Podcasting Race: Participatory Media Activism in Postcolonial Italy

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Abstract   In the past few years, the increasing production of podcasts on issues of race and structural racism has been part of a wider panorama of digital activism that has promoted global antiracist networks and fostered an intersectional debate on race and gender oppression, migrations and citizenship, generally inadequately discussed by Italian mainstream media. After analysing the specificities of the podcast as citizen media and as tools for global mobilisation, the article examines three podcasts produced by Italian Black women and women of Color as case studies (*Sulla razza*, *Black Coffee* and *The Chronicles of a Black Italian Woman*).

Keywords   Podcasts. Structural racism. Digital activism. Intersectionality. Black Italian women intellectuals.

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1   Introduction

In the past two years, digital platforms have acquired an increasingly central role in individual and collective lives, also as a consequence of the social isolation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Concurrently, the spreading of the Black Lives Matter protests following the assassination of George Floyd in May 2020 saw a proliferation of digital initiatives and debates worldwide, which have enabled the creation of global connections among marginalised social groups.[1] If social media constitute the digital infrastructures through which the affective and emotional engagement of digitised audiences is produced (Papacharissi 2015, 9), such production has recently become highly visible in Italy, where the BLM protests have promoted a digital transnational response to and collective conversation on issues of race, historical and structural racism, contemporary processes of racialisation as a colonial legacy and the acquisition of Italian citizenship for 'second generations'.[2] Black Italian intellectuals, artists, artivists and activists have employed different social media to elaborate personal narratives starting from their own experiences as racialised people, to reflect on such experiences, to draw transnational trajectories, and to connect with the global BLM movement (Uyangoda 2020). In this contexts, practices of cultural media activism such as podcasts have functioned both as a tool for global mobilisation and a site for the production of race studies.

Beginning with the assumption that "with the increased dominance of social media, the role of public intellectuals has shifted from that of highly individualized and solitary iconic figures to that of collective, diffused and multi-sited actors" (Ponzanesi 2021, 434), in this chapter we argue that podcasting in contemporary Italy has been deployed as a "citizen medium" operating in a "highly interdisciplinary territory of

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[1] Hu 2020; Wirtschafter 2021; Auxier 2020; Moody-Ramirez, Tait, Bland 2021; Vannoni 2021.

[2] Hawthorne, Pesarini 2020; Kan, Ripanti, Obasuyi 2020; Pesarini 2020; Younge 2020.

scholarly enquiry and practice, one where the boundaries between the university and the street, between different disciplines, and between physical and virtual spaces are all critically examined, questioned and renegotiated" (Baker, Blaagaard 2017, 2). We briefly introduce how podcasting has rapidly become a global cultural phenomenon (Chadha, Avila, Gil de Zúñiga 2012; Samuel-Azran, Laor, Tal 2019) and highlight some of the specificities of podcasting that make this medium different from radio broadcasting – flexibility, intentionality, commitment, sense of intimacy, affective relationship between speakers and listenership, asynchronous listening, potentiality in promoting activism (Berry 2016; Espada 2018; Lundström, Lundström 2021). We then scrutinise the potential role of podcasts as citizen media in making human rights and social matters relevant, "attractive and 'newsworthy'" (Carlton 2018, 355) and specifically analyse the significance of podcasting in the production of race studies in general and of feminist race studies in particular. In the second section of this chapter, we then examine how in the past decade contemporary postcolonial Italy – where racism is seldom perceived in its structural aspects and connected to Italian colonial history and where national culture is in urgent need of decolonisation – has seen a production of podcasts by racialised subjects who utilise these media to author their own stories, and thus regain authority over their own lives, but also to create awareness and connections in the Black Italian and transnational community and to make race issues visible and debatable. They thus assume the role of "counterpublic intellectuals" as their "actions are carried out in alternative and marginal (counter) publics" (Habed, Ponzanesi 2018, xxxvi) and contribute to the decolonisation of Italian and European culture. In Italy, where citizenship is still attributed mainly according to a law based on the biological principle of *ius sanguinis* and where a new law based on the principles of *ius soli* and *ius culturae* (now *ius scholae*) has yet to be approved, Black podcasters are articulating counternarratives that denounce processes of racialisation as a colonial legacy and highlight everyday practices of race and gender oppression against migrants and subsequent generations. We present here three case studies of podcasts produced (mainly) by racialised Italian women writers, intellectuals, bloggers, journalists and activists in Italy centered on processes of racialisation and on the intersection of race and gender in contemporary Italy: *Sulla razza* (conducted by Nathasha Fernando, Nadeesha Uyangoda, and Maria Catena Mancuso and aired in 2021); *Black Coffee* (directed by Ariam Tekle and Emmanuelle Maréchal, launched in 2020 and still on air); and *The Chronicles of a Black Italian Woman* (conducted by Benedicta Djumpah, started in 2020 and still on air).[3]

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[3] At the time we selected the case studies and started elaborating the article, the podcasts included in the present analysis were the only ones conceived and conducted by

2 Podcasting: An Intimate Practice to Build Political and Social Commitment

In an article published in *The Guardian* in 2004, journalist and blogger Ben Hammersley commented on the upcoming revolution in the field of audible media, stating that "MP3 players, like Apple's iPod, in many pockets, audio production software cheap or free, and weblogging an established part of the internet" constituted "all the ingredients […] for a new boom in amateur radio" (2004). He highlighted some of the characteristics that made this medium different from radio broadcasting, suggested a few made-up names for it ("But what to call it? Audioblogging? Podcasting? GuerillaMedia?"), and one of them – podcast – was adopted consistently and has been in use ever since. Nowadays scholars unanimously consider podcasting as a different kind of medium from radio broadcasting (Berry 2006; 2016a; 2016b; Menduni 2007; Bonini 2015), the main difference consisting in the great freedom and flexibility podcasting affords both producers and consumers alike. As ex-*New York Times* and National Public Radio journalist Christopher Lydon stated at the very beginning of this cultural phenomenon already in 2004 while comparing podcasting to more 'traditional' journalism, such flexibility was "something that newspapers can only dream about… they all have an institutional envy (of this)" (quoted in Hammersley 2004). Podcasting necessitates a rather minimal equipment (mainly a computer, a microphone, and an internet connection) and, therefore, its production does not require a specific location (as radio broadcasting does). As for consumers, the digital files containing audio (and video) can be downloaded onto personal computers and portable media players (mainly iPods in the past and iPhones in the present) and then listened to asynchronously, thus eliminating spatial and temporal constraints (Hammersley 2004; Haygood 2007; Chada, Avila, Gil de Zúñiga 2012).

For podcast listenership, flexibility is also accompanied by a sense of 'hyperintimacy' ("Podcasts are listened to in an intimate setting [headphones], utilizing an intimate form of communication [human speech]" and they are "frequently recorded in a podcaster's own domestic space") (Berry 2016a, 666), which, in turn, combines with intentionality and an active commitment ("Unlike radio listeners, who may encounter programmes by chance and use them as sonic wallpaper, the podcast listener actively searches for content and puts

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Italian Black women and women of Color. They are of particular importance since they paved the way for the production of podcasts focused on issues of race and racism by racialised Italian women. Other podcasts on race and processes of racialisation have subsequently aired, including Sabrina Efionayi's *Storia del mio nome* (Story of My Name).

time aside to listen") (Berry 2016a, 666).[4] The combination of intimacy with commitment in this form of aural communication based on the voice of the presenter-researcher is more likely to create an affective engagement in the listenership (Kincaid, Emard, Senanayake 2020), and to help people make sense of their personal experience through the experiences of others. Therefore, even when the stories narrated are personal and the process of listening produces a sense of intimacy, podcasting still retains a highly social potential, as it encourages identification with other members of the listenership and promotes activities that lead to community building (Lundström, Lundström 2021): "By listening to detailed personal experiences of 'others', listeners become connected to the people whose stories they share" (Lindgren 2016, 27).

What was considered really revolutionary in the mediascape of the early 2000s was the strong social and political impact this medium could potentially produce, as "the pioneers threatened to disrupt the top-down media ecosystem" and to enact a "democratization of media production tools" (Berry 2016, 661). Although the very notion of democratisation must be relativised and questioned, as vast sections of the world population are excluded from the internet and thus left outside of digital global communication, internet-based citizen media have in fact facilitated the access of marginalised subjects generally absent from the traditional media world and allowed these new figures of '(counter)public intellectuals' to emerge, including social media activists, artists and artivists committed to promote social change, justice and equality in contemporary postcolonial societies. In their digital activity not only does "the street migrate […] to the living room" (Young 2012, 32), thus blurring the boundaries between public and private, political and personal, but such blurring acquires a global dimension as it produces transnational digital networks that reinforce offline political action.

Podcasting is considered a relatively easy medium to access for communities historically underrepresented in mainstream media who want to tell their own stories in their own voices, create social awareness, be it in the field of disabled, queer, trans, Black, Indigenous environmental activists and activists of Colour (Mulki, Ormsby 2021); 'everyday human rights' activists in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Carlton 2018); African American intellectuals and activists who promote racial politics in the USA (Fiorini 2015), just to mention a few meaningful examples. In the past ten years, podcasting has been

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[4] Berry also mentions the existence of other differences, such as podcast and audio on demand, professional and amateur producers, distribution via free hosting sites and via private networks (2016a, 66). These differences are not examined here as they are not significant for the specific analysis we develop in this article.

deployed, alongside other digital media, to build a constructive dialogue about race, to denounce structural racism, to reveal the presence of processes of racialisation and also to underline how Black people have given their remarkable contribution in different societies around the world. In the podcast *About Race*, for instance, host and world-famous author of the best-selling *Why I Am No Longer Talking to White People about Race* (2017) Reni Eddo-Lodge discusses race with her guests through such diverse issues as institutional racism in British politics, the connection of contemporary racism with colonial history, the inclusion of new words indicating racial injustice into the Oxford English Dictionary – such as 'woke' – and the change in the ways race is discussed in the media. Eddo-Lodge also highlights the pervasiveness of racism in British culture, and analyses how the democratisation of communication implemented by social media and the internet has made the obliteration of the race question in the public debate harder and harder.[5]

The exclusion of Black people from the media, however, has historically interested women in larger numbers than men, as observed by Moya Bailey who has coined the term 'misogynoir' to indicate specifically "the anti-Black racist misogyny that Black women experience, particularly in US visual and digital culture" (2021, 1). If gender and colour confer a visual 'normativity' from which the bodies of Black women are excluded as they do not comply with the dominant "somatic norm" (Puwar 2004), in aural communication such normativity (or the lack thereof) is not detectable through the materiality of the body, but rather through the immateriality of the voice (Tiffe, Hoffmann 2017). In their feminist reading of podcasting as a medium of resistance,[6] Raechel Tiffe and Melody Hoffmann point out that marginalised subjects in general, including women, and especially Black women, are expected to be invisible and not to take up social space, even sonic space. Precisely because the female voice is generally considered as "deviant" (Tiffe, Hoffmann 2017, 116) and "[n]umerous popular press articles have been written criticizing the traditionally feminized qualities of women's voices, including: vocal fry, upspeak, the use of the word 'like,' and women using curse words, among others" (117), women, and especially Black women and women

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5 On this issue, listen specifically to the interview with British rapper and actor Riz in Episode 8, "The Anti-Racist Reneissance".

6 In Raechel Tiffe and Melody Hoffmann's incipit of the article, the authors reveal the strategies through which they articulate their resistance, which include research, irony and humor and competence in utilising technology and social media: "The authors of this paper host a podcast called Feminist Killjoys, PhD. Every week, we research and compile notes about our topic; set up technology to record, talk, and laugh for an hour; manage our way through software in order to edit the files; and utilize social media to publicize" (115).

of Color, are increasingly using podcasts to enact resistance through a use of their voice that defies hegemonic vocal rules as traditionally enforced in broadcast journalism, and thus construct a physical media space in which (Black) female bodies and their voices are free to rewrite the rules:

> we understand podcasts as a medium from which to better understand the ways in which women are uniquely subjugated in the media, and, more importantly, how this medium becomes a tool of resistance. (118)

Pointing to the intersection of race and gender, Moya Bailey claims that Black women are using social media not only to fight misogynoir, but also to create healthy practices through which they deconstruct stereotypical imaginaries and produce new, complex, and diverse counterpublic representations. In conceptualising the notion of a "digital alchemy" (2021, 23) as "the ways that women of color, Black women, and Black nonbinary, agender, and gender-variant folks in particular transform everyday digital media into valuable social justice media that recode the failed scripts that negatively impact their lives" (24), she distinguishes between "defensive" and "generative" digital alchemy: the former responds to misogynoir and deconstructs perpetuated stereotypes that have informed and continue to inform collective imaginaries; the latter is not moved by the necessity to respond to racialisation and marginalisation, but is rather projected into the present and the future (as much as present and future can be independent from the past) and based on the desire to create multifaceted representations.

In the second section of this chapter, we argue that the three podcasts that constitute our case studies create both defensive and generative alchemies in the Italian society, as podcasters aim at making their voices heard in a context of intersectional discrimination and at questioning the Italian white population and its role in the reproduction of structural racism, while at the same time they introduce new words to articulate the discourse on race from their situated perspectives and produce counternarratives about their personal experience and how it intersects the experience of other Black people in Italy and Europe.

3 Antiracist Voices: Podcasts and the Shaping of a Postcolonial Digital Archive

Since 2010, as Camilla Hawthorne notes (2019), young Italians of African origins have begun to meet on social platforms and create spaces for discussion about the specific African descendant experience in a context of structural racism and a lack of cultural decolonisation. This trend experienced a significant increase during 2020 and 2021 as a result of the wave of antiracist mobilisations following the murder of George Floyd on the one hand, and, on the other, the exponential growth in the use of the internet and of technological tools in a context of lockdowns and social distancing. The last two years have seen a proliferation of online formats, programs and initiatives promoted by racialised people, who have used digital tools to keep a sense of community, activism, and political discussion alive, at a time when the offline world did not allow in person interaction. It is in this panorama that the production of podcasts devoted to the issues of race, colonial memory, and the Black experience in relation to the Italian context is situated. The podcasts selected here (*Sulla razza*, *Black Coffee* and *The Chronicles of a Black Italian Woman*) are conceived and conducted almost entirely by Italian Black women and women of Color and constitute a digital postcolonial archive that contribute to the production of race studies in a collaborative, participatory and horizontal way. These podcasts are included in a broader context of digital cultural activism, in which they are configured as media of "digital resistance" (Bailey 2021) and encourage the creation of alliances and "alternative networks of debate" (Jackson, Bailey, Welles 2020, xxxiii).

3.1 *Sulla razza* (About Race)

Sulla razza was hosted by Nathasha Fernando, Nadeesha Uyangoda and Maria Catena Mancuso and aired between February and July 2021.[7] The podcast is structured in twelve thirty-minute episodes. In each of them, a word or an expression (such as tokenism, colourism, minority model myth) from the Anglo-American discourse on race is translated into the Italian language and context. The structure of the podcast highlights its didactic and pedagogical connotation: the project was born with a well-defined deadline and a precise duration and cadence in the publication of the episodes (twice a

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[7]   Nathasha Fernando is Visiting Lecturer at the University of Westminster, Nadeesha Uyangoda is a writer and freelance author, and Maria Catena Mancuso is a web content editor.

month, thirty minutes for each episode). Such pedagogical function is also conferred by the fact that the contents have a solid theoretical structure, in most cases the explanation of theoretical and historical topics is entrusted to Nathasha Fernando, who often assumes the role of the 'academic' and the speakers offer precise bibliographic references during and at the end of each episode. This academic connotation also appears to reinforce the validity of the content presented and fosters a sense of trust among listeners (Lindgren 2016). The episodes, then, are not structured as dialogues with a certain amount of freedom but take the form of a pre-set conversation with pre-written dialogues, in which each interlocutor plays a specific role and is tasked with addressing a specific part of the topic under discussion. This rhythm is interrupted only by brief contributions from external guests (such as Angelica Pesarini, Mackda Ghebremariam Tesfau', Fred Kuwornu), who are asked specific questions, or by short excerpts from documentaries, songs, films, and other audiovisual contents. The centrality of the issue of race also emerges from the situated approach to social relations among the presenters. In the first episode, devoted to the term 'race', the racial identity of the speakers is made explicit, and the presence of a white speaker (Maria Catena Mancuso) is explained. By motivating Maria Catena Mancuso's participation as an ally and illustrating what it means to be a good ally, the presenters implicitly emphasise the necessary prominence of racialised people in the debate on race and racism. This positioning also determines the division of roles among the presenters – Maria Catena Mancuso holds a secondary role – and configures podcasting as a political practice. *Sulla razza* is the only one among the selected case studies to present a title in Italian and this, as the speakers assert, is a statement in itself. Uttering the word 'razza' in a national context that has constructed itself as postracial (Lombardi-Diop 2012) signals the need to fill this linguistic and conceptual void and to counter the way in which Italy identifies itself as immune from structural racism, generally attributed to other countries. This evasiveness means that the Italian lexicon and public debate lack the words to talk about racial issues in the Italian context, and the words already in use – such as the term 'razza' itself – are not recognised as necessary in order to name, and thus address, specific dynamics of oppression and privilege.[8] As Tatiana Petrovich

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[8]   Since the end of World War II and after the social trauma of the Shoah, in Italy the term 'race' has become largely confined to the memory of the Holocaust and the Fascist Racial Laws (1938) and has obliterated the memory of the racist legislation in the colonies (1933, 1937, and 1940). The lack of a combined analysis of anti-Semitic racism and racism against the Black population in the African colonies has in turn not allowed for a proper assessment of Fascist raciology. The resistance to use the word 'race' in Italy at present follows two distinct trajectories: one is grounded in a 'colour-blindness'

Njegosh notes, echoing Edward Said's theorisation of "traveling theory", race travels, adapting and modifying itself according to different space-time coordinates: "race does not move automatically from one context to another, according to a linear and unidirectional pattern, but is 'translated' from one linguistic and cultural system to another (2012, 17).[9] This podcast explains and, in some cases, translates into Italian terms and expressions in order to name racial formations and to re-articulate these concepts in a different historical, social, cultural, and political framework. Each episode opens with a contextualisation of the selected word in the place where it originated – almost always the United States –, proceeds with its translation into the Italian cultural system, and analyses its different but contiguous function within Italian racial history. This emerges, for example, in the episode entitled "Coppie miste" (Mixed couples), in which the theme of interracial relationships is analysed starting from the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* legal case but is then situated in the *longue durée* of Italian colonial history. Such analysis shows the line of continuity – in terms of racial, gender and class constructions – between the Italian racial laws of 1938 and the stereotypes regarding mixed couples circulating in contemporary Italy.[10] The episode devoted to the N word opens with a portion of a speech by Martin Luther King and discusses the origin of the English terms 'negro', 'n***er' and 'n***a'. This issue is then connected with other problematic Italian expressions not imported from other countries but born in the Italian colonial context (such as 'fare un ambaradam' [making an ambaradam]).[11]

that tends to remove Italian colonial past and the racial question in Italy altogether; the other, instead, is motivated by the potential negative consequences intrinsic in the process of resurrecting racial categories in the specific context of Italy (and Europe), which presents profound differences from the US context. Such resistance is evident, for instance, in the Italian translation of Reni Eddo-Lodge's world-famous *Why I Am No Longer Talking to White People about Race* as *Perché non parlo più di razzismo con le persone bianche*, where the issue discussed is 'razzismo' (racism) instead of 'razza' (race). This choice does not demonstrate a desire to avoid the discussion on the racial question, but rather cautions about a term perceived as problematic. At the same time, however, the term 'razza' is also employed in the context of race studies and antiracist activism by racialised and white subjects alike as a necessary analytical category to address structural racism in Italian past and present. The fact that the title of the podcast *Sulla razza* is centred on the term 'race' in Italian goes precisely in the direction of placing this social category at the centre of critical analysis.

9   Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the authors'.

10   The *Loving v. Virginia* case involved Mildred Loving, a woman of Colour, and Richard Loving, a white man, who were sentenced to one year in prison for marrying in violation of Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924, which prohibited interracial marriages. In 1967, the US Supreme Court declared the Racial Integrity Act unconstitutional and overturned the conviction.

11   The expression 'to make an ambaradam' originates from the massacre occurred on the Amba Aradam plateau (Ethiopia) on February 15, 1936, when Italian colonisers killed approximately 20,000 Ethiopian soldiers. This expression, which originates in

From this point of view, *Sulla razza* seems to take up Camilla Hawthorne's invitation (2019) to decentralise the United States from reflections about structural racism and the African diaspora and to focus on the importance that European colonialisms and racism have held in structuring global racism, including that of the United States.

3.2   *Black Coffee*

Black Coffee, directed by Ariam Tekle and Emmanuelle Maréchal, started airing in 2020 and is still on air.[12] The podcast deals with the process of identity construction for people of African descent in Italy and in Europe in general. Each episode is shaped around a specific issue – such as mental health in Black communities and aesthetic practices enacted by women of African descent – addressed in a conversation between the presenters and an expert on the selected issue. The structure of this podcast is more flexible and dynamic than *Sulla razza*, and is articulated in four seasons of seven episodes each, to which are added special episodes and specific columns – such as "Passato rimosso" ["Repressed Past"], conducted together with researcher and activist Marie Moïse and focused on colonial history, or "Storie italiane (ig)note" ["(Un)known Italian stories"] created in collaboration with journalist Adil Mauro and centred on Black Italian people who have played a relevant role in Italian history. This dynamism is also determined by the different positioning of the two presenters: Ariam Tekle is Italian of Eritrean origins, while Emmanuelle Maréchal is French of Cameroonian origins and has lived in Italy for five years. Such diversity allows for the construction of a debate on Black communities in Italy that is in constant dialogue with the European context and that places the Italian racial question within a wider framework. Even though the language used is Italian, the English title suggests the desire of the speakers to project the podcast outside of national borders and to reach out to other Black communities in Europe. This purpose became more evident in November 2021, when *Black Coffee* received the Culture and Solidarity Fund: in the fourth season, the podcast is characterised by a more specifically European connotation through the production of episodes entirely in English and the inauguration of a section called "Exploring Black Europe", in collaboration with Kwanza Musi Dos Santos (former hostess of the Instagram Page @lastanzadikwanza).

Italian colonialism, has been depotentiated and has entered the Italian common language with the meaning of 'making a mess'.

12   Ariam Tekle is an Italian Eritrean videomaker based in Milan and Emmanuelle Maréchal is a French Cameroonian freelance copywriter and translator based in London.

The intimate and personal dimension typical of podcasts seems to apply, in the case of *Black Coffee*, not only to the listeners but also to the speakers, who have often stated that the podcast has granted them the opportunity to talk without filters about issues that are assigned little room for discussion in mainstream communication or that are addressed in a stereotypical way. As argued in the previous section, podcasting takes on a value which is both private and public: on the one hand, it is a liberating practice through which issues involving the personal dimension can be discussed in a space perceived as safe; on the other, it confers authority to the voices of those who personally experience the processes of discrimination and places these voices in dialogue with the community of listeners. *Black Coffee*'s target audience provides valuable information about the role that this podcast assumes in the panorama of activism (digital and non-digital) of Italians of African descent. Although the podcast was born out of the need to foster debate about the lives of Black people in Italy and is therefore primarily aimed at Black communities, the hosts also intend to deconstruct the idea that racial issues and structural racism do not concern white society. *Black Coffee* is therefore also aimed at white people who want to reflect on the experiences of Black people in Italy and Europe and, at the same time, on their own role in the reproduction of a specific racial hierarchy. From this point of view, this podcast is in continuity with a trend that characterises the cultural activism of a new generation of Italian writers, artists, activists, and scholars of African descent, who not only analyse racism, but also directly question white society, confronting it with its responsibilities and discussing the many forms that privilege can take.

3.3   *The Chronicles of a Black Italian Woman*

The Chronicles of a Black Italian Woman, conceived and directed by Benedicta Djumpah, started airing in 2020 and is still on air.[13] The podcast, not divided into seasons, is composed of forty-four episodes and presents the column "Diasporahood", in which the main speaker hosts people from the African diaspora. From a technical point of view this podcast is the most 'undisciplined' of those analysed so far: it does not have a fixed structure (the episodes are weekly or bi-weekly, the "Diasporahood" column does not have a precise cadence but seems to occur randomly, and the duration of the episodes varies from an average of 30 minutes to a maximum of 95 minutes), there are no auditory contents other than the voice of the presenter, nor are there

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[13]   Benedicta Djumpah is a Student Life Coordinator at Temple University in Rome and an activist in the association Italianə senza cittadinanza.

any sound effects (with the exception of a brief theme song which, however, is not utilised in all the episodes, nor does it constantly feature at the beginning or at the end of the episode). Ambient noises are clearly recognisable, and reveal a domestic and informal setting, which, as stated earlier, affords a higher degree of freedom, autonomy, and flexibility. As Richard Berry states, echoing Kate Lacey, this interconnection between social exposure and the domestic dimension, as well as the balance between the public and private valence of content, complicate the distinction between public and private and allow access to an "intimate soundscape" (Lacey 2014, 120, quoted in Berry 2016a) that in most other media does not assume a relevant role. Compared to the other podcasts analysed, the element of hyperintimacy emerges more strongly in this case not only because the domestic setting is clearly perceptible – and the listeners are induced to visualise the image of the room – but also because the speaker's oratorical style tends to address the listeners in the attempt to build an almost familial relationship with them ("You can call me Benny, my family and my friends they call me Benny", episode 1) and also to involve them directly in conversations. Djumpah's intended audience has a global dimension (in the opening and closing greetings, Djumpah often refers to the different time zones of her listenership – "Good morning or good night", "I don't know what time you are listening to this podcast"). This projection beyond Italian and European borders is reflected in the choice of English as the only language used, but also in the strong presence of multiple cultural references from other countries, continuously related to the Italian political and social context. Unlike the previous podcasts (especially *Sulla razza*), *Chronicles* does not have a pedagogical intent nor an explicit theoretical framework but is configured as a storytelling project with a strong personal connotation. As Djumpah affirms, the intent of the podcast is to tell the stories of Black Italian women precisely because the experience of Black Italians and Europeans enjoys less visibility. The themes of racism, misogyny, access to citizenship, anti-racist activism and Black identities are therefore translated into the language of everyday life and discussed starting from the speaker's story, interests and passions ("This podcast means doing something for myself", episode 1). The highly personal connotation of the contents, together with the presumably domestic setting, the tone of the speaker and the structure of the podcast, creates a bond between the listeners and the presenter, favoured by the fact that the medium is based on voice and sound:

> audio stories [...] explore our lives through sounds and spoken words, intimately whispered into our ears. The personalized listening space created by headphones further accommodates the bond created between voices in the story and the listener. (Lindgren 2016, 24)

The narration of the host's own emotions and private experiences, as well as the informal connotation of the podcast, denote a different style from the podcasts previously analysed, as well as a different approach to the project's objective. *Chronicles* confers value to micro-stories which, together, delineate a broader historical and political landscape. This characteristic emerges not only in the personal approach to the narration but also in the fact that the speakers hosted in the episodes of the "Diasporahood" column are not known personalities, or 'experts' on certain issues, but rather they are people to whom Djumpah is affectively connected (her mother, Felicia Efua Annan, is the protagonist of episode 25; her best friend, Olivia Lifungula, is the protagonist of episode 29), as well as friends and fellow activists – Italian and non-Italian – with whom Djumpah comments on news, politics or current events related to the African Diaspora. Djumpah's choice to involve people affectively connected to her has a double effect: on the one hand it includes listeners in her affective circuit, on the other it gives visibility to the work, activism and voice of other racialised people who are from or are based in different places of the world. With *Chronicles* it emerges how, in the case of podcasting, the private dimension does not make the content private but rather facilitates raising awareness around political issues that have an impact on personal lives. Podcasting is a medium that can contribute to a wider context of digital cultural activism and that can enhance offline activism. This medium proposes a non-academic mode of production of race studies in Italy, centered on situated bodies and experiences and promotes alternatives to hegemonic forms of knowledge production.

4 Conclusion

The case studies analysed show how podcasts constitute a particularly valuable digital tool for opening up spaces of discussion which, because of their digital nature, are able to remain active regardless of the contingencies of the offline world. In addition to fostering debate on issues traditionally excluded from public discourse, the podcasts examined also contribute to the construction of new communities and to the strengthening of already existing communities. They base their existence on the relationship with an audience that is continuously invited to participate and that, in response, shows interest in further relating to the hosts and the content (Berry 2016). The podcasts analysed are all accompanied by an apparatus of additional channels of communication and user engagement. This apparatus can be highly articulated, as in the case of *Sulla razza*, which offers, in addition to all the social channels, also an extremely well-maintained website in terms of graphics and usability, a newsletter and a dedicated section

on the Vice.com website; less articulated, as in the case of *Black Coffee*, which offers social channels and a basic website; and basic, as in the case of *The Chronicles of a Black Italian Women*, which is accompanied by an Instagram page. Regardless of the greater or lesser complexity of these additional apparatuses, all podcasts promote interactivity with the audience even outside the podcast itself, offering additional contents and insights and engaging with the audience through stories and comments on Facebook and Instagram. As Lundström and Lundström observe, podcasts differ from other forms of recorded dialogue because they are participatory media, capable of creating connections with the audience both by inviting guests into episodes and by engaging in conversation with listeners, who thus become "secondary speakers" and play an active role in the production of content (Lundström, Lundström 2021, 291). In the cases analysed, the communities gathered around the podcasts are engaged in the production and promotion of a discourse on the themes of race, diaspora, racism and its intersection with further discriminations starting from their own position as "raced and gendered counterpublics" (Jackson, Bailey, Welles 2020, xxiii), connected in different ways to the Italian context. The podcasts analysed here also promote a transnational European perspective, as they contribute to the formation and corroboration of networks among racialised communities and put into dialogue personal experiences of racialisation as well as theories and methodologies across national borders and citizenships, connecting countries whose national formation is grounded in a colonialism systematically disavowed (Habed, Ponzanesi 2018) as the racist violence perpetuated in European neocolonial politics. These podcasts thus promote a postcolonial and decolonial critique of Italian and European racial histories and contribute to the development of transnational counterpublics committed to challenge European "white innocence" (Wekker 2016).

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