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**Black authors are still expected to ‘dissect’ the issue of race
says Diana Evans at Edinburgh International Book Festival**

Black authors and writers of colour face a greater critical expectation of writing about race, according to British Black author Diana Evans. “There is this pressure to dissect race and to explore race as if it’s our subject, a thing that belongs to Blackness, and I don’t see that,” she explained to guest selector Afua Hirsch, in an event that was part of the Edinburgh International Book Festival’s “Identity Parades” strand.

Evans’ latest novel, *Ordinary People*, focuses on the everyday midlife crises of middle class Black London families, set against the backdrop of Obama’s election in 2008. “I see race as a universal responsibility,” she said. “I think the legacy of slavery and colonialism has left such deep damage in the world, and this construct of race, that it’s not just the responsibility of Black people or people of colour to negotiate it and to dissect. We should all carry that load.”

Evans shared the stage with the American author in T Geronimo Johnson, whose new novel, *Welcome to Braggsville*, sees him write a white male character in his story of four Berkeley students protesting at a Civil War re-enactment. Following up on Evans’ comments, Johnson added: “I think it’s so true that there’s this labouring global wound. Increasingly I feel that not only is it not the responsibility of people of colour to dismantle it, but it’s not actually possible, because they didn’t construct it.

“When you look at where the foundations are, where it’s invested: it’s just embedded in so many tiny ways, it’s just not possible for us to extricate it. It’s a lot more complex than people walking around holding up picket signs and saying we want equal rights.”

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Evans believes that there is a growing literary interest in representing a wider culture. “With publishers there’s almost a hunger for voices that are ‘other’; publishing seems to be waking up a bit,” she said. “I hope that’s going to continue.”

However, she did feel that her work is marketed in a particular way because she is a Black British writer. “I didn’t like the cover of *Ordinary People* at first. I had spent seven years writing a book about the Britishness of Black British people and then I was presented with this book wrapped in African cloth. It’s a beautiful cover, but it does have certain connotations of ‘other-ing’. I think that’s something us black writers comes up against often.”

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