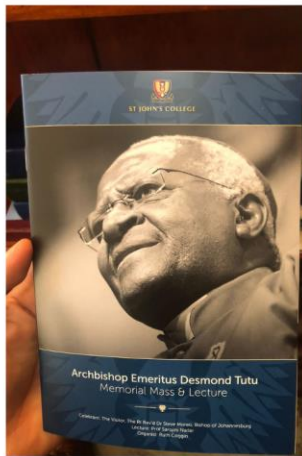




# Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice

*Annual Report*

March 2022 – April 2023



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# FOREWORD

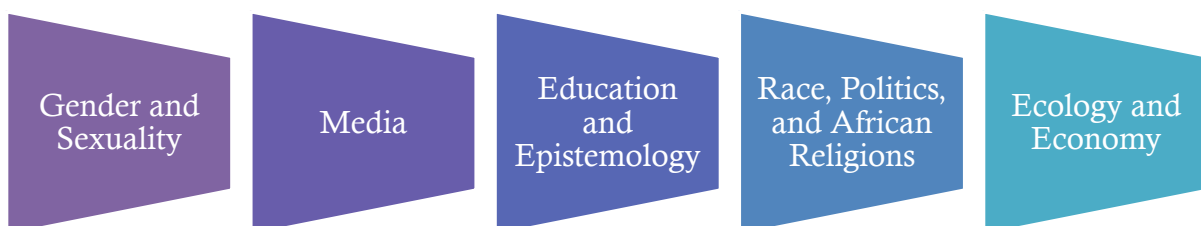


If 2021 was characterised by another year of living with the COVID pandemic, 2022 can be considered the year that paved the way out of the pandemic. One of the biggest challenges we face as a Centre, is the enduring mental health challenges that our students experienced as a result of the pandemic. Many of them report that simple academic tasks are more difficult to manage in the afterlife of the pandemic, and as academics we have to navigate the often-difficult conversations around missed deadlines and late submissions. Our commitment to flexibility and compassion is often stretched beyond limits when we ourselves are impacted by the effects of wasted opportunities and neglected goals. Our feminist framing to mentorship certainly helps, but commitments to social justice comes with its own limitations and challenges. These are critical conversations that we are having in the Centre.



Arundhati Roy's appeal for the pandemic to be considered a portal that invites us to live more justly with planet and people<sup>1</sup>, remains a challenge, as things seemed to slip back to "normal" with great haste. In addition to going back to normal, we also seemed to have slipped into normalising the abnormal. This is signalled by, among others, in our own university context, regular requests for contingency load shedding planning, instead of the collective harnessing of intellectual reflection and political will to challenge the systems that perpetuate this abnormality. Similarly, we normalise gender inequity through the offering of spa pampering sessions during women's month instead of critical engagements with the ongoing physical, epistemic and political gender-based violence that characterises our context. We normalise hijacking and 'smash and grabs' through regular calls to "stay safe" and "vigilant" and we normalise anti-intellectualism, through our everyday participation in a 'knowledge economy' that values quantity over quality, and rankings over rigour.

We clearly have much more to do in the work of social justice, and the work that we do in the Desmond Tutu Centre, reflects one small means of understanding and theorising how religious beliefs, community ethics and cultural value systems both hold resources for, and challenge imperatives for social justice. Admittedly, the challenges are myriad and multiple, but we have to continue doing the work. We are therefore pleased to present this report from May 2022–April 2023, in the following thematic areas of focus.



Given that the focus of the SARChI Chair which is housed in the Centre is primarily in the area of gender and sexuality, it is unsurprising that this thematic focus features most prominently in this report.

<sup>1</sup> Arundhati Roy. 2020. "The pandemic is a portal." Financial times 3.4.

Notwithstanding, we are also glad to report that there are burgeoning areas of research focused on media, as well as politics, with specific attention on theorising race.

Overall, the centre continues to thrive despite the constraints of arguably flawed political, economic and educational circumstances. This is only made possible through the generous support from our funding partners, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and wider university support. In this regard, we are also delighted that the university has confirmed a second permanent senior researcher post for the Centre. The granting of this second post is an acknowledgement of respect and recognition for the significant work that the Tutu Centre is doing.

When I took up the position as Director of the Centre in 2017, the Tutu Centre for Spirituality and Society, as it was then called, was 3 years old and existed "virtually" with no physical space, no staff, and with little strategic direction. The plan to develop a vision and mission, as well as a strategic plan to establish the Centre more intentionally as an intellectual hub for the study of diverse religious and cultural traditions as they intersect with commitments to social justice, has paid off substantially. The addition of this second permanent academic post adds strength and support to the ongoing and growing range of work we do, and we look forward to recruiting and appointing a high calibre scholar in 2024, who will align with the scholarly and strategic vision of the centre.

In addition to this new post, the number of extraordinary professors and research associates whom we have added to the Centre, has yielded an exponential growth in areas of research that we do not have primary expertise in as yet, for example the area of ecology and economy. The table below reflects our research outputs in the reporting year and demonstrates quite starkly, the richness and transdisciplinary nature of our work.

	Gender & Sexuality	Media	Education & Epistemology	Race, Politics & African Religion	Ecology & Economy
Journal Articles	10	2	3	12	3
Chapters in Books	4	2	2	3	9
Books	1			2	
Edited Books	2			3	3
Book Reviews		1		1	
Op-Eds	1				4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>

We anticipate another productive and inspiring year ahead.

Sarojini Nadar  
April 2023

# Appointments

## EXTRAORDINARY PROFESSOR

Miranda Pillay

Miranda Pillay was recently appointed as an Extraordinary Professor at the Centre. At the time of her retirement she worked as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religion and Theology at UWC. In addition to her affiliate status to the Centre, we are also pleased to welcome her on a one-year contract, in place of Megan Robertson who took up a fellowship at the University of Leeds in 2023.

## Staff

Sarojini Nadar

**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 expand knowledge by examining how religious and faith traditions challenge or hold resources for social justice imperatives that produce sustainable societies. Prof Nadar's own research focus is at the intersections of religion, race, gender and sexuality. As an activist-academic, she is committed to intersectional socially engaged scholarship



Lee-Shae Scharnick-Udemans

**Senior Researcher, Dr Lee Scharnick-Udemans**, researches, teaches, and supervises in the areas of religious diversity, pluralism, new religious movements, and media. Her publications focus on the dynamics between the political economies of religion and media, and address topics such as religious normativity, racialisation of religion, religious privilege, pluralism and diversity. As a Religious Studies specialist her work spans across religious traditions and includes the study of mediated expressions of Islam, Christianity, Satanism, New Religious Movements and Indigenous African religions.



Miranda Pillay

**Senior Researcher, Dr Miranda Pillay** joined the Centre in February 2023. Pillay writes and publishes in the areas of Biblical Studies, Gender and Ethics from a theo-ethical feminist perspective. With scholarly insights gained from Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics, Socio-rhetorical Interpretation, Womanist Ethics, and the Circle of Concerned African Woman Theologians, her research interests centre on how particular understandings of biblical texts impact the lives of contemporary Christians.





Ferial Marlie

**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



## Students

Masters	Research focus area
Rifqah Tifloen	Decolonial Eco-feminist Religion
Aamira Benjamin	Implicit Religion and Digital Media
Thozama Mabusela	Black theology and reconciliation
Tswelopele Makoe	Digital Rituals and Sangomas
Corne Hendricks	Religious Authority and Media
Carl Collison	Sexuality, migrancy and religion
Harold Jansen	Sexuality and the Bible
Shinell Smith	Masculinity and faith movements
Reshaan Dollie	Visual Ethnography of Ritual
Allan Magubane	Black theology and education
Cameron Shabangu	Race and Pentecostal Ecclesial Leadership
Phatisani Sibanda	Sexuality and African Theology
Doctoral	Research focus area
Winnie Varghese	Decolonial feminist theology
Ashleigh Petersen	Feminist religious leadership and media
Pralini Naidoo	Food, faith, feminism
Leona Morgan	Sexual trauma and spirituality
Nolwazi Nzama	Indigenous healers, gender and mental well-being
Nobesuthu Tom	Decolonial epistemology, African religion
Roxann Thompson	Feminist care and ancestral religion

Saskia Smith	Pentecostalism, reconciliation and music
Pam Delport	Feminist ecclesial leadership
Sakeenah Dramat	Social Media and Muslims
Claudene Sebolai	Sexual trauma and Pentecostal spirituality
Albert Bangirana	HIV, Catholic higher education
Seth Naicker	Ethical leadership and social justice
Godfrey Owino Adera	Sexuality and theology
Rhine Phillip Tsobotsi Koloti	Black theology and public intellectuals
<b>Postdoctoral fellows</b>	<b>Research focus area</b>
Mutale Kaunda	African feminist theology
Selena Headley	African feminist theological education
Dane Isaacs	Masculinity, disability and cultural studies



# Celebrations

## Dean's Merit Awards

We were delighted to celebrate three outstanding achievements at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Dean's Merit Awards, on 13 September 2022.

Currently registered as a PhD student, Rhine 'Toby' Koloti received a Magna Cum Laude Certificate for his Master's degree in 2021 (Supervisor: Prof Sarojini Nadar)

Currently registered as a PhD student, Ashleigh Petersen received a Cum Laude Certificate for her Master's degree in 2021 (Supervisor: Prof Sarojini Nadar, Co-supervisor: Dr Lee Scharnick-Udemans)

Tutu Centre Administrator: Ms Ferial Marlie, who was registered for the final year of her BA degree received an award for her outstanding performance in 2021.

All three awardees showcase the scholarly excellence that we nurture and support in the Centre.



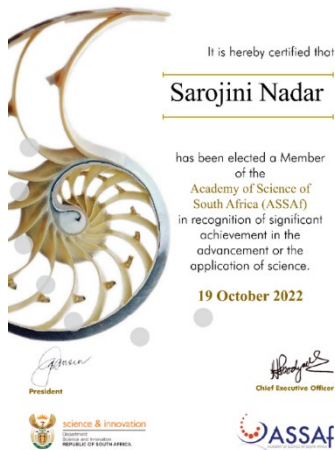
## Graduations



We are enormously proud of Ferial Marlie, Tutu Centre Administrator, who graduated with her BA degree on 18 April 2023. Ferial began her studies in 2020, and while juggling her full-time job at the Centre, and two young children at home during the pandemic, she made it onto the Dean's commendation list almost each year. Her majors were Gender Studies, Anthropology and English. Ferial is currently an Honours student in the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Cape Town, and is supported by the SARChI Chair. She has an abiding interest in gender and Islam, and her registration at UCT bodes well for the envisaged co-operation between the Centre for Contemporary Islam at UCT and the Tutu Centre at UWC.

## Inauguration as a Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa

Sarojini Nadar was inaugurated as a member of the prestigious Academy of Science of South Africa. The media release summarises the significance of this award: "Twenty-nine of the country's leading scholars and scientists were inaugurated as Members of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) at the annual Awards Ceremony on 19 October 2022.



As the official Academy of South Africa, ASSAf has a core function to honour the country's most outstanding scholars by electing them to Membership of the Academy. ASSAf Members are drawn from the full spectrum of disciplines. New Members are elected each year by the full existing Membership. Membership of the Academy is a great honour and is in recognition of scholarly achievement. Members are the core asset of the Academy and give of their time and expertise voluntarily in the service of society. The 29 new ASSAf Members bring the total Membership of ASSAf to 659."<sup>2</sup>

In a statement to UWC media, Nadar said: "I'm honoured and humbled by this election. Unfortunately, my field of research, which focuses on the intersections of religion, race and gender with violence, is seldomly taken seriously in an increasingly neo-liberal academy that focuses on the 'hard sciences'. My election to this body, therefore, signals a recognition that the ongoing challenges of physical, racialised, sexual and epistemic violence requires research from various fields within the humanities and social sciences. For me, the election points to a greater scholarly responsibility in an age of sound-bite scholarship to produce careful, critical and creative knowledge for collective social wellbeing."

## Appointment as a Member of the National Orders Advisory Council



Sarojini Nadar was appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa to serve on the National Orders Advisory Council, for a term ending in 2026. "National Orders are the highest awards that South Africa, through the President, bestows on citizens and eminent foreign nationals. The Advisory Council on National Orders processes nominations of deserving South Africans and foreign nationals and advises the President to assist him in the execution of this important responsibility."

See: <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/press-statements/appointment-new-advisory-council-members>



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.assaf.org.za/files/Newsletter%20December%202021/final.pdf>

## Impactful scholarship: “Most downloaded article”



Megan Robertson and Lee Scharnick Udemans were both notified that their articles published in *Religion Compass* in 2020 and 2021 respectively, were given the status of “top downloaded article” as one of the most downloaded articles in the first 12 months of it being published. These achievements are important to us as a centre, because we have a commitment to impactful scholarship.

Robertson, M. (2020). Queer Studies and religion in Southern Africa: The production of queer Christian subjects. *Religion Compass*, 15(1), 1-12. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12385>

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

## Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship, University of Leeds, United Kingdom

Megan Robertson 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 Cape Town, South Africa." The project is hosted at the Centre for Religion and Public Life (CRPL), at the University of Leeds. Under this project, she will explore sexuality and religion/spirituality as embodied and performed in the lives and art of Black queer performing artists in Cape Town, South Africa. The project is particularly interested in exploring the potential of the performing arts for (re)constructing the narrative of queerness in South Africa.

While we were sad to see Megan leave in January 2023, we are hopeful that this will strengthen our ongoing partnerships with the CRPL and with Adriaan van Klinken, Director of the CRPL and Extraordinary Professor at the Centre. Megan will continue her association with the Centre as a research fellow.

## Women Who Build a Better Future for South Africa: 2022

Sarojini Nadar was featured in the book "66 women who build a better future for South Africa" (eds Rozena Maart and Joan Madibeng). The book was launched around the country in the week of 10 March 2023. The editors describe the book as follows:

“Women Who Build a Better Future for South Africa: 2022, is the first in our series. We have a collection that we believe will serve as a token of memory and information, of strength and resilience, a coffee table

book, an archive, an educational and informational piece of South African history, a slice of South African memorabilia and a gesture of our commitment toward South African women's history.

In this collection, the women contributors share their journeys with us, the hardships they have endured, the difficulties they lived through during apartheid, and also the resilience with which they fought. We want to ensure that every South African never forgets where we all come from and envision along with us, where we are going. This year, in our first collection, we chose sixty-six women to mark the period of sixty-six years since the historic march, 1956-2021." <https://rozenamaart.com/women-who-build-a-better-south-africa/>



## National Institute for the Humanities & Social Sciences (NIHSS) Postdocs

In 2021 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 were allocated two postdoc researchers to host under its auspices. In 2022 Shanleigh Roux and Dane Isaacs joined the Centre under the mentorship of Lee Scharnick-Udemans and Johnathan Jodamus respectively.

Both postdoctoral researchers reported a productive year of conference attendance, research development and manuscript development. They each participated in a number of Centre offerings including the cohort supervision workshops, writing retreats and reading groups. During her tenure as a postdoc in the Centre it became clear that Shanleigh Roux's specific expertise as a linguist and interest in religion, would be better served through working more directly within a sociolinguistics framework. Consequently, in order to support the ongoing development of her academic career Shanleigh's affiliation has been transferred to the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR) where she will participate in a new project under the guidance of Quentin Williams, Director of the CMDR. Dane Isaacs will be spending another year working under the auspices of the Centre.



# RELIGION, GENDER, & 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.

## GRADUATE RESEARCH

Leona Morgan, Ghent University

Leona Morgan, PhD student working in the area of sexual trauma and spirituality, reports as follows on her stay in Belgium, where she is registered for a joint degree with Ghent University and UWC.



*During the 5-week research stay and collaborating with the International Centre for Reproductive health (ICRH) at Ghent University, I was able to have in person quality supervision with Prof Ines Keygnaert. This was especially important for the in-depth qualitative process of the research and the content of proposed journal publications. We could spend time on structuring the process of and completion of data collection by the end of 2022. I am deeply grateful to my supervisors and peers at both UWC and Ghent for their support in making this research stay possible.*

*The joint PhD in Psychology, Religion, Social Justice and Health Sciences necessitates taking into account multiple dimensions of disciplinary and knowledge domains. The multi-disciplinary team at ICRH come from a variety of contexts and the interaction with them greatly benefited the way in which I will disseminate the data. I was able to get clarity on this with multiple discussions on the importance of integrated, pluri-disciplinary approaches to address research. Given the interdisciplinary perspective of the research, I was able to integrate the theoretical constructs of the health and psychosocial sciences with constructs of social justice and spirituality and spend focused time on completing the theory chapter.*

*Prof Nadar was able to join us for co-supervision and we could finalize the planning of the guidance committee and the internal and public defence at Ghent towards the completion of the PhD, 2023 to early 2024. Focused time was spent on discussing the current status of scholarly research on complex trauma. The collaborative discussions focused on the importance of my research that explores intervention models and applicable integrated survivor-community care. Valuable insights were gained on the importance of ethical, reflexive, socially accountable and contextually relevant research in the global South. The complexity of childhood sexual trauma recovery for adult survivors in the South African context is best investigated through the theoretical lens of critical psychology and feminism, while carefully assessing and integrating the contributions of the clinical and medical sciences. Discussions and co-supervision focused on this interdisciplinary collaboration.*

*On a more personal note, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Desmond Tutu Centre and Prof Nadar's generosity of spirit that has enabled me to be part of this collaborative research and visiting Ghent University. It has been a life changing experience and I trust that the research will constructively contribute to quality scholarly output and community engagement.*



## TEACHING

### ETH 321: Moral Discourse on Gender and Human Sexuality

Department of Religion and Theology, University of the Western Cape

This third-year ethics course was facilitated in the second semester of 2022 by Megan Robertson, Rhine Koloti, and Dane Isaacs with Phathisani Sibanda assisting as tutor. In this module we studied how moral discourses are formed around gender identity and sexual diversity. We also examined the ways in which these moral discourses are 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 focused 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 focused on lived experiences as they are represented in a selection of narrative case studies. In 2022, we focused on narratives of male headship and female submission in Cheryl Zondi's rape trial against her rapist, Pastor Timothy Omotoso. We also looked at the narratives of queer Christians as well as the discourses implicated in the Fatwa release in July 2022 by the Muslim Judicial Council's "clarifying" that same-sex marriage and "actions" – is not allowed in Islam. Finally, we looked at positive sexuality by focused examples in music and the arts.

### WGS 312: Gender and Embodiment

Department of Women's and Gender Studies, University of the Western Cape

In the second semester of 2022, Megan Robertson, took over teaching responsibilities for the Women and Gender Studies third year module on Gender and Embodiment. The course mapped out recent constructionist explorations of gender, sexuality, race and embodiment in relation to the following case studies:

- cultural assumptions about race, gender and sexuality in the "marking" of women's and men's bodies
- the beauty and 'body perfection' industry, including 'fitness' and 'fatness', and the "healthy" body and disability (Dane Isaacs was brought in as a guest lecturer focusing on masculinity and disability);
- the ambiguities of body performance with reference to dress, fashion and self-styling
- heterosexuality, femininities and masculinities in media and popular culture;
- how gender and sex can be (re)inscribed on the body through religious and cultural beliefs, discourse and practices.

Through teaching this course the Centre has further developed its relationship with the WGS department and opened up opportunities for students under our supervision to also engage and learn from a broader network of scholars and students.

### REL 2047F/ REL 2054: Religion, Sexuality, and Gender

Department for the Study of Religions, University of Cape Town

Postdoctoral scholar Selena Headley taught the section on Christianity within the above module. the course was developed and convened by Sa'diyya Shaikh, who planned the course as follows:

This course explores ideologies of gender and sexuality in the history of religious traditions, focusing particularly on the role of women in religion. Special attention will be given to how gender is symbolised in religious myth and ritual practices, exploring how this relates to women's lived experiences. Connections between sexuality, embodiment and spirituality will be addressed through case studies in 'Abrahamic' and Asian religions. Drawing on examples from the beliefs and practices of different religious traditions, the course aims to engage with cross-cultural and interdisciplinary scholarship in religious studies, gender studies, women's studies, and feminist theory. Theoretical reflections on gender in religious traditions will be addressed throughout the course.

Christianity - Weeks 4, 5, & 6 (6-24 March): Selena Headley

Topics included:

- Introduction to Christianity, gender, and sexuality
- The Bible and (African) women's experiences
- Queer and Christian identity

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Op-Ed: "Women should not be stigmatised for being 'women'"

"Women should not be stigmatised for being 'women'" by Tswelopele Makoe, 26 February 2023

<https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/news/politics/opinion/women-should-not-be-stigmatised-for-being-women-4c34e789-ce27-449d-b87e-c3c0e0511172>

## Podcast on faith, feminism and black religion

An op-ed piece published by Sarojini Nadar in Times Live. (Sarojini Nadar 2022. God, grief and Good Friday: A response to Eusebius McKaiser, Sunday Times, 16 April 2022, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times-daily/opinion-and-analysis/2022-04-16-god-grief-and-good-friday-a-response-toeusebius-mckaiser/> led to a podcast invitation from public intellectual and journalist, Eusebius McKaiser.



Entitled "Encountering God through feminist liberation-theologies," this was a description of the conversation provided on the podcast website:

"University of Western Cape gender and religion scholar Professor Sarojini Nadar responded to an article by TimesLIVE analyst and contributor, Eusebius McKaiser, in which he had argued that the God he was taught about in Catholicism does not exist. McKaiser argued that the characteristics of being all-loving, all-powerful and all-knowing are incompatible with the existence of natural evils like devastating floods and earthquakes. Nadar did not reject all of McKaiser' philosophical analysis, but expanded the conversation by explaining why she had abandoned, in her own personal journey and academic work, a conception of God that invokes notions of "might, masculinity and militarism."

In this edition of Eusebius on TimesLIVE, Nadar expands on the conversation that had begun on TimesLIVE. She started off by sharing her personal journey from a Pentecostal upbringing to her discovery of black, feminist and queer works which engage her faith. Thereafter, McKaiser challenged Nadar on whether the very idea of a transcendental being is necessary in order for one to be committed to black radical thought,

feminism and justice. They also discussed the strategic importance of engaging and working with religious communities in order to achieve social justice in society, regardless of what one thinks about the metaphysical claims of those who believe in a supernatural being.

Nadar and McKaiser also reflected on religion and humour, and whether it is ever wrong to have playful discussion about religious beliefs. They ended the episode by debating whether or not it is important for religious beliefs to be true or whether religious beliefs and practices can be defended wholly instrumentally by appealing to the (potential) benefits for individuals and society.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/in/podcast/episode-88-prof-sarojini-nadar-uwc-engages-my-claim/id1561851417?i=1000558184500&l=h>

## WCC's Ecumenical Women Initiative for Leadership and Learning (WE WILL)

Geneva, Switzerland, 17-20 May 2022

For more than a decade the erstwhile named "Women in Church and Society" (WCAS) Desk of the World Council of Churches worked towards supporting and partnering with churches who sought to recognise the leadership of women. The potential of women to transform church through their leadership and skills were explored in a series of books that arose out of the project of the WCAS desk "On Being Church: Women's Voices and Visions" published by the WCC. Within the last decade, and since the inauguration of the Just Community of Women and Men unit, the visions that were hoped for in those decades were realised as women seem to be taking a more active role in church leadership, whether at the local or denominational level. The struggle has moved beyond the inclusion case for women's ordination, to one of transforming patriarchal ecclesial practices and spaces.



From 17-20 May 2022, the Centre, (supported by the SARChI Chair in Religion and Social Justice) partnered with the WCC, as part of its social impact work, to host a workshop for African women ecclesial leaders. Sarojini Nadar joined Vicentia Kgabe (Bishop of Lesotho, and research fellow in the Centre) in attending.

The aims of this gathering were to:

- Consider the long and arduous individual and collective journeys towards ecclesial leadership
- Celebrate the women pioneers who opened pathways for the election and consecration of women to positions of ecclesial authority
- Contemplate the unique dual burden and blessing of being "firsts" that comes with challenges and opportunities that calls for mentorship
- Collect important lessons from those who have walked the path of leadership before
- Critically map strategies and approaches for addressing ongoing injustices, exclusion, and marginalisation of women
- Curate spaces of joy, rest and hope, amidst the challenges
- Create a network of reciprocal and respectful sisterhood, that values spaces of affirmation, transformation and justice

The wide-ranging program included narrative sharing, critical reflections on biblical and theological scholarship, discussions on finance, communication and human resources, ecumenical accompaniment,

emotional and spiritual well-being, mentorship, self-care and social justice advocacy. To promote transnational networks of solidarity, women leaders from other vocational and geographical contexts, including Europe, Canada and the UK were also present to share their lived experiences, work and witness. The opening session on navigating power and authority constituted an important launching platform for the dialogue and analysis that followed in each of the focus areas of leadership. The importance of sharing power, authority and responsibility in ways that are just, transparent, collaborative, and conscious of intersections of race, class, culture, sexual diversity and gender, were recurring themes throughout many of the discussions.

The areas of concerns that came up in the discussions were:

- Gender justice is often sacrificed on the altar of church unity;
- Cultural systems of domination are often still uncritically accepted as normative;
- Contextual concerns such as food security, sexual and gender-based violence, climate justice, HIV and Aids, engaging with the younger generation;
- Theological doctrine, biblical interpretations and technicalities are put forward as justifications for excluding women from leadership.

While the importance of theological education and training for the purpose of ecclesial leadership was appreciated, the need for supplemental training for women in other areas of leadership, such as fundraising, management, advocacy and communication were also acknowledged as areas requiring attention. Overall, the collective hope expressed is that the deep lessons and significant insights gained at this consultation, will inspire similar gatherings in other geographical contexts, and that the critical reflections will ultimately culminate in a series of publications, similar to the "On Being Church" project of prior years.<sup>3</sup>

## World Council of Churches 11th Assembly

Karlsruhe, Germany, 27 August-9 September 2022

From 27 August to 9 September, Sarojini Nadar attended the World Council of Churches 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany. One of the key expectations of the SARChI Chair that Nadar holds, is to conduct research that is socially responsive.

Given that the key focus of Nadar's work is at the intersection of gender, religion, and sexuality, she was invited as an Advisor to the Assembly, where she was able to share her work with this significant global faith community. Her previous work with the Gender Advisory Group of the WCC, has had direct impact on policies such as the World Council of Churches Gender Policy for which she provided strategic direction.



<sup>3</sup> (See: <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/prof-dr-sarojini-nadar-i-believe-knowledge-is-power-and-critical-for-justice-work>, for an interview with Sarojini Nadar on this meeting; and <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/bishop-vicentia-kgabe-it-might-sound-cliche-but-i-had-to-learn-to-love-gods-people> for an interview with Vicentia Kgabe.)



She was invited to facilitate the bible study workshops for the pre-Assembly gathering organised by the Gender Advisory Group. The focus of the workshop was race, gender and sexuality, which she co-facilitated with Paulo Ueti from Brazil and Johnathan Jodamus from UWC. Apart from providing assessments of how scripture norms contemporary social and sexual ethics, the workshop provided tools, insights and critical points of analysis for the Pre-Assembly report that fed into the main Assembly. In addition to these workshops, Nadar also facilitated a book launch panel on gender-based-violence, moderated a panel on period poverty and menstrual health, served as a "listener" for the ecumenical conversation on human sexuality, and she was a panellist on the "decolonising theological education" workshop.

## Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians Zambia #Thursdays in Black Training

Lusaka, Zambia, 30 November-1 December 2022

Postdoctoral scholar, Mutale Kaunda, organised an intersectional Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights training workshop for a consortium of NGOs in Zambia working with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She used the method of contextual Bible Study as a means to have a conversation about the religion-culture intersection in impacting how adolescents and youth with compounded vulnerabilities access SRHR information and services.

## Bible and Activism

University of Leeds, January 2023

African Scholars Contribute to Bible and Activism Conference at Leeds



Sarojini Nadar attended a conference on Bible and Activism, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which was held at the University of Leeds in January 2023. The event was attended by participants from 4 continents, each working in the area of religion, theology, and the Bible. It was organised by Professor of Hebrew Bible at University of Leeds, Johanna Stiebert.

The event happened in two parts: Before the research day at the University of Leeds, the group spent a day at Bridge Street United Reformed Church as part of a "living library" programme. The scholars were allocated a table with a short description of their scholarship printed on a card, and members of the public could come in to pose questions. There were a diverse range of questions ranging from topics on race, gender and sexuality to topics such as death. Overall, the event proved to be a good way of making scholarship accessible and thereby strengthening scholarly public engagement. Read more here:

<https://www.ilkleygazette.co.uk/news/23301603.scholars-religion-gather-talk-in-depth-bible-otley/>

The following day, the same group of scholars met for a conference on the bible and activism. The conference provided space for the scholars to theorise aspects of their identities and work as socially engaged biblical scholars, particularly in the intersecting areas of race, gender and sexuality.

## HOPE Africa

Macassar, Western Cape, 4 March 2023



Miranda Pillay conducted a one-day workshop on “Church Responses to Gender-Based Violence” for Hope Africa: Social Development Programme of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa on 4 March 2023. Held in Macassar, Western Cape, the workshop was attended

by forty-three representatives from different congregations in the False Bay Diocese.

The aim of the workshop was three-fold (1) To create an opportunity for participants to reflect on their perceptions of gender-based violence (GBV) and how they might be shaped by popular beliefs influenced by religion and culture. (2) To reflect critically on a ‘typical’ case of GBV experiences in a family and identify what the possible (reactive) responses from their church would be (3) To explore possible proactive responses aimed at identifying systemic societal, political and ecclesial issues that could be challenged/addressed from prophetic and pastoral angles by the church. To this end, a “Gender-sensitizer Conversation” questionnaire was made available to participants who shared their views. This was followed by small group discussions on a GBV Case Study<sup>4</sup> with questions set to elicit possible re-active and pro-active responses to GBV in its multi-faceted manifestations viz. rape, incest, economic-, spiritual-, cultural manipulation and exploitation. The workshop ended with participants suggesting what the ‘church’ as community is able to do through bible studies, sermons, festivals etc.; to be mindful of patriarchally infused liturgies, policies, rules and laws that ‘sanctify’ the subjugation of women; to revisit Sunday School curricula, marriage preparation material, etc.

## Ecumenical Dialogue and the Life of the Churches: The Challenges of Reception

Paris, France, 22-24 March 2023

Mutale Kaunda, postdoctoral researcher, attended a conference called “‘Lost in Dialogue’: Pentecostal Women, Ecumenical Agreements, and (Un)Receptivity.” She gave a public lecture titled “Research and Publication: Reflections on my Personal Journey as an African Feminist Pentecostal Woman.”

## Exhibition: “Within the Fold: Sacred Sexuality and Activism”

The Atrium, UWC Main Library, 6 April 2023

The Centre was pleased to host an exhibition and a critical conversation about sexuality and the church on 6 April 2023. The exhibition is a series of sculptural and performance works that gently assert the presence of queerness within a church which clings to hate. Launched intentionally within “Holy Week” leading up to Good Friday, the exhibition sought to ask critical questions about who defines what is “holy” and “sacred” and how such conceptualizations relate to the sexual. Framed around a central crucifix piece, which is



<sup>4</sup> (Pillay, 2015 “The Church, Gender and AIDS”, *Missionalia* 43:3, 558)

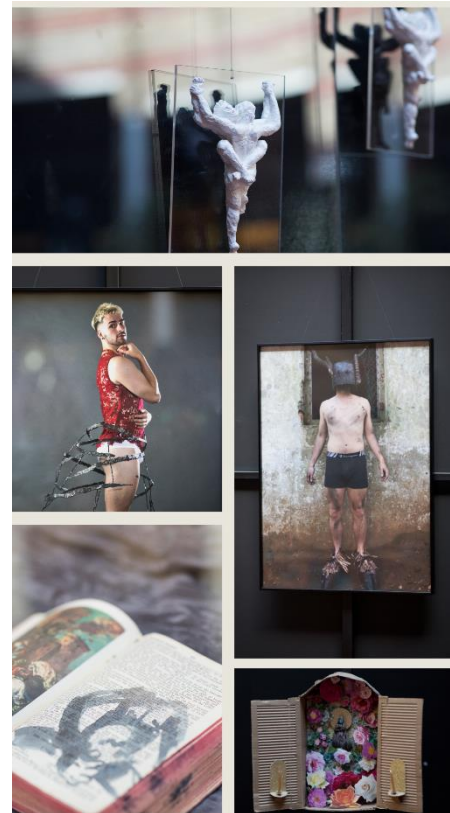
traditionally used for exorcism, the exhibition turned the crucifix back to face the church and to ask can queer hatred be exorcised from the church. The artist, Zach Stewart, was in conversation with Ashwin Thyssen, a queer theologian and PhD candidate at Stellenbosch University. Sarojini Nadar facilitated the conversation.

In his opening remarks, Head of the Department of Religion and Theology, noted the significance of the work to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities:

It enhances the current work being done on sexuality in departments like women's and gender studies, anthropology, sociology etc by adding the important variable of religion to ongoing research. The commitment of the faculty and university to social impact is advanced through this kind of intentional engagement with belief systems within faith communities. The creative and the critical come together in this exhibition in ways that are unique to the arts and humanities and therefore the faculty can be proud to host such events.

Miranda Pillay, in her opening remarks, on behalf of the Tutu Centre, noted that the exhibition was significant to the work of the Centre as it was part of honouring Tutu's legacy of affirmation for sexual diversity.

The critical conversation was structured around queer resistance, queer existence and queer presence. The event was very well attended, and inspired challenging discussions which undoubtedly will lead to further engagements in this area.

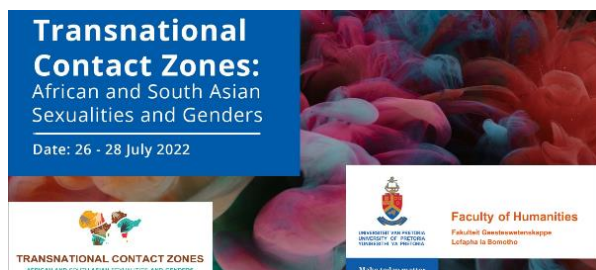


## CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

### Transnational Contact Zone Conference

University of Pretoria, 26-28 July 2022

Megan Robertson presented a paper at a conference hosted by the Universities of Pretoria, Fort-Hare, and Huddersfield and the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, titled "Transnational Contact Zones: African and South Asian Sexualities and Genders." This international conference aimed to open up debate about the politics of crossing geographic, linguistic, cultural and heteronormative boundaries in these 'contact zones'. It also showcased the South Asia-Africa experience in its broad diversity and featured scholars, activists and creatives from South Asia, Africa and the diasporas.



Megan's paper was titled, "Crossing and Dwelling as Queer Clergy: Navigating the politics of belonging in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa".

**Abstract:**

As the scholarship on Christianity has moved away from considering queer Christianity an impossibility, it has moved closer to the conclusion that in order for queer Christians to belong to a church or religious community some sort of radical transformative theological work needs to take place first. Therefore, in this paper about queer clergy, one may expect to encounter narratives of resistance and subversion, in order for the participants of this study to make the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) a place of belonging. However, a more prevalent theme appeared in the findings – one of feeling “at home” in the Church. By drawing on scholarship on boundaries, borders, migration, and citizenship in this paper, I am able to theorise a politics of queer belonging in the MCSA. Drawing in particular on the work of Thomas Tweed (2006:52), I explore how queer clergy are engaging in crossing, dwelling and homemaking as active fluid political contestations of religious space. Borderland and boundary theories might be helpful in making sense of material space in the context of nationalism and migration, but I use these theoretical ideas to conceptualise how participants in this study used and contested the metaphor of ‘home’ and what this says about the contestation of the symbolic space of the MCSA and its institutional and identity borders of belonging.

This paper is not simply a discussion about participants' feelings about the Church, but, by exploring the ways in which queer clergy constructed and deconstructed the MCSA and their identifications and disidentifications with being queer and Methodist, I explore the ways in which power is located in particular identities and social values that subsequently determines who belongs and who does not.

## Annual Economies of Violence Public Lecture

Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, 11 August 2022

On 11 August 2022, the Centre hosted the 6th Annual Economies of Violence Public Lecture. 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. This year the lecture was delivered by Extraordinary Professor in the Centre, Khaled Beydoun, and was the first time since 2019 that the event was held in-person. The lecture took place at the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation in the City Bowl and over fifty academics, students, religious leaders and other members joined for an evening of intellectual engagement, impassioned discussion, music and poetry. Reflecting on the North American context, Beydoun's provocative lecture explored the tripartite dynamics of racism, gender and Islamophobia. Beydoun

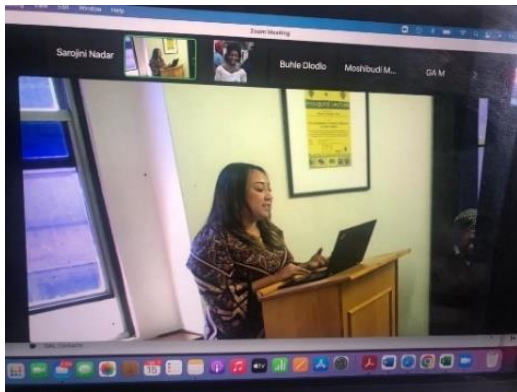




demonstrated the ways in which law as a critical tool for affirming and enforcing the sacrosanct character of human dignity, equality and esteem reinforces systems of power and privilege, both discursive and material that at best alienate, and at worst dehumanise Muslims across the gender spectrum. Following the lecture, celebrated poet and PhD candidate Pralini Naidoo accompanied by Afrikaaps performer Jitsvinger offered soulful contributions from Naidoo's debut poetry collection *Wild Has Roots*.

## Panel discussion "Epistemes, Methods and (Inter)textualities in Sacred Queer Stories", Es'kia Colloquium

Wits University, 15-16 September 2022



Megan Robertson was invited as a panellist to a roundtable discussion on the recently published book, "Sacred Queer Stories: Ugandan LGBTQ+ Refugee Lives & the Bible" by Adriaan van Klinken, Johanna Stiebert and with Sebyala Brian and Frederick Hudson. Megan participated along with Stella Nyanzi as well as the authors van Klinken, Brian and Hudson. The panel was part of the 6th Es'kia Colloquium, an annual event convened by the Department of African Literature at Wits University. Megan's paper was titled, "Building the Queer African Archive: For whom? How? And why?".

### Panel Abstract:

This panel discusses questions regarding knowledge production, method and (inter)textualities in relation to the recently published book, *Sacred Queer Stories: Ugandan LGBTQ+ Refugee Lives and the Bible* (van Klinken, Steibert, Sebyala, & Hudson, 2021). Arguing that the telling of life-stories of marginalised people, such as of Ugandan LGBTQ+ refugees, affirms embodied existence and agency, is socially and politically empowering, and enables human solidarity, the book also shows how the Bible as an authoritative religious text and popular cultural archive in Africa is often used against LGBTQ+ people but can be reclaimed as a site of meaning, healing, and empowerment. The result of coproduction between UK-based academics and a Nairobi-based community of Ugandan LGBTQ+ refugees, the panellists will give an account of, and reflect critically on, this book, the methodological, epistemological, and political questions it raises, and its contributions to African queer studies and queer religion studies.

## VI Global Network of Public Theologies (GNPT) Consultation

Curitiba, Brazil, 3-6 October 2022

Public Theologies in Vibrating Cities: Precious and Precarious

Megan Robertson presented a paper titled "Matrimonies, Promiscuities and Silences: Queering the 'Same-Sex Debate' in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa", in a session chaired by the Gender, Sexuality and Public Theology Working Group.

## Abstract

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) has positioned itself in a seemingly non-divisive space of ambivalence in relation to the so-called “same-sex debate”, a position favoured by many mainline churches in South Africa. In other words, while the MCSA has declared that it will not reject anyone on the basis of their sexuality, it has also refused to condone same-sex marriage. The MCSA suggests that this ambivalence is due to an absence of denominational consensus on a theology of marriage. Scholars have worked with a similar assumption and thus there exists a preponderance of theological literature on the matter. In order to understand the possibilities and perhaps limitations that a theology of marriage might produce, in this paper I use a queer lived religion framing to foreground the experiences of six queer clergy. I provide a descriptive analysis of the nuanced and varied ways in which participants inhabit family, kinship, the domestic and erotic in the MCSA and what these everyday experiences mean for the ‘same-sex debate’ in the Church. In order to explicate this I have characterised participants’ experiences and narratives into three framings: matrimony, promiscuity and silences. The research findings queer the binary between ‘upper-body’ religious work life and ‘ordinary’ (seemingly secular) home life in ways which expands the institutional and theoretical conversation beyond a focus on Christian marriage theologies and towards a more nuanced queering of domestic and erotic life.

## Ackermann Archival Collection Launch: Keynote Address by Miranda Pillay

Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology, Stellenbosch University, 15-17 March 2023



Miranda Pillay presented at a conference “Narrating Rape: Lacunae and Shifting Perspectives in Biblical Literature and Popular Culture” at the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University. The conference was also the occasion for the launch of the Denise Ackermann Archival Collection at the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology where Pillay was invited to give the keynote address.

Pillay’s lecture is reproduced below:

I start on a personal note. When Denise Ackermann retired from her post as professor of practical theology at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), I was appointed “in her place”. Or rather, I was the next “only woman” in the Department of Religion and Theology. This was 23 years ago.

During an interview back then, I remember being asked, “What is it like to step into the shoes of Prof Ackermann?” to which I quipped:

“I’m sure Prof Ackermann would want me to find my own shoes.”

However, like many other feminist theologians, I would, time and again, find myself in Ackermann’s shoes: To identify, name and describe systems of power that oppress, subjugate, exploit and violate “othered” bodies;

To highlight and challenge practices, policies, beliefs and norms that serve the interests of those privileged by systems in dominant cultures at the expense of “othered” bodies;

To interrupt and disrupt the re-inscription of patriarchal and kyriarchal power – aware that the way language is used often serve to reinscribe and prescribe positional power;

To reconstruct alternative, transformative, life-affirming ways of being and doing towards fostering equity and relationality amongst humans, and towards the environment;

To call for the reflexive use of power towards promoting opportunities for all to flourish.

Labelling herself as a “feminist theologian of praxis”<sup>5</sup>, Ackermann has left many indelible prints – not only in books and journals – but also on the hearts and minds of students and scholars; priests and parishioners. These prints will remain relevant, as long as there’s a need to grapple with social justice issues of which violence, in all its manifestations, remain pervasively persistent.

As already mentioned, Denise Ackermann retired from her academic post at UWC in 2000. But as is the case with many scholars who embody theologies of liberation, the work never stops, and they never stop working in the face of social injustices. Thus, even after her retirement, Ackermann continues her theological engagements through conversations, reflections, mentoring and spiritual retreats. Ackermann has shared her scholarly expertise nationally and internationally. A visiting scholar and research fellow at many academic institutions, she has held positions at Harvard Divinity School, USA; Auckland University, New Zealand; the Center for Theological Inquiry, Princeton, USA; Rhodes University, SA and the University of Cape Town, SA.

The profound impact of Ackermann’s research and her contributions as lay leader and ‘Canon Theologian’ in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA), continue to shape theological discourses in the global Anglican Communion and the ecumenical church, nationally and internationally. She served on many commissions, committees, councils, boards and advisory panels. Her contribution as the Theological Consultant for the 13th Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church (Canterbury, UK) is of particular significance to her, and the church. Thus, it is no surprise that Ackermann received the highest award for lay leadership in ACSA, the Order of Simeon of Cyrene.

Ackermann says that she “came into theology later in life” than many of her colleagues which meant she had to play “catch-up”.<sup>6</sup> Catching up on research, writing and teaching from a liberative, South African feminist perspective, often took her off the usual theological highways onto byways that required doing theology in multi-faceted ways. Thus, her academic writings and public engagements have varied foci, such as feminist liberation theology, theological anthropology, freedom of religion, feminist hermeneutics, ethics and lament – amongst others. Ackermann’s list of publications spans over a period of four decades. It exhibits a variety of social justice issues and reflects the value of vulnerability, justice, love, freedom, solidarity, hope, allyship, communion, community and paradox, in ways that inspire an embodied faith in God.

In 2015 Ackermann received the Andrew Murray/Desmond Tutu Prize for her book, “Surprised by the Man on a Borrowed Donkey: Ordinary Blessing”. As is the case with all of her work in academic and ecclesial contexts this publication has been framed by ‘meaning of life’ questions as her voice speaks incisively into the heart of the troubles of our time. As the title of the book suggests, the ultimate reference point for Ackermann’s academic, prophetic and pastoral voice, is Jesus Christ. In her book, “After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith”<sup>7</sup> Ackermann states that the point of departure in her writing is her Christian faith and that her longing for healing and freedom has shaped her theology. This is another stark reminder that, for Ackermann, theory and praxis are inextricably linked in meaning-making and generating new knowledge.

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<sup>5</sup> See Ackermann, Denise M. *Surprised by the Man on a Borrowed Donkey: Ordinary Blessing*. Cape Town: Lux Verbi (2014), p.14.

<sup>6</sup> Ackermann, *Surprised*, p.14.

<sup>7</sup> Ackermann, Denise M. *After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (2003), xiv.

That many people from all walks of social, academic and ecclesial life have been inspired by Ackermann's work over the years is evident in the 2009 Festschrift titled "Ragbag Theologies: Essays in Honour of Denise M Ackermann – a Feminist Theologian of Praxis." This publication followed a conference hosted by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Ackermann's honour in 2008. At this celebratory conference Ackermann referred to herself as a "ragbag theologian"<sup>8</sup> It is no surprise that the editors of the Festschrift decided to bookend it with the article "Found Wanting and Left Untried – Confessions of a Ragbag Theologian," penned by Ackermann herself. Here she writes, "Surrounded by the pressing need for food and shelter, appalled by the abuse of women, and dismayed at the conditions of employment for the majority of black South Africans, I cannot conceive of 'disinterested' research"<sup>9</sup>.

Not only does Ackermann's research investigate important intersections between theory and praxis, her theological reflections also exhibit a dialectic between social ramifications of the turbulent history of apartheid South Africa, the AIDS pandemic, the systemic nature of violence against women, poverty, environmental degradation and theologies and politics of the day.

To have Ackermann's collection of work housed at the archive of the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology is to also rightfully acknowledge the legitimacy of Ackermann's theology towards a just, equitable world. Those who engage with the Denise Ackermann Collection will find a pearl of wisdom at every turn in Ackermann's varied theological reflections on multiple societal issues.

As we interact with Ackermann through her writings and reflect on the role she plays in public life and in ecclesial contexts, may we be moved to act in ways that promote justice for all. For, we have inherited from this feminist theologian of praxis a ragbag filled with material for further use.

## Publications by Staff, Students, Fellows and Affiliates

### Journal articles

1. **Nadar, S.** (2022). Epistemologically Privileging Anger: Living with Cracked Containers in Feminist Scholarship. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 38(1), 59-62.
2. **Nadar, S, Ueti, P, and Jodamus, J.** (2023). Reimagining Religion, Race, Gender & Sexuality in Acts 8:26-40. *Ecumenical Review*, 75(1), 96-111.
3. **Robertson, M.** (2022). Contesting and curating the queer African archive with Sacred Queer Stories. *African Journal of Gender and Religion*, 28(2), 79 -88.
4. **Jakobsen, W.T. and Pillay, M.N.** (2022). Re-membering Tutu's liberation theology: Toward gender justice from theo-ethical feminist perspectives. *Anglican Theological Review*, 104(3), 330-340.
5. **van Klinken, A, Bompani, B., and Parsitau, D.** (2023). Religious leaders as agents of LGBTIQ inclusion in East Africa. *African Affairs*.
6. **Chitando, E.** (2023). Theorising African Women's Leadership: An Overview. *Women, Religion and Leadership in Zimbabwe, Volume 1: An Ecofeminist Perspective*, 25-43.
7. **van Klinken, A, & Stiebert, J.** (2022). A Hermeneutics of Life and Death, Liberation and Mourning: Response to a Roundtable about Sacred Queer Stories. *African Journal of Gender and Religion*, 28(2), 94-101.
8. **Beydoun, K A, & Sediqe, N.** (2023). Unveiling. *California Law Review*, 111 (forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> Ackermann, Surprised, p.14.

<sup>9</sup> Ackermann, Denise M. *After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (2003), xiv.

9. **Isaacs, D., Swartz, L., & Toefy, Y.** (2022). "My Stutter Has Put Me on the outside": Young South African Muslim Men Who Stutter Talk about Masculinities and Religion. *Journal of Disability & Religion*, 26(1), 26-45.
10. **van Klinken, A.** (2022). Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality. *Journal of Development Studies*, 58(1), 210-211.

#### **Chapters in books**

1. **Robertson, M.** (2022). Butch lesbians, femme queens and promiscuous clergy: Queering the body politics of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. In Starkey, C and Tomalin, E (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Gender and Society* (pp. 193-207), London: Routledge.
2. **Chitando, E., Chirongoma, S., & Nyakudya, M.** (2023). Introducing a Radical African Indigenous Feminist Principle: Chihera in Zimbabwe. In *Chihera in Zimbabwe: A Radical African Feminist Principle* (pp. 1-31). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
3. **Chitando, E., & Nyakudya, M.** (2022). "Nhai Varume, Tapindwa Nei?" (Men, What Has Entered into Us?): Oliver Mtukudzi and the Complexities of Transformative Masculinities. In *The Life and Music of Oliver Mtukudzi: Reconstruction and Identity* (pp. 23-37). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
4. **van Klinken, A.** (2023). Pentecostal Plurality and Sexual Politics in Africana Worlds. In *The Pentecostal World*, Routledge.

#### **Books**

**Pillay, M. N.** (2022). Re-Membering Community: Towards Unconditional Inclusion of LGBTQIA+ Members.

#### **Edited Books**

1. **Chitando, E., Chirongoma, S., & Manyonganise, M.** (Eds.). (2022). *Gendered Spaces, Religion and Migration in Zimbabwe: Implications for Economic Development*. Taylor & Francis.
2. Chirongoma, S., Manyonganise, M., & **Chitando, E.** (Eds.). (2022). *Religion, Women's Health Rights, and Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe: Volume 1*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.



# RELIGION & 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.

## GRADUATE RESEARCH

Ishaya Anthony, Ghent University

Ghent, Belgium, June–July 2022

Ishaya Anthony, who will be defending his PhD thesis entitled "Public Pedagogy and the Socio-Political Economy of Religious Media: A qualitative study of the Advent Cable Network Nigeria (ACNV)," in June 2023, writes the following of his visit to Belgium:



*"As part of the Joint PhD agreement between the University of the Western Cape and Ghent University, I travelled to Belgium for a two-month research stay. During this visit, I completed the first draft of chapter six of my research project. During the period, I had four in-person supervisory sessions with my host and co-supervisor, Prof Kris Rutten and two meetings with my doctoral advisory committee. I was able to fully participate in the bi-monthly meeting of the Education and Culture Research Group, Faculty of Education, Ghent University. During this research stay I was able to complete a considerable amount of writing and together with my supervisor believe that I am on track for submission of my thesis before the end of 2022."*

## TEACHING

Religion and Media in Africa

Department for the Study of Religions, University of Cape Town

Between August and September 2022 Lee Scharnick-Udemans offered a series of seminars 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.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Cape Talk Radio Interview

Lee Scharnick-Udemans was invited to share her expertise on religious diversity and pluralism by participating in a live telephonic interview with presenter Zain Jacobs to speak about the significance of the Passover, Easter, and Ramadan period for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Lee Scharnick-Udemans. "Why this is an important time for Christians, Muslims, and Jews" April 2023

<https://www.capetalk.co.za/articles/471020/why-this-is-an-important-time-for-christians-muslims-and-jews>

## CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, AND WORKSHOPS

### African Consortium of Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS): Law, Religion, Health and Healing in Africa

Nairobi, Kenya, 15-17 May 2022

In May 2022, Lee Scharnick-Udemans presented a paper at the 9th Annual Conference for the African Consortium of Law and Religion Studies. Her presentation on a panel, was entitled "Blended and Blurred: Digital Healing and Wellness in a Pandemic". The paper argued that in between the spaces occupied by recognized medical professionals, both western and traditional as well as religious leaders, social media revealed a cohort of individuals who offered similar services related to health, wellness, spiritual/religious counsel and wellbeing. Major social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok reveal an extensive buffet of alternative therapies including reiki, energy healing, divination, eco-therapies, restorative yoga, breathwork, and ancestral healing. Lee argued that while these offerings are certainly not new, their visibility, popularity and accessibility has come about as a result of the increased digitalisation of wellness and health and religious practices that has been mandated by the COVID 19 pandemic. For many of these "alternative" health, religious/spiritual and wellness workers as well as their 'patients', the online space, which is determined by its own codes and conventions, offered a space outside the purview of authorising agencies of accountability and legislative frameworks.

Scharnick-Udemans also chaired a panel on Women, Religion and Wellness and participated in the biennial general election of the association.



## European Association for the Study of Religion Conference

University of Cork College, Ireland, 27 June-1 July 2022

Theme: Religion and States of Freedom

PhD student Sakeenah Dramat and Senior Researcher Lee Scharnick-Udemans presented their research at the European Association for the Study of Religion Conference which took place at the University of Cork College in June 2022. This international meeting offered a multi-disciplinary forum for discussions on the academic study of religions.



Scharnick-Udemans presented her work in a session entitled Digital Worlds. Her presentation, "Exploring the 'religious' in religious diversity: The Meaning and Making of an Urban Mystic" explored how material expressions and theoretical conceptions and definitions of "religion, religions and religious diversity" are constructed and circulated through digital media logics and subjective experiences of religion and spirituality. She offered an intersectional analysis of how definitions and conventional explanations of what counts as "religious" are entangled with questions of race, socio-economic status, gender and geo-politics.

Dramat presented a paper entitled "Representations of Religious Freedom, Islam, Muslims and Public Broadcast Media in South Africa" which derived from her Master's project and was part of a session on Islam, Community and Identity. This paper explores the ways in which mass-mediated representations of Muslims in South Africa contests dominant negative stereotypes which associate Muslims and Islam primarily with issues of violence and veiling.

## International Research Training Group (IRTG) on Transformative Religion

University of the Western Cape, 5-9 September 2022

On 6 September Lee Scharnick-Udemans delivered a keynote address at the inaugural summer school of the IRTG on Transformative Religion. This project brings together students and researchers from Humboldt University, Stellenbosch University and the University of the Western Cape. Under the theme "Troubling the Social" Scharnick-Udemans' presentation, "Political Economies of Religion, Race and Media" offered an intersectional reading of how the political economy of the media produces and sustains representations of race and religion that inordinately favour white expressions and practices religiosity. Drawing on the example of the documentary series *Devilsdorp*, she reflected on the importance of expanding the field and the archive of what constitutes both data and knowledge about religion for developing nuanced and contextually relevant studies that take seriously the ways in representations and discourses of religion are constructed, circulated and contested within popular culture.

## Religion and Media Workshop

University of the Western Cape, 4 October 2022

On 4 October 2022, Lee Scharnick-Udemans facilitated a postgraduate workshop for the religion and media



cohort of students. Students were given the opportunity to present their research topics to their peers and to Rosalind Hackett, Extraordinary Professor in the Centre. Enriching discussions followed these presentations and the students all thoroughly benefited from the exchanges. Shanleigh Roux presented a workshop on multimodal discourse analysis. This workshop provided students with the theoretical and conceptual foundation required to make serious methodological decisions about their projects. A group activity wherein a video was

analysed using this framework enabled students to test its utility in real-time. PhD student Ishaya Anthony delivered a short presentation on theories and concepts and shared some insights learned while writing his literature review chapter. The workshop allowed for a supportive environment where thoughts and ideas could be shared.

## The role of media in contemporary South Africa: Ethical and Theological perspectives

Stellenbosch University, Faculty of Theology Open Day, 13 February 2023

Lee Scharnick-Udemans was invited to join a plenary discussion alongside journalism icon Ferial Haffajee



and leading scholar of media studies Prof Hermann Wasserman, on “The role of media in contemporary South Africa: Ethical and Theological perspectives. Her contribution was advanced along three key points. The first spoke to the need for theoretical and conceptual approaches, dispositions, or orientations to the study of religion and media that seek to disrupt presumptions and limiting perspectives of what religion and media are, where they are located, and by whom they are controlled and authorised. Secondly, she suggested that digital media sites, practices, and affordances are shifting notions, representations and expressions of religious authority. Thirdly, she reflected on some of the epistemological and ethical considerations that are important when social media and other online platforms are considered legitimate, authentic and serious sites and sources of knowledge about religion.

## Publications by Staff, Students, Fellows and Affiliates

### Journal articles

1. **Scharnick-Udemans, L** (2022). Spurious Satanists and Christian Cults: Political Economies of Race, Religion and Media. *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 13(2), 125-144.
2. Scharnick-Udemans, L and Dramat, S. (2022). Exploring Representation of Muslims and Islam on Public Broadcast Television and Social media in South Africa. *Journal of Islamic Studies*. 40(1). (In Press)

### ***Chapters in Books***

1. **Scharnick-Udemans, L** (2023). Prospects and Potential for the Study of Religion and Digital Media in (South) Africa. In Jaco Beyers (ed), *What Has Religion Studies in Africa Been Up To?* (pp. 53-76). Wipf and Stock Publishers.
2. **Hackett, R** (2022). Religious Encounters of the Third Kind: Spiritual Technology in Modern Nigeria. In Victor C. Hayes (ed), *Australian Association for the Study of Religions Book Series* (pp. 155-166). The Australian Association for the Study of Religions.

### ***Book Reviews***

1. **Scharnick-Udemans, L** (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.



# RELIGION, EDUCATION, & EPISTEMOLOGY

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.

# GRADUATE RESEARCH

## Desmond Tutu Centre Writing Retreat

Saldanha Bay Hotel, 19-23 September 2022

In September 2022 the Centre hosted a writing retreat for 10 of our postgraduate students. In order to



attend, students were required to submit a draft of their research proposals to their respective supervisors. The retreat was aimed at providing students with an opportunity to revise their proposals based on their supervisors' feedback and for working on chapters of their dissertation. We were also joined by our UCT partner Prof Fatima Seedat, post-doc Dr Dane Isaacs, and extraordinary Professors Adriaan van Klinken and Rosalind Hackett, all of whom

provided supervision support and mentoring. At the beginning of the retreat we asked all attendees to write out their research focus/statement and to set writing goals for each day of the retreat. We followed this up with daily check-ins where we could hold each other accountable or support each other in shifting the goals when necessary. Throughout the retreat the supervision team also met with small groups and individuals to provide more focused guidance when necessary. As the majority of students were still relatively new to the Centre and to each other, this week also allowed students to foster their own sense of community with each other. We see this as a necessary part of combating the isolation which often accompanies postgraduate studies, and in previous years the sense of belonging and accountability formed within the Cohort group has been a vital part of the success of students in our postgraduate training programme.



## Cohort Supervision Workshop

University of the Western Cape, 28 February -2 March 2023

The first of four cohort supervision support workshops, the flagship programme of the DTC, ran from the 28 February to 2 March. A group of ten postgraduate students, including nine PhD students, along with one Master's student gathered for three days of intensive support intervention directed at assisting students with developing a clear, concise and feasible research focus along with a set of research questions, and objectives. In addition, students received intensive training in the area of literature review development. As a part of our peer-to-peer mentorship and coaching model, Nobesuthu Tom, an advanced PhD student offered input, by way of



a case-study of her own literature review chapter, offering students a literal picture of the function and form of the literature review.

Extraordinary Professor in the Centre Prof Mika Vähäkangas presented a seminar entitled, 'White Jesus as Colonial Violence: Kimbanguist Incarnations as Decolonization of Mind'. His presentation inspired a profoundly varied discussion that covered a number of topics including conceptual framing, methodology, race, representation, identity politics and the politics and pragmatics of fieldwork. Students and staff alike thoroughly engaged Vähäkangas and each other on these important and timely issues, and this conversation set the tone for many more convivial and critical engagements throughout the three days of the workshop.



Overall, the cohort supervision workshops offer students the time and space to collectively reflect on their intended research projects under the guidance of a range of experienced academics with varied research orientations and areas of expertise. At this workshop Professor Azonzeh Ukah (UCT) and Drs Jonathan Jodamus and Demaine Solomons (UWC), generously offered their time and skills providing invaluable input and guidance for the entire cohort. As each workshop is themed according to the structural and conceptual requirements of a research proposal and a thesis, the next workshop is on Theoretical Frameworks and Methodology.

## TEACHING

### REL 731: Intersectional Approaches to the Study of Religion

Department of Religion and Theology, University of the Western Cape

This course considered how religion features and functions as an intersection of privilege and power. It explored 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 offered their expertise on the course. Mujahid Osman, an emerging gender and Islam scholar 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 provided 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

### Data Analysis and Theory Building Workshop

Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, Fire and Ice Hotel, 7 April 2022

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. The theme of the workshop was 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. Through the networking from this meeting, further research collaborations were established.

## CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, AND WORKSHOPS

### VI Global Network of Public Theologies (GNPT) Consultation

Curitiba, Brazil, 3–6 October 2022

Public Theologies in Vibrating Cities: Precious and Precarious

Sarojini Nadar chaired the working group on Theological Education as Engaged Scholarship, and postdoctoral fellow, Selena Headley, was both part of the working group and presented a paper in person. The title of her paper was: "Participatory Theological Education and Research for African cities"

## Abstract

Developing African cities exhibit unique characteristics sometimes referred to as African urbanisms. Theological education and research could be positioned to engage African urbanisms within the challenge of developing just, inclusive and sustainable cities at the forefront of public theology. At the centre of engaged urban public theology, the stories of those who have been marginalised in urban development due to various factors such as race, class or gender help to inform the intent, discourse and outcomes of theological education and research.

This paper explores the kind of research methodologies which foster participation and collaboration to benefit vulnerable communities in Cape Town who are often the subject of inquiry. This includes wrestling with research ethics, investigating the positionality, orientation, and posture of the researcher drawing from Womanist and praxis-based frameworks. The result of well-designed community-based approaches can lead to reciprocal knowledge co-production, embodied scholarship, conscientisation, and sensitivity to the situation of urban dwellers. The contribution of well-designed pedagogical and research approaches leading to the formation of urban leaders who could facilitate inclusive and just urban futures is investigated.

## Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa (ASRSA)

University of the Western Cape, 12-13 October 2022

On 12 and 13 October the Centre hosted the 43rd Annual Conference for Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa. The Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa (ASRSA) is an international scholarly association that promotes the scholarly study of the religions of Southern Africa and beyond. The 2023 conference theme was Religion and/in the Humanities, and followed a hybrid format bringing together over fifty scholars of religion from South Africa, Mozambique, Brazil, Portugal, Canada, Botswana, Rwanda and Eswatini. Leading scholar of religion, Professor Abdulkader Tayob. Tayob holds the National Research Foundation Chair in Islam, African Publics and Religious Values and delivered a compelling keynote address entitled, "Turning Threats into Opportunities: Religious Studies and the Humanities". His presentation raised and addressed critical questions regarding the decolonisation of Religious Studies as well as the inherent scholarly and social value of decolonial approaches to the study of religion.



Sarojini Nadar welcomed the participants with the following message:



"Friends and colleagues, on behalf of the Desmond Tutu Center for Religion and Social Justice, and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, here at UWC, it is my exceptional joy and delight to welcome ASRSA here for its 43rd annual meeting convening with the theme 'Religion in the humanities, Religion and the humanities.'

When I say it's my joy and delight, I'm not just repeating the conventional, polite niceties of protocol. I really do mean it.



Two years ago, we were supposed to meet here at UWC for another meeting - the joint conference of the societies of religion and theology, but COVID prevented the meeting. It was fortuitous that the meeting did not happen, because if it did, the impetus of the Black Lives Matter movement combined with the righteous rage that some of us were feeling about the exclusionary politics of the conference may have caused serious disruptions.

Here we are two years later, hosting a society that stood in solidarity with those who were experiencing this righteous rage. Solidarity is a wonderful moral and social virtue, and certainly forms part of the values which undergirded the life of Desmond Tutu, who's name we are proud to bear in our center. While social solidarity may be a lovely virtue, it strikes me that we need scholarly solidarity more than ever, in university contexts that are marked by corporate agenda's that insist on seeing us as productivity units, cogs in their systems of rating, reviews, recognition and branding, where the 'sage on the stage' who cleverly curates their standing, counts more than the critical contemplative who's deep thought can ultimately shape the direction of our quest for a deeper understanding of the human condition.

How do we study religion in the humanities and what is the relationship between the study of religion to the humanities in such higher education contexts?

Religion offers a crucial means of insight into the human condition, and so we must of necessity ask not just the what, or how questions about religion, but more importantly why it matters that we produce the knowledge that we do, and how we produce such knowledge.

The decolonial turn in academia called our attention to this question in ways that are thankfully being taken up in university contexts, albeit sometimes in instrumentalized ways that serve neoliberal agendas. And so we must be honest, and declare that marginalized and racialized scholars within feminist, and critical race traditions were, inspired by Audre Lorde and others, asking questions about the relationship between the master's house and the master's tools, long before it became fashionable to do so.

These questions were part of our scholarly inquiry not because the powers that be were asking us to tick those boxes, or because we needed them for promotion or rating or simply to be academically fashionable. These were questions that we were deeply committed to, as a means of producing knowledge that was just; as well as judicious, contextual and critical.

If the study of the Humanities, is to consider what it means to be human - to study symbols, cultural forms, dance, music, art and literature - what does it mean to conduct these studies in Africa, the context in which we gather, and what does it mean to study these things in other colonized parts of the world?

How do we ourselves account for our own humanity as scholars and the humanities of the other, and the othered in our research and scholarship - queer, women, black - those that are not just marginal in academic discourses, but those whose voices and wisdom have been intentionally marginalized, deliberately silenced and preferably unheard, as Arundhati Roy so poignantly reminds us.

As we consider the rituals and rites of passage within the various religious traditions that we study, what space do we give to interrogate the rituals and rites of passage of this monster that we call academia - those things that mark us as scholars of religion? I would venture that these questions are not incidental

to our work, but should be integral to it. Especially as we gather here, today, in this moment at the intellectual home of the left.

And so, with those few words, questions, ponderings- it is my joy and privilege to welcome you all to our space - where we are a small group of 4 women of colour who seek to undertake and advance research at the intersections of religion and social justice. It's a feminist space, a space of friendship - a space of scholarly conviviality as, Francis Nyamnjoh so aptly puts it. It is a space of deep reflection, as well as laughter and joy. Feel welcome, and I wish you well for the critical conversations and scholarly work that you will engage in over the next few days. May they be productive, generative and generous!"

Over the course of the next two days, participants shared thoughtful reflections on the intersections of religion, gender, politics, philosophy, ethics and race. A highlight of the conference was a graduate panel, Critical Terms for the Study of Religion in South Africa, the abstract is featured below:

"This panel brings together postgraduate students who variously employ a critical term in the study of religion to understand new, and revisit existing phenomena in South Africa. These concepts include 'gam', 'juig', 'kerkhare', and 'waterslams'. That the etymology of these terms is located in Afrikaans furthermore highlights how the language was produced by migrant, exiled, and gendered religious subjects and subjectivities. The contributors in this panel will show that these terms provide not only a glossary for the study of religion/s in South Africa, but an intimate understanding and mapping of the religious genealogies, geographies, and conditions that produce and animates the term under study. Contributors in this panel will address what makes these terms uniquely South African? Which religious person claim the term, 'gam', 'juig', 'kerkhare', and 'waterslams', and on whom has the term been applied? To what extent and in what ways do religious adherents and academics share or disagree on the meaning of the term? We hope these terms encourage other scholars to revive 'old' concepts and reimagine 'new' ways of speaking and thinking about everyday religious vocabularies used in South Africa."

Following this presentation, the Centre pledged to support a recurring panel on this topic at forthcoming conferences.

PhD student Nobesuthu Tom presented a well-received and timely paper, entitled, "Tracing the



Epistemological Foundations of African Traditional Religion: A decolonial exploration of David Chidester's work". Her paper used the academic writings of David Chidester as a case study, to demonstrate that the application of approaches and theories such as Decoloniality, and Critical Whiteness Studies, raises for consideration, new understandings of the epistemological foundations of African religions". Given Chidester's close relationship

with ASRSA over his 35-year career, this paper was especially appreciated by members and participants. Tom's fresh insights provided a hitherto unexplored critical intervention that is both novel and nuanced.

At the welcome reception the theme of the conference was enlivened by performances from two talented UWC students, poet, Jerome Coetzee and vocal powerhouse Siphesihle Linette Mhlongo. Both generously shared their talents through rousing performances.

This was the first time in the history of ASRSA that the conference took place at UWC and all in attendance agreed that it was a phenomenal event.

## Institute of Religion, Culture and Peace

Payap University, Thailand, December 2022

Workshop Topic: "Exploring 'Academicity' through a transdisciplinary cohort supervision program in Religion and Social Justice"

Sarojini Nadar and Johnathan Jodamus had meetings and facilitated a workshop with staff and PhD students at Payap University in December.

The purpose of this workshop was to explore the pedagogical underpinnings of a trans-disciplinary cohort research supervision programme. Through the experiences of the cohort model of supervision in South Africa, Nadar and Jodamus shared how transdisciplinarity enables the development of scholarly, independent and critical thinkers – in a word “academicity.” Drawing on the work of Petersen in 2007, Charteris et al note that "Academicity is defined as a performative construct and ongoing process of becoming through which academic subjects ‘come into being by being appropriated by, and by appropriating, available enactments and desires that are recognisable as “academic.”"



The workshop reflected on the cohort model of supervision and how it:

1. Expands the concept of research supervision beyond the "master/apprentice" model and conceptualises supervision as a critical community of practice
2. Explores the epistemological diversity of transdisciplinary research supervision
3. Enables a more robust engagement with social context (social responsiveness)

The participants showed great appreciation for the method, and this inspired discussions of an MOU with Payap University that will enable South-South exchanges which offer resources that are distinctly different from the power dynamics that conventionally characterise North-South academic partnerships. The Centre is supporting Senior Researcher, Lee Scharnick-Udemans to visit the institution in April. Ly Le, an early-career academic, will visit UWC in May and participate in the research training workshop on Theories and Methods, scheduled for 2-5 May. We hope that this will be the start of a mutually beneficial academic partnership.

## Publications by Staff, Students, Fellows and Affiliates

### Journal articles

1. Jodamus, J., Robertson, M., and Nadar, S. (2022). "Transdisciplinary, Transgressive and Transformative: Pedagogical Reflections on Sexual Ethics, Religion, and Gender" *Critical African Studies*, 14(1), 1-17.
2. Headley, S. D. (2022). Black Theology in Theological Education: Expanding the Boundaries through African Women's Theologies. *Ecumenical Review*, 74(4), 631-644.

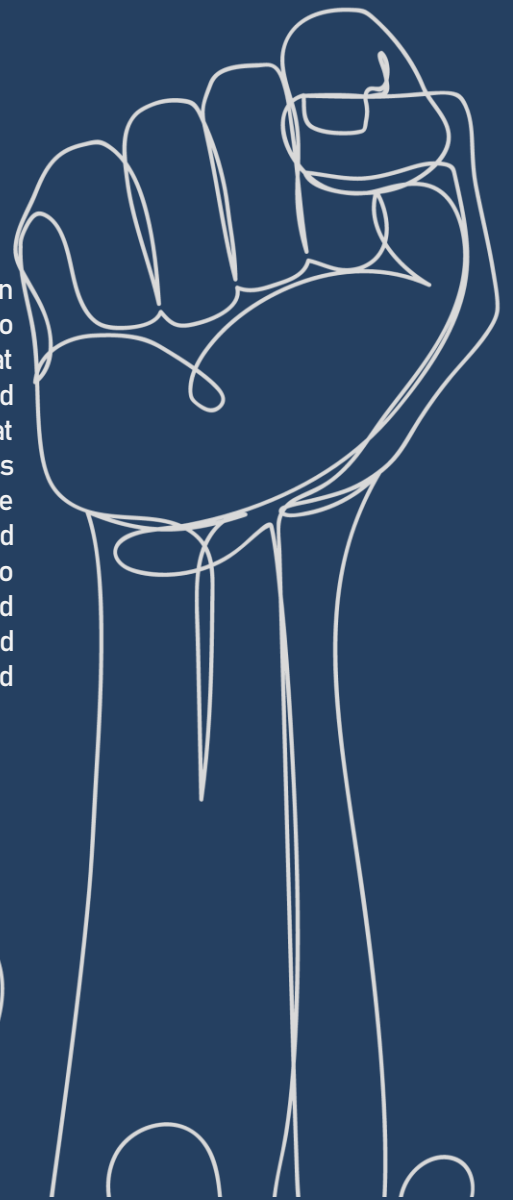
3. Tom, N. (2022). Black Theology before the Decolonial Turn. *Ecumenical Review*, 74(4), 561-575.

#### Chapters in books

1. Nadar, S. (2023). The Embodied Cost of Knowledge Activism. In J. Y. Choi, & G. L. Cuéllar (Eds), *Activist Hermeneutics of Liberation in the Bible, Routledge Series: New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies*, (183-190). Routledge.
2. Kaunda, M. M. (2022). Bemba Imbusa as African Indigenous Knowledge Framework for Life-Giving Marriage. In T. M. Muyambo, A. M. Hlatywayo, P. M. Sithole, & M. Mawere (Eds.), *Re-imagining Indigenous Knowledge and Practices in 21st Century Africa: Debunking Myths and Misconceptions for Conviviality and Sustainability* (pp. 267-284). Langa RPCIG.

# RELIGION, RACE, POLITICS, & AFRICAN RELIGION

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 focuses on decolonial explorations of religion. 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. In addition, 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.

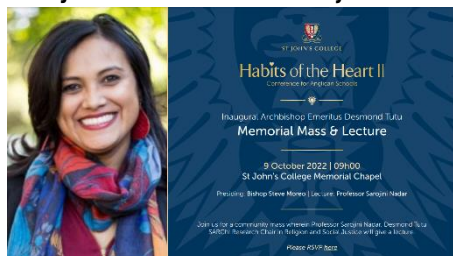


## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Inaugural Tutu Memorial Lecture: Keynote, Sarojini Nadar

St John's College, Johannesburg, 7-9 October 2022

Sarojini Nadar was invited by St John's College in collaboration with The Anglican Board of Education to

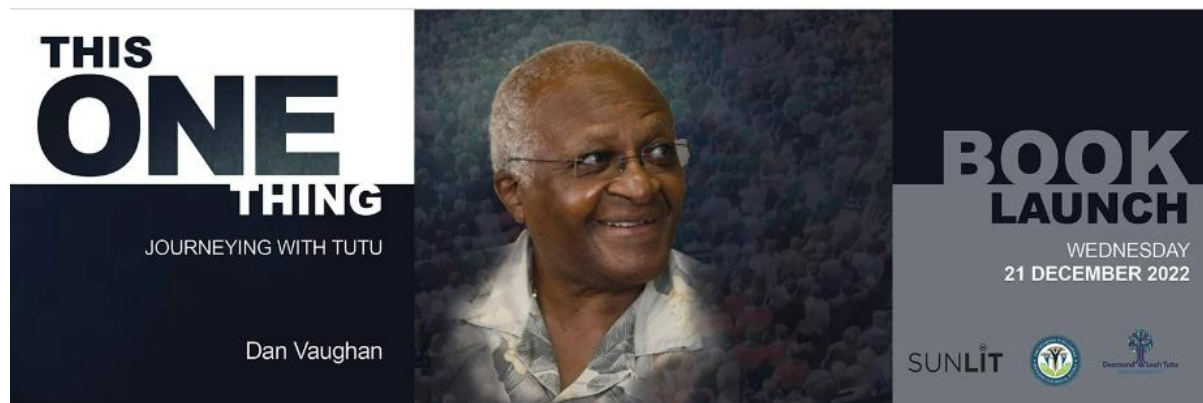


deliver the Inaugural Desmond Tutu Memorial Lecture at the St John's College school on 9 October. The title of her lecture was: "Faith, Freedom and Fraternity: Exploring Religion, Race and Sexuality in sacred texts." The link to the lecture can be found here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l\\_FPIdjZB4M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_FPIdjZB4M)

Following the lecture, the school's deputy head for Transformation and Diversity will be joining the Centre's postgraduate programme as a Masters student.

### Book Launch: "This One Thing" a Memoir about Tutu, by Dan Vaughn

Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, 21 December 2022



As part of its ongoing commitment to preserving the intellectual legacy of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, the Centre and the SARChI Chair were pleased to support the publication and launch of Dan Vaughn's book, "This One Thing." The book was launched in partnership with the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation. Dan Vaughn describes the book as follows:

This is a Tutu book, unique in its behind-the-scenes insights into the life of this global giant, and a significant contribution in the understanding of Tutu's life and message. The memoir is a compelling narrative of two entwined lives. It is about the transformation of an ordinary white South African who came to be Tutu's right-hand person in the South African Council of Churches, and later companion as he later travelled the world. It is about a fearless opponent of apartheid who would rise to world prominence in the struggle against that evil.

The memoir opens in the impact of the early days of apartheid, and the author's short-lived missionary service in Zimbabwe. His role as leader of a para-church organization and invitation to join the staff of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) follows. In the SACC, his new inverted world, he finds supportive colleagues and hostile friends and family. The author shares his insights into Tutu's faith, courage, and passion for justice, with details of his earlier life and his appointment as General Secretary of the SACC, and the impact there as its first black leader. Tutu calls for sanctions and incenses the authorities who are relentless in their efforts to silence his voice. Later, in the turbulent early eighties, Tutu leaves the SACC.

The final chapters describe Tutu's role in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the new phase in his life where he exercised a truly international ministry of peace and reconciliation. The book documents the stories of the author's travels with Tutu, describing his efforts on reconciliation in Columbia, Northern Ireland and the Sudan, up to his official retirement in 2012 and his passing at the end of 2021.

## Complementary Certificate in Ecumenical Studies, Ecumenical Institute

Bossey, Switzerland, August 2022–January 2023

Rhine 'Toby' Koloti, PhD student in the Desmond Tutu Centre was accepted for this prestigious international programme for the autumn semester of the academic year 2022–2023. He obtained a diploma in Ecumenical Studies and 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits jointly awarded by the Ecumenical Institute and the Autonomous Faculty of Protestant Theology of the University of Geneva.



Archbishop of Canterbury, His Excellency Most Revd Justin Welby and Rhine Koloti at the 11th WCC Assembly in Karlsruhe.

*"In August 2022, I was privileged to be accepted into the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in Switzerland through efforts and encouragement by the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice under the guidance and leadership of Professor Sarojini Nadar – who also happens to be my PhD supervisor. The institute serves as a 'laboratory' for emerging ecumenical theologians associated with the World Council of Churches. I enrolled for the Complimentary Certificate in Ecumenical Studies which is a joint postgraduate diploma offered by the University of Geneva and the Bossey Ecumenical Institute. I am tremendously grateful for the financial support I received from the DTC as well the University of the Western Cape for making this enrolment possible. live, learn and pray together.*

### **Living together**

*As we became experts in ecumenism, we simultaneously learned the kind of peace-building skills that are vitally important in today's global context. One of the most important aspects of education at Bossey was the combination of academic teaching and learning with practical living together in an ecumenical community. Though all of us were expectedly familiar with the former, the latter seemed like a mountain to climb at first. Living together as 35 students from different countries and cultures under one roof was indeed difficult but necessary. It was necessary because book-learning and life-learning intertwined to form an environment that combined scholarly methodology with the experimental adventure of a laboratory – hence the institute is commonly referred to as "an ecumenical laboratory". We did not learn*

*about 'the other' from just books, but we learned through personal encounters and discussions with each other.*

### ***Praying together***

*For example, during our daily compulsory Morning Prayer in the beautiful 18th century chapel, we got to understand that, when we pray, we all become members of a single communion even if we come from different cultures, traditions and denominations. That this communion is not exclusive of, but rather despite our differences. At no point did I feel the illusion that ecumenicity meant denouncing one's own diverse identity. Instead, I was often reminded that the goal of ecumenism is not uniformity but visible unity.*

### ***Studying together***

*For the 2022-2023 class, the following ecumenical study visits were planned: The 11th World Council of Churches Assembly in Karlsruhe - Germany, the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy - Switzerland, The Vatican City and Rome - Italy, the Taizé Community - France, local parishes of the Reformed Protestant Church - Switzerland.*



*Graduation: Rhine Koloti shakes the hand of Revd. Prof Jerry Pillay (WCC General Secretary)*

*As students of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, it became important for us to not only reflect academically, theoretically, and conceptually on ecumenism, but instead to also explore the various ways through which ecumenism is said, lived, sung, prayed and embodied. My biggest highlight was when I was selected by the Institute's Dean, Professor Simon Sinn, to be the Moderator for the inter-generational dialogue between the World Council of Churches' Executive Committee and Bossey students. A highlight was when one of my role-models in Feminist and African Theology: Professor Isabel Phiri, former WCC Deputy General Secretary - ended the conversation with "Thank you for making us proud Rhine". Today I can comfortably say that I am benefactor of a life-changing experience that transformed me into becoming a leader in my local community and in the world's ecumenical movement - and for that I am humbly grateful."*

- Rhine Phillip Tsobotsi Koloti, Bossey Ecumenical Institute class of 2022/23)



# CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, AND WORKSHOPS

## Black Theology Colloquium

Online (Zoom platform), 23 May 2022

The Centre hosted an online colloquium on Black Theology on 23 May 2022. Sarojini Nadar and Demaine Solomons, from the Department of Religion and Theology, worked together to draft a call for papers, and they secured a special edition of the journal, *Ecumenical Review*, to publish the papers from the colloquium, which they co-edited. The colloquium was jointly supported by the SARCHI Chair in Religion and Social Justice as well as the “Black Theology as Unfinished Business” grant that Solomons holds under the auspices of the Black Academic Advancement Programme, of the National Research Foundation.



The revival of interest in Black Theologies are sparked by, amongst others, the global reach of movements such as #BlackLivesMatter, and in South Africa, mainly through questions about its utility in a democratic state that has failed to provide for all its citizens. This colloquium sought to explore questions about Black Theology in the current moment. In addition to questions about its utility, the colloquium reflected on questions that push the boundaries of earlier thinking in the field of Black Theology.

How does Black Theology respond to the “marketplace” of social justice thought such as public, contextual and reconstruction theologies? With the increasing appreciation of decolonial approaches to the study of religion, can critical race theory and other theories of social justice help to more clearly define and expand the contours of Black Theology? Why have feminist and womanist theologians been reluctant to implicitly and intentionally name and engage with Black theology and Black male theologians? What lessons have the proponents of Black theology not learnt? In what ways do early proponents of Black Theology inspire current reflection, and in what ways are their contemplations challenged by a younger generation of scholars seeking to nuance matters of sexuality, gender, and race?

These and many other questions were explored in the papers presented at the colloquium. 11 papers were published in a special issue called “Black Theologies of Resistance, Existence and Solidarity.” They can be accessed at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/17586623/2022/74/4>

# Peacebuilding and Women's Rights in Nigeria: Current Challenges and Responses

University of the Western Cape, 28 September 2022

Extraordinary Professor at the Desmond Tutu Centre, Rosalind Hackett, facilitated an international webinar



**Peacebuilding and Women's Rights in Nigeria: Current Challenges and Responses**

Wednesday, September 28th

in collaboration with the Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (ACMCU) at Georgetown University. She facilitated conversation between two leading Nigerian activists, Dr Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi, Director of the "Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre" (WARCD) and Ms Khadijah Hawaja Gambo, Commissioner of the Kaduna State Peace Commission. Both interlocutors work at communal, regional, national, and international levels to promote and protect girls' and women's rights in Nigeria. The Centre hosted an in-person collective viewing of the event. Lee Scharnick-Udemans facilitated a discussion

session afterward, which allowed for deeper engagement with the issues raised by the speakers, particularly in relation to the way in which religion and culture are implicated in the discursive and material affirmation of universal human rights and reparative social justice.

## Publications by Staff, Students, Fellows and Affiliates

### Journal articles

1. Nadar, S. and Solomons, D. (2022). Black Theologies of Liberation: How Should Black Lives Matter Theologically? *Ecumenical Review*, 74(4), 501-503.
2. Nadar, S. and Maluleke, T. (2022). Of Theological Burglaries and Epistemic Violence: Black Theology, Decoloniality and Higher Education. *Ecumenical Review*, 74(4), 541-560.
3. Nadar, S. and Solomons, D. (2022). Black Theologies of Resistance, Existence and Solidarity. *Ecumenical Review* 74(4), 503-514.
4. Kaunda, M. M. (2022). Transformation, Mission, Reconciliation, and Unity: An African Woman's Perspective. *International Review of Mission*, 111(1), 19-28.
5. Adera, G. O. (2022). "Black, Queer, and Christian" Exploring Sexuality as an Emerging Contour of Black Theology. *Ecumenical Review*, 74(4), 658-670.
6. Vähäkangas, M. (2022). Judging from the Inside: A Theological Reading of Joel Robbins's Theology and the Anthropology of Christian Life. *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*, 46(3), 96-100.
7. Vähäkangas, M. (2022). Jesus Is the Saviour of the World-What If It Is Not My World? *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*, 98(4), 319-329.
8. Hackett, R. I. (2022). From Festive Sacred to Festive Secular? Indigenous Religious Presence in Two Nigerian Festivals. *Numen*, 69(4), 341-389.
9. Hackett, R. I. (2022). Movements, Pentecostal and Charismatic. In *Encyclopedia of African Religions and Philosophy* (pp. 464-467). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
10. Battle, M. (2022). Tutu's Apocalypse. *Anglican Theological Review*, 104(3), 321-323.
11. Beydoun, K. A. (2022). Righting the Rift between Muslim and American: Celebrating Abdullahi An-Na'im. *Emory Int'l L Rev.*, 36(4), 637-646.
12. Beydoun, K. A. (2022). Killing an Arab. *North Carolina Law Review*, 101(1), 207-221.

### Chapters in Books

1. Nyakudya, M., Chinouriri, B., Mateveke, P., & Chitando, E. (2022). Culture, Language, Human Rights and Politics in Oliver Mtukudzi's Music. In M. Nyakudya, B. Chinouriri, P. Mateveke, & E. Chitando (Eds), *The Cultural and Artistic Legacy of Oliver Mtukudzi: Using Language for Social Justice* (pp. 1-16). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
2. Parker, E. (2022). Transgender, Transcended and "Born Free": Theological and Intersectional discourse about the Body of Lee Mokobe. In N. Bowers Du Toit (Ed), *Faith, Race and Inequality Amongst Young Adults in South Africa, Contested and contesting discourses for a better future*. Africa Sun Media in the SUN Press Media.
3. Beydoun, K. A. (2022). The War on Terror: The Phases and Faces of a Modern Crusade. In D. Carbado, E. Houh, and K. M. Bridges (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Race and Law in the United States*. Oxford University Press.

### Books

1. Vaughan, D. (2022). *This One Thing: Journeying with Desmond Tutu*. African Sun Media.
2. Beydoun, K. A. (2023). *The New Crusades: Islamophobia and the Global War on Muslims*. Univ of California Press.

### Edited books

1. Lauterbach, E & Vähäkangas, M. (Eds). (2022). *Faith in Lived African Christianity: Anthropological and Theological Perspectives*. Brill.
2. Chitando, E, Maseno, L, & Tarusarira, J. (Eds.). (2023). *Religion and Inequality in Africa*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
3. Nyakudya, M., Chinouriri, B., Mateveke, P., & Chitando, E. (Eds.). (2022). *The Cultural and Artistic Legacy of Oliver Mtukudzi: Using Language for Social Justice*. Springer International Publishing.

### Book Review

1. van Klinken, A. (2022). Chosen Peoples: Christianity and Political Imagination in South Sudan (Religious Cultures of African and African Diaspora People Series), *Religion* 52(3), 480-483.

# RELIGION, ECOLOGY, & 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.

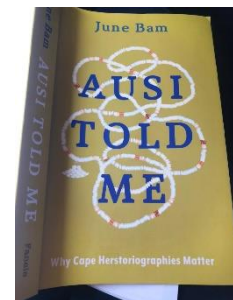


## TEACHING

### Eco-Theology Project Proposal

Given its commitment to the critical study of religion, theology and the environment, the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice at the University of the Western Cape is well positioned to popularise Eco-theology as a political ecology of religion, since the university's site/land itself holds traces of memory and indigenous knowledge of the Cape indigenous communities who were violently removed from their land. On 1 April 2023, the Centre sent through a proposal to EMW for an Eco-Theological project that maintains that conservation needs to be centred on belonging and justice to undo past crimes and injustices against both people and the environment.

In this project we will deliberately eco-theology as a political ecology of religion by unpacking more of the context of the Cape Flats including the Cape Flats Nature Reserve which is where the project will principally be taking place. The project aims to focus on the survival of the cultural and ritual archive on the Cape Flats area by inviting the Ausidi (Ausidi refers to first-born daughters, female knowledge-keepers, who were and continue to be profound intergenerational knowledge-holders of those pasts. Ausidi is the plural form of 'Ausi' (Bam, 2020: 265) to share knowledge about the land, plants and conservation practices of the indigenous people of the Cape Flats and simultaneously creating celebratory spaces to pay tribute to the unrecorded archive of the Cape Flats Nature reserve, and surrounds.

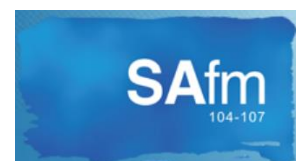


The goal of the project is to educate and enhance the agency of participating students from disciplines within the Religion, Health and Environment faculties at the University of the Western Cape. In addition, we seek to recognise the marginalised knowledge of the indigenous network of women referred to as the Ausidi. We also seek to raise awareness of the links between ecology and religion, as well as of the ritual archive on the Cape Flats, and amongst the broader university community (through public events).

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### SAfm Panel discussion

Miranda Pillay participated in a panel discussion, "The Role of the Church in Development and Building Community" on SAfm, a national radio station. The programme, The View Point aired on 10 April 2023. Pillay explored the Gospel imperative of love + Justice in developing a meaningful, Christ-inspired contribution to building community. This means that the church's socio-religious and spiritual responses ought to be Pastoral and Prophetic, each of which needs to be shaped by an ethics of responsibility and driven by just policies and politics.



“Comment”, by Tswelopele Makoe, 3 January 2023

<https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/news/politics/opinion/comment-58bed846-140a-4861-b404-b3d405c6e4c2>

“Racism is alive and kicking in our land”, by Tswelopelo Makoe, 9 January 2023

<https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/analysis/racism-is-alive-and-kicking-in-our-land-ed0384ed-650f-446d-9336-6ee65c90b6a8>

“The United States of Africa benefits us all”, by Tswelopele Makoe, 12 February 2023

<https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/news/politics/opinion/the-united-states-of-africa-benefits-us-all-ab435199-db9f-4c4d-8d34-f22fdf3a5f15>

“Poverty hardships increase mental distress at varsities”, Tswelopele Makoe, 19 February 2023

<https://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/news/politics/opinion/poverty-hardships-increase-mental-distress-at-varsities-df862e07-6347-4f0b-aa84-96b61a485e03>

## Publications by Staff, Students, Fellows and Affiliates

### Journal articles

1. **Naidoo, P.** (2022). Joy in the Dirt: Discovering Indenture's Wild Places. *Art/Research International*, 7(2), 369-388.
2. **Naidoo, P.** (2023). Greener on the other side: tracing stories of amaranth and moringa through indenture. *Agenda (2023)*, 1-9.
3. **Van Klinken, A.** (2022). Wangari Maathai's Environmental Bible as an African Knowledge: Eco-spirituality, Christianity, and Decolonial Thought. *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*, 8(3), 156-175.

### Chapters in Books

1. **Tifloen, R., & Makgoba, M. J.** (2022). Sustainable Faith and Livelihoods: Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief in Development. In M. Tadros (Ed), *What About Us? Global Perspectives on Redressing Religious Inequalities* (pp. 145-176). Institute of Development Studies.
2. **Tarusarira, J., & Parsitau, D. S.** (2022). The religio-spiritual and sacred dimensions of climate-induced conflicts: A research agenda. In E. Chitando, E. M. Conradie, & S. M. Kilonzo (Eds), *African Perspectives on Religion and Climate Change* (pp. 186-202). Routledge.
3. **Chitando, E.** (2022). Introduction: African perspectives on religion and climate change. In E. Chitando, E. M. Conradie, & S. M. Kilonzo (Eds), *African Perspectives on Religion and Climate Change* (pp. 1-21). Routledge.
4. **Chitando, E.** (2022). Africa and the Quest for Sustainable Development: A Critical Review. In E. Chitando, & E. Kamaara (Eds), *Values, Identity, and Sustainable Development in Africa* (pp. 69-84). Palgrave Macmillan.
5. **Chitando, E., Conradie, E. M., & Kilonzo, S. M.** (2022). Five years after: An overview of the response of Catholics in Africa to the Laudato Sis call for creation care. In **E. Chitando, E. M. Conradie, & S. M. Kilonzo** (Eds), *African Perspectives on Religion and Climate Change*. Taylor & Francis.
6. **Manyonganise, M., Chitando, E., & Chirongoma, S.** (2023). Introduction: Women, Religion and Leadership in Zimbabwe. In *Women, Religion and Leadership in Zimbabwe, Volume 1: An Ecofeminist Perspective* (pp. 1-21). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

7. Sibanda, F., Muyambo, T., & **Chitando, E.** (2022). Religion and public health in the shadow of COVID-19 pandemic in Southern Africa. In F. Sibanda, T. Muyambo, E. Chitando (Eds), *Religion and the COVID-19 pandemic in Southern Africa* (244-256). Routledge.
8. **Chitando, E.** (2022). Interfaith Networks and Development. In E. Chitando, & I. S. Gusha (Eds), *Interfaith Networks and Development: Case Studies from Africa* (pp. 3-26). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
9. Chirongoma, S., Manyonganise, M., & **Chitando, E.** (2022). Religion, Women's Health Rights and Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe. In S. Chirongoma, M. Manyonganise, & E. Chitando (Eds), *Religion, Women's Health Rights, and Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe: Volume 1* (pp. 1-19). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

#### **Edited Books**

1. Sibanda, F., Muyambo, T., & **Chitando, E.** (Eds.). (2022). *Religion and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Southern Africa* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003241096>
2. **Chitando, E.** & Kamaara, E. (Eds.). (2022). *Values, Identity, and Sustainable Development in Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan.
3. **Chitando, E.** & Gusha, I. S. (Eds.). (2022). *Interfaith Networks and Development: Case Studies from Africa*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

# NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Centre continues to build meaningful and productive national and international partnerships that mutually enrich our scholarly work and commitments to social justice.





## Ghent University

Ghent, Belgium, 7-13 July 2022

Sarojini Nadar had several meetings with colleagues from Ghent University from 7-13 July.

### **Ines Keygnaert, Professor of sexual and reproductive health, International Centre for Reproductive Health/ Department Public Health & Primary Care, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences**

Sarojini Nadar and Ines Keygnaert jointly supervise Leona Morgan's PhD, under the Strategic Institutional Partnership (SIP) Agreement between University of Ghent and UWC. After two years of meeting online, the two supervisors had the opportunity to meet with Leona Morgan for in-person meetings to chart the direction of the research, joint publications, as well as other matters such as the PhD advisory committee.

### **Chia Longman, Director of the Centre for Research on Culture and Gender**

Apart from an agreement to continue collaborating in ongoing research partnerships, it was also agreed that an application for a visiting fellowship in 2023, will be made to pursue new areas of research, particularly in the area of women's spirituality. Prof Longman also agreed to be on the dissertation committee of PhD candidate, Leona Morgan.

### **Stef Slembrouck, Department of Linguistics and Kris Rutten, Culture and Education**

A productive meeting with Stef Slembrouck and Kris Rutten on the current status of the SIP Agreement was held. An outcome of the meeting is a further application under the SIP agreement for a new joint research and doctoral supervision venture called "Research Pathways of South/North Exchange in Capacity and Learning."

## Meeting with Centre for Contemporary Islam

Blaauwberg Beach Hotel, 2 August

On 2 August Sarojini Nadar met with the co-directors of the Centre for Contemporary Islam, at the



University of Cape Town, Sa'diyya Shaikh and Fatima Seedat. The purpose of the meeting was to explore collaboration between the DT Centre and the CCI. It was acknowledged that the two centres hold expertise in the study of two major religious traditions, Christianity and Islam. The current research and supervision relationships between the staff at both centres, provides an ideal opportunity to explore further partnership and

collaboration, and it was agreed that this will be explored via an MOU between the Centres.

## 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.



This opportunity was taken up by Megan Robertson who visited the Institute from May to June 2022. The primary focus of her time as a visiting researcher was to conceptualise and write a monograph based on her doctoral work with queer clergy in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Within six weeks she conceptualised the format, outline and wrote two chapters of the book. The monograph reveals queer clergy life stories and explicates what these stories reveal about the Church that makes up such an integral part of not only how they make sense of their Christianity, but who they are and how they make meaning of their lives and experiences. In the book, she is interested in the construction of Methodism in South Africa and whether there is a potential for this normative space of Christianity to also become a sacred queer place. It also uncovers different forms of queer resistance in this context and looks at how heteropatriarchy is both constituted and subverted in the Church in various ways. For a full interview with the Polin Institute see: <https://polininstitutet.fi/interview-with-guest-researcher-megan-robertson/>.

Sarojini Nadar also took up the opportunity to spend focused time on her research, at Polin Institute during July 2022. During her time there, she worked on various publications including the special issue on Black Theology, which is forthcoming in November 2022. She also made some important connections for future research collaborations.

## Ayşe Almıla Akca, Humboldt University

University of the Western Cape, 30 August 2022

On 30 August 2022, the Department of Religion and Theology weekly Tuesday seminar featured Dr Ayşe Almıla Akca, a post-doc research fellow from Humboldt University. The lecture was titled “What Ramadan is actually about” – Navigating Muslims’ practices of fasting in Germany”. Almıla Akca shared important insights on the gendered, racial, political and religious intersections of fasting practices amongst Muslims in Germany. After the seminar the Centre hosted Dr Almıla Akca along with Drs Saidi and Tawwfeek from Foreign Languages as well as Prof Swart from the Department of Religion and Theology for further discussion on her research and on possible future collaborations. Two students, Ashleigh Peterson and Sakeenah Dramat, presented their work to the group and received valuable input, comments and encouragement for their projects.

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# ACADEMIC SERVICE

In addition to their primary work in the Centre, staff also participated in various academic citizenship activities, within, and beyond UWC in the year 2022/2023.



## Sarojini Nadar

<b>Journal Editor</b>	African Journal of Gender and Religion
<b>Editorial Board Member</b>	Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion Feminist Studies in Religion Book Series Journal of Africana Religions Women Studies International Forum
<b>Executive Member</b>	National Research Foundation (NRF) Executive Evaluations Committee
<b>Chairperson</b>	NRF Rating Panels in the following disciplines: Law, Earth Sciences and Engineering, Communication, Media Studies, Library and Information Sciences
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	ASSAF Peer Review Multidisciplinary Journal Panel (Nominated by ASSAF's Committee on Scholarly Publishing and Council)
<b>Chair</b>	ASSAF Evaluations of journals in the discipline of Gender
<b>Rector's Nominee</b>	Senate International Research Committee
<b>Co-Chair</b>	American Academy of Religion: Religion and Sexuality Unit
<b>Special Advisor</b>	Gender Advisory Group, World Council of Churches
<b>Board Member</b>	Inclusive and Affirming Ministries
<b>Member of UWC Committees</b>	Faculty of Arts and Humanities Research Committee Faculty of Arts and Humanities Professorial Appointments Committee Joint Appointments and Promotions Committee of Senate and Council
<b>External Examiner</b>	University of South Africa
<b>Member</b>	Advisory Council on National Orders, Office of the Presidency
<b>Peer reviewer</b>	Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion
<b>Chair</b>	Shaping Urban Futures Working Group, Global Network for Practical Theology

## Lee Scharnick-Udemans

<b>Reviewer</b>	Alternation, Interdisciplinary Journal (UKZN)
<b>Media Officer and Reviewer</b>	African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies
<b>Editorial Board Member</b>	African Journal of Gender and Religion
<b>Co-Editor</b>	Journal for the Study of Religion
<b>Rating Application Reviewer</b>	National Research Foundation
<b>Executive</b>	Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa
<b>Member of UWC Committees</b>	Faculty of Arts and Humanities Research Committee Faculty of Arts and Humanities Higher Degrees Committee
<b>Chair of sub-committee</b>	National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) PhD scholarships (2021/2022)
<b>Editorial Board Member</b>	Indigenous Religious Traditions (Equinox)
<b>Co- Principal Investigator</b>	National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences/ University of the Western Cape Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Programme 2022-2024.
<b>Selection Committee member</b>	Andrew Mellon Foundation "Turning the Tide" Postdoctoral Fellowship and PhD Scholarships grants (2021/2022/2023)
<b>External Examiner</b>	Masters thesis: UNISA, Department of Religious Studies, Islamic Studies and Arabic  PhD thesis: UKZN, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics
<b>Moderator</b>	Level One courses: UCT, Department for the Study of Religions.  Honours courses, UKZN School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics

## Megan Robertson

<b>Steering Committee Member</b>	Religion and Sexuality Unit, American Academy of Religion
<b>Co-chair</b>	Religion and Sexuality Unit, American Academy of Religion
<b>Member</b>	Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa American Anthropology Association African Association for the Study of Religions
<b>Associate Editor/Managing Editor</b>	African Journal of Gender and Religion

**Peer Reviewer**

Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae

Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion

**External Examiner**

Masters thesis: University of Stellenbosch

**Member of UWC Committee**

Arts Higher Degrees & Proposal Review Committee

## Miranda Pillay

**Member of UWC Committee**

Arts Higher Degrees & Proposal Review Committee, UWC

**Reviewer**

Scriptura  
AJGR