

BLACK WOMEN IN SCIENCE NETWORK

Greetings all,

I thought I'd kick off our newsletters this year with a (somewhat) personal note from myself.

Often come February, we know which one of our resolutions were fairy tales and which ones are now shaping new habits. We've also probably decided that we're restarting the year. Well, we've used January to prepare for the coming year. The new start has us optimistic and hopeful, but still grounded by the reality of what 2021 is shaping up to be.



Tomi Akingbade, Founder of Black Women in Science Network

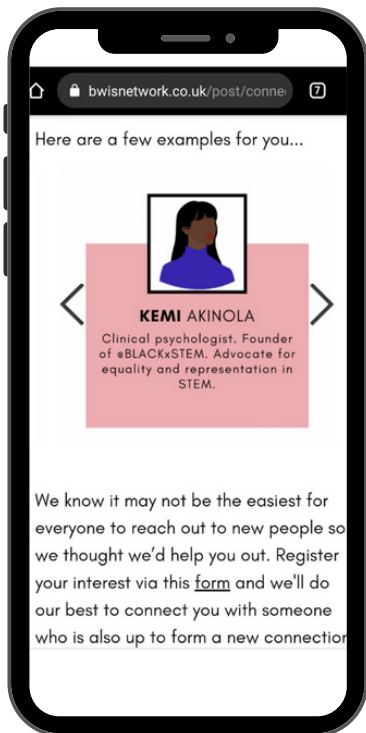
Last year was indescribable, you honestly had to be there to know what I'm talking about. I don't want to go into the negatives too much, but I can confirm now that I never expected it. Early last year, I was optimistic, and that's putting it mildly. I had travel plans, I was going to finally get a job that I was passionate about and I was going to be launching all kinds of projects (both personally and in my capacity as founder of BWiS). I was ready to take on the world. Fast forward to March 2019, COVID-19 said a resounding 'no'. 2020 was a year of undeniable devastation, the world was (and still is) in pain.

With time, however, we accustomed to the fact that life would have to move forward through these new waters. Replanning and navigating life through this pandemic hasn't been easy, but it had to be done. We went back to the drawing board and a lot of the 'big' plans shifted to COVID-friendly plans. It gave us the room to reflect and ask ourselves what we really want to be as a community platform.

When I reflected on the platform's moves in the past year, I was happy and thought, "Yeah, for a difficult year, we did alright" but when I looked at the numbers... We exist on multiple platforms and 2020 was a year of growth on all of them. Our main platform (our website) was visited over 1,000 times and there's only one continent in the world that our website wasn't opened on: Antarctica. If you know anyone over there who would be interested, give us their details... we're ready to talk.

This year, on Twitter, we more than doubled our following, had almost 8,000 profile visits, well over a million tweet impressions and you guys were all up in our mentions. We loved it! We hosted great conversations on Instagram and Facebook too. My first reaction to these numbers was 'shock' but now, they've just motivated me to keep going and up the content. Your support and interaction this past year has massively shaped where we've gone and where we're headed.

So the future... planning has changed and the contingencies are no longer figments of our imagination. They are very real, very likely possibilities. If the unpredictability of COVID-19 has shown us anything, it would be to make plans with an 'anything can happen' mindset. This is how we will go forward in defining our future plans: believing that anything can happen when we dream big enough. We took a quick poll over on our social media at the end of last year to find out how we're doing and what more you would want to see from us. We always tell you to watch this space, but this time, I'm going to ask you to be part of this space. Here's how you can be a contributing part of this community:



- Become a member
- Post in our forum
- Engage with us on social media (@BWISNetwork on all platforms)
- Tell a friend about us
- Give us feedback and share your ideas
- Network (if you're interested in forming a new connection; read our Networking Online guide and sign up to be part of our mentorship scheme).

I speak for the team when I say, thank you. We do what we do for you and because of you, so it means a lot to see you all engaging and benefiting from the supportive community we have here.

I can't be sure about what kind of year 2021 is going to be, but, as January comes to a close I've decided that 2021 is my year of shooting my shot; I hope you'll join me in taking chances and claiming the spaces that I deserve. And let's do so loudly. Here's to a great year of networking and growing.

**Yours excitedly,
Tomi Akingbade**

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