



CIRCLE OF CONCERNED AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANs
Conference on
GENDER and RESISTANCE

HOFMEYR LECTURE ROOM, FACULTY OF THEOLOGY, STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

PROGRAMME
THURSDAY 5 MAY 2016

- 07:45 – 08:15 Registration
- 08:15 – 08:30 Welcome and Arrangements
Julie Claassens
- 08:30 – 10:30 **Session 1 (Chair Julie Claassens)**
- Resisting Gender Based Violence: What we can learn from Women’s Activism in South Africa and India
Amanda Gouws, Stellenbosch University
- The Engagement of Pentecostal University Students and the #FEESMUSTFALL Campaign on Two University Campuses
Maria Frahm-Arp, University of Johannesburg
- Lovelyn, Belhar, and Mary: Exploring the Rhetoric of Confession as Resistance to Injustice
Nadia Marais, Stellenbosch University
- 10:30 – 11:00 Tea
- 11:00 – 13:00 **Session 2 (Chair Nadia Marais)**
- Reading Revelation 18: Reflections on Fear, Hope and Gender in a Post-apartheid South Africa
Miranda N. Pillay, University of the Western Cape
- Re-reading Revelation 12:1-6: On Violent and Non-violent Resistance
Claudene Sebolai, University of the Western Cape
- What does it mean to be a Concerned Female Theologian in South Africa? Reflections on the Role of Ubuntu
Nobuntu Matholeni, Stellenbosch University

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch

14:00 – 16:30

Session 3 (Chair Miranda Pillay)

#LiefdeisLiefde: Reflections on Embodied Resistance
Charlene van der Walt, Stellenbosch University

Subordination vs. Agency/Resistance in South Africa: Virgins
Bargaining Their Way Through Higher Education
Sunelle Stander, Stellenbosch University

Understanding Draupadi as Paragon of Gender and Resistance in
the wake of Gender based Violence in Botswana
Elizabeth Pulane Motswapong, University of Botswana

Between Boundaries: Holding a Space between Quran and Bible
in a Feminist Classroom
Sarojini Nadar and Fatima Seedat, UKZN

FRIDAY 6 MAY 2016

08:00 – 08:15

Welcome and Arrangements
Julie Claassens

08:15 – 08:30

Reading by Philomene Luyindula, Author of *The Widening of the
Womb and Other Stories*
"The Daughters of Zelophehad"

08:30 – 10:30

Session 4 (Chair Elna Mouton)

Agency, Complexity and Hope: Female Resistance in the Old
Testament
Julie Claassens, Stellenbosch University

Resistance on the Menu: Food and Gender Relations
Manitza Kotzé, University of the Western Cape

Men Resisting Women? Instances of Nagging in the Old
Testament
Funlola Olojede, Stellenbosch University

10:30 – 11:00

Tea

11:00 – 13:00

Session 5 (Chair Charlene van der Walt)

An Investigation into the Roles of Women and Their Resistance in
Pentecostal Church: A Case Study of the Apostolic Faith Mission in
Zimbabwe
Joachim Kwaramba, University of Zimbabwe

Women and Resistance: Rev. Eve Abraham's Responses to
Migrants/Refugees
Clementine Nishimwe, University of Johannesburg/UNISA

Nativity and Counterpublics: New Beginnings on the Outer Limits
Magriet de Villiers, Stellenbosch University

ABSTRACTS

Resisting Gender Based Violence: What we can learn from Women's Activism in South Africa and India

Prof Amanda Gouws, Department of Political Science/SARChi Chair in Gender Politics and Distinguished Professor, Stellenbosch University

South Africa is a country saturated with gender based violence. Using Nancy Fraser's theory of redistribution and recognition as a starting point I will show the importance of acknowledging the dimensions of redistribution and recognition in struggles around gender based violence (GBV), illustrating it with the Shukumisa Campaign and the activities of the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) in South Africa. Both these campaigns access the political arena of representation to change misrecognition and maldistribution as a consequence of GBV with very different outcomes. I compare the mobilization and activism of women's groups after the brutal rapes and deaths of Anene Booysen in South Africa and Jyoti Singh Pandey in India at more or less the same time.

The Engagement of Pentecostal University Students and the #FEESMUSTFALL Campaign on Two University Campuses

Dr Maria Frahm-Arp, Department of Religion Studies, University of Johannesburg

During apartheid the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches (PCC) were not particularly engaged with political resistance movements. Research done in 2014 showed that in the run up to the SA elections a variety of PCC were active in encouraging members to be politically active and to vote. This paper focuses on the resistance rhetoric, theology and actions of two campus PCC churches namely His People Wits and His People UJ. The research is based on an analysis of their social media discussions about #FEESMUSTFALL and interviews conducted with students about their views of this resistance campaign.

Lovelyn, Belhar, and Mary: Exploring the rhetoric of confession as resistance to injustice

Nadia Marais, Stellenbosch University

South Africa has, over the last couple of months, been confronted anew with protest as a way of resisting injustice. Moreover, protest may even have become the primary means to resist injustice in South Africa, and particularly with regards to the political powers of the day – both before and after the transition to democracy in 1994. However, an alternative way of the resistance to injustice may very well be confession – and indeed, such confessions as those of Mary's Song, the Belhar Confession, and more recently the speeches by Stellenbosch student leader Lovelyn Nwadeyi. This paper wants to explore the rhetoric of Mary's Song and the Belhar Confession in the light of the challenges raised by young female voices of protest, and in particular that of Lovelyn Nwadeyi, as a classic theological way of resisting injustice and promoting human flourishing.

Reading Revelation 18: Reflections on Fear, Hope and Gender in a post-apartheid South Africa

Miranda N. Pillay, University of the Western Cape

Apartheid was a time of intense struggle for many South Africans. Many found hope in the Christian Bible. For example, in *Comfort and Protest: The Apocalypse from a South African Perspective*, Allan Boesak, reminds us that a characteristic of a literary works such as the book of Revelation is that they reflect in the most dramatic way the response of the people of God to pressures of their time. One has to bear in mind though, that while some South African Christians found *hope* to be free from oppression in the bible, so too others found their hope in controlling and oppressing others. Today, the book of Revelation continues to be a source of *hope* for different South Africans Christian communities, albeit still for different 'struggles'. In times of struggle, the crisis (fear) rhetoric of Revelation together with the promise it holds for those who are obedient, has the potential to be a source of comfort and hope when selected biblical texts are used and particular modes of interpretation are employed by those who have authority to interpret them. These interpretations offer Christians a set archive of normative

bodies, desires and affects that become encoded into their social practices. The interests held by interpreters and the androcentric strategies of biblical texts often blind interpreters to the genderedness of biblical text. In this paper I argue that when the normality of patriarchy in a biblical text has become a hypernorm, it has to be challenged. Thus this paper seeks to explore the continued relevance of a feminist critique as resistance against interpretations that foster and justify hegemonic, supremacist ideals and resistance against the demonizing of women – their autonomy, their sexuality ...

Re-reading Revelation 12:1-6: On violent and non-violent Resistance

Claudene Sebolai, University of the Western Cape

The recent violent protests by some students and workers at South African universities have echoed concerns about a culture of violence – understood by many to be a legacy of apartheid. It is evident that violence is regarded as an appropriate means of resolving conflict – or keeping peace. At times it seems as if violence, as a form of control, is the only means to effect social and political change. It has been noted that violent imagery in the Book of Revelation may be interpreted in ways that condone violence in contemporary societies. I want to explore and expound the theme of non-violent resistance in Revelation 12: 1-6. Although the context of the text and that of contemporary South Africa differs widely, there are parallels of unjust social relations, unequal distribution of power, oppression and discrimination that may be drawn.

What does it mean to be a Concerned Female Theologian in South Africa? Reflections on the role of Ubuntu

Nobuntu Matholeni, Stellenbosch University

This topic was motivated by the following comments made at the Stellenbosch University on the Theological Day in February 2016:

- Few white students supported the protest at Stellenbosch,
- Only black people attended Reconciliation Day in Port Elizabeth.

These comments raised two questions for me:

- Who are we reconciling with?
- Whose pain is related to the fees - *our* pain or *their* pain?

These observations determine the presentation of this paper as we explore ways in which the African concept can be used in this current culture of protest.

It further argues that the justice and recognition envisaged on these campuses will be best served where UBUNTU principles are used.

UBUNTU does not have room for non-participation or *othering*. Archbishop Tutu put it so well: "We can't be fully human alone. We are made for interdependence." When God instructed Abraham to leave his country, He said to Abraham: "I will make you into a great nation. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing." (Genesis 12:2). God would bless *others* through Abraham. That is the principle of UBUNTU. God knows that one cannot be blessed without others.

#LiefdeisLiefde: Reflections on embodied resistance

Dr. Charlene van der Walt, Stellenbosch University

The landmark October 2015 decision of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa regarding the ordination of LGTBIQ clergy and the possibility of blessing same sex unions marked an historical first for mainline Christian denominations on the African continent. The conditions and process that gave rise to the decision has been described by some as a '*perfect storm*' and the paper aims at exploring these conditions in genealogical fashion. Special attention in the analysis will be given to the role played by the silent embodied resistance of gay clergy at the General Synod meeting as well as the stance of solidarity taken by many when *speaking on behalf* of the voiceless. The importance of embodied resistance as an attempt to create a space for '*more bodies to matter*' within a Bible based heteronormative institution is highlighted especially considering the severe backlash against inclusionary nature of the decision.

Subordination vs. agency/resistance in South Africa: Virgins bargaining their way through higher education

Sunelle Stander, Stellenbosch University

Oppression manifests itself in various ways, so that intersections between different forms of oppression can be identified. This is also true for women living in South Africa, a country that has for years been plagued by many forms of oppression (racism, sexism, classism etc.). Women have been seen to react in diverse and often conflicting ways to these forms of oppression – ranging from becoming complicit in the oppression of themselves and others to an active and committed fight against oppression. This has often led to over simplified assumption about distinctions between subordination and agency/resistance. In the light of recent student protests , highlighting the discriminating ways in which black students are still kept from obtaining higher education, the so called “maidens bursary” awarded to underprivileged girls who vow to stay virgins throughout their studies will be used as a case study. Women are, amidst various forms of oppression, often left with few alternative options, but to bargain with various forms of female subordination as a means to obtain basic human rights (like education). The notion of patriarchal bargaining will be used to highlight the often unrecognized, complex and interwoven relationship between subordination and agency/resistance that operates within the South African context.

Understanding Draupadi as Paragon of Gender and Resistance in the wake of Gender based Violence in Botswana

Elizabeth Pulane Motswapong, University of Botswana

In this paper, I wish to draw an analogy between Draupadi (a paragon of gender and resistance) and women in Botswana. Draupadi is the most complex and controversial female character in the Hindu literature. On the one hand she could be womanly, compassionate and generous and on the other, she could wreak havoc on those who wronged her. She was never ready to compromise on either her rights as a daughter- in- law or even on the rights of the Pandavas and remained ever ready to find back or avenge high handedness and injustices meted out to her. It is as a result of these traits that I argue Draupadi is a model of gender and resistance. In this paper, I will illustrate how Draupadi’s resistance could be used to understand gender based violence in Botswana. In the midst of suffering Draupadi just like Botswana women managed to keep her head high and continue to strive where most women would have given up. The paper will illustrate with examples how these women find themselves in a similar predicament though they come from different countries and background. Lastly conclusions will be drawn.

Between Boundaries: Holding a Space between Quran and Bible in a Feminist Classroom

Sarojini Nadar and Fatima Seedat, UKZN

The purpose of this paper is to theorise the teaching and learning of feminist approaches to Bible and Qur’an in a Masters course, with a historically Christian focus, within a South African higher education context. The paper draws on a critical review of a major assessment task of students, as well as our pedagogical experiences to consider how students made meaning of the space created for conversation on different feminist approaches to the two sacred texts. When viewed through de-colonial feminist pedagogical thought, our analysis reveals that our job as teachers was to hold onto the tension in the space between the feminist approaches to the sacred texts, and not to succumb to the pressure to release, trivialise nor exacerbate the tension. The students’ essays then reveal much creativity in how they engage the feminist approaches to the two texts with varying degrees of “inflation and conflation of the spaces” between them. The reflections in the paper challenge and extend the dominant literature on Christian-Muslim hermeneutics in two ways: through a focus on the pedagogical aspects of the encounter between the two sacred texts in a secular university feminist space; and through an emphasis on the intellectual insight drawn from the encounter as conversation and as a ‘becoming’, rather than the encounter providing a utilitarian response to a perceived crisis.

Agency, Complexity and Hope: Female Resistance in the Old Testament

L Juliana Claassens, Stellenbosch University

This paper reflects on the nature and significance of female resistance in the Old Testament. Drawing on the concluding chapter of my recently completed book, *Claiming Her Dignity: Female Resistance in the Old Testament* (Liturgical Press, 2016), this paper considers the agency of women who even in the most difficult of circumstances show themselves able to rise up and transform their situation of victimization into a space of transformation that benefits not only themselves but also their communities. Moreover, it will be shown that the resistance of women who find themselves in various situations of violence can be described as quite complex. Reading stories of female resistance in the Old Testament with compassion implies that one understands and appreciates that these women are acting to the best of their ability in very difficult circumstances. Finally, despite the complexity that inevitably is associated with women's resistance in the Old Testament and in so many communities around the world, one finds that a common feature of all these women who stand up and refuse to accept violence as normal is that their resistance is rooted in the hope that things can be different. Hope which is the source of these women's resistance is thus the ability to imagine a counter reality in which the future is distinctly different from the present.

Resistance on the Menu: Food and gender relations

Manitza Kotzé, University of the Western Cape

In this contribution, I will be examining the symbolic construction of food, specifically how the aspect of power and resistance is contained within the structures of how food is produced, executed, sold, prepared and eaten. This aspect of power in food also has direct correlations to and impacts on gender relations, with women usually being those that prepare the food, while men most often receive preference in eating it. Numerous feminist scholars who explicitly refer to their vegetarianism as an expression of their feminist identity and as resistance to the perceived link between meat and masculinity will also be engaged with, in particular in terms of the theme of 'resistance'.

Men Resisting Women? Instances of Nagging in the Old Testament

Funlola Olojede, Stellenbosch University

Taking its point of departure from Genesis 30:1-5, this essay reads against the grain of feminist interpretation of Old Testament narratives by showing that even though the issue of gender and resistance is rather complex and the what constitutes resistance is difficult to define, gender resistance is not all about women resisting men in a context of patriarchy. Men also resist women. It is argued that men tend to resist women sometimes in the context of what is called in common parlance nagging. Whereas some men succumb to the power of "nagging", others resist the persistent demands of women to have their way.

An investigation into the roles of women and their resistance in Pentecostal church: A case study of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe

Joachim Kwaramba, University of Zimbabwe

The role of women in the Pentecostalism, particularly, the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFM) had no clear direction for a long time. This position has been argued to be a biblical mandate for women being resisted to participate in the church in the Old Testament. Yet, April 1999 saw the genesis of women in ministry empowered by their ordination. There appears to be an apparent contradiction in the church's policy. Today women could work for God and have a special role to play in certain areas and positions the church. The argument here being that there are women found to be helping in the church issues in the ministries of great people (like Jesus and Paul) in the New Testament. This paper will argue that the position of women within the church is a contested issue as men resist operating on equal standing in the house of God.

Women and resistance: Rev. Eve Abraham's responses to migrants/refugees

Clementine Nishimwe, University of Johannesburg/UNISA

Migrants and refugees living in host countries raise ethical and legal questions concerning the rights and responsibilities of individuals and societies when both the host countries, migrants and refugees are wrestling with rising economic inequality and socio-political insecurity.

Given the problematic of care encountered by the Central Methodist Church it has become clear that the South African political set up and the negative attitudes towards migrants/refugees often make it difficult for many care givers and faith-based institutions to care for them. This article argues that women resistance can often contribute to the care for vulnerable groups of people. Regardless of the risks of the political distresses that are involved in the care for migrants/refugees, Rev. Eve Abraham a priest at Christ Church Anglican Church opened a camp for about a thousand migrants/refugees who were victims of the March 2015 xenophobic attacks. She created an atmosphere where migrants/refugees regain their dignity and respect. In this way, Rev. Eve formed a node where migrants/refugees who seek help meet caregivers and is expressing an ongoing resistance to the government's policies on migrants and refugees.

Natality and Counterpublics: New Beginnings on the Outer Limits

Magriet de Villiers, Stellenbosch University

Hannah Arendt draws a very distinct line between the private and public sphere postulating that the *animal laborans* of the private *oikos* cannot be part of the *bios politikos* of the public. Persons of labour, focusing on survival and working in areas that she deems non-political, are invisible to the political eye and cannot participate in the creation of the bigger political realm of the world they inhabit. This paper would like to counter this argument by using the examples of migrants and refugees in South Africa as a counterpublic with the capacity for new (political) beginnings on the outer limits of citizenship.