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Chapter in *The Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism*, edited by Reiland Rabaka (London and New York: Routledge).

Queer Pan-Africanism in Contemporary Africa

Adriaan van Klinken

This chapter focuses on pan-Africanist discourses in contemporary Africa specifically in relation to the politics of sexual and gender diversity. It begins by examining the populist use of pan-Africanist rhetoric in narratives mobilizing against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) identities and rights. It then proceeds by discussing an emerging counter-narratives employed by LGBTI activists, communities, and allies, in which pan-Africanist thought is used to reimagine Africa from queer perspective.¹ Finally, it examines the strategic invocation of transatlantic black memory and black traditions of thought within these pan-Africanist queer counter-narratives and explores their political significance. Thus, this chapter foregrounds and explores how, in the words of Hakima Abbas and Amina Mama, ‘Pan-Africanism as theory and praxis is in constant dialectic with other African political and intellectual thought including socialism, Black consciousness, Black nationalism, African queer thought and activism, as well as in polemic counter-position with present-day manifestations of imperialism.’²

Anti-Queer Pan-Africanism

In recent decades, across the African continent societies have witnessed an intense politicization of issues around homosexuality, the position of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, and the recognition of their human rights. Former Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe, was one of the first African political leaders who, in the mid-1990s, initiated a high-profile public discourse against sexual minorities, after the organization Gay and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) had registered for participation in the 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair, which that year was themed “Human Rights and Social Justice”. GALZ became subject of a last-minute ban from the Fair – reportedly following a directive issued by the president himself. Shortly after the event, Mugabe made his infamous statement about gay people as ‘worse than dogs and pigs’, adding that ‘what we are being persuaded to accept is sub-animal behaviour and we will never allow it here.’³ He made these comments while speaking at the national Heroes Day celebration, which commemorates those who died in the country’s liberation war. This is highly symbolic, because it appears that for Mugabe indeed homosexuality is something foreign, introduced by, if not imposed on the country by external forces, and that resisting this pressure is a new patriotic liberation struggle. In response to international criticism of his speech, he retorted, ‘Let them be gay in the US, Europe and elsewhere... [But] they shall be sad people here.’⁴ In subsequent years, Mugabe himself has continued to express strong anti-gay rhetoric, and he has been followed suit by politicians and other opinion leaders, such as clergy, in Zimbabwe and many other countries on the continent. This rhetoric has often been accompanied by intensified legal and political efforts to persecute people involved in same-sex relationships, and to introduce new legislation criminalizing not just same-sex activity but also the advocacy for LGBTI human rights. These dynamics have taken different forms in different countries as they are shaped by local socio-political contexts, and there certainly is nothing intrinsically “African” about these manifestations of homophobia (or anti-queer animus).⁵ However, there are

commonalities in anti-queer politics in contemporary Africa, and a major one is the persistent pattern that homosexuality and, more recently, also transgender identity, are discursively constructed as “un-African”. Cameroonian anthropologist Basile Ndjio refers to this process as the ‘culturalization of sexuality’ in postcolonial African societies, by which he means the ‘enduring efforts ... to construct a more racialized and autochtonized form of sexuality as well as to a novel form of biopolitics that makes sexuality a marker of racial and ethnic identity.’⁶ With particular reference to post-colonial Cameroon, Ndjio points out that ‘the anti-homosexual law took up the (Pan)Africanist project to create an exclusive African sexual identity that was the mirror opposite of “western perverse sexuality”.’⁷ A similar conceptualization of these dynamics is presented by the Ugandan law scholar, Adrian Jjuuko, when he argues that one of the major challenges for the protection of LGBTI rights in Africa is the “rise of a conservative streak of pan-Africanism” in which sexuality is being used by political and religious leaders as a key site “to protect and preserve African values and identities and to challenge foreign dominance”, and with abuses and violence against sexual minorities being given a “cloak of legitimacy in the name of pan-Africanism.”⁸

The consequence of this form of sexual politics is that homosexuality is framed as exogenous, and that LGBTI people are denied a claim to African identity and are excluded from the body of the nation. One example of this is the 2013 statement by the then Minister of Justice in Zambia, Wynter Kabimba, that ‘there is no room for gays in Zambia’, claiming that homosexuality is both “un-Zambian” and “un-Christian”. This quotation illustrates how anti-queer pan-Africanism often expresses itself in the guise of conservative religious thought, both Christian and Islamic.⁹ Such understandings of, and attitudes towards, sexual minorities, are, in Ndjio’s words,

informed by nativist ideologies and Pan-Africanist discourses that generally construe LGBTI persons as radically ‘others’ of the Muntu – the African libidinal heterosexual subject naturally inclined to heterosexual relations. Essentialist philosophies of African self-hood have come to see homosexuality as a distinctly un-African phenomenon and a threat to the African way of life, the defence of which has become the pretext for all kinds of sexual fundamentalism and intolerance.¹⁰

Arguably, this anti-queer pan-Africanist narrative is based on an invented notion of African authenticity: it reflects a postcolonial revival of earlier colonialist discourses about African sexuality as fundamentally heterosexual. These discourses were informed by the racist notion of Africans as primitive – so close to nature that they could not engage in what European colonizers and missionaries at the time considered “unnatural” sexual transgressions.¹¹ The painful irony is that in contemporary Africa, pan-Africanist spokespersons have bought into this notion and use it to resist what they perceive as current Western imperialism in the form of the “gay rights agenda”. Meanwhile these spokespersons represent a form of cultural amnesia, as they systematically ignore and deny the anthropological and historical evidence of sexual diversity in African societies in the past and the present.

Reclaiming and Reimagining Queer Africa

In the context of widespread populist pan-Africanist rhetoric denying LGBTI people their citizenship, their human rights and dignity, and their African identity, African LGBTI activists and communities in recent years have developed counter-narratives in which they reclaim and reimagine a queer Africa through a progressive pan-Africanist lens. One major example is the African LGBTI Manifesto¹², which was released following a roundtable

session of activists from across the continent, held in Nairobi in April 2010. The Manifesto, quoted here at length, opens with a strong, explicitly pan-Africanist vision:

As Africans, we all have infinite potential. We stand for an African revolution which encompasses the demand for a re-imagination of our lives outside neo-colonial categories of identity and power. For centuries, we have faced control through structures, systems and individuals who disappear our existence as people with agency, courage, creativity, and economic and political authority.

Striking in these opening words is the self-inclusive notion of “Africans” that the writers of the manifesto adopt. The manifesto appears to deliberately inscribe itself into the tradition of pan-Africanist thought, as it buttresses the ‘belief in the unity, common history and common purpose of the peoples of Africa’ and highlights ‘the importance of the liberation and advancement of the African continent’.¹³ It is on this basis that it proceeds by referring to sexuality, careful not to single out the issue but to frame it in a comprehensive narrative of African cultural diversity, political self-determination, and socio-economic justice:

As Africans, we stand for the celebration of our complexities and we are committed to ways of being which allow for self-determination at all levels of our sexual, social, political and economic lives. The possibilities are endless. We need economic justice; we need to claim and redistribute power; we need to eradicate violence; we need to redistribute land; we need gender justice; we need environmental justice; we need erotic justice; we need racial and ethnic justice; we need rightful access to affirming and responsive institutions, services and spaces; overall we need total liberation.

Only then, having laid out a strong pan-Africanist vision, the manifesto explicitly states its specific concern with sexuality, but again linking this to the project of ‘total liberation’ of the African continent and its peoples:

We are specifically committed to the transformation of the politics of sexuality in our contexts. As long as African LGBTI people are oppressed, the whole of Africa is oppressed.

On the basis of this vision, the writers of the manifesto continue by committing themselves to seven demands, such as reclaiming and sharing their stories, strengthening their organizational networks, and challenging legal systems that criminalize LGBTI people.

A similar emphasis on mainstreaming sexuality in a broader project of liberation and decolonization is found in the emerging body of literature in African queer studies. For instance, Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas, in their introduction to the *Queer African Reader*, state that ‘at the root of queer resistance in Africa, is a carrying forward of the struggle for African liberation and self-determination.’¹⁴ They continue by explaining their use of the term queer as denoting ‘a political frame rather than a gender identity or sexual behaviour’:

We use queer to underscore a perspective that embraces gender and sexual plurality and seeks to transform, overhaul and revolutionise African order rather than seek to assimilate into oppressive hetero-patriarchal-capitalist frameworks.¹⁵

Importantly, the authors draw a link between liberation in the areas of gender and sexuality to the broader project of economic liberation; they present queer politics as a project concerned, not just with LGBTI identities and rights, but with the struggle against patriarchy,

heteronormativity, homophobia, and neoliberal capitalism. As Ekine writes in another contribution to the volume, historically speaking ‘the struggle to break free from colonialism was largely a political project, which involved minimal disturbance of Western economic interests or hetero-patriarchal structures.’¹⁶ Queer resistance, then, aims to complete the project of decolonization by aiming at a comprehensive liberation of African peoples and societies from the multiple structures of domination and oppression.

The motif of reclaiming Africa from queer perspectives is central in the title of another collection in the field of African queer studies, *Reclaiming Afrika*. As Zethu Matebeni and Jabu Pereira point out in their preface to the volume, the spelling of Afrika with a k – which is common in certain pan-Africanist traditions – is deliberate in order...

to emphasise the need to reclaim our existence and being in this continent. As sexual and gender non-conforming or queer persons, we have been alienated in Africa. We have been stripped of our belonging and our connectedness. For these reasons, we have created our own version of Afrika – a space that cuts across the rigid borders and boundaries that have for so many years made us feel disconnected and fractured.¹⁷

The language of “reclaiming Africa” reflects a sense of retrieving something that has been lost in the course of history, a past that has been hidden by historical events, and that can be recovered and used for contemporary political purposes. Such a sense can be distilled, for instance, in the talk titled “Conversations with Baba”, by the Kenyan literary writer Binyavanga Wainaina. Here, Wainaina uses an inclusive “we” to reclaim Africa as a continent that has always been characterized by diversity and has embraced it, and to present Africa – the cradle of human civilization – as an example of moral authority to the rest of the world: ‘We, the oldest and the most diverse continent there has been. We, where humanity

came from. We, the moral reservoir of human diversity, human aid, human dignity.’¹⁸ In Wainaina’s commentary, this rich and strong tradition of diversity characterizing African societies and cultures was only interrupted by ‘those people who came from that time of colonization to split us apart, until our splitting apart came from our own hearts’. Thus, he suggests that the interruption came from outside – from the forces of colonialism and missionary Christianity; he further suggests that the exogenous views of moral conservatism and rigidity have been adopted and internalized by certain sections of society in postcolonial Africa. Here, Wainaina specifically refers to conservative religious actors, which he describes as ‘fake moral hypocritical brokers of our freedom to be diverse’. At other occasions, he has used the term ‘brokers’ for Pentecostal pastors who with their religious fervor, their agenda of moral reform, and their obsessions with demons have recolonized public space.¹⁹ The Kenyan queer activist Gathoni Blessol expresses a similar concern when she writes:

The religious extremists in Africa, whose kingdom of heaven has been bestowed on them because of their ‘righteousness’, are the followers of the evangelical ministries from the West in testimonies, speech and norms, sometimes even in accent and spiritual tongue. The irony is not lost. ... [T]he religious madness is leading to the gross and fatal human rights violations of the African LGBTI-Q community.²⁰

Vis-à-vis such forces, Wainaina calls for a reclaiming of indigenous African moral traditions that recognize human diversity. He considers this a key step in what he calls the process of ‘freeing our imaginations’ – or what Kenyan literary writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o would call the decolonization of the mind.²¹ In his six-part video, “We Must Free Our Imaginations” (in which he explicitly identifies as a pan-Africanist), Wainaina describes socio-political and religious homophobia in Africa as ‘the bankruptcy of a certain kind of imagination’. He urges

his fellow Africans to engage in creative, liberating, and imaginary thinking, reclaiming the past in order to reimagine the future – a future free from oppressive modes of thought.

The queer pan-Africanist reclaiming of an ideal (and perhaps somewhat idealized) African past involves the recovering of indigenous traditions of sexual and gender diversity. This is a key strategy in order to challenge the myth of homosexuality as something ‘un-African’ and a Western invention, and to demonstrate, in the words of the Kenyan scholar Lyn Ossome, ‘the falseness of the “fact” of Africans’ exclusive heterosexuality’.²² As Kenne Mwikya argues, ‘Not only did queerness exist in Africa before colonialism but it did so in many variations that reflect the diversity of Africa’s cultures and with fluidity: weaving itself in and out of gender norms, social institutions, moral censure and even social utility.’²³ With reference to the historical evidence of same-sex practices in African cultures and societies, many activists on the continent have claimed that in fact homophobia, not homosexuality, is un-African and is imported from the West.²⁴ Recovering indigenous transgressive sexualities and gender identities is also of critical epistemological significance. According to the Ugandan sexuality scholar Stella Nyanzi, ‘to queer “Queer Africa”, one must simultaneously reclaim Africa in its bold diversities and reinsert queerness: two non-negotiable strategies that encapsulate the politics within this project.’²⁵ She goes on by arguing:

Thinking beyond the loaded westernized frame of the LGBTI acronym, queer Africa must necessarily explore and articulate local nuances of being non-heteronormative and non-gender conforming. ... Cultural and indigenous understandings of gendered spirits of ancestors who may possess individuals offer socially appropriate notions of handling fluid, transient gender identities. Queer Africa must reclaim such African modes of blending, bending and breaking gender boundaries.²⁶

Thus, the adequacy of modern, originally Western conceptualizations of gender and sexuality, as reflected in the globalized discourse of LGBTI identities, and their relevance for African contexts, is called into question from queer pan-Africanist perspectives. Particularly interesting is Nyanzi's reference to indigenous spiritual beliefs and worldviews as allowing for queer gender and sexual practices, which interrogate Western, typically secular notions of queerness.²⁷ There is a great potential here for indigenous African queer theorizing, which so far has hardly been explored.

Like Nyanzi, also Ekine critiques what she calls 'the meta-narrative of LGBT imperialism', expressing the threefold concern that it does not adequately grasp 'indigenous contemporary constructions of sexuality and gender', 'obscures the diversity and contextual specificity of queer African formations, past and present', and is based on a problematic notion of a 'shared gayness'.²⁸ The latter concern echoes earlier debates in feminist politics, with African and other postcolonial feminists questioning the notion of a 'shared sisterhood' among women. Comparable to black feminism or womanism in their critique of feminism, queer pan-Africanism then can be seen as a critique of white and Eurocentric models of LGBTI activism.

Given the criticism of LGBTI terminology as being Western, the adoption of the term 'queer' – which can be argued to be a similarly loaded Westernized frame – as an alternative may come as a surprise. Yet this move appears to be informed by the insight that queer theorizing, different from the LGBTI framework with its inherent notion of fixed and stable identities, does more justice to the fluidity and ambiguity of sexual and gender performances associated with African indigenous cultures. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, queer theory's radical political edge and its critique of neoliberal capitalist structures and imperialist patterns of thought is embraced by queer pan-Africanist scholars and activists. See, for instance, Ekine's critique of a 'contemporary neoliberal, global "LGBT" agenda

which seeks to universalize white Euro-American sexual norms and gender expressions.’²⁹ She critically points out that this agenda fails to acknowledge that Africans belonging to sexual and gender minorities are equally affected by the realities of ‘economic exploitation and debt dependence and a neoliberal consensus based on economic imperatives’ as other people on the continent.

The review so far has focused on the ways in which queer Africa is reclaimed and reimagined in written texts. Yet LGBTI and queer activism in contemporary Africa makes use of many other creative and artistic forms. One case that is interesting in the light of our interest in queer pan-Africanism is the Kenyan “Same Love (Remix)” music video, which was released in February 2016. Produced by the band Art Attack under the leadership of the openly gay musician and activist, George Barasa, the video was presented as ‘a Kenyan song about same sex rights, gay rights, LGBT struggles, gender equalities, gay struggles and civil liberties for all sexual orientations’.³⁰ The video’s lyrics and imagery present a progressive pan-Africanist vision, which unfolds in two steps. First, the video draws critical attention to the recent politics against homosexuality across the continent. It shows a series of images of newspapers from Ghana and Uganda, whose front page headings include strong and sensationalist anti-gay messages, such as “Homos are Filthy”. It further shows a photo of Irungu Kang’ata MP, who is the leader of the anti-gay caucus in the Kenyan Parliament, and pictures of an anti-gay protest, the “Protect the Family” demonstration, which took place in July 2015 in Nairobi and was organized by a number of Christian organizations, and that featured Kang’ata as a main speaker. In the meantime, the lyrics of the song tell the story of a boy falling in love with another boy and coming out to his parents, only to be harshly rejected by them. This part of the song then concludes by stating:

Homophobia is the new African culture / Everyone's the police, Everyone's a court judge, mob law, street justice / Kill 'em when you see 'em / Blame it on the West, never blame it on love, it's un-African to try and show a brother some love.

In the next part of the song, the lyrics specifically refer to Uganda and Nigeria, the two countries that in 2015 became international known for passing new anti-homosexuality legislation, but then it calls upon Africa as a whole, saying:

Uganda stand strong, Nigeria, Africa, it's time for new laws, not time for new wars / We come from the same God, cut from the same cord, share the same pain and share the same skin.

A positive pan-Africanist vision is presented here, emphasizing the unity and common history of African peoples, and underlining a sense of solidarity. The basis for this vision is a religious one: the idea of African peoples being created by God. This echoes an important tradition of religiously (mostly Christian) inspired pan-Africanist thought, centering on the belief 'that Africa's destiny is God given', or in the words of Marcus Garvey: 'God Almighty created us all to be free.'³¹ Where originally, this religious notion allowed for resisting racial discrimination and overcoming the inferiority of people of African descent vis-à-vis white superiority, the *Same Love* video uses it to resist sexual discrimination and to overcome divisions that exist among Africans about the question who counts as truly African, as well as who counts as truly human.

Black Memory and Black Religious Thought

Some recent examples of creative African queer activism not only demonstrate a pan-Africanist vision, but also an explicit engagement with black memory and history. The “Same Love” video is a good example here. It opens with two images: first, of the rainbow flag, as an international symbol of gay and lesbian pride, and second, of the South African flag. Adopted after the end of apartheid in 1994, the latter flag came to symbolize the “new South Africa”, popularly referred to as a “rainbow nation”. In the video, the South African flag reminds the spectator of an African “success story” in achieving liberation from oppression, constitutionally guaranteeing equality of all citizens regardless of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Although the reputation of post-apartheid South Africa as a success story of diversity and equality has been called into question in recent years, “Same Love” illustrates that this narrative continues to appeal to queer communities elsewhere on the continent. Apparently, the observation of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, that ‘South Africa [is] an integral part of the black self-imagination’ and that the ‘liberation of South Africa was key to the social liberation of the continent’, also applies to the African queer imagination and to the struggle for queer liberation on the continent.³²

While the South African flag appears on the screen, the vocals in “Same Love” recite the opening statement: ‘This song goes out to the New Slaves, the New Blacks, the New Jews, the New Minorities for whom we need a civil rights movement, maybe a sex rights movement. Especially in Africa. Everywhere.’ These words put the experience of same-sex-loving people in Africa in a longer history of racial and ethnic oppression and persecution. The reference to Jews may be read as suggesting that a “queer holocaust” is taking place in Africa³³, but it may also be seen as invoking the longstanding trope of identification of black slaves in the Americas with the suffering of the Jews and their liberation from slavery as narrated in the Hebrew Bible.³⁴ The opening statement suggests that there is continuity between the civil rights movements in the US and the contemporary LGBTI rights movement

in Africa. This continuity is acknowledged again later in the video, when images of prominent African queer individuals – namely, Binyavanga Wainaina and “Same Love” producer George Barasa, both from Kenya; Ugandan gay and lesbian rights activist Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera, and the legendary South African bisexual singer Brenda Nokuzola Fassie (1964–2004) – appear on the screen, while the vocals state that ‘Luther’s spirit lives on’. The suggestion is that the spirit of the African American civil rights movement leader Martin Luther King Jr. lives on in those Africans resisting homophobia and campaigning for the human rights of sexual minorities today. Among American activists it is more common to describe the oppression of LGBTI people as ‘similar in nature although not in history to that of African Americans’, for instance through the use of ‘metaphors of chains and enslavement.’³⁵ The use of this trope in a Kenyan gay music video illustrates Ngũgĩ’s conceptualization of pan-Africanist creative imagination as a ‘remembering practice’, with black memory as a ‘link between the past and the present, between space and time, and the base of our dreams.’³⁶ It also allows the producers of the video to claim a moral high ground, implicitly appropriating King’s prophetic dream of racial liberation in the US, and applying it to the struggle for queer freedom in Africa.

Binyavanga Wainaina has also invoked the name of Martin Luther King, and of African American literary writer James Baldwin, as part of his queer pan-Africanist imagination. Since his coming out as gay in January 2014, Wainaina has actively used Twitter and other social media to denounce homophobia in Africa, and to claim African queer visibility. In several tweets in February-March 2014, he referred to Baldwin as a source of inspiration, recognizing him as ‘black, African, ours’, as a ‘gay icon of freedom,’ and canonizing him as a writer of ‘new scriptures.’³⁷ While commenting on the anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda, he further stated that the pastor of former U.S. president George W. Bush ‘has had more influence on the imagination of Africans than Martin Luther

King and James Baldwin.³⁸ Elaborating on this, in a 2015 Facebook post Wainaina invoked the tradition of progressive black religious thought, explicitly referring to ‘the Jesus of James Baldwin and Martin Luther King’ which, he critically observes, is ‘a dead man in Africa’.³⁹ He uses the notion of Jesus as a liberating figure, who is in solidarity with the marginalized in society and sides with them in their struggle, and on that basis he criticizes Christian churches in Africa for maintaining structures of oppression and exclusion, specifically on the basis of sexual orientation.

Throughout his literary oeuvre, James Baldwin has wrestled with his religious upbringing in black holiness traditions and its conflict with his homosexual orientation. Although Baldwin reached the point that he lost faith in organized Christianity, and possibly also in God, he was inspired by black liberation theology, and by the radical message of love and inclusion preached by Jesus.⁴⁰ Indeed, Baldwin’s work has recently been engaged in several black queer intellectual projects.⁴¹ Claiming the legacy of Martin Luther King in support of LGBTI rights might be a more contested move. In the United States both those who defend and those who oppose LGBTI rights have claimed that King is on their side, and ironically, these two camps have received the support of King’s widow and his daughter respectively.⁴² This controversy notwithstanding, for Wainaina and the producers of the Same Love video, King’s prophetic dream and Baldwin’s creative imagination allow for the development of a progressive, black, pan-African, and Christian counter-narrative that affirms sexual diversity, human dignity, solidarity, and radical love. Likewise, the legendary Archbishop Emeritus, Desmond Tutu, from South Africa, has claimed that as much as King inspired him in his fight against apartheid, ‘the life of Dr. King beckons me to shout for love and justice from the mountaintop, especially in the struggle for gay rights.’⁴³ The invocation of progressive traditions of black religious thought is particularly significant in the light of the role of Christian institutions and leaders in the politicization of homosexuality on the

continent. Popular African Christian discourses denounce homosexuality on the basis that it is both “un-African” and “un-Christian”, which can possibly be interrogated by progressive black pan-African Christian counter-narratives. At least one organization is actively working to promote such a narrative. Called The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM), it was originally established to promote ‘a theology of radical inclusivity’ in the so-called “black church”, that is, in African American Christian circles.⁴⁴ Since the year 2009, TFAM has developed activities in several African countries, such as Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. It builds partnerships with local Christian clergy, supports faith-based LGBTI advocacy, and establishes LGBTI affirming Christian communities, inspired by an explicitly pan-Africanist vision:

The Fellowship Global is positioned to be a catalyst for a pan-African faith movement, connecting the radically inclusive Christian movement led by African Americans and our allies to communities in Africa and throughout the diaspora. ... As heirs of the civil rights movement, African spirituality, Christian traditions, and prophetic witness we have a vision for a radically inclusive revival to usher in a new era of social justice.⁴⁵

It is particularly interesting how TFAM frames its work in Africa explicitly in terms of countering the role of conservative white American evangelical Christians in fueling homophobia in Africa. Thus, in this framing, Africa is the new battle ground for the longstanding culture wars between American conservatives and progressives, but with an explicitly racial dimension.⁴⁶ TFAM, as a black Christian organization, seeks to resist the ‘spiritual colonization’ of Africa by white evangelicals with a conservative theological, and a neoliberal capitalist economic agenda.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Queer pan-Africanism is an emerging discourse among activists, artists, and thinkers concerned with sexual and gender diversity on the continent. It presents an intersectional approach, foregrounding the critical ways in which the politics of sexuality and gender in contemporary Africa are shaped by the histories of colonialism and racism, and by present realities of neocolonialism and neoliberal capitalism. Taking part of its inspiration from black memory and black religious-political thought, queer pan-Africanism offers an alternative to Eurocentric models of LGBTI activism, and it frames queer liberation as part of a broader agenda of decolonization and African liberation. The recent emergence of queer pan-Africanism demonstrates the ongoing salience and significance of pan-Africanist thought for contemporary socio-political projects on the continent, such as the project of African queer liberation. Indeed, it affirms Hakim Adi's argument that 'Pan-Africanism has been not so much a dream, or simply a vision, but a many-faceted approach designed to address common problems by Africa and Africans.'⁴⁸ Queer pan-Africanism addresses the problem of the contestation over sexuality as a defining aspect of African authenticity – a contestation that has emerged as a result of colonial and postcolonial modernity, and of globalizing narratives of sexuality. Resisting anti-queer pan-Africanist narratives that proclaim a heteronormative notion of African identity, queer pan-Africanism reclaims an African past characterized by sexual diversity and gender fluidity, and imagines Africa's future as one of liberation and freedom from (neo)colonialist and hetero-patriarchal structures and modes of thought.

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¹ In this chapter, I use both the acronym LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex) and the term queer. In some cases, both terms are used interchangeably, as is common in part of the literature. However, I also reconstruct an emerging African queer perspective that, at times, is quite critical of established narratives of LGBTI identities and rights.

² Hakima Abbas and Amina Mama, "Editorial: Feminism and Pan-Africanism," *Feminist Africa*, no. 19 (2014): 6.

³ Chris Dunton and Mai Palmberg, *Human Rights and Homosexuality in Southern Africa*, 2nd ed. (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institutet, 1996), 12–13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵ Ryan R. Thoreson, "Troubling the Waters of a 'Wave of Homophobia': Political Economies of Anti-Queer Animus in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Sexualities* 17, no. 1–2 (February 5, 2014): 23–42.

⁶ Basile Ndjio, "The Nation and Its Undesirable Subjects: Homosexuality, Citizenship and the Gay 'Other' in Cameroon," in *The Culturalization of Citizenship: Belonging and Polarization in a Globalizing World*, ed. Jan Willem Duyvendak, Peter Geschiere, and Evelien Tonkens (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 115.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 118–19.

⁸ Adrian Jjuuko, "The Protection and Promotion of LGBTI Rights in the African Regional Human Rights System: Opportunities and Challenges," in *Protecting the Human Rights of Sexual Minorities in Contemporary Africa*, ed. Sylvie Namwasa and Adrian Jjuuko (Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, 2017), 241.

⁹ Adriaan van Klinken, "Homosexuality, Politics and Pentecostal Nationalism in Zambia," *Studies in World Christianity* 20, no. 3 (2014): 259–81; Hassan J. Ndzovu, "Un-Natural, Un-African and Un-Islamic: The Three Pronged Unslaught Undermining Homosexual Freedom in Kenya," in *Public Religion and the Politics of Homosexuality in Africa*, ed. Adriaan van Klinken and Ezra Chitando (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016), 78–91.

¹⁰ Ndjio, "The Nation and Its Undesirable Subjects: Homosexuality, Citizenship and the Gay 'Other' in Cameroon," 133.

¹¹ Stephen O. Murray and William Roscoe, "Preface: All Very Confusing," in *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, ed. Stephen O. Murray and William Roscoe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), xi.

¹² Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas, eds., "African LGBTI Manifesto," in *Queer African Reader* (Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2013), 52–53.

¹³ Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 2.

¹⁴ Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas, "Introduction," in *Queer African Reader*, ed. Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas (Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2013), 3.

¹⁵ Introduction, *Queer African Reader*, p. 3.

¹⁶ Sokari Ekine, "Contesting Narratives of Queer Africa," in *Queer African Reader*, ed. Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas (Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2013), 81.

¹⁷ Zethu Matebeni, ed., *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities* (Cape Town: Modjaji Books, 2014), 7.

¹⁸ Binyavanga Wainaina, 'Conversations with Baba', TEDxEuston Talk 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5uAoBu9Epg&t=605s>.

¹⁹ See part 2 of We Must Free Our Imaginations.

²⁰ Gathoni Blessol, "LGBTI-Queer Struggles like Other Struggles in Africa," in *Queer African Reader*, ed. Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas (Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2013), 221, 223.

²¹ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1986).

²² Lyn Ossome, "Postcolonial Discourses of Queer Activism and Class in Africa," in *Queer African Reader* (Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2013), 34. See also Blessol, "LGBTI-Queer Struggles like Other Struggles in Africa," 224.

²³ Kenne Mwikya, "Unnatural and Un-African: Contesting Queer-Phobia by Africa's Political Leadership," *Feminist Africa*, no. 19 (2014): 100.

²⁴ Ashley Currier, *Politicizing Sex in Contemporary Africa: Homophobia in Malawi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 32.

²⁵ Stella Nyanzi, "Queering Queer Africa," in *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities*, ed. Zethu Matebeni (Cape Town: Modjaji Books, 2014), 65.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁷ E.g. see Adriaan van Klinken and Kwame Edwin Otu, "Ancestors, Embodiment and Sexual Desire : Wild Religion and the Body in the Story of a South African Lesbian Sangoma," *Body and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2017): 70–87.

²⁸ Ekine, "Contesting Narratives of Queer Africa," 78, 85.

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- ²⁹ Ibid., 78.
- ³⁰ Art Attack, Same Love (Remix), YouTube, February 15, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EataQQvPII>.
- ³¹ Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History*, 14; Marcus Garvey, "Purpose of Creation." In *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey: Africa for the Africans*, compiled by Amy Jacques (London: Routledge, 1967), 37.
- ³² Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Re-Membering Africa* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 2009), 77, 80.
- ³³ Matthew Waites, "Genocide and Global Queer Politics," *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, no. 1 (2018), 44-67.
- ³⁴ Clarence E. Hardy III, *James Baldwin's God: Sex, Hope, and Crisis in Black Holiness Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 47.
- ³⁵ Melissa M. Wilcox, *Coming out in Christianity: Religion, Identity, and Community* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 85.
- ³⁶ Thiongo, *Re-Membering Africa*, 28.
- ³⁷ Binyavanga Wainaina (@BinyavangaW), Twitter, March 9 and 26; February 7, 2014.
- ³⁸ Binyavanga Wainaina (@BinyavangaW), Twitter, January 24, 2014, 3:55 p.m.
- ³⁹ Binyavanga Wainaina, "The Jesus of James Baldwin and Martin Luther King," Facebook, May 4, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/binyavanga.wainaina/posts/10152746795847343>.
- ⁴⁰ Hardy III, *James Baldwin's God: Sex, Hope, and Crisis in Black Holiness Culture*, 12.
- ⁴¹ Matt Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination* (Ann Harbor: University of Michigan Press 2014); El Kornegay, Jr., *A Queering of Black Theology: James Baldwin's Blues Project and Gospel Prose* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).
- ⁴² Michael G. Long, *Martin Luther King Jr., Homosexuality, and the Early Gay Rights Movement: Keeping the Dream Straight?* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).
- ⁴³ Desmond Tutu, "Afterword," in *Martin Luther King Jr., Homosexuality, and the Early Gay Rights Movement: Keeping the Dream Straight?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 149.
- ⁴⁴ Ellen Lewin, *Filled with the Spirit: Sexuality, Gender, and Radical Inclusivity in a Black Pentecostal Church Coalition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).
- ⁴⁵ <https://www.radicallyinclusive.org/global>
- ⁴⁶ Adriaan van Klinken, "Culture Wars, Race, and Sexuality: A Nascent Pan-African LGBT-Affirming Christian Movement and the Future of Christianity," *Journal of Africana Religions* 5, no. 2 (2017): 217–38.
- ⁴⁷ Fellowship Global, "Black Pastors Launch African Tour to Counteract Rick Warren's Anti-Gay Movement," Believe Out Loud, April 7, 2015, <http://www.believeoutloud.com/latest/black-pastors-launch-african-tour-counteract-rick-warren%E2%80%99s-anti-gay-movement>.
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