



## Conference on Religion and Public Life in Africa and the African Diaspora: Religion and Human Flourishing

Weatherhead Center for International Affairs  
March 3–4, 2023

Location:  
Belfer Case Study Room, CGIS South, S020  
Harvard University  
1730 Cambridge Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

Day 1: Friday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>

**8:30–9:00am:** Breakfast

**9:00–11:00am:** Opening Remarks with Jacob Olupona and Kay Shelemay, Harvard University

Session 1: Religion and Politics

- **Presentation 1: Sarah Eltantawi, Fordham University, New York City**  
Title: Idealized vs. Political Shari'ah in Northern Nigeria
- **Presentation 2: Olufemi Vaughan, Amherst College**  
Title: Sharia Politics in Nigeria
- **Presentation 3: Charrise Barron, Harvard University**  
Title: Sounding Political in the Funereal Choir Stand

**11:00–11:30am:** Coffee Break

**11:30am–1:30pm**

Session 2: Religion, Sacred Arts, and Public Life

- **Presentation 4: Georgette Ledgister, Vice President of DEIB & People Experience at Double Verify**  
Title: Wrestling the Spirits: Sport as a Site for Social Change in the Congolese Public Sphere
- **Presentation 5: Kyrrah Malika Daniels, Emory University**  
Title: Soul Pots & Mortuary Vessels: Sacred Arts in Haitian Vodou's Private & Public Sectors
- **Presentation 6: Elyan Hill, Southern Methodist University/ Visiting Professor at WSRP at Harvard Divinity School**  
Title: Co-performing Counter-Publics: Danced Slave Narratives in Ewe Vodun Communities
- **Presentation 7: Jean Kidula, University of Georgia**  
Title: Music (the arts), Christianity, and Africans

**1:30–3:00pm:** Lunch, catered to Tsai Auditorium

**3:00–5:30pm**

Session 3: Gender Matters and Public Life

- **Presentation 8: Kinitra D. Brooks, Michigan State University/Visiting Professor at WSRP at Harvard Divinity School**  
Title: Dona Kimpa Vita and the Roots of Conjure Feminism
- **Presentation 9: Maha Marouan, Pennsylvania State University/ Visiting Scholar, Weatherhead Scholars Program**  
Title: How White Men Became the Public Face of Afro-Cuban Religions in Cuba
- **Presentation 10: Chandra Plowden, Harvard University**  
Title: Whenever Satan comes, 1199 B has prepared a way to deal with him": Black Women as Public Ethico-Religious Agents in the 1969 Charleston Hospital Strike
- **Presentation 11: Ngozi V. Enelamah, University of New Hampshire, Durham**  
Title: Differential Outcomes for Maternal and Child Health in African Countries: What Has the Religion of the Head of Household Got to Do with It?

**5:00–5:30pm:** Break

**5:30–7:00pm**

Session 4: Religion and the Public Sphere in Africa

- **Presentation 12: Kwasi Ampene, Tufts University**  
Title: Performing Arts, Religion, Power, and History in Akan Public Spaces
- **Presentation 13: Sheila Otieno, Centre College**  
Title: "Things That Go Bump in the Night": Indigenous Religion, Community, and Legitimacy in Western Kenya
- **Presentation 14: Wale Adebani, University of Pennsylvania (Presented by Ebenezer Obadare)**  
Title: Rituals of Transformation: Religion, Public Life and the Making of a Big Man in Nigeria

**7:30–9:30pm:** Reception and Dinner at Harvard Faculty Club

We will walk over as a group after presentations.

## Day 2: Saturday, March 4th

**8:30–9:00am:** Breakfast

**9:00–11:00am**

Session 5: International Affairs and Religion

- **Presentation 15: Ebenezer Obadare Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)**  
Title: The Spiritual Warrior as Strategic Witness: Pastor Sunday Adelaja in the Crosshairs of the Russia-Ukraine
- **Presentation 16: Mary Nyangweso, East Carolina University**  
Title: Is Africa Embracing A “Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing? Implications of China’s Foreign Policy in Africa for Religion, Gender, and Democracy
- **Presentation 17: Ousmane Kane, Harvard University**  
Title: "Religion, Fundamentalisms and Globalization. Reflections from Africa."

**11–11:30am:** Coffee Break

**11:30am–1:30pm**

Session 6: New Methodologies and Theories for the Study of Religion in Public Spaces

- **Presentation 18: Tracey E. Hucks, Harvard Divinity School**  
Title: Sacred Bodies, Sacred Bones: Religion and Black Death Matters in the Diaspora Public
- **Presentation 19: Enoch Joseph Aboi Cornell University**  
Title: Religion, the Cyberspace, and Dissenting Voices in Nigeria: An Ethnographic Approach
- **Presentation 20: Ayodeji Ogunnaike, Bowdoin College**  
Title: White Magic & Western Witchcraft: Turning the Tables on Conceptions of “Black Magic”
- **Presentation 21: Oludamini Ogunnaike, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia**  
Title: A Narrowing Vision: Religious Pluralism, Liberalism, and Capitalism in Contemporary African Publics

**1:30–3:00pm:** Lunch, catered to Tsai Auditorium

**3:00–4:00pm:** Closing Remarks and Goodbyes

## Program Information

Professor Jacob Olupona in conjunction with Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Professor Kay Shelemay, and Professor Todne Thomas.

For assistance, please contact our two conference assistants:

Phil Scholer ([philscholer@hds.harvard.edu](mailto:philscholer@hds.harvard.edu), 615-418-2036)

Siana Monet ([sianamonet@hds.harvard.edu](mailto:sianamonet@hds.harvard.edu), 703-975-8889)