'We are here because you were there':
Afropean identity as decoloniality


This is a very specific intervention that I made because there are so many currents that are being gloriously enforced and are blossoming all over Europe, and a lot of people are using the term Afropean with different intentions, motivations, backgrounds. I wanted to make sure that when I talk about Afropean, it is a decoloniality — that the theoretical model of Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality is made visible. Because it is not only about saying we are here, but from which perspective historically we are speaking when we say, ‘We are Afropeans, we are here.

As a Caribbean diaspora thinker, I align myself. I honour the legacy of Mother Africa and I live in Europe. Other people come directly from the African continent, from many countries there, and they are also here. So, we all have different momentums here. That’s another differentiation that is very important to always highlight or discuss or bring into the conversation. When I say Afropean decoloniality then I am bringing together this double consciousness of the immigrant with the absolute certainty that I have every right to be here because of the legacies of Europe on the entire planet. We are here because you were there, that’s why we’re here. It’s the reverse movement. We had massive European immigration in two different moments, first the colonisation of the Americas and then, actually more than one, in different countries it just depends. For instance, after the Second World War, also after the First World War, so there were streams of many, many massive migrations from Europe to our parts of the world, the global South. I want to always use my writing and the events that I organise to spread the word and tell people that are like me, that we share a common history. And we have many things to catch up with. We should tell each other our stories according to our own parameters.
I hope I am making it clear when I call it decoloniality, because decoloniality is the realisation that you are living in the state of coloniality, and that modernity continues reproducing the same rhetoric of ‘salvation comes through civilisation, only Europe can really fix the world.’ It is a constant in European progressive discourses. They always think that they can bring a solution. They never think for one second that they are the problem. You are not the solution my friend, you are the problem. It’s kind of an ‘aha’ moment for some, and some people feel very confronted, some people feel enlightened, and some people are just curious, like yourself I suppose? I don’t know, but in any case, we need these kinds of spaces to heal ourselves, to feel companionship and solidarity, and to keep doing the work that we do. We always operate, the majority of us, like islands in our respective environments. It’s like a way of making things more palpable, and expanding networks.