

Call for Papers

PURSUING JUSTICE IN AFRICA CONFERENCE

27th-28th March 2015, University of Cambridge

<http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/events/25640>

Convenors: Jessica Johnson and George Karekwaivanane

In recent decades, justice has been overshadowed as a subject of concern to scholars of Africa by vast literatures centring on rights, crime, punishment, policing and social order. This neglect of justice is striking given the increasing presence of international justice institutions, such as the International Criminal Court, on the African continent and the remarkable diversity of legal structures of justice. Across Africa, complex pluralities of 'customary', religious, state, and transnational justice regimes interact on what is often contested terrain. This interdisciplinary conference will place the past and present negotiation of competing notions of justice under scrutiny, with the aims of:

- * Moving beyond currently dominant themes in socio-legal studies of Africa by asking broader questions about the aims and aspirations of those engaging with formal, informal or 'customary' law, legal reform, and legal institutions.
- * Exploring the potential of a focus on justice to overcome limitations associated with the study of human rights, not least their questionable resonance with the vernacular concerns of African citizens. And at the same time, probing the relationship between rights and justice.
- * Considering the conceptual possibilities of justice as a means of bypassing contested notions of legal pluralism for understanding intersections of local, national and international legalities.
- * Remaining alert to what a focus on justice might obscure or exclude. How, for example, does the language of justice relate to concerns about power and inequality?
- * Gathering together scholars from a variety of disciplines whose work converges on issues of justice in Africa and whose projects have not previously been brought into conversation.

The focus of the conference is on the many and varied actors pursuing visions of justice in Africa – their aspirations, divergent practices and articulations of international and vernacular idioms of justice. We will bring together topics of research that are at the cutting edge of contemporary scholarship across a wide range of disciplines, including activism, resource extraction, international legal institutions, and post-conflict reconciliation. Our engagement will be both empirical and theoretical: we aim to grapple with alternative approaches to the concept of justice and its relationships with law, morality, and rights. The keynote address will be given by Professor Kamari Maxine Clarke.

We welcome papers from a range of disciplines, including – but not limited to – anthropology, history, law, criminology and politics. In order to allow time for discussion, presentations will be limited to 20 minutes. We are unable to fund travel and accommodation but will cover registration costs and conference meals for all delegates, and we can provide advice about accommodation in Cambridge.

To apply please send a 300-word abstract to pursuingjusticeinafrica@gmail.com by 28 November 2014.