



Hairvolution: 'an essential addition to the narrative'

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Authors Saskia Calliste and Zainab Raghdo on Hairvolution, a celebration of Black women's hair



What was the inspiration behind *Hairvolution*?

Initially, the idea came out of the discourse that began around BLM 2020 protests and George Floyd's death. Though the overall discussion was around issues like police brutality, in social media spaces dominated more by Black female voices, there was a focus on our place within wider society and how our looks play a part in how society treats us. It's here that we thought steering the conversation to the politics and micro-aggressions that surround Black hair would be an essential addition to the narrative. We noticed that sometimes we don't always discuss racism, colourism, and texturism within their historical contexts, so meanings get lost, blame is misdirected, and we don't get the catharsis we need. Part of the reason for this book is to give Black women of all ages that little bit of cathartic energy. It shows that we didn't begin our existence oppressed, none of us is alone in our feelings, and through learning, open discussion, and sisterhood, we have a chance to re-write our narratives.

The book contains a comprehensive history, interviews, poetry and illustrations - what was the process of putting it together like?

The first thing we knew we wanted to include was a comprehensive look at Black history and how Black women ended up in this position of hair hate in the first place. Once the history began to form, we realised we wanted the book's tone to convey a journey and the best way we thought to do that was by using illustrations, poetry and interviews to tell a story. Luckily for us, one of our interviewees, Kadija George Sesay, wrote these poems as part of another project, and they fit perfectly with the spirit of the book. The



process of putting the book together was pretty traditional from a publishing standpoint. Still, one thing we made sure we kept in mind throughout was every addition, every interview, every illustration had to represent our pursuit of celebrating our evolution, our individual hair journeys and our history of how we started to how it's going and how much further we need to continue to go.

In *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie calls Black hair a 'crown of glory'. Could you tell us more about the importance of hair to Black women?

Historically, hair has always had cultural, moral and social significance in all societies across the world. For Black women, hair is all of that and more - mostly because not only have we placed certain values and ideas on our own hair, but others also assume things about us through our hair. So today, as centuries before, we use our hair to communicate with each other and change our hair to tell people something about ourselves. It's our adornment, it's our energy, it's our time, and it's part of our identity.

***Hairvolution* is out on 15 September, how will you be celebrating?**

Of course, there's the launch on 15 September, where we will be hosting a virtual event. We have some great panellists, and we cannot wait to open the floor to discuss the thoughts and ideas and inspirations of starting a Hairvolution. Also, that day, Saskia will be going live on Instagram with @Voicemaguk to discuss the book, so it's basically going to be a day of screaming and shouting about this book. We are so happy with it, and we can't wait for everyone to see it!

Do you have any plans to create any other titles together?

There are no plans set in stone as of yet, but who knows what the future holds!

Hairvolution by Saskia Calliste and Zainab Raghdo is out tomorrow (15 September) with Supernova Books.

Tickets for the live event, featuring Anastasia Chikezie, Stella Dadzie, Annika Allen and Carryl Thomas, are available [here](#).

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