



**Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University Sokoto, Nigeria
& Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany**

**Summer School on
Perspectives of Feminism and Politics of
Identity in Africa: Finding a Common Ground.
27th August – 7th September 2007
Sokoto, Nigeria**

Call for Participation

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, gender relations have become highly contested in many African societies. Different stakeholders are negotiating cultural identity by referring to specific gender orders and gender norms. On one hand, global religious movements are gaining influence, on the other hand, African traditions are being reconstructed. These two processes have put African gender order in tremendous pressures, subjecting it into an enormous contest and negotiations on what a proper women is and the reconfiguration of lines between male spheres of moral practice and public action. The discourse on an authentic African gender order is embedded in a global discourse on modernity and tradition and played at national and local identity politics. Consequently, women at the grass-root level use different concepts and norms to renegotiate gender relations and create new spaces and room for maneuver.

In many African societies the negotiation of gender relations is done by deconstructing Western concepts of gender and gender order. African feminists and women activists are looking for new images and new identities that do not reflect Western concepts but their local/ethnic or religious experiences and aspirations, thereby questioning feminism as an adequate theory and point of reference for African women. The increasing localisation of African women's issues demonstrated by identity politics of 'difference' both at the level of international and national feminism is a double edged sword. On one hand such approach offers legitimacy and acceptance to African women's struggle, on the other hand, it may prevent building a consensus and finding a common ground among women at international, regional and national levels. What does this mean for feminist theory and practice in Africa? How do African women organisations position themselves in this process? And what does this mean for international feminist solidarity? Is there a common ground for feminist theory and practice in Africa? How can we start a process of finding this common ground despite our different identities and political interests? Finding a common ground in scholarship and movements is necessary for any success in feminist scholarship and activism in Africa and globally.

Workshop themes

The summer school is to be held in Sokoto, an Islamic city founded by a West African 19th Islamic Jihad Leader Sheikh Usmanu bn Fodiyo. The summer school aims to bring together scholars, students and activists from different African and European societies to discuss issues like:

- African women's multiple identities, the cultural (re) construction of gender orders
- The (re) authentication of religious identities under the influence of new revivalist movements
- Changes in gender specific domains of religious practice and subjectivity
- The usefulness of the notion of "African feminism" and/or Islamic feminism
- Reconfigurations in the relationship between the state and society

- The collaboration between religious and secular women's organizations
- Gender activists influence on national policy making
- The appropriation and negotiation of national gender policies by African Women in their daily lives

Summer School Framework:

The Summer School will be organized in modules over a two week period. Given the variety of participants, theory and practice will be alternated. In addition, a seminar on post colonial studies and recent approaches on identity and identity formation will be held, giving the participants the opportunity to discuss conceptual, theoretical and methodological questions. Beside an introductory lecture and inputs, different overlapping working groups would be formed to give the participants room for discussions and to meet different expectations. At the same time, the working groups are intended to create space for developing individual research topics. By means of organising the summer School in modules and working groups, we attempt to find a common ground for feminist theory and practice.

Eligibility

Those eligible to apply for to the Summer School are African based scholars and researchers and activists currently engaged on gender issues, and gender and identity politics. In particular, new and young scholars and researchers with "work in progress" are encouraged to apply.

Successful applicants will be offered:

- Return travel ticket from home base to Sokoto.
- Moderate per diem to cover accommodation and feeding.

Prospective participants are required to submit an application letter which should be accompanied by the bio-data of the applicant including names of 2 referees. Also, a letter of motivation of 2 page indicating: current research interest, experience with gender issues and the politics of identity within African context as well as expectations from the Summer School is required.

The deadline for the receipt of applications for the Summer School is 17th May, 2007. Late applications will not be accepted. Successful applicants would be notified by 15th of June 2007.

Admission to participate in the workshop is limited to 30 persons to allow for an intensive interactions and networking

Contact Persons

All applications should be sent by email to:

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