

NAI NEWSLETTER

28 April 2006

WITH FOCUS ON MASCULINITIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

MASCULINITIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The current court case in the Johannesburg High Court against former deputy president Jacob Zuma on a charge for rape divides the South Africa nation along lines of sexual politics. The South African Constitution of 1996 is remarkably tolerant and open-minded, prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender, race and sexual orientation. At the same time rape statistics for South Africa are exceptionally high.

Contradictions relating to sexualities and masculinities are acute in South Africa. On the one side are the Zuma supporters, who defend the ex-deputy president as a great politician and as a 'real Zulu man', proudly implying an always-alert heterosexual appetite to be part of Zulu masculinity. This side dismisses the charge for rape, laying the blame on the compliant along the familiar lines of 'wicked woman entrap innocent man'. On the other side stand those, who see Zuma and his supporters as adherents to patriarchal notions of masculinity and sexuality, notions which in principle were supposed to have been outlawed by the constitution, but which nevertheless thrive on the ground.

Ongoing debates on sexualities and masculinities in Southern Africa are fuelled by these contradictions. Studies and discussions on African masculinities have increased over later years. Southern Africa is the part of Africa where such studies first took root and where they have developed in terms of conferences, books and special issues of journals. After decades of studies of African women and gender relations, men and masculinities have come into focus, offering insights into issues of gender and sexuality from a different vantage point.

The notion of masculinities (in plural) signal a concern with social constructions, and with the ways in which masculinities intersect with class, race, sexuality, location etc in configurations of power. The plural also signal

possible *alternatives* to the dominant, hegemonic, heterosexual masculinity, which is often taken for granted.

SEMINARS ON MASCULINITIES AND POST-COLONIAL SEXUALITIES:

The Nordic Africa Institute is organising two seminars (one at Roskilde University in Denmark, co-organised with International Development Studies, Roskilde and one at Sida in Stockholm), on the themes of Situating Postcolonial Sexualities (Roskilde University) and Masculinities in Southern Africa (Sida). The presenters are prominent scholars within these fields.

MASCULINITIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Monday 8 May 09.30-16.00

Venue: Sida (room: Asien), Kungsgatan 36, Stockholm

http://www.nai.uu.se/sem/lectures/2006/research_forumsve.html

The speakers are among others:

Marc Epprecht teaches at Queens University, Kingston Ontario, Canada. His major research interest is gender and sexuality in southern Africa. His most recent publication 'Hungochani' (2004) is about the history of same-sex sexuality and homophobia in (principally) Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Chenjerai Hove is a Zimbabwean writer of poetry and novels, and a columnist. As a writer, he is also involved in human rights work, especially press freedom. His novel *Bones* (1988) has been praised for its women portraits. Today he is a writer in residence hosted by the city of Stavanger in Norway.

Robert Muponde is a research fellow at Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa. His current projects include a book on fathering narratives in Zimbabwean nationalism (Manning the Nation: Father figures and fathering of stories in Zimbabwe).

Deborah Posel is professor at Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa. She has written extensively on the history of apartheid. More recent work focuses on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Elaine Salo is senior lecturer at the African Gender Institute (AGI), University of Cape Town, South Africa. Salo received her PhD in Anthropology in 2004. Her dissertation is titled: "Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters. Making persons in Manenberg township, South Africa".

Lene Bull Christiansen is a PhD candidate at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, and the International Development Studies, Roskilde University, Denmark. She is currently doing research into the connection between masculinity and nationalism in Zimbabwe.

SITUATING POSTCOLONIAL SEXUALITIES – OPEN DAY SEMINAR

Tuesday 2 May 09.00-16.00

Venue: Room 8.1, International Development Studies, Roskilde University.
Roskilde, Denmark

Current discussions on sexuality in postcolonial societies take place within a climate of international moral panic. There is much concern over day-to-day sexual practices, presumably linked to inequality and gender-based violence,

and certainly to the spread of HIV/AIDS. This Open Day Seminar will examine sexuality within the discourses of gender, race and 'modernity', wedding important elements of the postcolonial project with those of internationalization and 'development'.

The speakers are among others:

Marc Epprecht teaches at Queens University, Kingston Ontario, Canada. His major research interest is gender and sexuality in southern Africa. His most recent publication 'Hungochani' (2004) is about the history of same-sex sexuality and homophobia in (principally) Zimbabwe and South Africa.

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Bodil Folke Frederiksen, is Associate Professor at Roskilde University, Department of International Development Studies. She is currently working on analysis of constructions of knowledge and of sexuality in colonial and post-colonial situations.

Tejaswini Niranjana, is Director and Senior Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society (CSCS) in Bangalore. She has published widely on cinema, translation theory and feminist theory. Currently she is co-ordination the project on Gender and Modernity for CSCS.

FURTHER READING:

Arnfred, Signe (Ed.), *Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa*. The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2004.

Bull-Christiansen, Lene, *Tales of the Nation. Feminist Nationalism or Patriotic History? Defining National History and Identity in Zimbabwe*. Research Report 132. The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 2005.

(If you would like to review the books above please contact Helena Olsson Helena.Olsson@nai.uu.se)

Reid, Graeme and Liz Walker (Eds.), *Men behaving differently : South African men since 1994*. Cape Town : Double Storey, 2005.

Useful link:

Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre:
<http://www.arsrc.org/features/issue005.htm>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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The research programme *Sexuality, Gender and Society in Africa* aims to develop spaces for critical discussion of sex and gender in Africa, connected to empirical studies and/or political practice, and informed by postcolonial, feminist and queer lines of thinking. Part of the programme goal is to promote academic re-thinking of basic terms, based on local points of view and connected to struggles on the ground. Collaboration with groups and individuals on the African continent struggling for similar goals is of great importance.

The programme has organized a series of conferences, on Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa (Uppsala 2002) on Images of Motherhood (Dakar 2003), on Dilemmas and Challenges of African Gender Research (Accra 2003) and on different ways of Writing African Women (Cape Town 2005).

COMMENTS ON THE NEWSLETTER ARE WELCOME

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