



Weatherhead Center FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS HARVARD UNIVERSITY

INDIGENEITY, RELIGION, AND REMAKING THE PUBLIC SPHERE PROGRAM

*Presented by the Weatherhead Research Cluster on
Religion and Public Life in Africa and the African Diaspora*

December 5-6, 2019

Harvard University
The GSAS Student Center
Lehman Hall – 201 Common Rm
Harvard Yard
Cambridge, MA 02138

Thursday, December 5, 2019

9:00 – 9:15 **Opening Remarks**

Todne Thomas, Co-chair, Weatherhead Research Cluster on Religion in Public Life in Africa and the African Diaspora; Assistant Professor of African American Religions, Harvard Divinity School. **Suzanne Young Murray** Assistant Professor, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

9:15 – 10:00 **Indigeneity, Religion and Remaking the Public Sphere: Framing the Discourse**

Jacob Olupona, Co-chair, Weatherhead Research Cluster on Religion in Public Life in Africa and the African Diaspora; Professor of African Religious Traditions, Harvard Divinity School; Professor of African and African American Studies, Department of African and African American Studies, Harvard University.

10:00–12:00 **Session I: Indigenous Knowledge and Epistemological Resilience**

Moderator: Christina Davidson, Postdoctoral Fellow, Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University.

“Religion on Display: Indigenous Religion in the Ghanaian Public Sphere”

David Amponsah, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies, University of Pennsylvania.

“Knowing the Gods in Public: Akan Religion and the Question of Sociopolitical Relevance.”

Marcus Harvey, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina, Asheville.

“A Reading of the Upsurge of Berber Indigenous Traditions in Today’s Public Life in Morocco”

Fatima Sadiqi, Senior Professor of Linguistics and Gender Studies, Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Morocco.

“The (Indigenous) Priest and the Prophetess: Ritual Healing Arts and Mental Illness in DRC”

Kyrah Malika Daniels, Assistant Professor, Departments of Art History and of African and African Diaspora Studies, Boston College.

- 12:00–2:00 **Break**, speakers Lunch, provided
- 2:00–3:30 **Session II: Global Expansion and Transnational Spaces**
Moderator: Margaret Lombe, *Associate Professor, School of Social Work and Assistant Dean, Doctoral Program, Boston College.*
- “The Osun Phenomenon: African Goddesses at Work in 2019 Black America”
Funlayo E. Wood-Menzies, *Postdoctoral Fellow in the Center for Black Studies Research, the University of California, Santa Barbara.*
- “Public Candomblé Revisited”
Stephen Selka, *Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Indiana University.*
- “Summons, the Priestess: Divinity, Co-Creation, and Vision in Global Africa”
Lauren Coyle-Rosen, *Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Princeton University.*
- 3:30–4:00 **Coffee Break** (provided)
- 4:00–5:30 **Session III: Identity, Citizenship and Political Performance of Indigeneity**
Moderator: Martine Jean, *2019-2020 Mark Claster Mamolen Fellow, Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University.*
- “When the Ancestors Wage War: Mystico-Political Movements and the Ethics of War in Congo”
Georgette I. Mulunda Ledgister, *Executive Director, Fearless Dialogues. Visiting Faculty, Religious Studies, Agnes Scott College.*
- “Mysterious Morality: Statecraft and Ritualist Interventions in Kenyan Electoral Seasons”
Sheila A. Otieno, *Ph. D Candidate in Social Ethics, Boston University.*
- “Yoruba Tradition and Public Life”
Ayodeji Ogunnaike, *Assistant Professor of Africana Studies, Bowdoin College.*
- 6:00 **Speakers Dinner**, Harvard Faculty Club, 20 Quincy Street.

Friday, December 6, 2019

- 9:00–11:30 **Session IV: Contestation, Rule of Law, the State and Indigenous Tradition**
Moderator: Bojana Coulibaly, *College Fellow, African and African American Studies.*
- “Vodun in Community and Conflict”
Venise Adjibodou, *English Teacher, The Rivers School.*
- “Culture, Creed or ‘Cult’: Africana Religions and the Struggle for Legal Recognition in the 21st Century”
Danielle N. Boaz, *Assistant Professor, Department of Africana Studies, University of North Carolina, Charlotte.*
- “Charity Begins at Home: Western Democracy and the Perpetuation of Moral Decay in Africa”
Nokuzola Mndende, *Director of Icamagu Heritage Institute; Deputy Chairperson for the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims; National Chairperson on the Council of African Religion.*
- 11:30 – 12:30 **Brainstorming/Reflecting on the way forward**
- 12:30–2:00 **Lunch** (provided)