



African Faith-based Activism in Canada and the Western World: Law, Politics and Socio-Economics

Friday April 29th, 2016

9am – 5pm

Osgoode Hall Law School, Ignat Kaneff Building Room 2027

About the Event

The conference on **African Faith-based Activism in Canada and the Western World: Law, Politics and Socio-Economics** is a scholarly event intended to convene leading intellectuals and practitioners in law, political science, theology, sociology, anthropology, etc, from Canada and beyond to listen to each other's prepared papers, engage in debates, and work toward the formation of an international research network.

The core question underpinning this scholarly event is *in what ways have African religious movements shaped or affected Western states and society and what are the implications for theories on the relationship between the global North and the global South?*

The conference offers a unique platform for national and international academics and religious leaders to examine this question in-depth from an interdisciplinary lens and exchange ideas with the purpose of moving the research agenda on faith-based activism among continental and diasporic Africans forward.



Event Program

TIME	ACTIVITY	SPEAKER
09:00AM – 09:30AM	REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST	
09:30AM – 10:00AM	<p>OPENING</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Welcome</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Introduction</i></p>	<p>Dean/ Associate Dean Research (TBA)</p> <p>Obiora Okafor Obiora Okafor (Professor & York Research Chair in International and Transnational Legal Studies, York University, Osgoode Hall Law School) & Uwafiokun Idemudia (Associate Professor & Director of Transition Year Program, York University, Department of Social Science)</p>
10:00AM – 11:30AM	<p>PANEL 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Man of God, Subject of Veneration: Pastors, Politics, and Changing Forms of Authority in Africa</i></p> <p><u>MODERATOR:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uwafiokun Idemudia (Associate Professor, York University, Department of Social Science) <p><u>DISCUSSANTS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benjamin Berger (Associate Dean, York University, Osgoode Hall Law School) • Rahina Zarma (LLM Candidate, University of Saskatchewan, College of Law) 	<p>Ebenezer Babatunde Obadare (Associate Professor, University of Kansas, Sociology Department)</p>

11:30AM – 11:45AM	BREAK	
11:45AM – 01:15PM	LUNCH	
01:15PM – 02:45PM	<p>PANEL 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Religious encounters: Gender, Decolonization and empowerment in Ghana</i></p> <p><u>MODERATOR:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uwafiokun Idemudia (Associate Professor, York University, Department of Social Science) <p><u>DISCUSSANTS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amelie Barras (Assistant Professor, York University, Department of Social Science) • Saratu Bissallah Alao (Research Fellow. at Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies) 	<p>Sylvia Bawa (Assistant Professor, York University, Department of Sociology)</p>
02:45PM – 04:15PM	<p>PANEL 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Early Black Churches in Canada: Sites of Activism and Resistance</i></p> <p><u>MODERATOR:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uwafiokun Idemudia (Associate Professor, York University, Department of Social Science) <p><u>DISCUSSANTS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obiora Okafor (Professor & York Research Chair in International and Transnational Legal Studies, York University, Osgoode Hall Law School) • François Tanguay-Renaud (Associate Professor & Director of the Nathanson Centre, York University, Osgoode Hall Law School) 	<p>David Este (Professor, University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work)</p>
05:00PM	DINNER FOR SPEAKERS AND INVITED GUESTS	

Abstracts and Speaker Biographies:

Man of God, Subject of Veneration: Pastors, Politics, and Changing Forms of Authority in Africa

Prof. Ebenezer Babatunde Obadare, Sociology Department, University of Kansas

One of the most fascinating sociological developments in Africa over the past two decades is the emergence of a cohort of charismatic religious leaders who, in varying degrees, exercise increasing sway over theological, political, as well as economic matters. These religious leaders circulate regionally and globally, galvanizing a transnational spiritual economy in which devotional principles, if not modalities, are freely exchanged. In this presentation, I propose a sociology of this all-influential pastorate. By accounting for its (the pastorate's) outsized influence on politics and the private lives of congregants, I advance an argument toward an understanding of the breakdown and recomposition of authority across Africa.



EBENEZER OBADARE (PhD, London School of Economics; Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Kansas, Lawrence, USA) is a civil society scholar, with particular interest in informal strategies of resistance under changing dynamics of rule. He is also interested in, and has published extensively on religion and politics, civic engagement, and civic service and citizenship in Africa. His essays have appeared in the *Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE)*, *African Affairs*, *Politique Africaine*, *Journal of Civil Society*, *Democratization*, *Patterns of Prejudice*, *Africa Development*, *Critical African Studies*, *Development in Practice*, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* and *Journal of Church and State*, among others. He is editor of *The Handbook of Civil Society in Africa* (Springer, 2014) and co-editor of *Civic Agency in Africa: Arts of Resistance in the 21st Century* (James Currey, 2014) and four other books. His monograph, *Humor, Silence and Civil Society in Nigeria*, will be published in February 2016 by University of Rochester Press. His current research focuses on Pentecostal pastors, power, and politics in Africa. A recipient of numerous prestigious international awards and research grants, Professor Obadare currently sits on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Civil Society*, *Contemporary Sociology*, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, and *Review of African Political Economy*.

Religious encounters: Gender, Decolonization and empowerment in Ghana

Prof. Sylvia Bawa, Department of Sociology, York University

Religion was perhaps one of the most contentious spheres of colonial domination. Undoubtedly the imposition, or acceptance, of colonizers' religious beliefs and practices in colonial sub-Saharan African societies played a significant role in entrenching and legitimizing imperialism. The combined influences of Christianity, Islam and traditional African belief led to what has been described as Africa's triple heritage in the postcolonial era. Within the postcolonial setting, concerns of locating emancipatory discourses within colonially introduced religious spaces is not unfounded given the role of religion in entrenching patriarchal notions of gender and inequality during colonialism. In line with a methodology of closely examining the socio-religious and cultural ideologies that structurally sustain women's statuses as subordinates in African postcolonial society and drawing on participant observations and primary interviews in Ghana, I examine, in this presentation, the ways in which women challenge both traditional socio-cultural ideologies on women's subservience and deconstruct dogmatic religious doctrine that reinforces women's marginalization.



SYLVIA BAWA is an Assistant Professor in Sociology at York University. She obtained her BA at the University of Ghana, MA in Social Justice and Equity Studies at Brock University and PhD in Sociology at Queen's University in Canada. Within a postcolonial African Feminist framework, her research examines discourses of culture, identity, women's rights and empowerment within Africa's postcolonial contexts. She has published works in *Third World Quarterly*, the *International Journal of Public Administration*, *Development in Practice* and the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*.

Early Black Churches in Canada: Sites of Activism and Resistance

Prof. David Este, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary

In virtually every early Black community that emerged in Canada, the Black Church became a "pillar of strength" as community members were recipients of anti-black racism which prevailed in mainstream society. The creation of these churches represented concrete examples of resistance by African Canadians to the forms of exclusion they encountered on a daily basis in the different regions that became part of the nation. Using an array of secondary and limited number of primary sources, this presentation explores how these Black churches served as sites of activism not only within their respective communities but as well platforms to deal with the daily injustices encountered by people of African descent who ventured to the Canadian state.



DAVID ESTE is a professor with the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. He served as the Associate Dean (Research and partnership-2003-2008; 2010-2013) and Associate Dean (Academic-2010-2013). His teaching areas include social work practice with immigrants and refugees, mental health, management of non-profit organizations and qualitative research methods. During his career the majority of his research has focused on the well-being of immigrant, refugee and racialized communities in Canada. He is currently involved in a number of research studies such as the Strength and Unity Project; Diversity in Social Work Groups and the Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts Project. Dr. Este has co-authored one book, co-edited three volumes and has published numerous peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters.

Organizers:

OBIORA CHINEDU OKAFOR is a Professor of Law and York Research Chair in International and Transnational Legal Studies (Tier 1). He joined Osgoode Hall Law School after holding faculty positions at the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, Nigeria, and at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. He has served as an SSRC-MacArthur Foundation Visiting Scholar at Harvard Law School's Human Rights Program; a Canada-US Fulbright Scholar at MIT; a Visiting Professor at the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France; a Visiting Professor at the St. Augustine International University, Kampala, Uganda; and as the Gani Fawehinmi Distinguished Chair of Human Rights Law at the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. Professor Okafor is currently a Member of the United Nations Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, a Geneva-based committee of experts elected by the Human Rights Council to serve as its think tank and principal subsidiary organ. He has also served as an expert panelist for the United Nations Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee and United Nations Working Group on People of African Descent.



UWAFIOKUN IDEMUDIA is an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Science and the Director of the Transition Year Program. Professor Idemudia's research interests are in the area of critical development studies, political economy and political ecology approaches to natural resource extraction in developing countries, business and development, issues of governance, transparency and accountability in resource rich African countries. He is also interested in the relationship between development and conflict as well as environmental security. He is at present working on a SSHRC funded research

project that seeks to critically examine the relationship between corporate social responsibility and the resource curse in Africa.

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