



## **Religion, Gender and Sexuality in Africa: Texts, Discourse and Practice**

Building on a long history of reflection, contextual engagement and advocacy related to gender and sexuality in religious and theological contexts, we invite scholars, activist and practitioners to reflect with us on new directions in the exploration of the complex intersection of religion, gender and sexuality.

The reification of gender and sexuality norms, in Africa, as elsewhere has informed the suppression or regulation of human expression, relational possibility and embodiment. In this regard religious institutions within the African context remain a key force for the justification and deployment of Bible based patriarchal, sexist and heteronormative religious teachings, textual interpretations, legal regimes and knowledge forms.

In opposition to the life-denying trajectory highlighted above, there has however, increasingly been the emergence of faith communities, religious practices, theologies and spiritualities that foster and advocate for equity and justice pertaining to issues of gender and sexuality in the African context. The continuing proliferation of African feminist, queer and LGBTIQ+ works on faith systems and contextual interventions attests to this fact (Gebara 2002; Tamale 2011; Langenberg, 2015; Bennett and Pereira 2013; Pui-lan 2005). These processes and practices have primarily resulted in three trajectories: (a) the reclaiming of the body in the process of doing Theology or engaging in Religious discourse, (b) the re-renderings of religious and scriptural texts to re-imagine gender and sexuality; (c) the recovery of indigenous religious or ritual practices that disrupt imperial, heteronormative, and white western conceptions of gender and sexuality.

Within the collaboratively constructed, creative, and interactive conference setting, we plan to explore and reflect on the various ways that gender and sexuality, when privileged in knowledge production and in religious ways of knowing and being, produce transgressive discourses and practices that speak to postcolonial African contexts and confront apparent unquestionable constructions of religiously infused heteropatriarchy. In this regard, we have three primary areas of engagement:

1. Biblical hermeneutics related to gender and sexuality
2. African theological discourse on sexuality and gender

### 3. Contextual practices engaging the intersection of gender, sexuality and religion

The conference will be convened on the Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal from 21-25 May 2018, to provide an opportunity for religious actors, academics, and activists to engage in dialogue with the view to interrogate, challenge, and contribute to gender and sexual justice in African contexts. In pursuit of this goal, we ask the following questions:

- What happens when gender and sexuality become the primary category of analysis in the appraisal of religion and theology in Africa?
- How does the lived experiences of religious actors transform epistemologies on gender and sexuality justice in Africa?
- What learnings can we collectively benefit from when engaging the best practices from creative interaction between various faith, academic, and contextual actors?
- What are global, regional and local practices that occur when matters of gender, sexuality and faith intersect?

#### **Abstracts and Submissions**

We are particularly interested in underrepresented fields of research on the aforementioned intersections, as well as interdisciplinary collaborations. Academic-activist collaborations are particularly welcome.

Paper and panel abstract submissions of 150-200 words in MS-Word format should be emailed to Ms Kelly Stuart (stuartk@ukzn.ac.za) before or by 2 April 2018. Abstracts should reflect and engage the theme of the conference, and contain the title of the presentation, the name(s) of the author(s) and affiliation(s) and should indicate a preference for primary subject area:

1. Biblical Hermeneutics related to gender and sexuality
2. African theological discourse on sexuality and gender
3. Contextual practices engaging the intersection of gender, sexuality and religion

An email containing a notification of acceptance or otherwise will be sent out on 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2018. If your abstract is accepted, we expect you to be present at the Conference for your own presentation. The deadline for registration and payment of fees is 25 April 2018.

#### **Local Organizing Committee**

Associate Professor Lillian Siwila  
Associate Professor Charlene van der Walt  
Dr Federico Settler

