

## Navigating Belonging - Black Queer Diasporas

Jason Vandercamp\*, Sarah Nakiito

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*What does it mean to live in Sweden/Europe as Black and queer? Why is it important to have separatist spaces for Black people here in Malmö, and how does activism and art intersect? Navigating Belonging - Black Queer Diasporas with Sarah Nakiito and Jason Vandercamp.*

### Sarah Nakiito: “There is power in numbers”

Sarah Nakiito, works as a fashion designer, textile artist and visual artist. She started Sisteria Art Collective outside normative artwork for female artists. “My queerness is always part of everything but before that I am a black female in a white country”

-My education in terms of fashion design and textiles work is in Sweden. When I was student in fashion school, there was very specific frames to work within style that considered elegant to work especially in scandinavian style as a norm. I remember during my student’s time I tried to fight for that. Why we don’t work with beautiful silks from china for example. I wanted to work with the material were familiar to me. I grow up with African material. So, it became always a political statement to continue to this.

- Sisteria art collective came about by accident about year ago. Malmo has for the last years hosted gallery night every year in September. I was doing a show last year and I was offered a big space 50 square meters! It was amazing to offer that. It was an opportunity for me to share the space with many people who do create art but have not seen! I opened for everyone who wants to share the space with me. For the people who are artist but have not attended to get college degree. There is power in numbers. We help each other, apply together, share the application and working together. Each of us working alone but we have done until now 3 shows together and taking each other knowledge very base on solidarity and female art collective. I have done most of my shows in Malmo. It is my home. Shows are very exclusive space in Malmo. I want to make it open for all.

### Jason Vandercamp: “In Europe it is okay to be queer but blackness is an issue of tension”

Jason Vandercamp is a member of SQI which stands for, Swedish Queer Institute, an organization for and by queer people of color. “I used to do musical theater and growing up in Jamaica, the performance art was always a mechanism for me to totally full express myself to dance, language of the body, taking different kind of characters and many people. It was a form of activism for me. Moving here in Sweden, I have been total active in my work. Art has been a **space** for me and activism has deep part of mine core. All my life I have been fighting for space to exist and to find that community or that group that I can identify with and work throw art and performance with who I can share my experience.”

Living in Malmo for about 6 years and Europe for 8 years, I realized that being black and queer in Europe is total different definition than in being black queer in Jamaica. What is not Ok to be in queer in Jamaica and it is Ok into some extends to be black. In Europe is Ok to be Queer but Blackness always is an issue of tension.

Back home to Sweden even if you born or raise here it is difficulty to meet in some normal spaces. If you are black and identify Swedish they still come from the culture which demonize queerness that it very important for me for us to come together to provide a safe space to see, meet, empower, share and work with each other.

\*1.Jason Vandercamp,: Jason Dean Holness-Vandercamp - is Social Entrepreneur, Speaker, Activist and Academic known for his exuberant energy and his abounding creative ideas. He utilizes his passions for human rights, art, and culture to invent new ways, small and large, to impact his environment and further cultivate his interests. He is a member of the Swedish Queer Initiative (SQI) an anti-racist organization for and by queer people of color. In collaboration with SQI, he launched the Black Queer empowerment Brunch. This initiative began as a monthly gathering of young black queers to discuss problems they face in their communities, while simultaneously educating participants about their rights under Swedish and International law.

\*\*Sarah Nakiito; Fashion designer, textile artist and visual artist