

# DISCOVERING SOULCLAP CAFE: AN INTERGENERATIONAL AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC DISCUSSION ON BLACK JOY, HEALTH, AND WELLNESS

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## ABSTRACT

The OMNI (Outreach \* Mentorship \* Narrative Inquiry) Institute prioritizes Black Joy as a non-medical factor of public health. This research project extends our investigation into Black women's health through our work on this latest project, *SoulClap Cafe: An Intergenerational Story Exchange*.

We participated in the interviews of two Black women (ages 71 and 31) from Bristol, U.K. along with Dr. Chris Omni and intergenerational researcher Michelle Gunn. The interviews were divided into three segments: "Joy," "Nature and Spirituality" and "Growth, Lessons, and Self-Care."

## BACKGROUND

### Key Facts:

- Black Joy is "a collective self-ideology that amplifies and activates the emotional well-being of Black people."<sup>1</sup>
- The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health categorizes emotional well-being as high priority.<sup>2</sup>
- Black people consist of 6% of Bristol's population.<sup>3</sup>



(Left) Japheth Monzon,  
(Center) Dr. Chris Omni,  
(Right) Vince Omni

- The OMNI Institute partnered with the Black South West Network to provide a Black Joy writing workshop.
- The oldest and youngest participants were invited to join an intergenerational, autoethnographic study.
- Their life stories were supplemented with scholarship, and the findings will be released in the inaugural issue of *SoulClap: A Black Joy Journal*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our research mentor Dr. Chris Omni, Vince Omni, and senior researcher Michelle Gunn for their guidance. We appreciate FSU's UROP Program for fostering our scholarly growth. We thank the Black South West Network which hosted and co-sponsored the Black Joy writing workshop. We thank Eshiva Wright and Sheila Hutchinson for taking time to share their wisdom.

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References



## FINDINGS



### Sheila Hutchinson

*Mrs. Sheila is 74 years old. She was raised in Antigua and resides in Bristol, U.K. She is a nurse and a Senior Lecturer in public health.*

#### MAJOR FINDING 1

**Agency allows for Mrs. Sheila to understand her identity and to challenge imposed gender and racial barriers.<sup>8</sup>**

- Mrs. Sheila challenges traditional gender norms through labor redistribution:  
"I made a 'Declaration of Sheila's Rights' ... I'm not doing anything you can do for yourself."
- Mrs. Sheila immerses herself in positive representations of Black people in absence of the narratives in her upbringing:  
"There's been more music that isn't all about Black misery, really. I think that's actually helped me to grow and actually recognize myself as being more than a black pain vessel."

#### MAJOR FINDING 2

**Nature serves as a spiritual practice for Mrs. Sheila.<sup>9</sup>**

- Mrs. Sheila utilizes nature for emotion regulation:  
"If I wake up thinking I'm feeling grumpy...out in nature... something just seems to disappear."
- Mrs. Sheila uses nature as a vessel of grief and reflection:  
"Water is significant... but, also, I think of drought because, in the...Caribbean islands, there's a lack of water."

### Eshiva Wright

*Miss Eshiva is 31 years old. She represents Bristol, U.K. and Jamaica as the 2023 Miss Caribbean U.K. She serves professionally as a primary school educator and band vocalist.*

#### MAJOR FINDING 1

**By amplifying my voice, I also amplify my joy.<sup>10</sup>**

- Miss Eshiva embraces her authentic self by projecting her American-British accent in her classes, performances, and daily interactions.  
"This was kind of my time of, like, claiming my voice and actually claiming the tone of my voice, and understanding that communication's actually something that I'm really good at."
- The historical phenomenon of Black women's silence prohibited them from enjoying the simplest pleasures. Miss Eshiva exercises her agency by maintaining a childlike appreciation for nature.  
"It's the simple things, I think, when being Black women and being busy and sometimes constantly going; it is the simple things that bring us back."

#### MAJOR FINDING 2

**Agency can be attained through self-directed spiritual practices.<sup>11</sup>**

- Miss Eshiva follows a customized religious practice that combines the Christian faith with spiritual connection to nature.
- By actively managing her spiritual health, Miss Eshiva develops a sense of self that serves as the foundation of ecowomanism.  
"And so even growing up, knowing that there are so many different ways that people praise, worship, and serve God has kind of let me know that the way in which we serve God is something that's personal."

#### MAJOR FINDING 3

**Sisterhood can serve as a conduit to navigating hardship and discovering joy.<sup>12</sup>**

- The SoulClap Cafe created a model of sisterhood among Black women which reframed relationships as safe spaces. Miss Eshiva could vulnerably discuss the negative personal and professional effects of archetypes like the Angry Black Woman. She is affirmed in her journey to embrace Black joy in her daily routines.  
"It's okay to be going through experiences that are pulling and taxing on our hearts, but we should still be able to pour light into a space, you know, and I think that, as a mission, is something that's a blessing."



Miss Eshiva Wright

## METHOD

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by Michelle Gunn, former FSU UROP mentee, and supported by Eryn Files and Gemini Williamson. Michelle identified three key segments for us to investigate - "Joy," "Nature and Spirituality," and "Growth, Lessons, and Self-Care," while operating within the following framework:

### (1) Dr. Omni's Kujima Theory of Collective-Self Motivation<sup>4</sup>

A culturally tailored theoretical framework inspired by three core Kwanzaa principles.

- Kujichagulia** ("Koo-jee-cha-goo-LEE-ah"): Self-Determination
- Kuumba** ("Koo-oom-bah"): Creativity
- Ujima** ("Ooo-jee-mah"): Collective Work and Responsibility

### (2) Endarkened Narrative Inquiry

A method of qualitative research that centers Black women's perspectives, pioneered by Dr. Keondria McClish-Boyd and Dr. Kakali Bhattacharya.<sup>5</sup>

### (3) Embodied Knowing

The incorporation of intuition and emotional analysis into traditional analytic practices (a.k.a. "Soul Vibrations" and "Third Eye").<sup>6</sup>

### (4) Autoethnography

A genre of academic writing that investigates the lived experience of the author in connection to scholarship to emphasize a larger socio-political or socio-cultural topic.<sup>7</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As young Black women, we recognize that Black womanhood is nuanced in ethnicity, personalities, and goals. Yet, prominent trauma-based narratives ignore that. We reassert the need for public health research to reflect more stories that positively characterize Black women.

Black women should engage in activities that promote agency as a form of active resistance and empowerment. Recognizing the danger of adhering to spiritual practice without self-advocacy, we support personalized spirituality to improve emotional well-being. Within our personal relationships, we will pursue sisterhood. We advocate for the normalization of healthy, affirming communication that challenges stereotypes instead of perpetuating generational cycles of trauma. We encourage Black women at every stage of life to embrace Black joy as a lifestyle in the footsteps of Mrs. Sheila and Miss Eshiva.