

# Toolkit: Integrating Kalista Sy's Work In Higher Education

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ScreenWorlds

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# Toolkit:

## Integrating Kalista Sy's Work in Higher Education

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From the late twentieth to the early twenty-first century, audiovisual production and distribution in Africa have experienced significant changes. These are largely shaped by a context of increasing digitalisation and mobility of small screen devices. However, these are still rather absent or under-represented in the film and media curricula of Higher Education Institutions. In this toolkit, we offer a series of resources that can contribute to the contextualisation and integration of a case study of an online television series in Senegal, namely *Maîtresse d'un homme marié* / *Mistress of a Married Man*, launched in 2019 in Marodi TV and directed by Kalista Sy.

Khadidiatou Sy, known as Kalista Sy, is a Senegalese screenwriter, director and producer, who became famous in Africa and beyond following the success of her first series, [\*Maîtresse d'un homme marié\*](#) (*Mistress of a Married Man*), known as MDHM. In 2019, following the international success of her first series, *Maîtresse d'un homme marié*, Kalista Sy made it to the [BBC's list of the 100 most inspiring and influential women from around the world](#).

Aware of her leading role in centring women's stories on Screen, with particular reference to Senegal, she enjoys comparing herself to American television producer and screenwriter Shonda Rhimes, stating: "She's certainly not Shonda Rhimes, but she has no less merit than her. Their worlds differ, as do their paths and goals. Yet, they share a common struggle: to tell stories that resonate with their lived experiences". Even if she feels she still has a long way to go, she is a determined entrepreneur convinced



that it is possible to play a leading role in international screen media. She studied Journalism at the Higher Institute of Entrepreneurship and Management. As a graduate journalist, she joined various editorial teams, including 2STV, with a remarkable career before moving to screenwriting. In 2019, she directed and produced the first season of *Mistress of a Married Man*, an adaptation from her first chronicles, with 50 episodes which soon fostered fandom communities across the globe. The key to the success and even controversy was the identification, particularly by women, who felt that the narration belonged to women. Today, Kalista Sy is the CEO of the production company Kalista TV, which continues her mission to create content on women, for women and by women. Her second series, *Yaay 2.0* (*Mother 2.0*) addresses the subject of motherhood and infertility, and her third series, *Hair Lover*, deals with rivalry in Senegalese society.



*Maîtresse d'un homme marié* is the first Senegalese women-led television series where women are placed at the very centre of the narrative. The series, first released on 25 January 2019, and broadcasted online via YouTube, became viral, with over 5 million viewers per episode, and being compared to *Sex and the City* in international media.

MDHM is an intersectional and complex site of negotiation of feminism in contemporary Senegal. Launched in 2019, it is the very first Senegalese series that tells women's stories from a woman's points of view. The series has been discussed as a 'soap opera', 'melodrama', 'Afronovela' or Senegalese screen world. Its plot revolves around several strong women, who, together, represent the various forms of everyday struggles embodied by women in Senegal, Africa, and the whole world. Themes include sex and sexuality, infidelity, polygamy, mental health and revolve around the representation of Senegalese women in marriage and the family. MDHM was hugely successful from the start, with millions of views and fandom communities in and beyond Dakar, being praised as the first series in the country whose story was conceived and told from a woman's point of view.

### Key Readings about *Maîtresse d'un homme marié* and Kalista Sy

- Fall, Zoubida (2023) *Conversations Féminines: Des places assignées, à celles arrachées*. Dakar: Editions Saaraba. [FRENCH]
- Kifouani, Delphe (2022) 'L'intimité des femmes à l'épreuve du petit écran sénégalais. *Maitresse d'un homme marié*, trame des ruptures ou modèle spectaculaire.' In *Revue AKOFENA* 6(4): 79-88. [FRENCH]
- Sendra, Estrella (forthcoming October 2024) 'Maîtresse d'un homme marié: Re-tracing Woman(hood) in Senegalese Screen Worlds'. In Dovey, Lindiwe, Agina, Añulika and Thomas, Michael W. (forthcoming October 2024) *Contemporary African Screen worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press. [ENGLISH]

### Key Readings to study online television series in Senegal

- Adejunmobi, Moradewun (2015). 'African Film's Televisual Turn.' In *Cinema Journal*, 54 (2): 120-125. [ENGLISH]
- Dovey, Lindiwe (2018). 'Entertaining Africans: Creative Innovation in the (Internet) Television Space.' *Media Industries*, 5(2): 93-110. [ENGLISH]
- Mano, Winston, Knorpp, Barbara and Agina, Añulika (eds.). (2017) *African film cultures: Contexts of creation and circulation*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. [ENGLISH]
- Sawadogo, Boukary (2019). *West African Screen Media: Comedy, TV series and Transnationalization*. Michigan: Michigan State University Press. [ENGLISH]
- Werner, Jean-François (2012). 'Télévision et changement social en Afrique de l'Ouest postcoloniale. Étude de cas : la réception des *telenovelas* au Sénégal. In *Revue Anthropologie et Sociétés*, 36(1-2) : 95-113. [FRENCH]

### Key Readings to study fandom communities of the series

- De Kosnik, Abigail (2013). 'Fandom as Free Labor'. In Scholz, Trebor (ed.) *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*. Routledge: 98-111. [ENGLISH]

- Jenkins, Henry (2012). *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. New York: Routledge. [ENGLISH]
- Lothian, Alexis (2015). 'A Different Kind of Love Song: Vidding Fandom's Undercommons'. In *Cinema Journal*, 54(3): 138-145. [ENGLISH]
- Ross, Sharon Marie (2008). *Beyond the box: television and the Internet*. Oxford: Blackwell Pub. [ENGLISH]

### Key Readings to study representation of women in the series

- Dieng, Rama Salla (2021). *Féminismes africains: une histoire décoloniale*. Paris: Présence Africaine. [FRENCH]
- Mistry, Jyoti and Schuhmann (2015). *Gaze Regimes: Film and Feminisms in Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press. [ENGLISH]
- Nnaemeka, Obioma (2004). 'Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way.' In *Signs*, 29(2): 357-385. [ENGLISH]
- Vergès, Françoise (2019). *A Decolonial Feminism*. London: Pluto Press. [ENGLISH]

### Video-recorded interview with Kalista Sy

Kalista Sy, conducted via ZOOM, 10 September 2020, by Estrella Sendra, as a teaching and learning resource for 'Global Film Industries' in the MA Global Creative and Cultural Industries at SOAS, University of London. Available via vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/795235965> [FRENCH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES]

### Season 1, Episode 1

Available in Marodi TV Sénégal, both in the mobile application and the Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrKBkMCN4qE&t=812s> [The first episode has ENGLISH SUBTITLES, and is both in WOLOF AND FRENCH]

### Teaser of the series with English subtitles

Available via Estrella Sendra's Vimeo Page (esendra):

<https://vimeo.com/927199125>

## Theme Song of the Series 'Maîtresse' by Maya Abdul

Link to song on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRkNyHPxw1I>

### Wolof Transcription of the Lyrics

*Gis nga ko?*

*Fu la jigeen romb ndaanan romb na la*

*Ndax xool nga ko?*

*Loo gis, lu mu sol walla yeew li ci xolam?*

*Seen nga ko?*

*Ni mu mel walla li ku sonnal, yow moom nga yekk?*

*Jigeen boo gis, ni muy noppee noonu lay muññee.*

*Jigeen boo gis, daje nga yow ak aduna.*

*Ahhhh, li mu bëgg, moom la xam!*

*Ahhhh, du taayi, du taayi, du taayi, du baayi!*

*Romb naa la, li mu bëgg, moom la xam*

*Ahhhh, du taayi, du taayi, du taayi, du baayi!*

*Romb naa la, ahhh, li mu bëgg, moom la xam!*

*Ahhhh, du taayi, du taayi, du taayi, du baayi!*

*Ahhh, li mu bëgg, moom la xam!*

*Ahhhh, du taayi, du taayi, du taayi, du baayi!*

*Romb na la, ki mooy jom, mooy ki ñefe, ki gëm boppom*

*Romb na la, du la xaar te moom dey tabbax addinaa*

*Dey foog ni mu ngi yaaqu, mën na am bëgg-bëggam moom lay top*

*Mën na am bëgg-bëggam moom lay top*

### English [Literal] Translation of the Lyrics

*Have you seen her?*

*Where a woman passes by, a gentlewoman passes by.*

*Did you watch her?*

*What do you see: what she is wearing or what is attached to her heart?*

*Did you see her?*

*How she looks like or what is tiring her? Are you giving her more?*

*If you see a woman, show her that you can be patient.*

*If you see a woman, you will meet her and the world.*

*What she wants, she is the one who knows it.*

*Oh, she does not get tired, she does not give up.  
A gentlewoman is passing by. What she wants, she is the one who knows it.  
Oh, she does not get tired, she does not give up.  
A gentlewoman is passing by. What she wants, she is the one who knows it.  
Oh, she does not get tired, she does not give up.  
What she wants, she is the one who knows it.  
Oh, she does not get tired, she does not give up.  
She passes by, she is the one who loves properly. She is the one who believes in herself.  
A gentlewoman is passing by. She doesn't wait for you, she is the one who builds her own world.  
People think that she destroys, [but] maybe she is following her desire.*

### **Spotify Playlist 'Woyu Jigeen' [Women songs] curated by Estrella Sendra for the CMCI Research Staff Seminar at King's College London**

Accessible via this link:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6FJKCvaYcWQDvzi3xa3DY3?si=NIYingPXRqOGKwvSw86QjQ&pi=e-USZgJ7KlTo-k>

Or QR code:



This playlist is composed of Senegalese songs on women's themes, by women.

### **About the Toolkit Author**

Estrella Sendra is a scholar, teacher, filmmaker, journalist and festival organiser, currently working as Lecturer in Culture, Media and Creative Industries Education (Festivals and Events) at King's College London. Prior to this role, she worked as Lecturer in Global Media Industries, at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton and as Lecturer in Film and Screen Studies in the Centre for Creative Industries, Media and Screen Studies at SOAS, University of London. She is recognised as Fellow by the Higher Education Academy. Her research interests include creative and cultural industries in postcolonial societies, festival studies, film festivals, global screen media, African cinema, audiovisual representations of migration, transnational communities, youth and digital media, and gender.