my own management consultancy business, and within that perform a range of roles, which continue to provide me with challenge and many opportunities for growth. Will I ever learn to be a good administrator? I think that I probably won't, as the acquisition of those particular skills, though necessary to my effective functioning, do not excite me. My passion lies in my work as a facilitator of learning and change – in myself; my family; my network of friends - and in the professional relationships I have as a consultant, career counsellor, or mentor; with groups of managers, or work teams and individuals.

This thesis is a representation of an inquiry conducted over the last ten years. The study emerged from questions from my work in the early 80's. As an internal and

external consultant to various organisations, I struggled to understand why it was that despite so much effort, and other resources, spent in attempting to transform inherent patterns of discrimination and oppression, we made so little impact on the organisations. Exploring these questions I realised that they were external representations of a much deeper, more fundamental question. It was a question that I could not give voice to for years. In 1992 in the context of a collaborative inquiry group with peers, the question emerged, and suddenly I knew that this was the real purpose of this work. I had been trying to discover whether it was possible for me as a Black woman to thrive, i.e. to realise my God-given potential in the context of a White supremacist, patriarchal Britain.

## **An invitation to dialogue**

Martin Buber, (1958) the Hasidic philosopher who was a major spiritual antagonist of Nazism said:

"The meaning of what is communicated cannot be defined by one party it must be discovered by dialogue."

This thesis is an invitation to you to explore my world and to dialogue with me. However engaging with me may require you to, temporarily, leave your habitual position of standing in the world and to move to mine - to stand in my shoes, experiencing the world from my perspective and viewing it through my lens.

On occasions when I have tried to really listen to another, to stand in their shoes and open myself to the other view of the world I have found that it has challenged my attachment to my place of standing in the world. I have also found that prior to that moment of deciding to or having to move, my stance and position was a taken-for-granted of which I was unaware.

Socialised in a context where differences are viewed as oppositional (Capra 1988), and are rarely held side by side and considered complementary, I have found it difficult to listen to a perspective different to mine without feeling that it threatens, denies or invalidates mine. Viewing it in this way it has been hard to resist the anxiety and to overcome the instinctive reaction to suppress, attack, or "rubbish" the other's view. Yet it has been in those moments of experiencing my difference from the other that I have understood a little of what it means to me to be in the world. To live in this body, at this moment in the world's history - in the country, institution, sector, family, religion and all the so many other facets of my positioning that have previously been undefined, invisible and taken- for-granted.

Developing and maintaining a relationship with my husband - a man (one difference) from a different culture (second difference) has caused me to experience this on many occasions. One example that springs to mind was a conversation very early on in our relationship. I enquired about the date of his birthday. I was amazed to find that he had to think about it. *How could he not know immediately? What was going on?* Such questions spilled out into his silence. His reaction was one of equal surprise. "Why should he not have to think about it? He wanted to give me the correct date so he needed to think in order to get it right." He went on to tell me that in his culture birthdays were not important, and not celebrated. Suddenly I felt challenged. Our

casual light-hearted conversation had changed its tone. I found myself wanting to leap into defence of the importance of birthdays. Previously, I had assumed that birthdays were a universally significant event. I had not known, prior to that moment, that I had any major attachment to this ritual. If asked previously, I would have said that they did not matter very much to me. Yet here I was threatened by, and wanting to attack his way of construing birthdays. I found it difficult to move, even temporarily, away from my view that the occurrence of a birthday is a meaningful event for every person. Without this moving it was hard to be able to glimpse his world, yet in moving I was having my schema of the world challenged.

I was afraid that in seeing or acknowledging the validity of another's perspective I might have to change. Afraid that I might have to let go previously held meanings and unable to envisage how I might become if I were to change my view of the world? What was it like to live in a culture where birthdays came and went without any awareness of their passing? Having reached that point I soon found myself wanting to compare. Was his culture impoverished as a result of this? Whose was right his or mine? Were birthdays important or not? Eventually I found myself saying, "I don't really care if they are important to you or anyone else, but I would like you to understand that they are very important to me." In that moment, and out of that struggle he, and I had learnt something valuable about whom I was. I was discovering something about our mutual uniqueness and learning a little more about what it means to be accepting of myself and of another in our differences.

This raised the question "Is the experience of difference important to personal growth and learning?" As an African Caribbean woman living in Britain, it has always seemed strange to me that I experienced the Caribbean side of me - my "Caribbeaness" - best when I am in Britain or in an African setting. In those periods of being in the Caribbean I have learnt about my "Britishness", and of the influence of my African setting. Reflecting on this conundrum led me to think that difference is, to my learning about myself, like grit to the formation of the pearl. While still holding that to be true, examples of when the experience of similarity was instrumental to my understanding of who I am sprang to mind. It was in my engagements with African cultures, and my discovery of how many similarities exist between those cultures and my native culture that I have learnt about other parts of me. If the experience of similarities is important to self-learning does this mean that differences are not?

### **Working with Paradox**

From the struggle to hold both these insights emerged another important learning about the need to reframe my view of the world to accommodate paradoxes and contradictions in life. It challenged me to move from a position where differences, placed against the assumed norm and automatically became wrong, deviant or bad. It was instrumental in my shifting to a view of life as being about paradoxes and contradictions - where both things may be simultaneously true. But in that is a further paradox. Can I hold the possibility that things that seem contradictory to each other may be good and yet seek to identify if either of those things may be bad?

In this research I was challenged by many paradoxes that further caused me to confront my programmed fear of difference. I observed that I was pre-set to see people or situations that confronted me with differences as threatening; and to create

protective mechanisms that ensured I avoided such possibilities, and that shielded me in any chance encounters. Shields that also, stopped me from ever fully engaging with the other and in so doing stopped me from ever fully knowing ME. It caused me to begin exploring ways of becoming aware of those internal, taken-for-granted, inaudible messages of my programming. It triggered a commitment to examining my instinctive, habitual, knee-jerk responses; and to exploring the potential of differences for enhancing my knowledge of myself and of my world. It strengthened my determination to explore ways in which these well-used responses, may in themselves, inhibit my ability to fully make my contribution to our world.

The concepts of " being schooled" and of "programming " assisted me in realising the complexity of making changes in me - in my ways of learning, growing and developing. It highlighted the complexity of the change process that I would need to undertake. It allowed me to confront the connections between my internal and external worlds. It became apparent that if the belief systems of my external world were perfectly reproduced in my internal system, and that one maintained the other, any change strategy must be designed to impact on both 'worlds'.

I anticipate that this thesis, as an account of Black women's 'worlds' from Black women's perspectives, may challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions of many readers. My experience has taught me that embracing differences offers both rewards and challenges. In fully engaging with my work, and therefore with me, the reader may encounter our similarities and 'connectedness' as well as our differences and separateness, and so discover the extent to which I am you *and yet* not you. The thesis is an opportunity to view the world through my lens and to gain insights into the meanings that we (Black women managers) give to the world from our particular location. It is my gift to us, towards the enhancement of our knowing of ourselves and of our world. In making this gift I commit to offering you my authenticity and truths.

Buber (1981) says, that in the moment of meeting each is infinitely vulnerable.

## **Surviving and Thriving**

Notions of surviving and thriving are central to this thesis. They encapsulate that central question "*Is it possible for Black women in Britain to thrive?*" which though held within me for a very long time was so difficult to articulate even to myself, and could not be spoken aloud until many years later in the relative safety of the Black women's collaborative group. Of course, to ask a question is to risk finding an answer you do not like or may be unable to deal with, so suddenly I understood why it had been so hard for me to voice this question.

The terms, borrowed from Maya Angelou (1987), expressed a deep desire to find and realise my potential, and since then they have become a sort of a living paradox with which I am continuously engaged. In 1987, I had the opportunity to attend a Maya Angelou poetry reading concert in Lewisham and I was inspired by the woman herself as well as by the thoughts she expressed. Most of all I was struck by the idea of 'surviving' and 'thriving' as distinctly different goals for the Black woman. They

became structural frameworks around which newly emerging thoughts clustered and took shape. She said:

"The issues that face us all are not just how to survive – obviously we are doing that somehow, but how to thrive – thrive with some passion, some compassion, some humour and some style."

In those words I saw her acknowledgement that Black Western women had been faced with situations of such hostility that survival could not be taken for granted. At a time when there were many expressions of anger by my generation about what was perceived as the passivity of our parent's generation, Maya Angelou's comments caused me to rethink the experience of the past generations, and suggested another frame for making sense of their actions. It reminded me that even for the current generation of Black women living, as we are, in a context where ideas of the inferiority of women and of Black people are deeply ingrained in the dominant social system, survival is an achievement worthy of applaud. Yet for me survival was not enough. I wanted to go beyond that, but to grow or thrive seemed difficult to envisage at that time. It caused me to wonder what were our modern day survival strategies.

I left the concert energised and challenged. It was only in retrospect that I realised that with those words, and at that concert, the agenda for a ten years project had been set! Over the years I began to realise that for a Black woman to thrive in a context in which racism and sexism are embedded is to engage with paradox. To thrive I must move away from my well-known patterns of survival, and in doing so I put at risk my survival. And then if I do not survive I cannot thrive! This theme is a thread running right through the thesis, and it is more fully explored in section 3.

## **Introducing the research context and topic**

This introduction depicts the frame in which this research is set. The frame is not the picture, and I do not want to detract the viewer's attention from the picture. Nevertheless the framing of a picture does - in subtle ways I do not fully understand, or even feel I need to understand - contribute to the viewer's appreciation of the picture. I also suspect that there is a dynamic relationship between the frame and the picture and that in order to create a new picture we will have to alter the frame. To be able to assess what is needed to achieve real changes in the picture we need to understand the nature of the scenes and the frame and the nature of the relationship between both. A brief exploration of these issues is done in chapter 4.

To fully make sense of this research it is important to recognise that this is but a small section in a huge picture - a tapestry - depicting scenes of Black women (and men) across the world and over generations struggling to survive and thrive. Our quest for liberation, self-definition, and for improved life experiences is not new (Collins 1990). This study is simply one more step in the process of clarifying our goals and objectives for **this** period and location. The dilemmas, paradoxes and double binds with which we now struggle have emerged and are now visible only as a result of the work and struggles of our parents, grandparents, our grand parents' parents and so on - in previous years, decades and centuries.

This study is in essence an exploration of how the lives of Black women (or people from discriminated groups) may be transformed. What are the changes that must occur to enable us to shift our preoccupation with basic survival needs, to paying attention to those higher level needs which enable us to realise our potential and so to thrive? It takes cognisance of the fact that our ability to thrive or grow is influenced by our setting. Our attempt to grow takes place in a context of a capitalist, colonial, imperialist, and paternalistic Britain. It is a Britain that has had a long and intimate relationship with Black women, and men (Bhavnani 1994). These relationships developed over many centuries. They have weathered with time and become familiar and taken-for-granted and therefore difficult to observe. Their invisibility poses some of the greatest challenges to the possibilities of change.

As we scratch away at the taken - for - granted, we begin to reveal a rich tapestry with scenes portraying the enslavement of Black women. Scenes which when viewed through one set of lens depict estrangement, disjunction, migration, displacement, acquisition, loss, perpetual struggle, gross humiliation, degradation, relentless searches for freedom, creative resistance, victories, celebrations and continuous defining and redefining of the given situations. Change the lens and the same scenes tell stories of the glorification of the domination, suppression and possession of many peoples and of the consequential acquisition of great wealth. They are disturbed and disturbing scenes - full of contradictions and paradoxes. The scenes compose a familiar yet not consciously understood scene. It has been hidden – obscured and made invisible by its very familiarity and by our human tendency to blank out that which makes us most uncomfortable. Those objectified players in the scenes who have by some means remained or regained sensibility and consciousness have been muted. Often silencing themselves through shame, guilt and the perceived futility of screaming in the wind. Over time, most have resigned themselves to not being heard. They have given up trying to tell their stories and have even begun to believe that they have no story worth telling. We have become a people with no history - or to be more precise no easily accessible collectively recorded history.

Towards understanding the frame in which Black women struggle to survive I offer my personal history. Struggling to find a structure for the thesis I thought that, in order to depict the historical, social and economic context of the study, I would need to tell the stories of ancestors such as Mary Seacole (Alexander and Dewjee, 1982), Mary Prince (Gates 1987), and of some of the women who came to Britain to fight in the two world wars. This seemed like quite a task and I was daunted by the prospect. Then as I worked with my own life experiences, and with those of the other women with whom I had worked and talked, and as I read the writings of other Black women it became more and more apparent that significant elements of the whole were reproduced in its parts. The picture was holographic!

This realisation posed me a great dilemma. Over the years I had gained insight into the collusive relationship between individuals and society in producing and maintaining oppressive situations, and begun to understand that blocks and barriers to empowerment and growth are internal as well as external. As the research progressed, there was growing recognition that in dealing with issues of equality of opportunities we must face the Herculean task of changing a system. Much deeper and more fundamental questions about the nature of the problem and of changing a living and continuously evolving system emerged. Where do we as participants in that system



place ourselves in order to change it? What is my investment in this very system that I am trying to change? How do I deal with the inevitable resistance that I, a part of the bigger system, will face as I try to change my relationship to that system, and myself.

As I explored these and many of the other questions that arose I was taken further and further into an inquiry into my life, and into an examination of the self. From this awareness came the deep knowing that we are not victims of a system but co-maintainers of that system, and I began to understand that I had within me the power to liberate ourselves and to trigger a shift in the dominant culture. To do this I realised that I must unpack my individual and collective histories; make sense of the survival habits inherited from my family; and from our shared group culture, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of our legacy. I needed the courage to closely (and lovingly) examine ourselves observing our habitual behaviours and our ways of perceiving and constructing our world, and ourselves within that world. It dawned on me that to do this I must explore the micro processes of actions and reactions that over time connect and form the learned patterns of behaviour that have become our unconscious coping/survival responses. I began to realise that to understand the potential for change I must uncover and make visible my (and others') struggles to become aware of the personal and collective costs of our survival strategies. I must acknowledge our secret questioning of our abilities to sustain our current modes of surviving as we face the double binds that lock us into survival modes; and raise our horizons beyond states of survival to create images of ourselves thriving.

To be authentic I needed to start with myself. I realised that I had put my story at the centre of this study. This was an extremely difficult thing for me to do. For many years I resisted. I explored ways in which I could be in the research without the exposure and visibility of a central position. I was willingly inquiring into my life but I did not want to reveal that work. This resistance produced a 'stuckness' that lasted many months. Breakthrough came when I fully grasped that this urge to hide or mask was simply another aspect of the degenerative side of a key survival strategy which inhibited me from fully using my potential. As African Caribbean people, coming from a historical context where the 'White Man' had threatened our existence and humanity, we had learned a long time ago the dangers of visibility and exposure to powerful forces. I had, as a protective, survival strategy, inherited a learned anxiety of revealing self to the 'White Man'. Our continued existence as a people has to a great extent rested on our ability to 'play mas'. Over the years the masquerade has become one of our most highly developed art forms.

### **The writing of the thesis: a present location of struggle**

I was unprepared for the intense challenges that the writing of this thesis posed to me. I was surprised to discover that many of the barriers to realising our potential that we identified in the study we reproduced in this process and had to be faced yet again. I was challenged by:

#### **Paradoxes and double binds**

An important learning emerging from this study and others (Davidson 1997, Essed 1991) is that the Black woman finds herself continuously struggling with double binding situations. The writing of this thesis brought me face to face with the

experiential knowledge of that fact. In the writing of the first draft of the thesis, my anxiety to 'prove myself' had seduced me into a theoretical abstraction, and away from Black women's realities (mine and others). An endeavour which needs to gain academic recognition *and* to make visible the realities of a group of people whose experiences, historically, have been overlooked and treated as if not worthy of exploration, is paradoxical. Martin Luther King (1963) asserts that if we are to be agents for the transformation of our worlds we must take the risk of not conforming. The first draft of this thesis reminds me how difficult it is to learn this lesson, and how much more difficult it is to take and maintain the position of a non-conformist when struggling to establish one's credibility!

### **Struggling to maintain focus**

The issue of truly valuing my own work, in all its uniqueness and difference is challenging to me. I am still struggling with how to feel valuable and worthwhile when I am engaged in work that is not valued by the dominant system. It is indeed a dilemma – double bind from which I find it hard to break free. The system gave me its rules. It said, "If you want to demonstrate your worth and worthiness, and if you want to be attributed value by us, then this is what you need to do...". For academic work it told me that I must demonstrate my ability to play with concepts, and ideas and to generate new theories that become the prefabricated solutions applied to generic situations in the world of "technical rationality (Schon 1983)." I must be objective and wary of the subjective, decrying and despising evidence gained in the "swampy lowlands" of lived experience and expressed through stories and recounted incidents. What a dilemma - when I do not believe in the appropriateness of prefabricated solutions for many of life's most challenging problems and "technical rationality" has left me with solutions like shoes made for someone else's feet. How can I gain a sense of worth if I engage in making something that I believe to be worthless?

So in maintaining focus I continue with my process of becoming a fully human acting subject and claim the right to define and know. In doing so I risk being negatively judged by the system as I chose to stay in the "swampy lowlands".

### **Feeling the pain of our experiences**

From this research I gained experiential knowledge of how hard it is to talk about discriminatory and oppressive experiences. To understand this we must begin to perceive discrimination as a form of abuse and to recognise that stories of abuse are not easily re-lived, and therefore not easily told. An important part of my learning to thrive was the gaining of sensibility, and the integration of the personal and the professional self. Paradoxically, the very process that facilitated my ability to articulate insights that previously were 'known' only in actions, have made the thesis difficult to write. My heightened awareness made the pain in these stories very difficult to bear and sometimes flooded me with feeling of despondency as the same themes recurred repeatedly. Writing this thesis has not been easy!

### **Fear of taking voice and becoming visible**



In deciding to be very present in this study and to reveal my self and other Black women I am claiming the right to **be fully human** - equal yet different. To assert my presence and voice - boldly and yet timidly with fingers crossed. Hooks, 1989 says:

"Only as subjects can we speak. As objects we remain voiceless – our beings defined and interpreted by others ... [speaking /writing] is a radical gesture."

In taking the risk of breaking this very old cultural taboo I cannot completely quell the voice that says that I am being uppity and foolhardy in going against knowledge passed down through the generations. Hooks (1989) comments on the reality of that risk. She says:

"Speaking out is not a simple gesture of freedom in a culture of domination. ... There would be no need to speak of the oppressed and exploited, if there were not oppressive mechanisms of silencing, suppressing and censoring ... when one threatens one is at risk."

With sweaty palms and cold feet I have *felt* that risk on many occasions as I attempted to write this thesis. What a dilemma! What a double bind! Aware that to empower myself - to change, I must unpack, make visible and make sense of the subtle meanings gained from and given to the challenging situations faced in the past, and identify the deeply hidden, well disguised automatic responses to such situations currently and in the future. Aware that to liberate myself /ourselves I / we must move out of the shadows claiming my / our right to be visible. Yet afraid that to do this is to court death. I can no longer live in the shadows, masking the potency of my humanity from others and myself. I am committed to being all that I have the potential to be so I must respectfully test this survival strategy exploring how it may be reframed to allow me to both survive and thrive.

### **Feelings of inadequacy and despair in relation to the size and scale of the problem**

As I worked with these issues I often felt overwhelmed and paralysed by the challenge of untangling, deconstructing and changing them. Appreciation of the scale of the system, and of the strength of the seemingly delicate and often transparent threads of its weave often left me feeling small and inadequate for the task of describing my/ our experiences, and the ways in which our survival strategies intertwine to produce a self-sealing system. As I better identified the extent to which my ability to develop, grow and to realise my potential was/is dependent on the untangling of the complex weave I experienced feelings of despair, and a petrifying sense of inadequacy.

### **The difficulty of using linear forms of communicating to express a circular and interconnected process**

This thesis is about a web or network of interconnected forms that together produce a system in which Black women and people of other oppressed groups are disadvantaged and oppressed. In attempting to write the story of the research endeavour I often did not know where to start, where and how I could or would end it, and where would I place myself in my depiction of this interwoven system. How do I, using the linear form of a thesis, represent the interconnected nature of my explorations and discovery? Over the period of trying to write the thesis I produced

and abandoned many structures and plans. I experimented with differing starting points and with various ways of handling the interconnectedness of the material. Finally I decided that there was no perfect way and that many of the proposed structures were 'good enough'. I hope that the chosen form facilitates the reader in understanding the particular issues involved as well as the nature of the problem. I will attempt to offer adequate markers to signal the various connections.

## **A reader's map of the thesis**

This study represents a journey of exploration and discovery triggered by the questions emerging from my life work and experiences and from knowledge generated in traditionally separated fields that are to my mind inherently interrelated. The research story is held like a prism, with various voices acting as guides directing attention to some facets of the complex interweave that composes the lives of African Caribbean professional women in Britain.

### **Section 1 – The Frame**

*Section 1 (Chapters 1 – 4)* - unpacks and makes visible the contextual setting in which today's Black women managers operate. It is this aspect of the picture that is often overlooked. In the first three chapters I inquire into my history. I have presented my story as a case study from which we can better understand the historical context which frames the experiences of current day Black women. As I explore my story I have tried to identify personal and collective themes; and to draw attention to patterns of reacting, sometimes faint and at others well pronounced. These habitual responses to challenging and anxiety raising situations that over the years have been so well practised that they now automatically form our survival strategies. In these chapters I open my inquiry process to view and give access to my dialogue with myself.

An important part of this frame of the research is the theoretical understanding I brought to the study and that influenced many of the choices and decisions made. In chapter 4, I make visible the assumptions about oppression, liberation and about developing Black women managers with which I started the study and indicate some of the ways in which they were formed.

### **Section 2 – Methodology and methods**

*Section 2 (Chapter 5 –7)* - communicates my research epistemology, and outlines the research design and methods used.

### **Section 3 - From Surviving to Thriving**

*Section 3 (Chapters 8 & 9)* describes the experiences of Black women managers and explores the nature of the organisational context that is constructed from these separate but recurring incidents. I try to understand what it is about the environment that causes us as Black women to feel that at best we are only able to survive (Chapter 8). I then explore some of the discussion and explorations undertaken in dialogue with my peers in the Collaborative Inquiry sections as we try to raise to the surface the

transparent threads by which we are continuously tripped up, tied, strangled *and also* attached to the destructive system. Chapter 9 is based on my Living Inquiry and is an exploration of issues critical to the recovery of self and thriving.

## **Section 4 - So What?**

In this short closing chapter I consider key outcomes from this endeavour.

### **Notes**

- **Use of the term ‘Black woman manager/professional’**

In this thesis ‘Black’ is a political term. The word ‘Black’ contrasts with ‘White’ not as a description of human pigmentation but as an expression of the stark difference of experience between those people perceived to be White and those perceived not to be.

Within the group of people included under the umbrella term ‘Black’ there is both great diversity, and many similarities. Bhavnani (1994) comments that:

" Black women’s experience is specific and differentiated from white women, black men and white men. Ethnicity and national origin within the overall category of black women also differentiate it. Black women’s experience cannot always be assumed to be different from white women, black men or white women in all contexts. The cross cutting of such factors as ‘race’ class, gender and age create a multiplicity of discrimination."

The women participating in this study were predominantly African Caribbean - ‘first generation immigrant’, or of African Caribbean descent. Ages ranged from mid-twenties to fifties, and we were all in professional jobs with managerial responsibilities for discrete areas of work and/or staff.

Though many of the issues raised are specific to women in these particular categories, I believe that all women – Black and White, would find that at least some of the issues raised resonate.

- **Assurances of Confidentiality**

A key issue in this thesis is one of safety. Black women managers often experienced themselves as highly visible, overexposed and, as a result, vulnerable. Issues of confidentiality, a routine research issue, have paramount importance in my work. I would not, in any way, want to jeopardise the career opportunities of anyone who participated in my research. Therefore all names are fictional and information about organisations vague.

- **Use of different voices**

In the thesis I have used different voices (various aspects of myself) to explore, illuminate and highlight the process by which racism (and other discriminations) is maintained in the system. Through them I attempt to unmask and reveal the patterns of thought, ideologies (covert and overt) which combine to produce the everyday experiences of Black women