



2021

Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice Annual Report

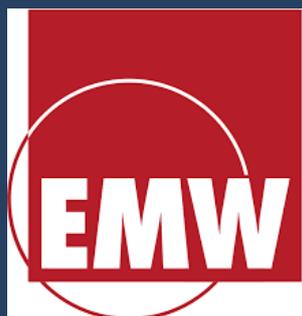


Compiled by:

S Nadar, L Scharnick-Udemans and M Robertson

GRATITUDE

With gratitude for the financial partnership of the
Evangelische Mission Weltweit (EMW), the Association of Protestant
Churches and Missions in Germany.



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Foreword

The year 2021 was characterised by both celebration and loss for the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice. Less than two months after celebrating Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu's 90th birthday on 7 October 2021, we woke up to the news on 26 December that he had passed on.

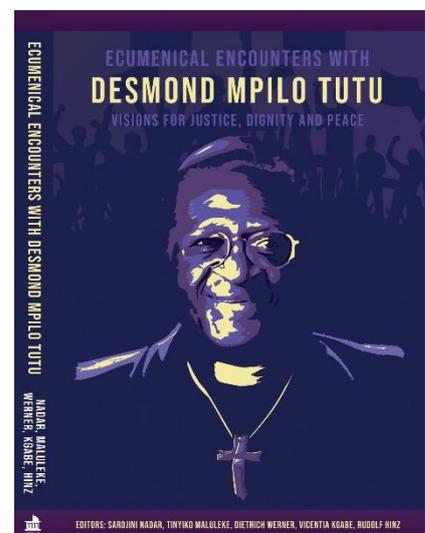


Photo Credit: Anti-Apartheid Movement Archive

Since his death, various commemorative events honouring his life and legacy have been held globally. On 6 April 2022, the Centre enjoyed the privilege of collaborating with Tutu's *alma mater*, Kings College, London, in hosting an online colloquium that celebrated Tutu's critical faith and leadership. The stellar line-up of speakers included, among others, his daughter, Mpho Tutu van Furth: theologian and author, Malala Yousafzai: Nobel Peace Prize winner 2014, Graça Machel, Vice-Chair of The Elders and Mabel van Oranje - Former Chief Executive Officer of the Elders.

Everything from Tutu's sense of humour to his readiness to rage against injustice, were drawn from the multiple 'living archives' that were present at this event. While the recollections from older generations constituted the important political and social work of memory, the distinctive voices of a new generation of activist-academics, including two of the Centre's students in dialogue with students from Kings, provided space to interrogate ongoing injustices which require academic reflection and political action. Overall, the event captured the legacy of the great icon, characterised as it was, by the spiritual virtues of radical empathy and critical compassion.

Another highlight of 2021, was the launch of the book, "Ecumenical Encounters with Desmond Mpiilo Tutu: Visions for Justice and Peace" jointly published by Regnum Books: Oxford and UWC Press: Cape Town. The book was launched virtually, in the week of the Archbishop's birthday, and I was enormously privileged to be the principal editor of the book, together with other leading theologians from South Africa and Germany. The Archbishop and Mama Leah made an appearance at the launch and conveyed their gratitude via their two daughters, who were also contributors to the book. It was a special moment to honour them in this way. As part of the launch, a "book-documentary" capturing the key themes of the book was produced. The launch was attended by over 160 people from 5 continents and the discussions in the chatroom, revealed the lifeblood of solidarity across continents, cultures and creeds that contributed to the dismantling of apartheid, and the inspiration for a more just society. This link can be used to access the YouTube recording of the event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4z5qo7VX18>



In the week of Archbishop Tutu's passing I was asked to do many media interviews¹. What was fascinating to observe via local and global media, which ran extensive coverage for the period leading up to the funeral, was how he was "owned" by so many across the world. This brings into sharp focus, what an enormous privilege and responsibility it is to host the Desmond Tutu Chair and Centre in Religion and Social Justice at UWC. Through our research and engagement with civil society, we hope to continue to bring together the two most important aspects of the Arch's life: critical contemplation and social action. While the Arch was celebrated the world over as a political priest, his profound theological and scholarly reflections are often left unattended. It is therefore deeply humbling to be tasked with preserving and maintaining his intellectual legacy.

One way of maintaining his intellectual legacy is through the training of the next generation of scholars and theologians. It was therefore with immense feelings of pride and joy that we watched 4 Masters and 3 PhD students walk the graduation carpet at the first in-person graduation ceremony in two years, in March 2022.

We hosted a graduation celebration with the graduates and their families after the ceremony. During the course of the celebration, it was humbling to hear students share the deep significance that the conferring of their degrees, held for their families - from being first generation graduates, to being providers of food security for their families. It was a joy to behold how the work of social justice was made manifest in their lives.

In those moments, their shared sentiments evoked, for me, the words of Maya Angelou:

“Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave, I am the dream and the hope of the slave, I rise!”



'Class of 2021' From left: Linda Naicker, David Dorapalli, Sakeenah Dramat, Ashleigh Petersen, Claudene Sebolai, Elizabeth Petersen, and Rhine Koloti

¹ Nadar, S. (2021, December 27). *Desmond Tutu | Remembering the life and legacy of Archbishop Desmond Tutu*. Retrieved from the SABC News Youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6Z01nPel7k>

Nadar, S. (2021, December 28). *Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice pay their tribute*. Retrieved from the Newzroom Afrika YouTube channel <https://youtu.be/pFDIMIUQDoo>

Nadar, S. (2022, January 3). *Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu*. Retrieved from the University of the Western Cape YouTube channel <https://bit.ly/ArchDesmondTutu>

All four of the Masters students have already registered for their PhD's under the auspices of the Tutu Centre, and two of them, Ashleigh Petersen and Rhine 'Toby' Koloti have been accepted into a prestigious ecumenical advocacy and training programme in Geneva, Switzerland. The programme runs for 5 months and bodes well for our goal of supporting global networking opportunities for our students. Two of our other students, Leona Morgan and Ishaya Anthony will spend a period of 6 weeks at University of Ghent in Belgium. These students are registered under the Partnership Agreement governing the joint supervision and awarding of a joint doctoral degree between UGhent and UWC.

In line with the global footprint that we are making, we are also enormously pleased that Megan Robertson, a Senior Researcher in the Centre, was awarded one of the most prestigious European research awards, the Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship, to the value of almost R4 million for her two-year project "Sex and the Sacred: Queering Black Performing Arts in South Africa." The project which will be hosted at the Centre for Religion and Public Life (CRPL), at the University of Leeds, forms part of our ongoing partnership with Adriaan van Klinken, Director of the CRPL and Extraordinary Professor at the Centre, and we look forward to strengthening those links.

It is also very pleasing to note that the kinds of research training that we are providing to our students prepares them for global opportunities and diverse careers. Just over a year after obtaining her PhD, and while registered as a postdoc fellow at the Centre, Megan was offered a Lecturer position in Social Anthropology at the prestigious King's College, London. We are also very pleased that we were able to keep Megan employed with us, via a counter-offer from UWC.

In summary, while still working within the context of the ongoing global pandemic, 2021 was an enriching and productive year for the Desmond Tutu Centre. When placing the passing of the Archbishop Emeritus Tutu alongside the achievements and accomplishments of our students and staff, we are able to clearly discern lines of continuity at the intersections of scholarly engagement and political action.

We are therefore pleased to present our annual report for the period May 2021- May 2022, under the following key thematic research focus areas of the Centre, as they intersect with the study of religion:

Gender and Sexuality

Media

Education

Politics and Race

Environment and Economy

In each of these areas, we have made remarkable progress in advancing the vision and objectives of the centre, which is to promote transdisciplinary research engagement that focuses on the critical intersections between Religion and Social Justice through:

≈ Facilitating ongoing debate and critical discourse on the intersections of Religion and Social Justice through conferences, workshops, seminars and other collaborations with civil society

≈ Engendering activist collaboration between academia and civil society

≈ Providing developmental resources such as research and graduate fellowships for the transdisciplinary study of Religion and Social Justice

≈ Publishing and disseminating the findings of research, through conventional academic means, such as books and journal articles, as well as public scholarship such as opinion editorials, podcasts and other public and social formats.

While Tutu's legacy (often unfairly) falls on hard times in a South Africa that has yet to provide a dignified and decent life for all of its citizens; we are reminded that the causes for which he fought so gallantly - gender and sexual diversity rights, Palestine's freedom, anti-racism, anti-corruption, dignified healthcare - all of these challenges remain. The work we do in the Centre, is one small way of continuing his legacy through scholarly interrogation of systems and structures that continue to deny dignity and justice to those relegated to the margins. We remain inspired by his fearlessness in speaking truth to power.

Sarojini Nadar

April 2022

Staff profiles

Director, Prof Sarojini Nadar holds the Desmond Tutu SARChI Research Chair (Tier 1) in Religion and Social Justice. Supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Lund Mission Society (LMS), the purpose of the Chair is to provide space to study how religious and faith traditions challenge or hold resources for social justice imperatives that produce sustainable societies. As an activist-academic, she is committed to intersectional socially engaged scholarship.



Her numerous publications span diverse topics of research at the intersections of gender studies and religion, including gender-based violence, HIV, masculinity studies and most recently gender in higher education. She sits on several international journal editorial boards including the Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, and she is also the editor-in-chief of the African Journal of Gender and Religion. Nadar is a B rated scholar by the National Research Foundation and has won numerous awards for teaching and research, among them the Department of Science and Technology Distinguished Young Woman in Science award in 2012; the Vice-Chancellor's Research Award at UKZN in 2015 and the Distinguished Teachers Award in 2013.

Senior researcher, Dr Lee Scharnick-Udemans' research focuses on religious diversity, pluralism and media. Dr Scharnick-Udemans graduated with a PhD in Religious Studies from the University of Cape Town in 2016. She is a Thuthuka grant-holder for a project that explores the intersectional nature of religion and media studies in religiously diverse democratic societies. Dr Scharnick-Udemans is also a trained filmmaker with expertise in documenting issues and phenomena related to the religious landscape in South Africa. She is a co-editor of the Journal for the Study of Religion and the managing editor of the African Journal of Gender and Religion, the media officer for the African Consortium of Law and Religion Studies and an executive member of the Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa. She is also an editorial board member of the newly established journal "Indigenous Religious Traditions" published by Equinox.



Senior Researcher, Dr Megan Robertson's research focuses on queer sexuality, gender, and institutional church culture. She obtained her PhD at the University of the Western Cape under the auspices of the Desmond Tutu SARChI Research Chair in Religion and Social Justice. Her study focused on the experiences of queer clergy in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and it was selected as a finalist for the African Studies Review, Best Africa-Based Dissertation. She held a LUCAS-LAHRI virtual visiting fellowship in 2021 at the University of Leeds and has most recently been awarded a Marie-Curie Individual Fellowship with the University of Leeds for a project on religion, sexuality and the arts. She is the associate editor for the African Journal of Gender and Religion and sits on the steering committee for the Religion and Sexuality Unity of the American Academy of Religion.



Administrator, Ms Ferial Marlie, has been with the Centre since late 2018. Apart from providing logistical and administrative support, she also has skills in online and print design, creating and updating social media pages, managing publication processes associated with academic journals, as well as a solid background in database administration, which makes her skills invaluable for postgraduate student administration. Ferial's scholarly interests are in the areas of Literature and Anthropology, with a specific interest in histories of enslavement and Islam in the Cape and its intersections with gender.



Student Research Interns



PhD Candidate, Rhine 'Toby' Koloti works within the focus area of religion, race and politics. His PhD research is on the relationship between black theology and public theology. His Master's thesis focused on pastoral care responses to clergy sexual abuse.



PhD Candidate, Ashleigh Petersen's research focuses works within the focus areas of religion, gender and media. Her PhD research is on digital religion and gender. Her Masters research focused on how clergy sexual abuse is engaged with on social media platforms.



PhD Candidate, Sakeenah Dramat's research falls within the religion and media focus area. Her PhD centres on the self-representations of Muslim women digital content creators in South Africa. Her Masters research explored mediated representations of Muslims and Islam within the context of public broadcast television.



Religion, Gender and Sexuality

Through this thematic focus area, the Centre seeks to foster critical research and civic engagement, which actively challenge the intersecting and systemic powers that produce and maintain the marginalisation and oppression of those who identify as woman and/or queer. Projects within this thematic focus draw on the variety of resources available within feminist, queer and masculinity studies to develop knowledge and just-action in the complex and diverse areas where religion, gender, and sexuality intersect. These include, but are not limited to: sexual and reproductive health rights, violence against women, sexuality, queer and trans identity and citizenship, women and leadership, and religious and cultural laws and tradition.

Student Graduations

We were pleased to have two PhD and two Masters students graduate under the thematic focus area of gender, religion and sexuality.

PhD

Linda Naicker

Thesis title: Food, Sex and Text: Exploring Survival Sex in the Context of Food Insecurity through Communal Readings of the Book of Ruth

Supervisor: Sarojini Nadar

While South Africa is regarded as a food secure nation, a recent study estimated that over 6 million people were faced with severe hunger due to COVID-19. Linda Naicker's study explored the gendered aspects of food insecurity and the phenomenon of survival sex within religious contexts. The original contribution of this study lies in its methodological approach which used bible study as a means of feminist participatory action research. This method produced rich and insightful data that also enabled expansive thinking around data production for academic research. The main conclusion of the study is that, any effective intervention regarding the dangers of survival sex as a subsistence strategy for women, must take into consideration the intersections of structural injustices and patriarchal religion, that leads to both the feminization of poverty and the feminization of survival.



Throughout my PhD journey, I received phenomenal support from my supervisor and the Desmond Tutu Centre Cohort system. From engaging regularly with my supervisor in the midst of the most trying time of our lives due to the COVID -19 pandemic to the numerous seminars, workshops and other forms of rigorous academic engagement and support, I was nurtured towards the completion of my degree.

I wish to convey my deepest gratitude to Prof Sarojini Nadar, all staff of the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice, the cohort of academic specialists, support staff, researchers and students who through collaborative, participatory and meaningful engagement, journeyed with me on the long road to PhD. ALUTA CONTINUA!!!"

Linda Naicker

Elizabeth Petersen

Title: Divine Interventions? Understanding the role of Christian religious belief systems in intervention programmes for men who abuse their intimate partners

Supervisor: Sarojini Nadar

Co-Supervisor: Johnathan Jodamus

Gender-based violence (GBV) against women in intimate relationships regularly feature in South African media to such an extent that the President declared it a shadow pandemic in 2020. While male perpetrators are often court mandated to attend intervention programmes, little research attention has been paid to the content of such programmes. In her thesis, Elizabeth Petersen, equipped with a great deal of practical social work experience, examined the religious dimensions of a selection of programmes. Her research question focused on how Christian beliefs about male supremacy and female submission feature in the interventions. The study found that while the organizations claim to be secular, the beliefs of the program implementers informed their interventions, in both productive and counter-productive ways. Notwithstanding, the thesis also found that to ignore religion within religiously pervasive contexts, is to the disregard a key resource for both victim-survivors and perpetrators.



“My PhD journey is summed up in the African phrase that “it takes a village” to complete a doctorate degree. My family, my supervisors and the Desmond Tutu Centre came as crucial midwives to birth the project.

Prof Sarojini Nadar’s extraordinary wisdom to discern through my chaos and holding a particularly gruelling sacred space as I got lost and found on this complex PhD journey, must be flagged as key in the successful outcome of this research project.”

Elizabeth Petersen

Masters

Rhine Koloti (Magna Cum Laude)

Thesis title: Pastoral Care Responses to Clergy Sexual Abuse: A case of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Supervisor: Sarojini Nadar

The multiple cases of clergy sexual abuse from different dioceses in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) prompted the Church to provide canonically binding guidelines and detailed processes in cases where sexual (and other) clergy misconduct is reported. While the Anglican Communion was clearly responding in some measure via the processes of pastoral care to the problem of clergy sexual abuse, there has been little critical interrogation of these measures. The purpose of this study was to critically interrogate the Pastoral Standards document to understand how the theologies which underpin the document reflect beliefs regarding gender, power, and abuse. These beliefs are analyzed against feminist pastoral care principles, for the ways in which they offer a victim-centered approach to sexual abuse.



“I would like to thank my postgraduate cohort peers who journeyed with me through this journey from its proposal stage to its completion, your time, engagement and critical inquiry helped shape this project. I would like to thank Dr Lee-Shae Scharnick-Udemans for stimulating my interest in academia and motivating me when I was at my lowest. My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor, Professor Sarojini Nadar, for all her guidance, patience, time and constructive criticism she provided in helping me complete this project. Her incredible insight and interest in feminist theology continues to be an inspiration. Words cannot describe how grateful I am for you Prof.”

Rhine Koloti

Claudene Sebolai

Title of Thesis: ‘Was Her Worth Only in Her Womb?’ A Feminist Reading of Revelation 12:1-6 in the Context of Women’s Bodies as Reproductive Capital

Supervisor: Johnathan Jodamus

Co-Supervisor: Sarojini Nadar

Using a feminist sociorhetorical analysis to problematise heteronormative readings of Revelation 12:1-6 that often perpetuate essentialist constructions of reproduction, this thesis utilized a rhetoric of the body approach as a crucial thinking technology. The thesis suggests that a feminist socio-rhetorical interpretation of this text allows for more liberating interpretive possibilities that transgress limited constructions of women’s bodies as reproductive capital.



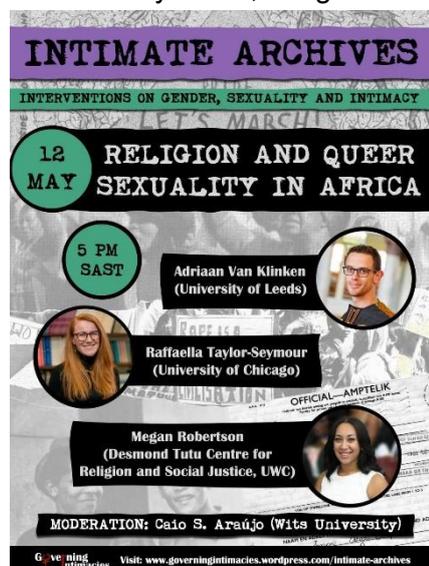
“Prof. S. Nadar and the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice, including the cohort supervisors, have provided me with a tremendous amount of support, for which I am really grateful. Thank you for permanently influencing my academic career. Prof. Nadar was introduced to me by my master's supervisor, Dr. J Jodamus, who invited me to join a cohort. Without the cohort space and the care and attention of my supervisors and the Centre, I do not believe I would have obtained my Master's degree, let alone an A+ on my thesis.”

Claudene Sebolai

Public Lectures, Workshops, Seminars and Roundtables

Intimate Archives: Religion and Queer Sexuality in Africa

On 12 May 2021, Megan Robertson participated in a webinar series titled “Intimate Archives: Interventions on Gender, Sexuality and Intimacy” which forms part of the broader Governing Intimacies Project, led by Srila Roy at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research. This international webinar series addresses issues of gender, sexuality and archives in the Global South. It creatively reconstructs archives not simply as historical curations but as contested terrains of intervention around which contemporary struggles for the past and the future are being fought.



Robertson’s paper titled, “South Africa as a Queer Utopia? The limits of the myth in the case of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa” featured in a session focused on religion and queer sexuality. In her paper she explored the limitations and consequences of the perpetuation of the discourse of a queer utopian South Africa within the context of religion. The three main points she made was: 1) that the discourse of South Africa as a queer utopia relies heavily on a secular human rights ideology in which religion is necessarily understood in opposition to queer rights and thus is left uninterrogated, 2) it centres the conversation around particular queer normative rights issues, especially same-sex marriage, thus “muting” wider discussions around violence, marginalisation and oppression of queer people and, 3) it homogenises queerness and flattens the intersectionality of queer experience forgetting that a “queer utopia” is centred around a particular queer normative experience.

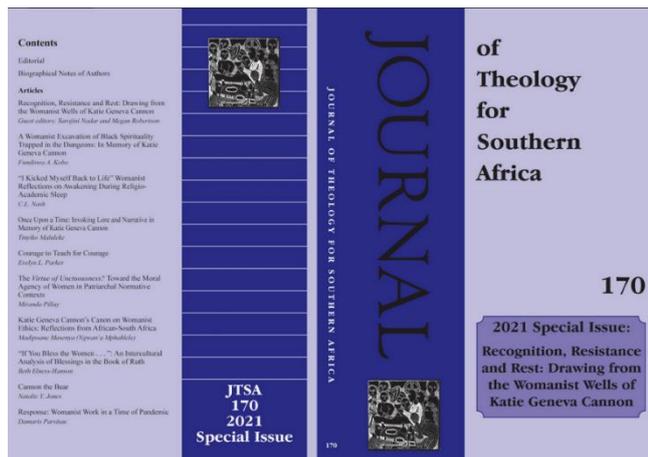
The Q&A following the presentations drew the panellists (which included world-leading scholar of religion and sexuality in Africa, Adriaan van Klinken and Raffaella Taylor-Seymour) into deeper conversations about what ‘queering’ religion looks like in different research contexts and what scholarship on religion contributes to (re)constructing a contested queer archive in Africa.

Special Journal launch: ‘Recognition, Resistance, Rest - Drawing from the Womanist Wells of Katie Geneva Cannon’

Guest edited by Sarojini Nadar and Megan Robertson, The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa (JTSA) published a special issue dedicated to exploring the work of the late womanist theologian, Katie Geneva Cannon. The Special Issue was launched as part of the Centre’s annual Economies of Violence symposium on 26 August 2021.

The welcome by Gerald West, the editor of the JTSA, was followed by a video of Katie Geneva Cannon’s keynote address at the 2017 Women in Ministry Conference at Princeton Theological Seminary titled “Thinking with our hearts, feeling with our brains.” This was followed by responses from the special issue editors as well as Madipoane Masenya, a trailblazer in the field of Old Testament studies in South Africa and a contributor to the issue. Following this, two selected contributors. Those who knew Cannon spoke about the amazing person she was, and those who knew her through her work, spoke about her contribution to black scholarship and the struggles of

both black and women scholars in the academy. The launch event also carved out space to remember



some of the black women activists and scholars of religion in South Africa who had passed on in recent months. This included Alease Brown, a postdoctoral fellow of the Centre, who had originally served as the co-editor of this special issue. A poetry reading by Veronique Jephtas titled, “My body is a temple” served as both the conclusion for the journal launch and an introduction for the Economies of Violence roundtable discussion which took place later that day. Nobesuthu Tom, on her experience of the launch:

“Participating in this launch added two things to my understanding of the academy. One, appreciation of the courage of women of past generations to bring up for scrutiny the forces that perpetuate the oppression of women in society. Two, the fact that this issue contained mostly work from women scholars, points to the endurance with which later generations of women carry the baton to resist oppression.”

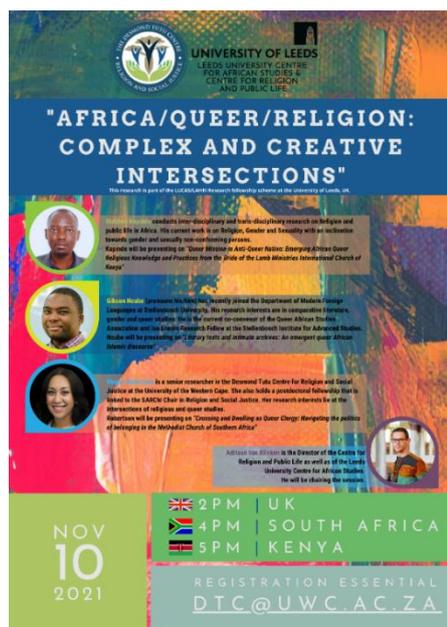
Economies of Violence: Religion, Resistance, Rest

On 26 August 2021, the Centre hosted the 5th Annual Economies of Violence symposium, titled Religion, Resistance, and Rest. This was the second year in which the event was held virtually, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This event takes place in August each year marked as it is, by two significant events in South Africa’s history: The anti-apartheid women’s march which happened on 9 August 1956 and the Marikana massacre on 16 August 2012, in which 34 miners were killed by the police at the Lonmin mine. These events bring up for scrutiny the “Economies of Violence” that continue to sustain the indignity and the poverty which women, queer people, and marginalised black people in South Africa disproportionately experience. The COVID-19 pandemic simply exacerbated this reality. The 2021 symposium considered the importance of resisting/transcending the epistemic violence which demands that black women focus on research and teaching that is perpetually located within pain and suffering. The keynote presented by Sa’diyya Shaikh titled, “Islamic Feminist Imaginaries: Love, Beauty, and Justice” reflected on examples of contemporary Muslim love ethics/politics as a way of moving toward gender inclusivity and social justice. Fatima Seedat responded by furthering the position that the personal is political, by discussing love and the spiritual as political. Farah Zeb, also considered spiritual reflections and practices which inspire joy and rest.

The complete roundtable discussion can be found in the African Journal of Gender and Religion, December 2021 issue <https://journals.uj.ac.za/index.php/ajgr/article/view/1048/673>.

The symposium was recorded and can be found on the University of the Western Cape’s YouTube channel <https://youtu.be/vGJGUI06fZw>.

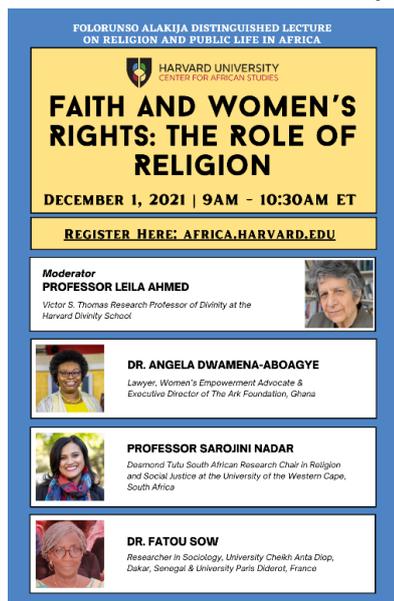
Africa/Queer/Religion: Complex and Creative Intersections



On 10 November 2021, the Tutu Centre partnered with the Leeds University Centre for African Studies (LUCAS) and Centre for Religion and Public Life (CRPL) to host a virtual seminar on the complex and creative intersections in studies on Africa, queer sexuality and religion. The three speakers were recipients of the 2021 virtual LUCAS-LAHRI fellowship at the University of Leeds, all of whom worked with Adriaan van Klinken on developing journal articles or grant applications. Stephen Kapinde presented on “Queer mission in anti-queer nation: Emerging African queer religious knowledge and practices from the Bride of the Lamb Ministries International Church of Kenya”, Gibson Ncube presented on “Literary texts and intimate archives: An emergent queer African Islamic discourse”, and Megan Robertson presented a paper titled, “Crossing and dwelling as queer clergy: Navigating the politics of belonging in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.”

Harvard University lecture: Folorunso Alakija Distinguished Lecture on Religion and Public Life in Africa: Faith and Women’s Rights: The Role of Religion

On 1 December 2021, Sarojini Nadar was invited to be one of the keynote speakers at the annual Alakija Folorunso Distinguished Lecture on Religion and Public Life, hosted by the Centre for African Studies at Harvard University.



The theme of the event in 2021 was "Faith and Women's Rights: The Role of Religion." The event was moderated by the renowned scholar of Islam and gender, Leila Ahmed, from Harvard Divinity School. Nadar's paper was entitled "Epistemic Erasure of Faith and Feminism: Exploring the desacralization and depoliticization of women's rights discourses in Africa." In her paper, Nadar engaged in human rights debates that essentially view “faith” as non-compatible with “rights.” She argued that erasing faith for its ostensible authority and power in maintaining normative and oppressive social and cultural ideals of gender and sexuality misses the transformative capacities of faith traditions; but more importantly, she argued that the ability to transform faith traditions through sustained critical study of the same, is also lost. This has pernicious ramifications for women's rights. Similarly, in the absence of a feminist framing - women's rights are

reduced to empty and meaningless grand gestures that do not necessarily translate into freedoms on the ground for women. She concluded that addressing the topic of women's rights in Africa without critically engaging the epistemic erasure of the two "f" words - faith and feminism, coupled with a persistence of the sacred/secular binary, ultimately results in more harm than good.

American Academy of Religion

 AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION The American Academy of Religion Conference took place in a hybrid format in November 2021. Megan Robertson presented a paper with, co-author, Mujahid Osman from Emory University titled, "Reading for queer African agencies: A comparative case study of Christian and Islamic queer agencies in Africa."

Abstract:

Conventional research has shown that religious and cultural discourses continue to produce and support systems and actions which marginalise many queer people in Africa. Understanding, subverting, and transforming the regimes of power at play is vital and necessary for a queer intellectual and political project. However, scholarship that seeks to do so often limits these possibilities through liberal Euro-American or secular centred conceptualisations of queer agency. This has meant that scholars in Africa have often located queer religious agency in limited ways with those who occupy positions of power and who have access to financial and legislative protection and support thus ignoring the multiple personal, cultural, social and economic contexts which shape, limit and give rise to the variety of ways in which norms are resisted, negotiated and inhabited. This paper aims to expand the conceptualisation of queer religious agencies by exploring the ways in which queer Christian and Muslim people in Africa navigate their religion and sexuality. Drawing on our ethnographic and textual research with queer Christians and Muslims in South Africa, we theorise the ways in which queer religious subjects relationally produce agencies enabling them to experience and make meaning of their lives while negotiating the political economy of religion and sexuality.

Resistance, Survival and Remaking: The Everyday in Liberative, Constructive, and Practical Theologies Colloquium



**LINCOLN
THEOLOGICAL
INSTITUTE**

On 28 and 29 January 2022, Megan Robertson, attended a conference hosted by post-doctoral researcher, Wren Radford, based at Lincoln Theological Institute (LTI) at the University of Manchester. The theme of the conference was using 'the everyday' as a framework for analysing inequality and for constructing theologies of ordinary practices of resistance and survival and forms part of a larger LTI funded project, 'The Embodied Everyday'. Robertson presented a paper titled, 'Agency is a queer thing: Ordinary queer agencies in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.' In her paper she argues for a queer(er) conceptualisation of agency through a discussion of the ways in which queer clergy in the MCSA navigate, experience, and disregard the politics of the same-sex marriage debate in the Church. This conference paper will feature in a future book project led by Radford.

Community Engagements

Hope Talk

In October 2021 Megan Robertson was invited by the LGBTIQ+ Task Team of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa to participate in their online seminar series for Queertober. Robertson participated in two separate panel discussions titled “Queer Theology: What is it?” (with Charlene van der Walt and Tebogo Klaas) & “What does it mean to be a queer ally?” (with Tebogo Klaas and Michelle Bonzaaier). This invitation emerged directly from Robertson’s research with queer clergy in the MCSA. She continues to share her publications and work with the task team and engage with them on what this means for advocacy and activist strategies in the Church.

HOPE-TALK ONLINE

JOIN US:

06 October @ 19h00 - 20h00

Topic: Queer Theology: What is it?

Hope-Talk Online Facebook page

#QUEERToberConversations

Hope-Talk online is resource to the LGBTIQ faith community, providing Queer affirming: liturgy, lectionary reflections, conversations and events for LGBTIQ siblings and allies that will support the continued work for justice and inclusion within the spaces of church and community. Hope-Talk is a project of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa's Connexional LGBTIQ Task Team.



HOPE-TALK ONLINE

JOIN US:

20 October @ 19h00 - 20h00

Topic: What does it mean to be a LGTBIAQ Ally?

Hope-Talk Online Facebook page

#QUEERToberConversations

Hope-Talk online is resource to the LGBTIQ faith community, providing Queer affirming: liturgy, lectionary reflections, conversations and events for LGBTIQ siblings and allies that will support the continued work for justice and inclusion within the spaces of church and community. Hope-Talk is a project of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa's Connexional LGBTIQ Task Team.



Publications

Edited Books

Hadebe, N., Genrich, D., Rakoczy, S. and **Tom, N.** (Eds.). (2021). *A Time Like No Other: COVID-19 in Women's Voices*. Cape Town: Jive Media Africa.

van Klinken, A. and **Chitando, E.** (Eds.). (2021). *Reimagining Christianity and Sexual Diversity in Africa (African Argument series)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van Klinken, A., Stiebert, J., Sebyala, B. and Hudson, F. (Eds.). (2021). *Sacred Queer Stories: Ugandan LGBTQ+ Refugee Lives and the Bible (Religion in Transforming Africa series)*. Oxford: James Currey Publishers.

Edited Journals

African Journal of Gender and Religion, December 2021

The December 2021 issue of the AJGR features four articles that highlight the persistence of gendered systems of power – even within spaces and with people who seemingly disrupt those same systems. While the four essays highlight the taken-for-granted ways patriarchy, heteronormativity and colonialism persists in literature, the church, and amongst domestic workers, they also demonstrate how religion continues to provide avenues for transformative change. The following articles are contained in this issue:

Fiona Moolla

“Her Heart Lies at the Feet of the Mother: Transformations of the Romance Plot in Leila Aboulela’s *Minaret*”

Justice Kyei, Elizabeth Yalley and Emmanuel Antwi

“Negotiating Gendered Leadership Positions within African Initiated Christian Churches in Amsterdam”

Susheela Mcwatts

“The Role of Religion in the Lives, Agency, and Activism of Domestic Worker Leaders”

Tracey Sibisi and Charlene van der Walt

“Queering the Queer: Engaging Black Queer Christian Bodies in African Faith Spaces”

This issue also featured the roundtable discussion between keynote Sa’diyya Shaikh, and respondents, Fatima Seedat and Farah Zeb which took place as part of the Centre’s annual “Economies of Violence” colloquium. This issue featured two book reviews, Selina Palm reviewed Élize Féron’s, *“Wartime Sexual Violence Against Men: Masculinities and Power in Conflict Zones”* and Johnathan Jodamus reviewed Chammah Kaunda’s, *“Genders, Sexualities, and Spiritualities in African Pentecostalism”* “Your Body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit’.”

Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, Special Issue, August 2021

The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa (JTSA) published a special issue dedicated to exploring the work of the late womanist theologian, Katie Geneva Cannon. The Special Issue was titled Recognition, Resistance, Rest: Drawing from the Womanist Wells of Katie Geneva Cannon and was co-edited by Sarojini Nadar and Megan Robertson.

Book chapters

Robertson, M. (2022). Butch lesbians, femme queens and promiscuous clergy: Queering the body politics of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. In C., Starkey & E., Tomalin (Eds.). *Routledge Handbook of Religion, Gender and Society* (pp. 193-207). New York: Routledge.

Robertson, M. (2021). Tutu the Ally: Lessons from Archbishop Desmond Tutu's LGBTIQ+ advocacy. In S., Nadar et al (Eds.). *Ecumenical Encounters with Desmond Mpilo Tutu: Visions for Justice, Dignity and Peace* (pp. 109-113). Cape Town: UWC Press and Oxford: Regnum Publishing.

Koloti, R. (2021). Rebuke, Repair, Reconcile: Stretching Tutu's Restorative Justice for Contexts of Sexual Violence. In S., Nadar et al (Eds.). *Ecumenical Encounters with Desmond Mpilo Tutu: Visions for Justice, Dignity and Peace* (pp. 114-120). Cape Town: UWC Press and Oxford: Regnum Publishing.

Kgabe, V. (2021). Tutu's Visionary Inclusive Leadership with Regard to Women's Ordination to the Priesthood. In S., Nadar et al (Eds.). *Ecumenical Encounters with Desmond Mpilo Tutu: Visions for Justice, Dignity and Peace* (pp. 93-98). Cape Town: UWC Press and Oxford: Regnum Publishing.

Jodamus, J. (2021). Troubling gender scripts: mothering and childbearing in 1 Timothy 2:8-15. In J., Havea & J., Melanchthon (Eds). *Bible Blindspots: Dispersion and Othering* (pp. 185-204). Oregon: Pickwick Publications.

Journal articles

Nadar, S. & Robertson, M. (2021). Rest, Recognition and Resistance: Drawing on the Womanist Wells of Katie Geneva Cannon. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 170, 7-18.

Robertson, M. & Nadar, S. (2021). Queering the Ecclesia: Exploring "Institutional Culture" as a path toward a socially just church. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 47 (3), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/9466>

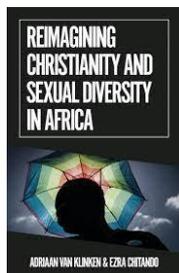
van Klinken, A. & Muyunga-Mukasa, T. (2021). "Accused of a Sodomy Act": Bible, Queer Poetry and African Narrative Hermeneutics. *Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies*, 2(2), 25-46.

van Klinken, A. (2021). Religion, Gender and the Pluriversity': Creative Imaginations. *Religion and Gender* 11(1), 130-133. https://brill.com/view/journals/rag/11/1/article-p130_16.xml

Book endorsements

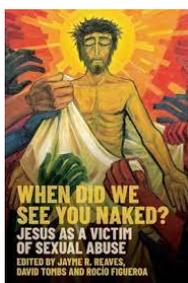
Sarojini Nadar has written the following book endorsements in the area of gender and sexuality:

'Reimagining Christianity and Sexual Diversity in Africa' by Adriaan van Klinken and Ezra Chitando



"In this accessible and engaging book, Van Klinken and Chitando offer unique scope for the reimagination of queer African Christianity. The nuanced accounts of queer agency, frames, shapes, and disrupts the field, beyond conventional tropes and conceptions about Africa and Christianity."

When Did We See You Naked? Jesus as a Victim of Sexual Abuse edited by Jayme R. Reaves, David Tombs, Rocio Figueroa



"The collection of essays in this volume, appealing in both form and content, invites us to strip bare conventional hetero-patriarchal norms of what constitutes sexual abuse. The bold hermeneutical meanderings in the essays, make solidarity between text and context possible. The volume will certainly inspire courageous and challenging conversations which are likely to unravel normative assumptions about the sacred and the sexual."

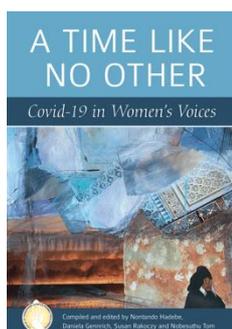
Research Projects

“Sex and the Sacred: Queering Black Performing Arts in South Africa”

Megan Robertson was awarded a Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship to conduct a 2-year project which will be hosted at the University of Leeds.

“Sex and the Sacred” is an interdisciplinary project that explores sexuality and the sacred in the work and lives of Black queer creative artists in South Africa. By using the concept of the sacred this project allows for religion/spirituality to be studied outside of the context of institutionalised religion and belief and to explore how the sacred becomes embodied and is performed in art as well as everyday practices. This will be done through an ethnographic exploration of the lived experiences of twelve Black queer performing artists in Cape Town. The project is particularly interested in exploring the potential of the performing arts for (re)constructing the narrative of queerness in South Africa. This is significant in a national context where religion is used to both, prop up anti-queer attitudes and discourses, but also inspire dreams for a rainbow queer utopia and motivates activism towards this. The performing arts have long been central in South African histories of Black resistance and remains equally significant in current queer resistance movements. The project thus also aims to theorise Blackness as an important intersection that shapes how sexuality and the sacred is negotiated and to analyse how the performing arts functions as a site for a queer Black consciousness. “Sex and the Sacred” holds great potential for (re)imagining political and social orders and queer futurity in the country. It is one of the most innovative and extensive studies to contribute to a growing body of literature that nuances hegemonic ideas of what it means to be queer in postcolonial Africa.

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians



The Centre continues to support the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. After the launch of its book, “A Time Like No Other: COVID-19 in Women’s Voices”, in 2021, the Circle was invited by a number of organisations to conduct readings of the stories in the book. The Centre’s representative at the Circle, Master’s student, Nobesuthu Tom, participated in these sessions.

The Circle’s project for 2022 focuses on women’s experiences of racism. Tom is leading this project, with a team of co-editors.

Religion and Media



Given the rapidly increasing presence, power, and persuasion of digital and electronic media on the African continent and in the global economy, the study of religion and the media is a flourishing field of intellectual inquiry. A focus on religion and media highlights how representations of religious identity, formations of community, and questions of authority are constructed and contested in mediated and mediatised spaces and the consequences of these multifaceted arrangements for offline experiences and environments. Furthermore, media spaces may contest as well as re-inscribe traditional discourses, ideologies and practices of power and privilege, inclusion and exclusion while offering novel spaces for these productions and circulations of identity, authority, and community. With this thematic area the Centre advances approaches, both theoretical and methodological, that foreground the multiple and complex relationships between religions and media.

Student Graduations

Masters

Sakeenah Dramat

Thesis title: Representations of Islam and Muslims on a public broadcast television programme in South Africa: A Case Study of An Nur the Light

Supervisor: Lee Scharnick-Udemans

Sakeenah’s research explored mediated representations of Muslims and Islam within the context of a public broadcasting lifestyle program, “An Nur The Light”. The study contributes to the growing field of religion and media studies and offered fresh insights on the dynamism of this intersection, based on a thematic, content analysis of a television programme. The study found that with regards to Muslim media representation, the South African context is substantively different from the problematic Islamophobic representations that dominate media representations in and from the Global North as a result of Muslim self-expression enabled through national media policies and practices that media products such as *An Nur* engender.



“The supervision and support I received has strengthened my resilience and nurtured my vulnerability as an emerging scholar. Without these, this thesis would not even have been a pipe dream.”

Sakeenah Dramat

Ashleigh Petersen (Cum Laude)

Thesis title: “He asked me to pray afterward”: Exploring Cheryl Zondi’s mediated court testimony as a narrative of clergy sexual abuse”

Supervisor: Sarojini Nadar

Co-Supervisor: Lee Scharnick-Udemans

Ashleigh Petersen’s thesis focused on the court testimony of Cheryl Zondi, who was sexually abused by her pastor, Timothy Omotoso. She explored how social media provided a site for exploring the ways in which patriarchal religious interpretations of gender and power are supported or challenged through a narrative of sexual abuse. Overall, the dissertation provided crucial insights regarding patriarchal religious norms relating to gender and sexuality that are essential for researchers interested in how individuals engage with sexual and faith-based norms, in the context of sexual violence generally, and clergy sexual abuse specifically. Ashleigh was awarded her degree *Cum Laude* pass.



“To my supervisors, thank you for pushing me beyond my limits and continuously making me reach new heights. Your never-ending guidance, motivation and unconditional support extended beyond this dissertation. For this, I am incredibly grateful.”

Ashleigh Petersen

Public Lectures, Workshops, Seminars and Roundtables

Sacred Writes

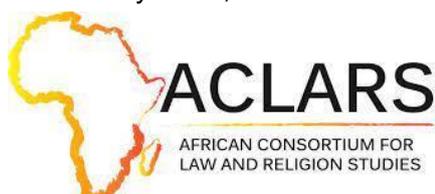
In May 2021 Lee Scharnick-Udemans took up a four-month fellowship with [Sacred Writes](#), a programme hosted by North Eastern University in Boston, Massachusetts aimed at developing the public scholarship of scholars of religion. This intensive program is a project in bridging the distance, literal and epistemological, between the academy and public and popular culture. The multi-modal program comprises formal learning sessions on topics related to writing for the public including, explainers, opinion editorials, audio-visual techniques, pitch deliveries to the editors of high impact public scholarship sites such as the Conversation US and Religion News, as well as group work and peer to peer engagement.



This opportunity builds on Scharnick-Udemans' existing research as a scholar of religion and media and is directly aligned to the Centre's commitment to engaged scholarship that is feminist, intersectional, and transdisciplinary. In line with the outputs associated with this program in early January, Scharnick-Udemans published a piece with the Daily Maverick, on the topic of uniform policy and [religious diversity](#).

African Consortium of Law and Religion Studies

On 16 May 2021, Lee Scharnick-Udemans presented a paper at the annual conference of the African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS). Due to COVID restrictions the conference was hosted entirely online. ACLARS is a collective of scholars from the continent and beyond who are interested in how religion, law, and issues of justice intersect and imbricate in African contexts. Scharnick-Udemans is also the media officer for the organisation. This year's conference theme was "Law, Religion and the Family". Alongside colleagues from Benin and Côte d'Ivoire, Scharnick-Udemans participated in a panel on the "Mediatization of the Family" and presented a paper entitled, "Reflections on the Mediatization of Religious Freedom through Religion Education in South Africa." In this paper Scharnick-Udemans provided an empirically substantiated discussion that explored how issues around religion, religious diversity, and freedom are depicted and negotiated within the context of a children's television program produced by the national broadcaster.



The presentation raised questions about the potential and limitations of projects in mediatized religious pluralism especially

in light of complex issues related to representations and representivity within media logic dominated milieus. As a Thuthuka grant holder for a project on the mediatization of religious diversity and religious pluralism, Scharnick-Udemans' participation is important for developing additional critical and creative avenues for engaging mediatization of religion and for contributing to ongoing explorations on the potential and limitation for and of religious freedom within multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts.

Recordings of the sessions can be accessed [here](#).

Public Scholarship

'Classical Ideas' Podcast Episode Discussion

In August 2021, as a result of her participation in the Sacred Writes program at North-Eastern University, Lee Scharnick-Udemans was invited to participate as a guest on the Classical Ideas podcast hosted by Greg Soden. The Classical Ideas podcast is one of the leading podcasts on religion with the core goal to “to empower students with the core knowledge of major world religions to improve citizenship and agency in a diverse society.” The interview focussed on the particularities of how religious diversity can be observed, theorised and analysed through the foregrounding of mediated representations.

[Classical Ideas Podcast Episode 224 Religious Pluralism in South Africa with Scharnick-Udemans](#)

Publications

Journal articles

Scharnick-Udemans, L. S. (2021). Feminist Pandemic Pedagogies: Podcasting and the Study of Religion. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 34(1), 1-22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2021/v34n1a6>

Book reviews

Scharnick-Udemans, L.S. (2022). Enqi Weng, Media Perceptions of Religious Changes in Australia: Of Dominance and Diversity and Felicitas Becker, Joel Cabrita and Marie Rodet, Religion, Media and Marginality in Modern Africa. *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*, 35(1), 126–130. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jasr.22174>

Research Project

Pilot Study with Judah Square Community: Religious Diversity and Media Project

After many cancellations due to COVID-19 Lee Scharnick-Udemans was finally able to accept an invitation from the Rastafarian community of Judah Square, Knysna to meet with senior members to discuss her project on religious diversity and media. The Judah Gate community comprises the largest population of Rastafarians in South Africa. Gaining access to this community, and such intimate access especially, is quite difficult and consent was granted through “reasoning” sessions with local, regional, national and international gatekeepers and decision makers. Permission was granted from the highest authority of the Rastafarian religious authority board located in Jamaica.

The pilot study conducted formed part of the NRF Thuthuka project of which Scharnick-Udemans is the grant holder. The project explores the medialization of religious pluralism and religious diversity in South Africa. This community was identified because initial findings, exploring how religious communities and religions are represented in South Africa as well as how they represent themselves, revealed two things. First, the Rastafarian community is generally far less present and/or visible in both mass media and social media. Second, the community is usually represented negatively in news media which has resulted in the predominance of narrow misrepresentations of the religion and its practitioners being produced and circulated. Narrow media representations focus on topics related to cannabis consumption and issues around sartorial representation in terms of dreadlocks. In both its visibility and invisibility, Rasta representation in the media, indicated the need to connect with the community in order to understand their experiences and opinions about media representations of their religion and to develop an understanding of their own approach to media.

The discussions revealed three potential outcomes/developments

- 1) The need for a thorough overview of news and popular representations of Rastafarians in South Africa.
- 2) A wider discussion on Rastafarian experiences of exclusion from any form of economic mobility that the cannabis industry may provide.
- 3) The need to include Rastafarianism within religion and theology curricula at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and to actively promote research and teaching in the area of Rastafarianism.

Through these initial meetings the feasibility of the project was established and research plans are in process.



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Religion and Education

The decolonial turn in global higher education, has prompted a paradigmatic shift in the study of religion, that scholarship from South Africa is poised to lead. The shifts are both epistemological and pedagogical. This focus area explores indigenous/localised as well as subjugated/marginalised knowledge and meaning making in the study of religion. What knowledge is being produced, how is such knowledge created and engaged with, and who is producing such knowledge are key questions that are asked. Furthermore, critically reflecting on pedagogical praxis is a key task in this context, hence transforming the content and the processes required for more decolonial, feminist and queer pedagogies, forms the basis of this focus area. As such, the postgraduate training workshops and supervision offered within the Centre is considered an important step towards “educational justice.” The postgraduate training programme is a project in the decolonisation and democratisation of education. Through structured and focused thematic workshops the process of academic writing is demystified and students are given the necessary support they need to navigate the research process.

Public Lectures, Workshops, Seminars and Roundtables

UWC Research Week Roundtable

The theme of the 2021 Research Week was “The UWC contribution to fighting and understanding the COVID-19 pandemic.” On 28 September 2021, Lee Scharnick-Udemans facilitated a roundtable discussion entitled “Research for Social Justice and Socially Just Research: Exploring Paradigms and Practices during a Pandemic.” The panellists were Megan Robertson from the DTC, Lorato Mokwena (Linguistics), Amiena Peck (Linguistics) and Sisa Ngabaza from Women and Gender Studies. The conversation was based on a series of provocations regarding the ways in which the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in society and highlighted the need for research approaches, theories and methodologies that are intersectional in orientation.

Early Career Mentorship Workshop

On 2 March 2021, Sarojini Nadar facilitated an early career mentorship workshop with staff in the Centre on topics directed at offering insight and advice about the challenges and conventions of the academy. Nadar provided an overview of NRF ratings and, with a clearer idea of the benchmarks, both of the early career scholars in the Centre have positioned themselves on a particular trajectory for rating and future career goals. Scharnick-Udemans and Robertson also shared their publication plans for 2021 and together they discussed appropriate publication outlets.

Postgraduate Poster-making workshop

In 2019, Rhine ‘Toby’ Koloti and Ashleigh Petersen presented academic posters explaining their Master’s research at the Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa’s (ASRSA) 41st Annual Congress. This is the leading academic association dedicated to the non-confessional study of religion in Southern Africa. The academic poster presentations were well received at the conference and began a new tradition for students in the DTC. In preparation for the 2021 conference Rhine and Ashleigh offered a comprehensive research poster workshop to students in the Centre.

Data Analysis and Theory Building Workshop: Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity



The Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity invited Sarojini Nadar to facilitate a workshop for early career academics working under the auspices of the “Engaging African Realities” research focus area. On 7 April 2022, Nadar facilitated a workshop on Data Analysis and Theory Building.

The purpose of this workshop was to examine approaches to data analysis and theory building when preparing research for publication. Through interactive and collective engagement with a selected publication, participants were invited to examine methods of data analysis that lead to innovative and novel theory building. The aim of the workshop was to inspire systematic, critical and creative processes that will enable participants to make meaningful connections, in their own research, between findings, theory building and knowledge claims.

NRF Rating Workshop: School of Education, UKZN

At the invitation of the Research Leader in the School of Education, UKZN, Sarojini Nadar facilitated a workshop on 4 August 2021, for academics seeking to apply for NRF rating. The workshop focused on the often-contested subjects of rating, review and recognition, while also offering practical advice on how to work within the problematic norms of the system.

Department of Religion and Theology Seminar Series

Three Master's students, Nobesuthu Tom, Rifqah Tifloen, and Sakeenah Dramat, presented their research proposals at the Department of Religion and Theology seminar series on 11 May and 1 June 2021.

Nobesuthu Tom: 'The Conceptualization of African Traditional Religion in liberal White Scholarship in South Africa'

Rifqah Tifloen: 'Constructing and Conserving the Urban Sacred': A decolonial-feminist exploration of Urban Sacred Natural Sites'

Sakeenah Dramat: 'Representations of Islam and Muslims on a public broadcast television programme in South Africa: A Case Study of *An Nur The Light*'



From left: Nobesuthu Tom, Rifqah Tifloen and Sakeenah Dramat.

Students presented their literature reviews, methodologies and theories and received feedback from experienced scholars and peers in the department. This feedback was helpful as it revealed some of the blind spots in the students' work, particularly in terms of pointing out the taken-for-granted concepts students sometimes use. Peers also offered helpful guidance with regards to literature. These seminars also provided an opportunity for students to practice their presentation skills, an important skill for students to hone as many of them have begun to participate in national conferences.

Teaching

Queering Religion Reading Group

In the first semester of 2021, Megan Robertson partnered with a colleague at Emory University, Mujahid Osman, to establish a multi-faith, interdisciplinary and international reading group with emerging scholars who work at the intersections of religion and sexuality. This group serves as a platform for scholars to engage around key concepts and texts in ways that cross the imagined boundaries of religion, discipline, and location. The group was attended by nine scholars and researchers in the US, UK and South Africa, located within the fields of theology and religious studies, and working on Christianity and Islam in all the locations represented and including China. The literature engaged included:

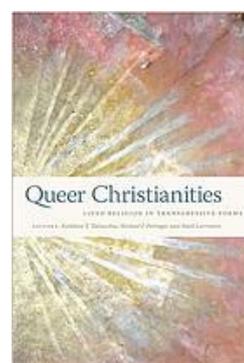
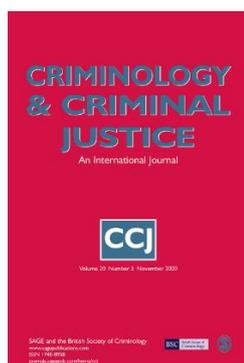
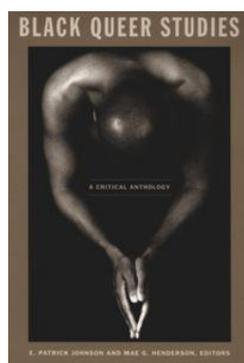
Cohen, C. 1997. Punks, bulldaggers and welfare queens: The radical potential of queer politics? *GLQ*, 3: 437- 465.

Smith, A. 2010. Queer theory and native studies: The heteronormativity of settler colonialism. *GLQ*, 16 (1-2): 42 - 68.

Copson, L. & Boukli, A. 2020. Queer utopias and queer criminology. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 20 (5): 510 - 522.

Hunter, D. 2015. Celibacy was queer: Rethinking early Christianity. In *Queer Christianities: Lived Religion in Transgressive Forms*, Talvacchia, K., Pettinger, M. & Larrimore, M (Eds.). New York and London: NYU Press, 13 - 24.

Literature engaged:



ReligioTheo Reading Group

The ReligioTheo Reading Group is an on-going project in knowledge production about religion and theology hosted in the Centre. It is facilitated by Lee Scharnick-Udemans and comprises a core cohort of postgraduate students, along with local and international academics who join the group for specific sessions.



In the second semester of 2021, The ReligioTheo reading group media cohort welcomed guest academic, religion and media expert Enqi Weng from Deakin University, Australia for a discussion on race, religion and media. Weng’s lecture described the ways in which Muslims and Africans are erroneously represented in news media and theorised how these representations are then exploited for political gain. The ensuing discussions revealed many similarities between the dynamics of race and religion in South Africa and Australia. The students also delivered short research presentations and were able to benefit from Weng’s expertise and experience.



A second guest of the media cohort was Jasjit Singh of Leeds University. Singh shared his insights on religion, race and media in the context of Great Britain and especially as it related to representation of Sikhism and narratives of extremism. The reading group is a space where students are challenged to read beyond the traditions with which they are familiar and also to enable a consciousness regarding social justice issues beyond the local contexts. The workshop with Singh epitomised this mission, as students were able to deeply engage issues of religious identity, religious diversity and the politicisation of religion and race.

Theories, Politics, Action



AFRICAN GENDER INSTITUTE

University of Cape Town, African Gender Institute

In the first Semester of 2021 and 2022, Megan Robertson was invited by Fatima Seedat to guest lecture for a third-year module titled, “Theories, Politics, Action”. The course aims to ground students in contemporary debates within African feminist theory through feminist knowledge and its relationship to movements and activism. Robertson delivered two lectures in 2021 and one in 2022 that focused on postcolonial African feminist critiques of religion and queer activism and religion.

Religion, Sexuality, and Gender



University of Cape Town, Department for the Study of Religions

In the first Semester of 2021 and 2022, Megan Robertson delivered a series of lectures on Christianity, gender and sexuality. This formed part of a second-year course, “Religion, Sexuality and Gender” convened by Sa’diyya Shaikh. Over a series of six lectures, Robertson introduced students to debates about the ways in which Christianity is both oppressive and liberating for women. Students were asked to explore feminist theologies and the lectures and assigned readings contextualised these theories in relation to African and queer women’s experiences.

Religion and Media in Africa



University of Cape Town, Department for the Study of Religions

Between August and September 2021 Lee Scharnick-Udemans offered a series of lectures on Religion and Media in Africa.

In these seminars she engaged the complex changes which media technologies bring to bear on religious life, organisations and understandings through two converging and competing theories, mediation and mediatisation. The cases of how indigenous African religions interact with the media were discussed as well as the historical and political context of religion and media in South Africa.

Religion and Media



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

University of Leeds, School of Philosophy, Religion and the History of Science

In November 2021, Lee Scharnick-Udemans was invited by Jasjit Singh to offer a lecture on the topic of religion and media in South Africa. In mapping the historical and contemporary contexts of religion and public broadcasting in South Africa, Scharnick-Udemans revealed surprising continuities between apartheid and democratic media policies and practices.

Moral Discourses on Gender and Human Sexuality



University of the Western Cape, Department of Religion and Theology

This third-year ethics course was facilitated in the second semester of 2021 by Megan Robertson. Rhine Koloti and Sakeenah Dramat also joined as student assistants and tutors. In this module we study how moral discourses are formed around gender identity and sexual diversity. We also examine the ways in which these moral discourses are being transformed by those who act with individual and collective 'moral agency' to "talk back" to the discursive production of sexual and gender norms. The module focuses in particular on the ways in which cultural and religious traditions in general (Christianity in particular) are responsible for the formation of moral discourses on gender identity and sexual diversity and the ways in which these discourses are challenged from the lived experiences of those who identify outside of the gender and sexual norms. Framed within a strong feminist ethics approach the module focuses on lived experiences as they are represented in a selection of documentary films and other media forms related to the topics.

This module took place online for the second time. Despite the difficulties this teaching format brings, participatory interaction was encouraged through the use of an online class gallery where students could introduce themselves to the group as well as through zoom tutorials. Due to the content of the module we found that students, more than any other year, were seeking mental health support as discussions regarding rape and GBV were triggering for some. Unfortunately, we found that the UWC mental health services were overwhelmed by the student demand and we therefore arranged for the services of a registered counsellor, Lynn-Joy Isaacs, who has worked with the Centre before, to provide additional support for urgent cases. While we made it clear that we were not trained to provide professional support services, the teaching team also made themselves available for students to talk through their emotional difficulties with the course content, an offer which many students took up.

The experiences of the facilitators (Johnathan Jodamus, Megan Robertson, and Sarojini Nadar) who have taught this module since 2018 forms the basis of a forthcoming paper in *Critical African Studies* titled, “Transdisciplinary, Transgressive and Transformative: Pedagogical Reflections on Sexual Ethics, Religion, and Gender”.

Owning Feminist Theorizing: Theories of Feminism/Trends in Contemporary Feminist Theory



University of the Western Cape, Women & Gender Studies

In the first semester of 2022, Megan Robertson, co-taught a postgraduate module on feminist theory with Desiree Lewis and Mary Hames. “Owning Feminist Theorising” equips postgraduates with a knowledge and understanding of key global philosophical traditions, writers and publications that are relevant to their location in South Africa. Conventionally, feminist theorising is seen in terms of “waves of feminism”: such as the first, second and third waves. This western-centric categorisation conveys the linear evolution mainly of North American, Western European and British feminism in scholarship and the academy. This course encourages postgraduate students’ familiarity and ease with navigating and using feminist traditions (from both the global North and the South) - from the perspective of being located in South Africa.

Intersectional Approaches to the Study of Religion

The course explores how religion features and functions as an intersection of privilege and power. It explores various theoretical, methodological, and empirical approaches to the study of religion that allow for an intersectional analysis of religious diversity in South Africa and beyond. The following guest lecturers have offered the expertise on the course. Mujahid Osman, an emerging gender and Islam expert and PhD candidate offered a lecture and discussion entitled, “Islam and Intersectionality: Mapping the Contours of Tradition”. Christina Engela, author and leading Pagan rights activist delivered a lecture entitled, “Enter the Dragon: Moral Panic in South Africa & the Alternative Religions Forum.” Tammy Wilks, a PhD candidate from the University of Cape Town offered a lecture entitled, “Material Encounters in a Religiously Diverse World.” The offerings of these guest lecturers provide students with the opportunity to test the theoretical underpinnings of the course and also expand their networks of scholarly community through close engagement with others working in the field.

The Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice welcomes guest academic, **Mujahid Osman** for a discussion on **religion and intersectionality**

Islam and Intersectionality: Mapping the Contours of Tradition
By Mujahid Osman



Mujahid Osman is a doctoral student in the Graduate Division of Religion at Emory University. His work is at the intersection of Islam, progressive politics, queerness, coloniality, and liberation theology. He is also pursuing a certificate in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Emory University. Mujahid holds a Master of Global Affairs with an International Peace Studies concentration from the University of Notre Dame where he examined forms of prophetic theologies and its role in building conditions of just peace in the city of Jerusalem. He has worked with social justice organizations in Cape Town for over four years. His work focused on political economy, liberation theology, and religious ethics.

Date: Wednesday, 23 March 2022 | **Time:** 4:30pm to 6:30pm | **Venue:** Google Meet | **Link:** <https://meet.google.com/zyzn-pokh-laf>

Readings and preparatory resources for the session are available upon request

Email Sakeenah Dramet for more information: sakeenah.dramet@myuwc.ac.za

The Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice welcomes guest academic, **Christina Engela** for a discussion on **religion and intersectionality**

Enter The Dragon: Moral Panic in South Africa & the Alternative Religions Forum
By Christina Engela



Christina Engela is a Pagan rights activist, author, and community organizer. She is the author of the book *Enter the Dragon: Moral Panic in South Africa & the Alternative Religions Forum*. She is also a frequent speaker at conferences and events related to Paganism and intersectionality. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Cape Town.

Date: Wednesday, 20 April 2022 | **Time:** 8:30am to 9:30am | **Venue:** Google Meet | **Link:** <https://meet.google.com/afmz-pgze-akem?si=4726a3e3e3e3e3e3>

Readings and preparatory resources for the session are available upon request

Email Sakeenah Dramet for more information: sakeenah.dramet@myuwc.ac.za

Research Training and Development

Postgraduate Training Cohorts

In March 2022, the Centre held its first in-person cohort supervision support workshop in two years. We welcomed back a few returning students, some of whom had completed their Masters and now joined as PhD students. We also met with many new students who were joining the Centre for the first time. The first workshop ran over three days facilitated by the Centre team, as well as facilitators and supervisors from outside the Centre including, Johnathan Jodamus, and Fatima Seedat (UCT).



The theme of the first workshop was ‘Literature Review and Research Focus’. The purpose was to help students develop and sharpen their research focus, questions and objectives. Students were asked to prepare preliminary literature reviews to present to the group with the aim of encouraging them to allow for their research focus to derive directly from the gaps (or areas for further exploration) that they have identified in their review of literature. To assist students with their preparation we provided helpful PowerPoint presentations and tutorial videos developed by Seedat and Robertson. The first session was attended by 16 students, including one Honours student. The team was impressed with students’ participation, commitment and excitement towards this novel form of supervision. Throughout the workshop we witnessed consistent lively and critical engagement and an initial sense of community seemed to form, something which we try to encourage and facilitate in our cohort sessions. On the final day we refined each students’ research purpose and questions through the process of a gallery walk and each student left with clear guidelines and timelines. Of course, there were students who demonstrated less commitment and accountability than others and we aim to manage this by implementing particular progress requirements for future cohort sessions. This not only enables us to hold students accountable but also respects the mutuality and feminist framings of the cohort space. Listed below are some of the broad areas that students are researching in:

Student	Area of focus
PhD	
Ashleigh Petersen	Religion, Gender and Sexuality Christianity, digital religion and gender
Sakeenah Dramat	Religion and Media Representations of Muslim women digital content creators
Rhine Koloti	Religion, Politics and Race The relationship between black theology and public theology

Claudene Sebolai	Religion, Gender and Sexuality Pentecostalism, Sexual Trauma and Gender
Pam Delport	Religion and Gender Exploring women's leadership experiences in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Ishaya Anthony	Religion and Media Public Pedagogy and the socio-political economy of religious media
Leona Morgan	Religion, Gender and Sexuality Childhood Sexual Trauma in Adult Survivors: A Collaborative Autoethnographic Study Exploring Spontaneity, Spirituality and Embodiment
Masters	
Nobesuthu Tom	Religion, Politics and Race Tracing the Epistemological Foundations of African Religion*: A decolonial exploration of David Chidester's work
Aamira Benjamin	Religion and Media Religion and digital practices of shaming
Claudene Sebolai	Religion, Gender and Sexuality Pentecostalism, Sexual Trauma and Gender
Cameron Shabangu	Religion, Politics and Race Critiquing White Ecclesial leadership in Multiracial South African Neo-Pentecostalism
Carl Adams	Religion, Gender and Sexuality
Harold Jansen	Religion, Gender and Sexuality Socio Rhetorical Interpretations of 1 Corinthians in the context of Sexuality
Phathisani Sibanda	Religion, Gender and Sexuality Queer Theologies and African Liberation Theologies
Suhail Kapdi	Religion, Gender and Sexuality Transness/Queerness as anti/religious/spiritual
Tswelofele Makoe	Religion, Gender and Sexuality Expressions and experiences of African Religion via social media.

Honours

Kauthar Marlie	Religion and Media "Occultism" and digital media
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The postgraduate development workshops have been a flagship offering of the Centre, and while we were pleased to have the in-person cohort workshop in March 2022, we also had to adapt to the ways of meeting in 2021. When, in the middle of May 2021, it became clear that it would not be possible to gather safely in the ways that this cohort of students were accustomed to, we sent out a communique informing students that we will meet in different formats for 2021. There were two reasons for this. The first, and obvious, was the circumstances of the pandemic, and the enormous toll that online meetings take on both the facilitators and students. The second, is that many of the students were either in their final stages of dissertation writing, or in the data analysis phase. We encouraged those who were in these stages to work independently or to seek support from the

communities of practice they had created with each other. For those who did not fall into the category of final stages of writing or data-production, we arranged three different sets of miniature cohorts as organised around thematic focus areas.

Religion and Media

Meetings are planned collaboratively and fine-tuned to suit the specifics of each project while still speaking to the broader theoretical and methodological orientations of the group. Group and individual meetings “catch-up” sessions wherein progress statuses on the various projects are discussed along with the various challenges that each student faces with regard to their projects. In 2021, group meetings were focussed on the theoretical concepts of “mediation and mediatization” and the prospect of digital religion studies for Africa.

In 2022 the cohort on religion and media research grew from three to six students. Students and supervisors meet fortnightly for extended individual sessions and a number of group sessions.

Race and Religion

Two Masters students form part of this small cohort, as they are working specifically within the area of race and religion. This first meeting was to formulate a plan of working together through the different stages of dissertation writing: literature review, theories and methods, and data/textual analysis. The subsequent meeting was to focus on specific chapters. Nobesuthu Tom submitted a draft of such outstanding quality that it has been recommended that her registration be upgraded from Masters to PhD. This recommendation is currently being taken up at the various levels of the university higher degrees system.

Theological Education

Recognising that some of our students come to us after an extended break from academia, a proposal writing tutorial series was designed and implemented to assist students in this mini-cohort who were struggling with their proposal writing or who needed a ‘refresher’. The tutorial programme was designed to assist students in moving from reading about and conceptualising their proposed research and communicating this in a full research proposal. Each week students were assigned readings that provided helpful and practical ways to think about and write each section of the proposal. Students were then required to submit a section of their proposal each week for commentary. We then met and students would receive their feedback as well as input on what is required for the next section. Each week following this they were expected to submit a revised draft of the previous sections addressing the feedback and comments received as well as submit a new section. While students attended all the sessions and participated in all the readings and discussions, unfortunately due to personal circumstances, students were unable to commit to writing as extensively as was required for the programme to work. Since then, due to personal health reasons, Natalie has taken a leave of absence, with the hope to rejoin us in 2023. Pam has continued her studies and aims to submit her proposal by September 2022.

Publications

Journal article

Parker, E. (2021). Courage to Teach for Courage. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 170, 56-73.

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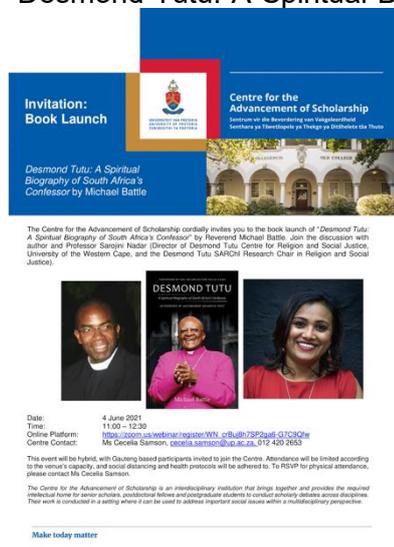
Religion, Politics and Race

With this thematic area, the Centre encourages research, conversations and partnerships that challenge the taken for granted nature of concepts and configurations such as democracy, equality, justice, reconciliation, and human rights in the social sciences and society. In light of the role of religion in general, and Christianity in particular, in both the colonial and apartheid projects, the Centre is dedicated to exploring the possibilities for social justice through scholarship that engages religion as a critical concept and as a central component of human existence. This is demonstrated through our commitment to providing teaching and research that prioritises giving voice and visibility to religious traditions, and aspects of religious experiences that have hitherto been marginalised in the academy. Seemingly neglected areas of exploration in post-apartheid South Africa such as Black Theology and religious diversity are also explored.

Public Lectures, Workshops, Seminars and Roundtables

Book launch: Michael Battle's Desmond Tutu: A Spiritual Biography of South Africa's Confessor

On 4 June 2021, Sarojini Nadar was the discussant at the launch of Michael Battle's new book: "Desmond Tutu: A Spiritual Biography of South Africa's Confessor." The launch was hosted by the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, at the University of Pretoria. Nadar provided a critical analysis of the book's main contention, and offered a recommendation of the book, which will serve as a blurb for the South African imprint as follows: "In this remarkable account of the Arch's life, Michael Battle shifts the paradigm of biographical research about Desmond Tutu beyond the popular trope of 'political priest.' Through a careful filtering of his life through the three stages of mysticism – purgation, illumination and union, Battle makes a convincing case that Tutu's political actions for justice was not in spite of his deep spirituality, but because of it. This ethnographic spiritual biography shatters the false binaries between the sacred and the secular, between spiritual contemplation and social action thereby inviting us to the warm embrace of a more authentic spirituality."



Nadar's response was published as a review essay in "The International Journal of Black Theology" Volume 19, No. 3. As a result of the networking through this event, Michael Battle joined the Centre as an Extraordinary Professor in 2021.

Religious "Software" Supporting and Maintaining the Occupation in Palestine

The event was attended by 66 local and international participants. Over the past few years, the Centre has created and supported efforts in solidarity with the people of Palestine. On 15 June 2021, Sarojini Nadar, moderated an international webinar that focused on the ways in which selected Christian beliefs produce the justification for, and maintenance of, the occupation in Palestine. These beliefs were conceptualised by the keynote speaker, world renowned scholar, Mitri Raheb, as "religious software." The seminar focused on seemingly innocuous Christian interpretations of scripture and history, that lead to the destruction and devastation of Palestinian lives and livelihoods.



The webinar was also a commemorative space that began with the lighting of a candle to remember the lives lost in this struggle. It was followed by a video contextualising South African solidarity with Palestinian struggles ([see link DTCRSJ Tribute to South African Solidarity with Palestine](https://tinyurl.com/7fcmefpw)) and finally a poignant moment of criticality and commemoration was made possible by Sakeenah Dramat who performed the poem, "We teach life, sir" by Rafeef Ziadah.

Annual Symposium of the International Centre for Law and Religion Studies: Africa Panel

Lee Scharnick Udemans was invited to participate in a pre-recorded regional panel for the 2021 Annual Symposium of the International Centre for Law and Religion Studies. The theme of the Regional Session - Africa (co-sponsored by the African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS) and West African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (WARCLARS))

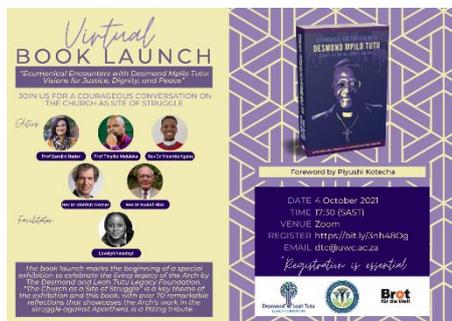


Symposium was "Finding Collaborative Solutions to Promote Freedom of Religion or Belief." Scharnick-Udemans was asked to share her views on the state of religious freedom in Africa, with a special focus on South Africa and mediated representations thereof. Other panellists included, Akinola Ibidapo-obe former director of the Centre for Human Rights at the

University of Lagos and Kofi Quashigah, Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Ghana and President of the African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies.

Book launch: Ecumenical Encounters with Desmond Mpilo Tutu: Visions for Justice, Dignity, and Peace

On 4 October 2021, three days before Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s birthday, the book ‘Ecumenical Encounters with Desmond Tutu: Visions for Justice, Dignity, and Peace’ was officially launched online

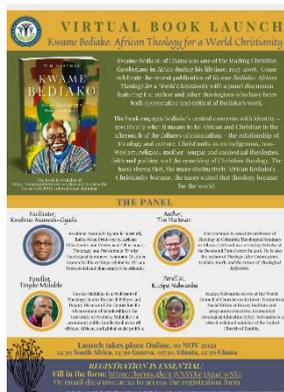


by the Tutu Centre in partnership with the Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation and the German organisation, Bread for the World. The launch marked the official lead up event towards the Arch’s 90th birthday celebration and it was creatively thought out by the organisers to be divided into a two-part virtual event.

Moderated by the renowned public intellectual Lovelyn Nwadeyi, the first part of the launch was a premiering of a documentary of voices and visuals from the authors and editors who read extracts from the book. The second part took the form of a “Courageous Conversation” examining the rationale of the church as an institution and site for struggle.

Throughout the event, it became hard to ignore that the Arch was not only the Archbishop of Cape Town but in fact the Archbishop of the World.

Book launch: Tim Hartman’s “Kwame Bediako: African Theology for a World Christianity”



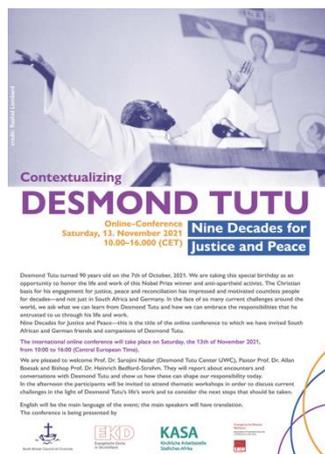
On 10 November 2021, the Centre hosted the virtual launch of Tim Hartman’s book, “Kwame Bediako: African Theology for a World Christianity.” Leading Ghanaian scholar of African Christianity, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu facilitated the discussion with the author and panellists, renowned theologians Tinyiko Maluleke and Kuzipa Nalwamba.

This book presents—for the first time—a thematic introduction to the theology of Kwame Bediako of Ghana, the most significant African theologian of his generation.

There were several key points that arose from the discussion:

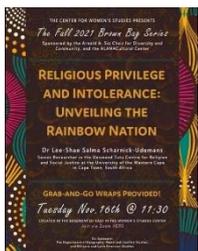
- The study of Bediako presses readers to interrogate their theological convictions. Reflecting on Christian identity in light of cultural presuppositions, Bediako asked what it meant to be African and Christian after the shortcomings of colonialism. Amid today's increasing secularisation and globalisation, we must ask what it means to be Christian in Europe, North America, and the global South. The book reveals the cultural blinders that all Christians wear (since there is no such thing as pure theology) through an exposition of seven major themes of Bediako's work: Identity, Translatability, History, Mother-tongue scriptures, Contextual theology, the Remaking of Christian theology, and Politics.
- The book demonstrates that Christianity is a non-Western religion (serving as a resource for World Christianity amid the exponential growth of Christianity in the global South) and expands the canon of resources to expand the Christian theological imagination. Many Christian leaders seek input for situations which the seminary did not prepare them for. Hartman's book presents an alternate (non-Western) foundation for theological reflection and a path for post-Christendom theologies and corrects inaccurate portrayals of African Christianity, by Philip Jenkins and others.
- The book offers a profound exploration of the interaction of gospel and culture that simultaneously challenges Reinhold Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* as well as offers an alternate understanding to Kathryn Tanner's *Theories of Culture*. The book proposes a way forward in thinking about questions of religious pluralism and presents an African Christian theologian who values (and does not simply reject) African traditional religions.

Contextualizing Desmond Tutu: Nine Decades for Justice and Peace



Sarojini Nadar was invited to be a keynote speaker at a conference, organised and hosted by the German organisation, Die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) on 13 November 2021. The theme of the conference was "9 decades for peace and justice: Contextualising Desmond Tutu," and the title of Nadar's paper was "Tutu's Inspiration for Intersectional and Indignant Struggles for Justice." The organisers requested Nadar to speak on the topic of gender-based violence and sexual diversity struggles within Tutu's legacy. In her paper, she shifted the focus from the material realities of gender-based-violence, to the more subtle and everyday acts of racial and gender-based violence in an unlikely space - the contemporary South African academy. Drawing on an auto-ethnographic case study of multiple micro-aggressions she has experienced with White supremacist and patriarchal operations of power in the religion and theology empire, Nadar demonstrated how struggles for justice are ongoing. Other speakers at the event included Allan Boesak and Heinrich Bedford-Strohm who respectively contemplated on Black Theologies and Public Theologies as reflected in the life and witness of Desmond Tutu.

Centre for Women’s Studies, Colgate University. Religious privilege and Intolerance: Unveiling the Rainbow Nation

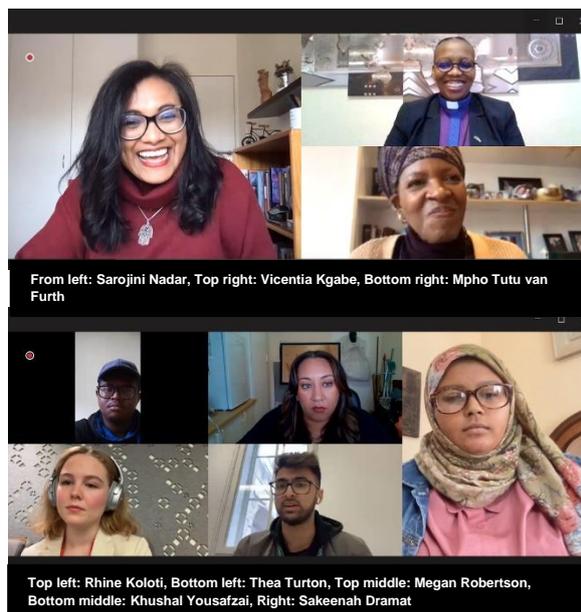


On 16 November, Lee Scharnick-Udemans delivered a lecture for the Centre for Women’s Studies, Colgate University Brown Bag series. Her talk was entitled, “Religious privilege and intolerance: Unveiling the Rainbow Nation.” The talk explored the surveillance and scrutinisation of Muslim women’s sartorial choices and highlighted the limited utility of rainbowism and constitutional religious freedom at the rock face of intolerance and exclusion.

Desmond Tutu: Spirituality, Social Justice and Leadership

On 6 April 2022, the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, King’s College London, which was Desmond Tutu’s *alma mater*, and the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice, University of the Western Cape, where Desmond Tutu served as Chancellor for 25 years, hosted a colloquium to commemorate the life and legacy of a global icon. The purpose was to reflect together on how Tutu intersected spirituality and social justice in a distinctive kind of leadership and what we can learn from this.

The programme covered a comprehensive range of themes, and brought together established and emerging scholars to reflect on Tutu’s theology, politics and moral and spiritual contributions to various social issues and causes.



American Academy of Religion

Sarojini Nadar presented a paper at the newly formed "Tutu Theology Unit" at the American Academy of Religion, on 19 November 2021. The theme set for the panel was: "The Legacy of Desmond Tutu: Ubuntu, Spirituality and Restorative Justice." In the spirit of not presenting Tutu's work reductively or as complete, Nadar presented a paper which focused on ongoing struggles for intersectional justice in South Africa. She argued that it is unhelpful to use a postcolonial approach to examine Tutu's legacy especially when postcolonial is used as a chronological marker - as in "post-Apartheid." She proposed a decolonial framing instead, which emphasises the ongoing coloniality of being in contemporary South Africa, and a desire to dismantle those systems of power and hegemony that persists even in a so-called post-apartheid context. Central to her paper was the idea that the personal beliefs that undergirded racialised systems of rule, did not disappear with the outlawing of Apartheid legislation. In fact, they re-appear with a vengeance in more subtle and un-recognisable ways, and so the work of restorative justice is rendered far more complex when everyday micro-aggressions are obscured by paternalistic and patronising systems of power and privilege. The session was moderated by Michael Battle, a renowned biographer of Desmond Tutu, and Willie Jennings was the respondent.

Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa Conference: Poster Session

This panel at the ASRSA symposium maintained a tradition set by the Centre to sponsor a poster panel on student research. In 2021 three students participated in this panel and the style and substance of their presentations were lauded by many participants as innovative and sophisticated.

Name of Participant	Title of Panel Abstract
Rifqah Tifloen (UWC)	Constructing and Conserving the Urban Sacred
Sakeenah Dramat (UWC)	The politics of media representations of Islam and Muslims on public television in South Africa
Nobesuthu Tom (UWC)	The conceptualisation of African Traditional Religion in liberal white scholarship in South Africa

"I found the ASRSA Conference to be a welcoming space to share ideas. Listening to the wide range of research projects out there gives one a better idea of what students are working though in the field and where there could be gaps in the study of Religion. Attending the annual general meeting was also interesting as we could gain closer insights into the funding and operations side behind the conference and association. I am privileged to engage with and learn from the scholars who presented and my seniors like Dr Scharnick-Udemans who was closely involved in the organisation of the entire conference and pulling it all off online!" Rifqah Tifloen

Course on African spirituality

From 3 to 8 June 2021 Master's student, Nobesuthu Tom attended a course on African Spirituality, hosted by the Sustainability Institute at Stellenbosch University. The course was facilitated by Mmatshilo Motsei, a renowned African feminist scholar and author of 'The Kanga and the Kangaroo court: Reflections on the Rape Trial of Jacob Zuma.'



The aim of the course was to explore the intersection between African Spirituality and Sustainable Development. Through the adoption of decolonial pedagogies each day comprised practice and reflections on African Spirituality which took place both within and outside of the traditional classroom setting. In addition to her attendance as a participant, Tom was invited to provide an introductory discussion on African Spirituality.

Tom found the course valuable for both her academic and personal understanding of African Spirituality. She found the content covered under the topics of birth stories, relationship with the land, and the feminine relevant to her research on African Traditional Religion and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Her attendance and participation at this event underscore the Centre's commitment to ensuring that African religions are centred within the study of religion and theology.



Publications

Edited Books

Nadar, S., Maluleke, T., Werner, D., **Kgabe, V.** and Hinz, R. (Eds.). (2021). *Ecumenical Encounters with Desmond Mpilo Tutu: Visions for Justice, Dignity and Peace*. Cape Town: UWC Press and Oxford: Regnum Publishing.

Bergmann, S. & **Vähäkangas, M.** (Eds.). (2021). *Contextual Theology: Skills and Practices of Liberating Faith*. New York: Routledge.

Hartman, T. (Ed.). (2021). *Kwame Bediako: African Theology for a World Christianity*. Cumbria: Langham Publishing.

Book chapters

Nadar, S. (2021). Introduction: A Moral Constitution for Justice, Dignity and Peace. In S., Nadar et al (Eds.). *Ecumenical Encounters with Desmond Mpilo Tutu: Visions for Justice, Dignity and Peace* (pp. xii-xxix). Cape Town: UWC Press and Oxford: Regnum Publishing.

Scharnick-Udemans, L.S. (2021). Religious Privilege and Intolerance: Unveiling the Rainbow Nation. In S., Nadar et al (Eds.). *Ecumenical Encounters with Desmond Mpilo Tutu: Visions for Justice, Dignity and Peace* (pp. 283-290). Cape Town: UWC Press and Oxford: Regnum Publishing.

Vähäkangas, M. (2021). Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Ecumenism: The Kimbanguist Church as a Test-Case for the World Council of Churches. In D., Munteanu (Ed.). *Okumene ist keine Haresie": Theologische Beiträge zu einer ökumenischen Kultur* (pp. 455-471). Leiden: Brill.

Vähäkangas, M. (2021). Doing Situated Theology: Introductory Remarks about the History, Method, and Diversity of Contextual Theology. In S., Bergmann & M., Vähäkangas (Eds.). *Contextual Theology: Skills and Practices of Liberating Faith* (pp. 1-14). New York: Routledge.

Vähäkangas, M. (2021). World Christianity as Post-colonialising of Theology. In S., Bergmann & M., Vähäkangas (Eds.). *Contextual Theology: Skills and Practices of Liberating Faith* (pp. 221-237). New York: Routledge.

Journal articles

Scharnick-Udemans, L.S. (2021). Decolonising Religious Studies in South Africa: Reflections on the field 26 years after democracy. *Religion Compass*, 15(4), 1-11. DOI: 10.1111/rec3.12393

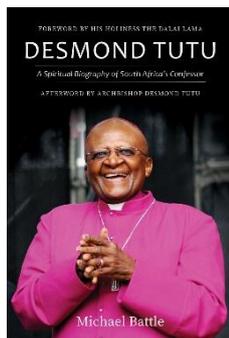
Anthony, I. & Forster, D. (2021). I Must Honestly Confess That I Am Afraid of You: Prophetic Preaching as Public Theological Engagement in a Context of Socio-Political Fear. *International Journal of Public Theology* 15(3), 369-384. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697320-01530005>

Vähäkangas, M. (2021). Navigating ethnicity, nationalism and Pan-Africanism – Kimbanguists, identity and colonial borders. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 77(3), 1-8.

Nadar, S. (2021). Beyond a "Political Priest" Exploring Desmond Tutu as a "Freedom-Fighter Mystic". *Black Theology*, 1-8.

Book endorsement

Michael Battle, *Desmond Tutu: A Spiritual Biography of South Africa's Confessor*



In this remarkable account of the Arch's life, Michael Battle shifts the paradigm of biographical research about Desmond Tutu beyond the popular trope of 'political priest.' Through a careful filtering of his life through the three stages of mysticism – purgation, illumination and union, Battle makes a convincing case that Tutu's political actions for justice were not in spite of his deep spirituality, but because of it. This ethnographic spiritual biography shatters the false binaries between the sacred and the secular and between spiritual contemplation and social action thus inviting us to the warm embrace of a more authentic spirituality.

Public Scholarship

The purpose of public scholarship is to offer considered reflections and provocations on issues of social significance. Staff in the DTC are inspired by the thematic research areas to respond via opinion editorials, podcasts and other public and social formats.

Sarojini Nadar. 2021, 'A time for collective grief: Reflections on the Phoenix Massacre', Mail and Guardian, 29 July 2021 <https://mg.co.za/opinion/2021-07-29-a-time-for-collective-grief-reflections-on-the-phoenix-massacre>

Sarojini Nadar. 2021. 'Towards a moral constitution for justice, dignity and peace', Sunday Times, 10 October 2021 <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/opinion-and-analysis/opinion/2021-10-10-towards-a-moral-constitution-for-justicedignity-and-peace/>

Sarojini Nadar. 2021. 'Recollections give an insight into Tutu', Cape Argus, 20 October 2021, <https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/cape-argus/20211020/281706912877405>

Community Engagement

UWC PSA and DTCRSJ collaboration for IAW 2022

The Tutu Centre was approached by the UWC–PSA to collaborate on the Israeli Apartheid Week 2022 campaign. Given the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions the Centre’s main involvement included joining a social media campaign supporting the efforts of the UWC-PSA to raise awareness for the cause. PhD Candidate, Sakeenah Dramat, delivered solidarity ribbons to staff and students and curated a number of social media posts, stories and reels which embodied the Centre’s orientation to Israeli apartheid in Palestine and invoked Tutu’s words when he spoke of his experience on a visit to Palestine: “A true peace can ultimately be built only on justice.”



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Religion, Environment and Economy

This thematic focus area foregrounds the connections between anthropocentric and androcentric discourses, as well as the dynamism between economic exploitation and other forms of oppression and marginalisation. It explores how religion, environment, and economy intersect and connect with culture, politics, community, heritage, and indigenous knowledge systems. This thematic focus area interrogates religion's entanglements within the institutionalisation of economic oppression and examines the resources available within religion to destabilise prevailing imbalances of economic power. Both environmental and economic justice are linked to moral principles which support the possibilities for people to live dignified material lives rooted in creativity and productivity.

Student Graduations

PhD

David Dorapalli

Thesis title: Daughters as Water-Fetchers: 'Streamlining' Water-Gender Dialectics in Biblical Narrative

Supervisor: Sarojini Nadar

Co-Supervisor: Johnathan Jodamus

The focus of this thesis was to engage with five biblical passages, namely Genesis 24, 1-21, Genesis 29, 1-14, Exodus 2, 11b-21, 1 Samuel, 1-14 and John 4, 4-26, in the context of water scarcity, as well as the burdening of women with the task of water-fetching in many rural communities. The issue of water sustainability received much attention during the 2018 Cape Town drought. While it is often said that water scarcity will drive future world wars, the urgency of water shortages have unfortunately not resulted in a greater appreciation of water as a resource, nor of the gendered task of water fetching in many traditional communities. Using a gendered eco-critical lens, David Dorapalli explores the ways in which women and water feature in a selection of biblical narratives, mining them for insights into the dual oppression of women and the planet. His innovative and original engagements with the narratives, provide much scope for a theological re-imagination of global ecosystems.



“First and foremost, I want to express my sincere thanks to Professor Dr. Sarojini Nadar, my doctoral adviser and supervisor, as well as my co-supervisor, Dr. Johnathan Jodamus, for their steadfast support and direction during this dissertation process. The Desmond Tutu Center for Religion and Social Justice's Cohort Seminars provided invaluable inspiration during the initial stages of this project, particularly learning from the valuable expertise of professors such as Professor Dr. Sarasvathie Reddy, Dr. Fatima Seedat, and Dr. Lee Scharnick-Udemans. My deepest appreciation to you and my outstanding colleagues for patiently and carefully guiding me.”

David Dorapalli

Community Engagement

Blog

Tifloen, R. (2022, April 26). *Sustainable Faith and Livelihoods: The Need to Promote Freedom of Religion or Belief in Development - Earthlife Africa*. Retrieved from <https://earthlife.org.za/sustainable-faith-and-livelihoods-the-need-to-promote-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-in-development/>

Publications

Books

Naidoo, P. (2021). *Wild Has Roots*. Durban: Poetree Publications.

Edited Journals

African Journal of Gender and Religion, Special Issue, July 2021

This special issue of the African Journal for Gender and Religion is entitled “Sacred Earth and African Women’s Theology.” This publication emerges from the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians’ (the Circle) Fifth Pan-African Conference, held at the University of Botswana (July 2-5, 2019). The special issue interrogates, not only the links between gender, land, race, class, ethnicity, colonialism, globalisation and environmental sustainability; it specifically focuses on contextual examples of the ways that women, nature, sacred sites, and theology are connected. The volume is also dedicated to honouring the memory of Alease Brown, a postdoctoral fellow in the Centre, who was the initial lead editor of this special issue before her untimely passing.

The following articles are contained in this issue:

Louisa Johanna Hannelie du Toit	“A Dark Green Religious Analysis of the Life and Work of Wangari Maathai (1940 - 2011)”
Linda Naicker	“Sisters in Solidarity: Resistance and agency Through Urban Community Food Gardens in Pietermaritzburg”
Gertrude Aopesyaga Kapuma	“Gender and Access to Land Ownership: The Experience of Malawian Widows and the Absence of the Church”
Sophie Chirongoma and Ezra Chitando	“What Did We Do to Our Mountain?”: Religious Responses to Cyclone Idai in Chimanimani and Chipinge districts, Zimbabwe”
Mutale Kaunda	“Mother Earth, Mother Africa and African Women’s Role in Indigenous Religions”.

Book chapters

Vähäkangas, M. (2021). Nature and Colonial Hybridity: Lars Levi Laestadius's Karesuando Sermons. In H., Heimbrock and J., Pesch (Eds.). *Eco-Theology: Essays in Honor of Sigurd Bergmann* (pp. 91-118). Leiden: Brill.

Journal articles

van Klinken, A. (2021). Wangari Maathai's Environmental Bible as an African Knowledge: Eco-spirituality, Christianity, and Decolonial Thought. *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*, 7, 1-20. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23277408.2021.1922129>

News

Renewal of Director Contract

At its board meeting of 29 April 2021, the board unanimously approved the renewal of Sarojini Nadar's contract as Director of the Centre for a further period of 5 years beginning on 1 August 2021.

Appointment of Megan Robertson as Senior Researcher

Megan has made an enormous contribution to the work of the Centre in the past three years, and on 1 September 2021, we were delighted to welcome her in a more formal capacity.

National & International Partnerships

Extraordinary Professors

In September 2021 the Centre motivated the appointment of five extraordinary professors and one research fellow. These colleagues have an established relationship with UWC in general and the Centre in particular, and their appointments serve to galvanise these relationships in order to enhance what are already mutually fruitful partnerships. Students at the Centre interviewed a selection of the newly appointed extraordinary professors and fellows.

Extraordinary Professors: Khaled Beydoun, Michael Battle, Damaris Parsitau, Ezra Chitando and S N Nyeck. **Research Fellow:** Vicentia Kgabe

Interview with Khaled Beydoun



Describe your “connection” to the work and researchers of the DTCRSJ

As a law professor and Critical Race Theorist, my work is driven by racial justice and interrogating how the law perpetuates racial inequities on a domestic and global scale. My focus on Islamophobia, specifically, aligns with the mission of the DTCRSJ.

What are your current research, teaching, and academic service projects?

I serve as a law professor at the Wayne State School of Law in Detroit Michigan, teaching an array of law school classes. I also serve as an Associate Director of the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights, and am a Scholar-in-Residence at Harvard University. Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society.

How do you plan to use your new position to enhance research, teaching, and academic service between the Centre and your networks?

My goal is to bridge the geographic and disciplinary lines between the Centre and my institution, and find innovative and dynamic new ways to educate students at both sites. I firmly believe that harmonising insights from South Africa and the U.S. could enhance the educations of both students, and create synergies that transform students' outlooks.

In what way (s) do you feel your research examines the intersections of and overlaps between religion and social justice?

My research, if anything, ties rigorous legal inquiry with accessibility. I take great pride in making my work, on Islamophobia and otherwise, accessible and understandable to lay audiences, young students, and working class communities. This is particularly true for Islamophobia, which I am most recognized for, where I've been committed to making the real life, everyday experiences of Muslims – especially during the War on Terror – understandable through a social justice frame.

What advice can you offer post-graduate students and emerging scholars?

Above all, it's key to follow your intellectual passion and genuine interests. Doing so will enable you to find your true voice, and will make an academic life far more than just a job or career – but a labour of love.

“I am super excited to be part of the Centre and community, and look forward to teaching a class – on the ground – at the University of Western Cape very soon.”

Interview with Michael Battle



Describe your “connection” to the work and researchers of the DTCRSJ

An essential research component of my books and teaching is on Desmond Tutu’s theology and spirituality.

What are your current research, teaching, and academic service projects?

I recently finished my book, *Desmond Tutu: A Spiritual Biography of South Africa’s Confessor*. My next book project is on a theology of atonement. I teach courses and offer Tutu Travel Seminars from the Desmond Tutu Center at General Theological Seminary in New York. I am currently working on making the *Theology of Desmond Tutu* a formal unit at the American Academy of Religion.

How do you plan to use your new position to enhance research, teaching, and academic service between the Centre and your networks?

I would like to offer joint courses (in-person and virtually) between the Centre and theological institutions in which I teach. I would also like to facilitate courses in prisons, both in South Africa and the United States.

In what way (s) do you feel your research examines the intersections of and overlaps between religion and social justice?

In the same way that Archbishop Tutu’s life and work engender intersection between religion and social justice, my research seeks the same.

What advice can you offer post-graduate students and emerging scholars?

I encourage post-graduate students and emerging scholars to develop specific relationships with established scholars. In these tumultuous times in the academy in which jobs are difficult to establish, such relationships are important to build upon. Therefore, simple practices like email correspondence, guild meetings, and occasional visits provide a vital network in establishing a vocation in theology and religious studies.

“I look forward to working with DTCRSJ and joining this highly esteemed community of teaching and learning!”

Interview with Damaris Seleina Parsitau



Describe your “connection” to the work and researchers of the DTCRSJ

My connections to the DTCRSJ comes from different people. First my friend and colleague Prof Adriaan Van Klinken told me about his appointment and the wonderful work that the centre does! Secondly, Professor Sarojini Nadar connected with me through social media! She reached out to me to ask if I was interested in this position and affiliation and I said yes!

What are your current research, teaching, and academic service projects?

Currently, I am undertaking a number of research projects:

- Religion, Gender and Sexuality in Africa with Prof Adriaan Van Klinken and Dr. Barbara Bompani
- The John Templeton/Nagel Institute sponsored projects on Grounded Theologies and African realities where I serve as a Project Advisor for projects in Ethiopia, Kenya and Zimbabwe
- Religion and Climate Change with Joram Turasiraria sponsored project by Netherlands Research Council
- The John Templeton Mega Churches Projects 2021-2023
- My own research projects and writings on Religion and Gender

How do you plan to use your new position to enhance research, teaching, and academic service between the Centre and your networks?

I plan to use this position to support and enhance the name of the DTCRSJ! I hope to bring in my teaching and research expertise, mentorship and leadership skills, social capital, connections and collaborations to support the centre! I also plan to publish research articles and acknowledge this appointment in all my writings and conversation in a way that will continue to give more publicity to the centre.

In what way (s) do you feel your research examines the intersections of and overlaps between religion and social justice?

First, I consider myself a social justice advocate and scholar. I am driven by a strong commitment to social justice, especially gender equality and women empowerment. At the same time, my major research focus aligns itself with the main thematic areas of the Centre. In many of my works, I examine the intersections between religion, gender and sexuality, religion and economies of violence, religion

and climate change, religion and the environment, religion and politics, religion and education and religion and society broadly conceptualised.

What advice can you offer post-graduate students and emerging scholars?

To get an education that grants them the intellectual skills and acumen that enables them to become agents of change. I often urge my students to pick a struggle that enables them to drive social change in their communities

“I am so deeply honored and grateful to be part of this community of social justice scholars and practitioners. Here, I feel I am home in a very broad sense of the word. At home that anchors my work and one that will enable me to continue to champion social justice struggles through research while at the same time being in community with fellow colleagues in the struggle. Thank you so much for this prestigious appointment.”

Interview with Vicentia Kgabe



Describe your “connection” to the work and researchers of the DTCRSJ

My connection started as a postgraduate student at the University of Pretoria, through research I got to know Professor Sarojini Nadar who at that time was at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. When I became the Rector and Principal of College of Transfiguration, the collaborations with DTCRSJ under the leadership of Prof Nadar were formalised. I have had the opportunity of being an external marker and journey/support the Masters’ students and PhD candidates.

What are your current research, teaching, and academic service projects?

I am currently registered with Cardiff University doing my LLM Canon Law. Also working on “women in leadership” research project and gender studies. My area of teaching is Practical Theology.

How do you plan to use your new position to enhance research, teaching, and academic service between the Centre and your networks?

To share my knowledge in my field of expertise. Research and co-publish. Be an ambassador for the centre and encourage students to pursue their studies through the Center/UWC.

In what way (s) do you feel your research examines the intersections of and overlaps between religion and social justice?

Justice and “just acts” are amongst the virtues that tell people about who you are and what you believe in without saying much. It is unfortunate that in some instances religion has been used to perpetuate injustice and discrimination. I see my research exploring ways of liberating and highlighting how God the Creator in creation made us exist in harmony and mutual benefit. Not to exploit, oppress or segregate.

What advice can you offer post-graduate students and emerging scholars?

I believe that I can offer what I wish I had when I was doing my postgraduate studies, which is emotional support, mentorship. And create or point them to platforms where they can present or share their research work.

“It is a privilege to be associated with the DTCRSJ.”

Partnership with Polin Institute, Åbo Akademi University, Finland



The Centre has established a partnership with the Polin Institute situated in Åbo Akademi University, Finland. One of the goals is for the Institute to become a leading research institute in the area of theology. Some of their notable areas of research which they seek to continue to develop is Old Testament, Pentecostalism and African Christianity. This overlaps with many of the areas of research of the staff and students in the Centre. The Polin Institute has offered to support Postdoctoral researchers and emerging scholars from the Centre who have produced excellent PhDs and who want to turn their work into a monograph. They have also extended an invitation to staff working on publications in the areas of theology. The Institute would offer a space to write including office space and access to library facilities at Åbo Akademi University. In return, the visiting researchers would credit the Institute in their publications. Megan Robertson will take up this opportunity in May-June 2022 and Sarojini Nadar in July 2022. We are currently in the process of drawing up a more formal MOU between the two parties to enable further exchange and supervision.

Awards and Recognition

Outstanding Academic Administrator Award

At the Registrar's Rewards and Recognition online event on 28 May 2021, Ferial Marlie won an award for Outstanding Academic Administrator. We were very pleased that Ferial, who forms an integral part of the DTC team, was recognised for her outstanding contribution in this way. One of the supporting testimonials we provided in her nomination was the following from Adriaan van Klinken who is an extraordinary professor in the DTC. He sums it up well:

"I have had the pleasure of encountering Marlie's outstanding administrative and coordinating skills during the development of an MOU between the University of Leeds and the University of the Western Cape and subsequently in 2019, when she arranged my travel, accommodation and all the details for a public seminar off-campus, as well as a presentation at a postgraduate training workshop, at UWC. In all of these interactions, her assistance was offered with professionalism and courtesy, going out of her way to ensure that all our arrangements were made timeously and to the highest of standards. She set up a WhatsApp group for ease of communication, consistently checked on whether we had everything we needed, and even designed the posters for the marketing of my public lecture. The entire event went off without a hitch, with everything from the sound, to the setting up of the venue and the catering being superbly organised, even for my special dietary requirements."

Developing Early-Career Researchers Programme

Megan Robertson was awarded a R50 000 DVC Research & Innovation International conference attendance and networking (DECRP) grant. This grant will enable Robertson to take up a research fellowship at the Polin Institute, Åbo Akademi, Finland in 2022.

Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship

Megan Robertson was awarded a Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship which will be hosted at the University of Leeds working with Adriaan van Klinken. The project title is "Sex and the Sacred: Queering Black Performing Arts in South Africa", and the value of the award for the two-year fellowship is EUROS 236,748. MSCA fellowships are among the most competitive and prestigious awards in Europe, aimed at supporting the best and most promising scientists in the world. The 2021 call, for which Robertson applied, received 8356 applications out of which 1025 researchers were selected. Applications are peer-reviewed by three leading international researchers in the appropriate fields and graded on the basis of Excellence, Impact and Implementation. Robertson's application received an outstanding 100% placing her in the top 0.92% of applications in the Social Science stream.

LUCAS/LAHRI Virtual Research Fellowship, Leeds University

In May 2021, Megan Robertson took up a three-month virtual fellowship with Leeds University located within the Centre for African Studies (LUCAS). Robertson's fellowship builds on the existing relationship the DTCRSJ has with Adriaan van Klinken and the Centre for Religion and Public Life at Leeds (CRPL).

As part of this fellowship Robertson and van Klinken produced a grant application, along with Co-Investigators Sarojini Nadar and Brendon Nicholls, for the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK. The transdisciplinary and qualitative project detailed in the application aims to explore the potential of arts for (re)constructing the narrative of queerness in South Africa, and of Africa more generally, by exploring the relationship between sexuality and the sacred in the work and lives of Black queer creative artists in South Africa. The application has since been submitted and we expect an outcome decision by the end of 2022.

The National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences/ University of the Western Cape Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Programme 2022

Lee Scharnick-Udemans joined Maurits Van Bever Donker from the Centre for Humanities Research and Sebolelo Makapela from the Department of African Languages to develop a proposal for a NIHSS funded Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme at UWC.

Eight Research Fellowships in the broad thematic area of “A Practice of Post-apartheid Freedom” were awarded and the DTC has been allocated two postdoc researchers to host under its auspices.

Rising Star in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

In July 2021, Lee Scharnick-Udemans was featured as a “rising star” in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in the DVC Teaching and Learning UWC Women in Academia and Leadership Magazine. In an interview on her views on the gendered nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, Scharnick-Udemans declared the notion of a healthy work-life balance as “just a myth.” She elaborated that,

“Given the many personal and professional expectations that I juggle it is simply impossible to live life by a rigid schedule, or set routine. I think it is an honour to do this work, and live, what is a life of earned privilege. Barring the restrictions of living in a pandemic, right now I have the energy and the passion to engage fully with my many lives and plan to do this to the best of my ability.”

Future Researcher Feature

Megan Robertson was featured as a future researcher in the first official DVC Research and Innovation eMagazine. This first edition focused on highlighting the achievements of some of UWC’s emerging academics, researchers and students. Robertson was interviewed on her PhD research and experience. In describing a defining experience of her PhD process she says,

“As a young woman of colour entering academia I know I will encounter the pain that I saw my colleagues [who are also women of colour] experience, I also know that I will be able to draw on them for wisdom and courage at those times, and even more so I know that the work they continue to do to ‘talk back’ to the white, male academy forms the platform which I step off of as I now enter these spaces.”

Academic Service

In addition to their duties at the Centre, staff also contributed to academic citizenship within, and beyond UWC in the year 2021/2022.

Sarojini Nadar

Journal Editor

African Journal of Gender and Religion

Editorial Board Member

Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion

Feminist Studies in Religion Book Series

Journal of Africana Religions

Women Studies International Forum

Executive Member

National Research Foundation (NRF) Executive Evaluations Committee

Chairperson

NRF Rating Panels in the following disciplines - Law, Earth Sciences and Engineering, Communication, Media Studies, Library and Information Sciences

Vice-Chair

ASSAF Peer Review Multidisciplinary Journal Panel (Nominated by ASSAF's Committee on Scholarly Publishing and Council)

Chair

ASSAF Evaluations of journals in the discipline of Gender

Rector's Nominee

Senate International Research Committee

Co-Chair

American Academy of Religion: Religion and Sexuality Unit

Gender Advisory Group

World Council of Churches

Board Member

Inclusive and Affirming Ministries

Member of UWC Committees

Faculty of Arts and Humanities Research Committee

Faculty of Arts and Humanities Professorial Appointments
Committee

Joint Appointments and Promotions Committee of Senate and
Council

External Examiner

MA thesis, University of Pretoria, Faculty of theology

PhD thesis, UNISA, Department of Old Testament

Member

Advisory Council on National Orders, Office of the Presidency

Peer reviewer

Critical African Studies

Chair

Shaping Urban Futures Working Group, Global Network for
Practical Theology

Lee Scharnick-Udemans

Reviewer

Alternation, Interdisciplinary Journal (UKZN)

Culture and Religion Journal (Taylor and Francis)

Religion Compass (Wiley)

Media Officer and Reviewer

African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies

Managing Editor

African Journal of Gender and Religion

Co-Editor

Journal for the Study of Religion

Rating Application Reviewer

National Research Foundation

Executive

Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa

Member of UWC Committees

Faculty of Arts and Humanities Research Committee

Faculty of Arts and Humanities General Appointments Committee (2021)

Elected Academic Member of Senate: 2020-2021

Chair of sub-committee

NIHSS PhD scholarships (2021/2022)

Editorial Board Member

Indigenous Religious Traditions (Equinox)

Co- Principal Investigator

National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences/
University of the Western Cape Postdoctoral Research
Fellowship Programme 2022-2024.

Selection Committee member Andrew Mellon Foundation “Turning the Tide” Postdoctoral Fellowship and PhD Scholarships grants (2021/2022).

External Examiner Masters thesis: UNISA, Department of Religious Studies, Islamic Studies and Arabic

PhD thesis: UKZN, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics

Moderator Level One courses: UCT, Department for the Study of Religions.

Honours courses, UKZN School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics

Megan Robertson

Steering Committee Member Religion and Sexuality Unit, American Academy of Religion (AAR)

Member Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa

Associate Editor African Journal of Gender and Religion

Peer Reviewer Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae

Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion

Co-Guest Editor with Sarojini Nadar Journal of Theology for Southern Africa

Member of UWC Committee Arts Higher Degrees & Proposal Review Committee, UWC