

Religion and Black African gender non-conformity in contemporary Southern Africa context: An Intersectional - theological perspective

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Abstract

The intersectionality of gender, sexuality, race, culture, and religion is a global phenomenon that has often been marked by controversy. In Africa this intersectionality is nuanced by debates surrounding the role of religion in defining moral barometers that determines what is perceived as right or wrong, good or bad, African and un- African and the list of these binaries is endless. In the same vein, even in African countries such as South Africa where the 1996 South constitution has been dubbed progressive because of its outright clause prohibiting discrimination based on gender, race, or sexual orientation; the adage that Africa is notoriously religious continues to render religions to be surveillance tools over moral and sexual issues within this context. However, the contemporary globalized and pluralistic genders and sexuality especially the influx of gender-nonconformism has presented a new challenge to religion in Africa. This paper uses the intersectional-theological theory to explore and analyze how religion, particularly Christianity in Africa continue to play a controlling role of Black African genders and sexualities especially gender non-conformity that disrupts the conventional gender and sexual binaries. The preliminary finding shows that Christianity dominates as a surveillance tool in shaping and controlling gender and sexual narratives. However, this has rendered people identifying with genders nonconformity to be contested spaces that are perceived to belong outside the church. Therefore, the paper investigates the possibility of a theological and transformative turn that can render Christianity to be a safer space for members of society irrespective of their gender or sexual orientation; yet remains within the confines of the mission of God on earth.

Keywords: Christianity In Africa, Surveillance, Black African, Gender Non-conforming, Theology, Intersectionality