

Anti-homosexual policies, hostile attitudes and violence against queer people in African societies have become an issue of international politics and western social movements as well as transnational queer movements. These issues have become visible not least through media representations. At the same time, both African and western scholars have emphasized to what extent research on sexuality in Africa has been biased by conceptions of sexuality that are deeply intertwined with colonial and neocolonial hegemonic ideologies and politics.

In western social movements and academic discourses queer politics and queer theory have been developed as critiques of dominant liberal-democratic concepts of coherent subjectivities, identities and sexualities, and have increasingly become globalized in their demands for universal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people (LGBTI). Such claims, however, neglect the multitude of concepts of genders and sexualities and their linkages to particular notions of identity, subjectivity and agency within different cultural settings.

African researchers have both engaged with the globalised discourse of rights and developed different epistemological approaches to grasp the complex historical and current realities in Africa. The public lecture, workshop and film series aim to scrutinize to what degree the outcry and campaigns against heteronormative politics in Africa are intertwined with continuing processes of Othering and discuss queer politics and theory as situated and non-universal as well as in relation to questions of visual, fictional and artistic representations.

## Organisers/Concept

**Dr. Kerstin Brandes**

(Institute for Art and Visual Culture)

**Dr. Katharina Hoffmann**

(Working Group Migration-Gender-Politics)

**Dr. Annika McPherson**

(Department of English/American Studies)

**Prof. Dr. Barbara Paul**

(Institute for Art and Visual Culture)

**Dr. Lydia Potts**

(European Master in Migration and Intercultural Relations – EMMIR)

**Dr. Sylvia Pritsch**

(Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Women and Gender,  
Gender Studies)

**Kristina Novy, B. A.**

(Research Assistant)

## Contact

Katharina.Hoffmann@uni-oldenburg.de



**Queer as ...**

## Queer as ... Questioning Representations of "African" Sexualities

Series of Events in  
**October and November 2013**  
Carl von Ossietzky University  
of Oldenburg, Germany

**22 October – 27 November 2013**

**Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg  
in cooperation with Cine K Oldenburg**

## **Workshop** Same-Sex Desire and the Defiant Pursuit for Justice and Recognition in the African Continent

Dr. Thabo Msibi, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

This workshop seeks to explore the various ways in which same-sex desire continues to be silenced and closeted in the African continent. In particular the workshop focuses on the repeatedly used arguments positioning same-sex desire as unAfrican and against God. The workshop will explore 1) the historical existence of same-sex desire and the associated multiple understandings of gender and sexuality across various parts of the African continent; 2) the recent moral panic associated with same-sex desire and the consequent draconian post-colonial legislative attempts which have sought to curtail same-sex engagement; 3) the (ir)relevance of Western concepts and categories in understanding gender and sexuality for the African continent and 4) the progress that has been made in the continent in the promotion of same-sex identification rights. The workshop will conclude by exploring possible implications for our understandings of same-sex immigrant issues.

## **Public Lecture** 'My God is a Loving God': Religious and Cultural Struggles Among Black South African Men who Engage in Same-Sex Relations

Dr. Thabo Msibi, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Much has been written in scholarly and popular media about the impact of religion and culture as negatively impacting contemporary African same-sex identities. Of recent concern have been the 'anti-homosexuality bills' in countries such as Uganda, Liberia and Nigeria. While the pioneering South African constitution explicitly recognises and protects the right to sexual orientation, South African individuals who engage in same-sex relations continue to be subjected to the most virulent forms of homophobic violence, often perpetrated in the name of culture and Christianity. This lecture reports on a study of eight South African black male teachers in rural and township contexts of South Africa and their struggles in negotiating and assimilating their same-sex interests with their Christian and Zulu cultural upbringings and practices. It challenges the assumption that religion/Christianity and African cultures are only restrictive and incongruent with same-sex desire, and argues instead that they are simultaneously accommodative and oppressive. While focus will mostly be on culture and religion, the lecture will also show the limitations presented by current western labels, such as gay, lesbian and bisexual, calling for a troubling of simplistic understandings of gender and sexuality in African contexts as well as for more work exploring the lived experiences of African individuals who engage in same-sex relations and the intersections of culture and religion.

## **Public Lecture** Re-membering Mwanga: Same-sex Memory and Belonging in Postcolonial Uganda

Dr. Rahul Rao, SOAS, University of London, UK

Can acknowledgement of same-sex desire in public memory of historical events help to legitimate the claims to sexual freedoms made by contemporary sexual minorities self-identifying in terms of modern categories? Taking as a point of departure ongoing controversies around the putative cultural inauthenticity of homosexuality in Uganda, the lecture discusses the memorialisation of the "Uganda martyrs." Hegemonic renditions of the martyrdoms contain clear references to same-sex desire that are pivotal to the narrative. The crucial, if ambiguous, place of same-sex desire in a narrative that is central to religious, political, and cultural life in Uganda makes it a widely accessible and especially productive site for articulations of sexuality, faith and nationalism. Through ethnographic analysis of ongoing practices commemorating the Uganda martyrdoms, the lecture offers a typology of competing contemporary narratives of the martyrdoms, demonstrating the potential inherent within these narratives for the political mobilisation of the memory of sexual pasts in contemporary struggles for sexual freedoms.

## **Film** "Getting Out" (Uganda 2011)

Documentary, 60 min, produced by the Refugee Law Project, Makerere University, in collaboration with the Ugandan Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights & Constitutional Law, Uganda.

"Getting Out" explores the reality that for many LGBTI Africans coming out to family and friends at home is not even an option. Before they can come out, they first have to get out. This means not only finding means to escape the political forces promoting homophobia at home, but also dealing with the hypocrisies and failings of asylum systems around the world. Filmed in Uganda, South Africa, Geneva, and London, with supporting footage from Malawi and Zimbabwe, "Getting Out" depicts the true stories of five individuals navigating their way through this complex issue (Youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7n4PGdLCsk>).

## **Film** "Call me Kuchu" (USA 2012)

Documentary, 90 min, directed by Malika Zouhall-Worrall and Katherine Fairfax Wright. The film you are about to see tells the story of a group of brave, committed men and women who stand up against bigotry and discrimination at great personal risk to themselves. They are harassed, threatened and attacked. They are treated with a callous cruelty that no human being should have to endure. Yet despite all this, they conduct themselves with calmness, optimism and dignity. It is truly remarkable. Violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people is a human rights violation: a violation that States have a moral duty and a legal obligation to address (UN, Secretary-General's message to Human Rights Film Festival Screening of "Call Me Kuchu", June 2012, <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/?nid=6163>).

Awards, inter alia, Teddy Award for Best Documentary, 2012; Amnesty International Human Rights Award, Durban Festival 2012.

## **Film** "Breaking Out of the Box" (South Africa 2011)

Documentary, 40 min, directed by Busi Kheswa and Zethu Matebeni.

Buhli Msibi's poem I Break the Boxes provides the title for this wide-ranging, touching, often funny documentary highlighting the lives of black lesbians in South Africa. The title is appropriate; by telling the tales of six high profile women, the sheer breadth of experience in the black lesbian community is revealed, the profiled women all having redefined their set parameters in one way or another. They are a well-thought out mix of voices and bear compelling witness to an epoch that has seen gay rights go from zero to hero (Out in Africa, <http://www.oia.co.za/films/breaking-out-of-the-box/>).

## **Film** "Black Beulahs" (South Africa 2006)

Documentary, 52 min, directed by Fanney Tsimong.

"Black Beulahs" is quite simply a film about being black and gay in South African Township of Soweto. It tells this story through the lives of three completely different men with the common factor that they all have their roots in Soweto.

The story is narrated by the director, Fanney Tsimong, who also sees this film as a personal journey of his own experiences as a gay man in Meadowlands, Soweto. He knows all of the subjects personally and is thus able to bring a certain amount of personal understanding, but also a certain kind of objectivity to the film that make it so unique.

"Black Beulahs" has been well received everywhere it has been screened – these include festivals in the United States, in Europe and in South Africa. Screening venues were filled to capacity when it was shown at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and at Out In Africa – South Africa's LGBT film festival.

(<http://www.underdogdigital.com/blackbeulahs/about/index.html>)

## **Film** "Dakan" (Guinea/France 1997)

Drama film, 87 min, directed by Mohamed Camara.

"Dakan"/Destiny is the first African film to deal solely and explicitly with the theme of homosexuality, in particular, gay male sexuality. Other African films tackling the same theme followed, among others, the documentary Woubi Chéri (Philip Brooks and Laurent Bocahut, Ivory Coast, 1998) and the fictional Karmen Geï (Ramaka, Senegal, 2001). Film director Mohamed Camara from Guinea had already attracted the critics' attention with his choice of taboo themes such as incest and child suicide in his short films Denka (1992) and Minka (1994). With homosexuality at its core, "Dakan" maintains the Guinean filmmaker's trademark of taboo topics.

(Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Foreign Narrative Feature at Outfest 1998; The Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Film Festival (Directory of World Cinema, <http://worldcinemadirectory.co.uk/component/film/?id=673>).



Queer as ...

**22 October – 27 November 2013**

Veranstaltungsreihe  
**Series of Events**

**Queer as ...**

**Questioning Representations  
of "African" Sexualities**

## Programm/Programme

### Workshop

#### **Same-Sex Desire and the Defiant Pursuit for Justice and Recognition in the African Continent**

Dr. Thabo Msibi, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

**Tuesday, 22 October, 9.00 – 13.00**

**Friday, 25 October, 14.00 – 18.00**

**Building AD1, Room D-005** – Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg

Registration required until Friday, 18 October: johannes.stock@uni-oldenburg.de.

### Public Lecture

#### **'My God is a Loving God': Religious and Cultural Struggles Among Black South African Men who Engage in Same-Sex Relations**

Dr. Thabo Msibi, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

**Wednesday, 23 October, 14.00 – 16.00**

**Building AD1, Room D-005** – Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg

Linked to the lecture series "Intercultural Relations/Intercultural Communications" (Prof. Dr. Martin Butler, Dr. Lydia Potts)

### Public Lecture

#### **Re-membering Mwanga: Same-sex Memory and Belonging in Postcolonial Uganda**

Dr. Rahul Rao, SOAS, University of London, UK

**Wednesday, 6 November, 16.00 – 18.00**

**Building AD1, Room D-004** – Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg

Linked to the lecture series "Inter- and Transdisciplinary Perspectives in Gender Studies: Critical Perspectives" (Dr. Sylvia Pritsch)

### Courses at the Institute for Art and Visual Culture

– Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg

Registration required. Please contact k.brandes@uni-oldenburg.de

**BA Course:** Kunst, Sichtbarkeit, Queer Theory: Schnittstellen zwischen Visuellen Kulturen und Sexualitätsdiskursen in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Art, Visibility, Queer Theory: Interfaces Between Visual Cultures and Discourses on Sexuality, Past and Present – Dr. Kerstin Brandes)

**MA Course:** Black Brown White & Queer: Alteritätsdiskurse in Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft (Black Brown White & Queer: Discourses on Alterity in Art and Art Studies – Prof. Dr. Barbara Paul)

With kind support of

## Filmreihe/Film Programme

### Cine K Oldenburg

Bahnhofstraße 11, 26122 Oldenburg

www.cine-k.de

**Wednesday, 06 November, 20.00**

#### **"Getting Out" (Uganda 2011)**

Documentary, 60 min, produced by the Refugee Law Project, Makerere University, in collaboration with the Ugandan Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights & Constitutional Law, Uganda.

**Wednesday, 13 November, 18.00**

#### **"Call me Kuchu" (USA 2012)**

Documentary, 90 min, directed by Malika Zouhall-Worrall and Katherine Fairfax Wright.

**Wednesday, 20 November, 18.00**

#### **"Breaking Out of the Box" (South Africa 2011)**

Documentary, 40 min, directed by Busi Kheswa and Zethu Matebeni.

#### **"Black Beulahs" (South Africa 2006)**

Documentary, 52 min, directed by Fanney Tsimong.

**Wednesday, 27 November, 18.00**

#### **"Dakan" (Guinea/France 1997)**

Drama film, 87 min, directed by Mohamed Camara.