



The Gender and Diversity Office of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence presents the Intersectionality and Critical Diversity (ICDL) ZOOM Symposium

Intersectional Interrogations of Reproductive Health for Women from Africa and its Diasporas

Friday 14 May 2021

[PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL TIME SLOTS GIVEN HERE ARE IN GERMAN TIME.]

09:30 - 10:30 AM

Dr. Jenny Douglas (Dept. of Public Health, Open University, London and St. Anne's College, Oxford, UK)

Bio-Notice

Dr. Jenny Douglas is passionate about the health and wellbeing of black women as evidenced through her research and public engagement. She has a PhD in Women's Studies from the University of York. Her research is both varied and wide ranging, spanning 30 years on issues of race, health, gender and ethnicity. The key theme unifying her research and activism is intersectionality – exploring how 'race', class and gender affect particular aspects of African - Caribbean women's health.

Jenny Douglas established and chairs the Black Women's Health and Wellbeing Research Network (www.open.ac.uk/black-womens-health-and-wellbeing) and her ambition is to establish an international research institute on the health and wellbeing of black women. She is a Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies at the Open University.

Recent publications include:

- Douglas, Jenny. Black women's activism and organization in public health – struggles and strategies for better health and wellbeing. *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*. (13), 51-68. (2019). See <http://oro.open.ac.uk/59460/3/59460.pdf>
- Douglas, Jenny. 'The Politics of Black women's health in the UK – intersections of 'race', class and gender in policy, practice and research' in Nikol Alexander-Floyd and Julia Jordan-Zachery (Eds.) *Black Women and Politics: Demanding Citizenship, Challenging Power, and Seeking Justice*. New York: SUNY Press. (2018). 49-68.
- Douglas, Jenny. 'The struggle to find a voice on Black women's health from the personal to the political' in D. Gabriel and S. Tate (Eds.) *Inside the Ivory Tower: Narratives of Women of Colour Surviving and Thriving in British Academia*. London: Trentham Books. (2017). 91-107.

Abstract

The fight for reproductive justice: the history and politics of black maternal health in the UK.

This paper explores reproductive politics and black women's health in the UK. It examines the ways in which black women and black families have been portrayed pathologically in social policy literature, and how this representation is embedded in an imperialist and colonial history. Representations of black women as fierce, fecund and feckless have led to inequities in the reproductive choices of black women. This paper examines contraception, abortion and maternal mortality among Black British women. It then explores the contribution of black women as activists for change and as organisers of change. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, black women have been involved in campaigning for change, setting up black women's groups to challenge

inappropriate, racist and ethnocentric practices within the NHS – for example Birmingham Black Health Workers, Brixton Black Women’s Collective and the Organisation of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD). However, the activism of these black women has remained ignored and unacknowledged. This paper aims to redress this and to make recommendations for future research and policy that incorporates an intersectional approach.

Discussant: Dr. Christine Vogt-William is the Director of the Gender and Diversity Office with the Africa Multiple Cluster at the University of Bayreuth. She is a Literary and Cultural Studies scholar with research interests in Gender Studies, Decolonial and Intersectionality Studies and Diasporic Studies. Her current research project is on intersectional readings of twinship in contemporary Anglophone postcolonial literatures.

11:00 AM – 12:00 noon

Dr. Eunice Pallangyo (Aga Khan University School of Nursing and Midwifery, Tanzania)

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Bio-Notice

Eunice Pallangyo is the eldest in a family of eight (seven girls and one boy) in Arusha-Tanzania. In the past, women in her society were underrated, denied their basic rights including education for sociocultural and economic reasons. Despite excellent performance on completion of fourth grade education, she was denied an opportunity to advance to a girls’ middle school in Machame. The reasoning here was that since she was a ‘female’, it would have been a ‘waste of resources’. In the case of the Pallangyo family, having many girls and only one boy was considered a misfortune by society.

From her mother, who inspired and supported her to become who she is today, Eunice Pallangyo learnt respect, caring, love, believing in herself and perseverance as important tools for a meaningful life. Through her mother’s influence, her parents took the challenge against all odds and proved cultural norms incorrect by educating their girls. Consequently, on completion of primary school, Eunice Pallangyo obtained a first class pass and was selected to join public secondary school where, after four years, she graduated with distinctions in her ‘O’ Levels, and qualified to join a special high school for talented students. She joined university in 1998 and graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor’s degree in nursing science.

As part of her PhD studies at Uppsala University-Sweden in 2016/2017, Eunice Pallangyo initiated twenty-six postpartum care clinics in government-owned healthcare facilities in Dar es Salaam. She teaches Reproductive Health, Community Health Nursing and Research. Her teaching strategies are shaped by a personal belief that higher education institutions in low-income countries should prepare confident, critical thinkers, innovators and creative minded graduates who would address the complex and dynamic health problems independently, innovatively and confidently. She has contributed extensively to the development and review of various programmes/curriculum within Aga Khan University and beyond.

Recent publications include:

- Pallangyo, E., A.C. Msokaa, S. Brownieb, and E. Holroyd. (2019). My husband will love me more if I give birth to more children: Rural women’s perceptions and beliefs on family planning services utilization in a low resource setting. *International Journal of Africa Nursing Sciences*, 10, 152-158.
- Pallangyo, E., C. Mbekenga, P. Olsson, L. Eriksson and A. Bergström. (2018). Implementation of a facilitation intervention to improve postpartum care in a low-resource suburb of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *Implementation Science* 13:102. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-018-0794-x>
- Pallangyo, E., C. Mbekenga, C. Källestål, C. Rubertsso and P. Olsson. (2017). “If really we are committed things can change, starting from us”: Healthcare providers’ perceptions of postpartum care and its potential for improvement in low-income suburbs in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare*, 11, 7–12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.srhc.2016.09.001>.

Abstract

Contemplating on maternal deaths in low-income setting using intersectional perspectives

In Africa particularly sub-Saharan countries, deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth remain a major public health issue. In Tanzania, maternal mortality rates (556 in 100,000 live births) and neonatal deaths (25 in 1000 live births) are unacceptably high. The analysis of factors (including post-partum hemorrhage, sepsis and eclampsia) contributing to deaths is usually conducted from medical perspectives and. Gender inequalities, high illiteracy among women, and several sociocultural practices which influence pregnancy and childbirth are generally neglected in such research. In order to achieve optimal women's reproductive health outcomes, appropriate interventions designed through the lenses of intersectionality are crucial.

Family planning, for instance, holds potential for averting about 32% of all maternal deaths and almost 10% of child deaths. Despite this, its utilization has remained persistently low in Tanzania and other sub-Saharan countries. Only 56% of married women aged 15–49 years use family planning in this country. Family planning is conventionally viewed by society as women's obligation even though men predominantly make decisions about all family matters including the choice of methods. As a result of this, men are rarely involved in family planning services. This stands as a barrier for the overall success in reproductive health services.

The existing marriage law act (1971) set 15 years as the acceptable age for girls to get married and 18 years for boys is an example of legal structures which counteract efforts set to facilitate women empowerment. Uncovering the complexity in the overall issues related to women affairs including preventable deaths requires intersectional analysis by interdisciplinary professionals.

Discussant: Dr. Serawit Debele is a Junior Research Group Leader for Intersectional Studies in the Africa-Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth. Her current work focuses on sexual minorities in moments of political transformation (revolutions) in Africa. Extending her previous work on queer subjectivities, her ongoing project focuses on Ethiopia, Tunisia and Sudan.

12:30 – 13:30 (PM)

Prof. Esmeralda Mariano (Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), Mozambique)

Bio-Notice

Esmeralda Mariano holds a PhD in Social and Cultural Anthropology from the Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA), at the University of KU Leuven, Belgium and MPhil in Social Anthropology (with emphasis on Human Ecology from the University of Bergen, Norway). She is currently Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences - Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM), Mozambique. She also has a joint appointment at the Faculty of Medicine (Master Program on Public Health – Reproductive Health's Module). Much of her work deals with the intersections of the body, gender, sexuality, and reproductive health issues, capturing forms of inequalities, power relations in society, particularly of those that do not identify with mainstream health and medicalized regimes.

Recent publications include:

- Mariano, Esmeralda, B. Manuel, H. Maúngue H, D.P. Rafael, C. Munguambe, G. Mataveia 'Violence Against Women and Girls in Public Spaces in Maputo: An Exploratory Study.' *Black Sea Journal of Public and Social Science*, (2020.) 3(1): xx-xx.
- Mariano, Esmeralda, and V. M. Pedro. "Planeamento Familiar é Assunto de Mulheres, porque elas é que têm Útero (...)" Carlos Arnaldo, Boaventura Cau, Baltazar Chilundo, Joelma J. Picardo e Sally Griffin (Orgs). In: *Planeamento Familiar e Políticas de Saúde Sexual e Reprodutiva em Moçambique*. Editor (CEPSA), Mozambique. (2019) 163-188.
- Mariano, Esmeralda. Reproductive disruption: bodily experiences. In: *Southern Hemisphere Ethnographies of Space, Place and Time*. R. E. Rinehart, J. Kidd and A. Garcia Quiroga (Eds.). Germany: Peter Lang. (2018). 323-343.

Abstract

Becoming woman, being person between visible and invisible worlds

When working within a plural and overlapping medical context, with social abandoned women, researchers must be reflexive concerning vulnerabilities and inequalities. In contemporary Mozambique, this is especially pertinent when the critical position of social researchers is deemed to be crucial. This paper discusses how to become women and a person, one has to face a range of pressures to be in and part of a recognized world. Not all reproductive concerns are visible in the world of medical science, paradoxically, "invisibility" is not cogitated within the biomedical paradigm. Mapping women's bodies, through the ways bodies are socially represented and symbolized is the means to understand how the biological body is both politically controlled and subjectively fragmented. Infertile women express how important is to understand both visible and invisible treatments of life, conceptualizations and the idioms of affliction, disease, ill-health and the responses to, in surrounding spaces of the living and non-living entities. The conversations with formal or informal health providers, with those suffering in search for reproductive care, raise the question of/for the inclusion of spiritual world within western medicine ideologies, as well as awakening an ethical sensitivity that impacts and challenges indigenous ethnographic research approaches.

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Discussant: Laura Guadagnano is a Research Associate in the project *Health discourses as moral communication? Linguistic case studies from Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon* within the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence and Junior Fellow at BIGSAS. Her current PhD research project addresses health discourses and communication in the field of sexual and reproductive health of young women in Côte d'Ivoire. Further research interests include intercultural communication, language in media, conversational analysis, and sociolinguistics.

14:30- 16:00 (PM)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

(8:30 AM – 10:00 AM, US Eastern Time)

Prof. Dorothy Roberts (University of Pennsylvania Law School, USA)

Bio-Notice

Dorothy Roberts is the 14th Penn Integrates Knowledge Professor and George A. Weiss University Professor of Law & Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, with joint appointments in the Departments of Africana Studies and Sociology and the Law School, where she is the inaugural Raymond Pace and Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander Professor of Civil Rights. She is also the founding director of the Penn Program on Race, Science, and Society. An internationally recognized scholar, public intellectual, and social justice advocate, she has written and lectured extensively on race, gender, and class inequities in U.S. institutions and has been a leader in transforming public thinking and policy on reproductive freedom, child welfare, and bioethics. She has also published more than 100 articles and essays in books and scholarly journals, including the 2019 Foreword to *Harvard Law Review's* Supreme Court issue, "Abolition Constitutionalism". She is the co-editor of six books.

Her publications include:

- *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (Pantheon, 1997/Vintage, 2017),
- *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (Basic Books, 2001), and
- *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-First Century* (The New Press, 2011),

Abstract

Reproductive Justice: The Politics of Black Women's Health and Freedom

Roberts' book Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty, published in 1997, documents a long history of regulation of Black women's bodies in the United States, beginning with the legal status of enslaved women as property, and explains its crucial importance to both reproductive and racial politics in America. Today, these devaluing ideologies, laws, and policies have expanded in new guises that help to perpetuate race and gender injustice in the health care, law enforcement, welfare, and foster care systems. At the



same time, the rise of an exciting reproductive justice movement has provided a new framework for envisioning a more humane and equitable society. In an era where Black women's health and reproductive freedom is increasingly under assault, understanding and advocating for reproductive justice is more urgent than ever.

Discussant:

Dr. Nikitta Adjirakor is a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of African Linguistics and Literatures, at the University of Bayreuth. Her academic research explores contemporary forms of poetic practice such as spoken word poetry, hip-hop and digital literature in African languages. Her areas of interest are Eastern and Western Africa. Nikitta is also a creative writer focussing on the intersections between women's health, trauma, language and belonging. Her non-fiction, poetry and essays which explore the realities of Black women's reproductive health have been published in *Tampered Press*, *Aha Review*, *gal-den Magazine* and *Praxis Magazine*. She produced the award-winning film 'A Thousand Needles' which is a documentary on the nuanced realities of African women living with sexual and reproductive health issues. She curates an online film festival on 'African Womxn's Sexual and Reproductive Health'.

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16:30 - 17:30 (PM)

Ghadeer Ahmed, MA (American University in Cairo, Egypt)

Bio-Notice

Ghadeer Ahmed Eldamaty is an Egyptian feminist activist and a specialized researcher in gender and women's studies. She got her bachelor degree in English Literature from Faculty of Arts at Tanta University (2012). She founded *Girls' Revolution*, an informal feminist and digital platform concerns with women's bodily rights. She worked for prominent feminist NGOs in Egypt. She completed her graduate studies in Public Administration and specialized in NGOs Management, at the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, 2014. She started on her writing project *Abortion Tales* in 2017. Ghadeer obtained her Masters of Arts degree in Gender and Women's Studies in the Middle East and North Africa from the American University in Cairo, and specializes in Gendered Political Economies (2020). She has published a number of journalistic articles on international and regional websites, in which she openly defends women's sexual and reproductive health in Egypt and the MENA region.

Recent publications include:

- Ahmed, Ghadeer. (2019). *Notes on Feminizing the State and Nationalizing Women's Bodies in Egypt and Palestine*.
- Ahmed, Ghadeer. *Why I collect Egyptian women's stories with abortion*. (September 2019). Retrieved from: <https://madamasr.com/en/2019/09/28/feature/society/why-i-collect-egyptian-womens-stories-of-abortion/>
- Ahmed, Ghadeer. *Feminist Movements in Egypt: From Fighting Colonialism to Fighting Over the Body*. (March 2018).

Abstract

Abortion inaccessibility: Tales from Egypt

Working on women's sexual and reproductive health in Egypt has its limits. Whereas the Egyptian state regulates definitions of reproductive health as represented only in heterosexual family planning, other factors such as religion, entertainment, and social norms contribute to that limited definition.

Abortion is one of the critical issues criminalized by law and refused by society. It has never been officially addressed as a health care issue, unless the pregnancy poses risks to women's lives. It is not allowed even in cases of rape and incestuous abuse. Being legally criminalized and socially unacceptable has not prevented abortion, abortion has been made inaccessible and unsafe. This has led to many women facing risks while seeking abortion in medically unsafe clinics, and legally threatening environments. In doing so, women's experiences with abortion are highly secretive, which intensifies the hardship of an experience marked by physical pain and trauma.

As a feminist and a woman who has experienced abortion herself, I noticed some similarities between women's experiences with abortion in Egypt, be it inaccessibility, secrecy, trauma, loneliness, helplessness, or guilt. Therefore, I decided to start the Abortion Tales writing project that collects women's stories with illegal and unsafe abortion in Egypt. My fieldwork depends on interviewing friends and women who asked me to help them to induce abortion. My close interactions with those women make me believe that abortion in Egypt happens across social classes, at fancy clinics or unnamed ones, to married and unmarried women, where pregnancy occurs through consensual sexual intercourse or rape experienced by young girls and old women.

I re-write oral stories in a literary format to be accessible for reading. I use theoretical frameworks such as the feminist analysis of child rearing, and the burden of motherhood as a form of emotional labor, Maria Mies (2014), Silvia Federici (2009). Also, I use affect (Sara Ahmed, 2010; 2014a), and intersectionality theories (Kimberle Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to address the complexities of these experiences.

Discussant: Dikko Muhammad has been a lecturer with the Department of English and French, Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina, Nigeria since 2013. He left Nigeria for a Study Fellowship in 2018 at the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), University of Bayreuth, Germany. Currently pursuing a PhD in English and Anglophone Literatures, his main research interest is in Literary and Cultural practices in Africa with emphasis on Northern Nigeria.

18:00 – 18:30 (PM)

Final Event: Film Screening 'A Thousand Needles'

A documentary about the realities of women living with the sexual and reproductive health issues like uterine fibroids and endometriosis. It follows the journey of one woman and the symptoms of chronic pelvic pain that affect her life.

Directors:

Kelsi Brooks, Gwamaka Mwabuka

Writers:

Nikitta Adjirakor, Sabrina Najib Zahor

Stars:

Nikitta Adjirakor, Hansel Mandi, Adnan Firoz Sulemanjee

18:30 – 19:30 (PM)

All speakers and film maker in discussion.

Chair: Prof. Valentina Serelli

19:30 – 20:00 (PM)

Closing Remarks