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Gender Unit Writing Retreat

Hosted by the
Gender Unit, Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology,
Faculty of Theology,
Stellenbosch University in
conjunction with the
Circle of Concerned African
Women Theologians

20-23 SEPTEMBER 2021

HOFMEYER LECTURE ROOM (2003)
FACULTY OF THEOLOGY, STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

PROGRAMME

MONDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2021

- 13:00 – 13:30 Registration and arrival tea and coffee
- 13:30 - 13:35 Welcome
*Juliana Claassens, Professor of Old Testament/Head of Gender Unit,
Stellenbosch University*
- 13:35 – 16:00 **Session 1 Introductions and Presentation of Research Topic**
Dr Funlola Olojede, Researcher, Gender Unit, Stellenbosch University
- 18:00 Dinner
De Oude Werf, Church Street

TUESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2021

- 8:30 – 9:00 **Morning Lecture**
In Search of Biblical Role Models for Mongo women: A Bosadi Reading
of the Characters of Vashti and Esther”
*Dr Marthe Kondemo, Postdoctoral Fellow, Gender Unit, Stellenbosch
University (Open to the Public)*
[Click here to join the meeting](#)
- 9:00-10:30 **Session 2 Defining the Writing Task and the Research Problem**

Prof Len Hansen, Research Support, Stellenbosch University

- 10:30 – 11:00 Refreshments
- 11:00 – 12:30 **Session 3 Sharpening the Research Question(s)**
Prof Len Hansen, Research Support, Stellenbosch University
- 12:30 – 13:30 Lunch
- 13:30-15:00 **Time to Write**
- 15:00-16:30 **Session 4 The Golden Thread: Argumentation and coherence**
Dr Funlola Olojede, Researcher, Gender Unit, Stellenbosch University
- 16:30-17:30 **Feedback/ Progress Report**

WEDNESDAY 22 September 2021

- 08:30– 10:30 **Session 5 Clarifying Research Objectives**
Prof Charlene van der Walt, Head of Gender and Religion/ Deputy Director Ujamaa Centre, UKZN
- 10:30 – 11:00 Refreshments
- 11:00 – 12:30 **Session 6 Sharpening Methodology**
Prof Charlene van der Walt, Head of Gender and Religion/ Deputy Director Ujamaa Centre, UKZN
- 12:30 – 13:30 Lunch
- 13:30-15:00 **Time to Write**
- 15:15-16:00 **Afternoon Lecture (joined by OT Postgraduate Seminar participants)**
African Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Socio-economic and African Hermeneutical Reading
Dr Funlola Olojede (Stellenbosch University) (Open to the Public)
[Click here to join the meeting](#)
- 16:00-17:00 **Feedback/ Progress Report**
- 17:30 – 18:00 Cheese and Wine (Due to Covid by invitation only)
Faculty Foyer
- 18:00-19:30 Launch Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians Website (Open to the Public)
[Click here to join the meeting](#)
Hofmeyer Hall
Words of Welcome: Prof Reggie Nel (Dean, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University)
Speakers: Prof Musa Dube (Professor of New Testament, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA), Dr Funlola Olojede (Stellenbosch University), Dr Sophia Chirongoma, (Senior Lecturer Religious Studies, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe)
Words of Appreciation: Prof Nadine Bowers-du Toit (Chair of Transformation Committee, Stellenbosch University)

THURSDAY 23 September 2021

- 8:30-8:35 Words of Welcome:
Prof Dion Forster (Director Beyers Naude Center of Public Theology, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University)
- 8:35 – 9:00 **Morning Lecture**
Vulnerable Bodies: The Rape of Dinah (Genesis 34) and the Stalking of Middle Sister (Milkman, Anna Burns)
Juliana Claassens (Stellenbosch University) (Open to the Public)
[Click here to join the meeting](#)
- 09:00-- 10:30 **Mini Conference by Writing Retreat Participants**
WRITING THE WRONGS OF THE WORLD
(Open to the Public)
[Click here to join the meeting](#)
- Paradoxical Gender Relations within the United Church of Zambia: An Optimal Experience of an African Woman (2010-2020)
Bridget Masaiti (United Church of Zambia University)
- Identity Belonging and Loneliness: Effects of Migration on Left Behind Children by Migrated Parents
Lucy Thokozile Chibambo (UKZN)
- “I Can’t Breathe, We Can’t Breathe:” Exploring the Toxicity of Religion and Acts of Faith that Inform GBV in Sacred Spaces
Zamantshali Dlamini (UKZN)
- 10:30 – 11:00 Refreshments
- 11:00-12:00 The Impact of Climate change on Street Vending Women along Lumumba Road in Lusaka
Rev Theresa Nanangwe Matimba (United Church of Zambia)
- Endleleni: The Lines Are Blurred Between Gender, Religion and Race for A Black Woman
Rev Nobuntu Penxa-Matholeni (Stellenbosch University)
- 12:00-12:30 **Response**
Dr Nontando Hadebe (International Coordinator Side by Side Gender Justice)
- 12:30-13:00 **Closing and the Way Forward (Chair Juliana Claassens)**

ABSTRACTS

**Paradoxical Gender Relations within the United Church of Zambia:
An Optimal Experience of an African Woman (2010-2020)
*Bridget Masaiti (United Church of Zambia University, Zambia)***

This paper contributes to the emergence literature on the experiences of the *First Female* General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ). While the Constitution of the UCZ (2004:7) permits equal participation in all church activities including conduction and partaking of the Eucharist, there is a paradox that runs deeper within the church. Coupled with her own experiences as the General Secretary of the UCZ, the paper focuses on how Reverend Dr. Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde has managed to stabilize the running of the church and maintain resources of the church from 2010 to 2020 during the tenure of office. The paper argues that as much as male leadership has portrayed some competence and recognition in the church, the reign of the female leadership has maintained some stability and consistency in the running of the UCZ, though with some challenges. For this reason, this paper employs Claassens' (2013) theory on "female resistance" as a framework to probe the actual power issues that God has instilled within female and male leaders, particularly Rev. Dr. Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde.

This research was conducted on 25th January 2020, with the *first female* General Secretary of the United Church of Zambia, Reverend Dr. Peggy Mulambya-Kabonde. Additionally, some sixteen members (eight women and eight men) of the UCZ were also interviewed. Consequently, guided by the feminist narrative methods of inquiry, the study adopts a qualitative approach to answer a key research question: How has the female leadership in the UCZ managed to influence others in the past ten years? The answer to this paradox is elucidated by an in-depth original research on the thoughts of the responses of some pertinent UCZ members as well as the thoughts of the General Secretary herself. The above discourse is viewed through the lenses of Charles W. Nuckolls' (1996) and James Scott (1990) respectively.

**Identity Belonging and Loneliness:
Effects of Migration on Left Behind Children by Migrated Parents
*Lucy Thokozile Chibambo (UKZN)***

Migration is a major economic concern in Malawi. The economic state in Malawi has forced some Malawian parents to migrate to other countries to look for greener pasture, in order to support their families. As a result of migration, children left behind tend to be cared for by relatives or family friends. Consequently, left behind children by migrated parents are exposed to; violation of rights, lack of identity, child labour, abandonment, depression, sexual abuse, psychosocial problems, issue of belonging, child trafficking, violence, child labour, lack of education, lack of health care, low self-esteem or loneliness just to name a few. However, this study focuses on the identity, belonging and loneliness of children who have both parents migrated. The social identity theory will be used in response to the question; how has migration of both parents affected the identity, belonging and caused loneliness on left behind children? content analysis will be used as tools of gathering data in this study.

**"I Can't Breathe, We Can't Breathe:" Exploring the Toxicity of Religion and Acts of Faith that
Inform GBV in Sacred Spaces
*Zamantshali Dlamini (UKZN)***

High statistics on gender-based violence illuminate South Africa as the most unsafe continent. Media portrayals report of GBV incidents as women are abused, sexually assaulted, and killed. Incidents reported give a glimpse of the realities of domestic violence prevalent in Christian households as church going women are suffer in their own homes. Patriarchal values are at the core of socialisation and are thus embedded in socio-cultural norms and Christian teachings which shapes the narrative of women as subordinate to men. Faith organisations through covert ideological teachings endorse institutional codes and cultures that render its women controlled and restricted. This paper tables and deconstructs theologies that informs gender-based violence in a church setting. Moreover, it contends that such

theologies require scrutiny so that intervention strategies can challenge such toxic cultures shedding patriarchal life-denying teachings with an intent to shape a positive narrative in curbing GBV.

Endleleni: The Lines Are Blurred Between Gender, Religion and Race For A Black Woman
Rev Nobuntu Penxa-Matholeni (Stellenbosch University)

Despite the intersection between the three concepts of ‘gender’, ‘religion’ and ‘race’ being widely researched, there have been few advancements in this regard. Although in recent years much attention has been given to the intersectionality of the experiences of black women in South Africa, these three concepts create muddy unmapped lines for a black woman. This paper therefore endeavours to answer the following question: How can the concept of “endleleni” be used to disentangle the muddy lines between these concepts? It also seeks to explore the lines that are stifling black women and ascertain where they need to set an end point. This will be explored through the indigenous storytelling methodology and my experiences as a black South African woman. The methodology mentioned above will enable the researcher to triangulate postcolonial indigenous values and belief systems with other sources of knowledge.

The Ompact of Climate change on Street Vending Women along Lumumba Road in Lusaka
Rev Theresa Nanangwe Matimba (United Church of Zambia)

This proposal investigates the impact of Climate change on street vending women along Lumumba Road in Lusaka, the Capital City of Zambia. This paper argues that Green House Gases (GHGs) produced through carbon emissions by motor vehicles, uncollected garbage and other waste emitted from manufacturing industries is a violation of the fundamental human rights to the health of women who are street vendors.

These GHG pose serious threats to human health. Women are the mostly affected amongst the population of Lusaka. In the recent past, Zambia has recorded many people migrating from rural to urban areas or cities. In urban cities like Lusaka, the population now stands at 2.5 million as compared to other rural towns. It is therefore true to state that half of Zambia’s population which now stands at 17 million is found in urban areas.

However, due to climate variations many people are migrating from rural areas to cities and Lusaka is one of them. Due to climate change issues, most people have moved from being peasant farmers to becoming traders along the streets of Lusaka. In addition, the increased economic activities like road and other infra-structure development in these urban areas have greatly contributed rural to urban migration. The end result of this has been the increase of unplanned settlements such as shanty compounds. Economic activities due to industrialization have furthermore contributed very much to increased usage of energy and the production of carbon emissions in urban cities such as Lusaka.

During the day, the streets of Lusaka are packed due to street vendors selling second hand clothes, food stuffs as well as hardware and electrical appliances. The majority are women, some with their babies clad on their backs. It is the women found on the streets trading that are mostly vulnerable to diseases of any kind due to their exposure. Urgent mitigation measures need to be instituted to protect vulnerable groups such as women on the streets.

It is beyond any reasonable doubt that urbanization is a contributing factor to inadequate and unplanned infrastructure in the big cities like Lusaka. Despite these constraints, women have continued to contributed positively to the well-being of their families regardless of where they reside.

**In Search of Biblical Role Models for Mongo Women:
A Bosadi Reading of the Characters of Vashti and Esther**
Marthe Maleke Kondemo (Stellenbosch University)

The Old Testament clearly subjected the woman to the will and protection of her husband but she was also celebrated for performing important roles as wife and mother. Although the Bible may be oppressive in certain ways it also contains positive examples of liberation for women to emulate. The Bible has examples which promote the right of women to be what God wants them to be, a right which

needs to be reclaimed. Therefore, reading the Bible from the point of view of the marginalised and oppressed enables us to find a liberation message. In this paper, one examines the character of Esther and Vashti in the book of Esther as they navigate in a patriarchal context. Though Esther and Vashti operated in high class level, if strategies used by the two queens are combined they can served as role model to be used by Mongo women to affirm new identities and roles.

“African Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Socio-economic and African Hermeneutical Reading”
Dr Funlola Olojede (Stellenbosch University)

In conversation with David Adamo’s Africa in the Bible approach which investigates the presence of Africa and Africans in Scriptures, this paper conducts a synoptic search of the named and unnamed “African” women of the Hebrew Bible with the aim of probing their socio economic status. We ask, to what extent does a socio-economic reading of the portraits of these women—from Hagar to the Queen of Sheba—afford us a glance into the lives of women in antiquity on the African continent many of who seemed to enjoy a great degree of social and economic independence? The social identity and status of these women may help to counteract some of the modern images of African women as victims of patriarchy under male power. The implications of the findings for African biblical hermeneutics of which Adamo is one of the foremost proponents cannot be over-emphasised.

**Vulnerable Bodies:
The Rape of Dinah (Genesis 34) and The Stalking of
Middle Sister (*Milkman*, Anna Burns)**
L. Juliana Claassens (Stellenbosch University)

In the process of writing and reading trauma narratives, Roland Granofsky compellingly shows how symbolic language serves as a way to represent individual experiences of collective trauma that honors the ambiguity, complexity, and incomprehensibility of traumatic events. This paper will facilitate a creative conversation between two trauma narratives, which both employ a narrative of a young woman’s experience of sexual violence to capture collective trauma.

I propose in this paper that reading the story of the Rape of Dinah as narrated in Genesis 34 as a multilayered trauma narrative offers us the opportunity to explore the important intersection between individual and collective trauma that informs this narrative. On the one hand, there is an individual, personal story that captures the trauma of sexual violation experienced by the main character, Dinah. Then there is a broader narrative that represents the vulnerability of a group of people who would become the nation-state of Israel and who choose to identify with the victim in a classic case of chosen trauma.

In this regard, we are helped by the contemporary trauma narrative, *Milkman*, by Anna Burns, which won the Booker prize in 2018. *Milkman* offers an intimate first person account of a young woman’s experience of being stalked and sexually threatened, against the backdrop of the ‘Troubles,’ as the narrator describes the tumultuous context of Northern Ireland in the 1970s. One thus finds how a story of sexual violation intersects with the collective trauma of a nation, as a way to document the painful process of individuals and the group as a whole coming to terms with life in a constant state of intertribal (interreligious) warfare.

As readers of trauma narratives, we are drawn into the complex individual and collective worlds of people making sense of ‘the Troubles’ in their respective communities in these different times and places, in ancient Israel and Northern Ireland in the 1970s. It will be important, though, to contemplate the implications of using a story of sexual violation to work through the trauma in our respective contexts today in which a rape culture can be said to be rampant.