

FEMINIST AFRICA



Call for Paper Submissions

Gender, Class and Mobility from the 1980s

Deadline for Submissions: 30th September 2024

All submissions and enquiries should be emailed to:

contact@feministafrica.net (cc) info@feministafrica.net

Issue Editors: Dorothy Takyiakwa and Faisal Garba Muhammed

Introduction

How do gender and class intersect with the experience of mobility in a political and economic climate where the physical mobility of ordinary Africans is viewed as a problem to be confronted and curbed, while their attempts at social mobility are curtailed by the same processes of exclusion and inequality? With global mobility regimes, national state structures, and the market assigning value and opportunities to groups and individuals based on class position and gender identity (among other markers of social differentiation), the aspirations of ordinary Africans to move from one geographical location to another, and from one social position to the next is impeded by the lack of access to resources and the increasing securitisation of mobility. Yet, Africans are moving in significant numbers within and beyond the African continent. In the process, they face difficult conditions en route to their destinations, and in their host societies. In a gendered world, their gender and sexuality as women, men, and sexual and gender minorities play a role in determining the opportunities open to them as migrants and the conditions under which they move, the work that they do, and the resources available to them to improve their lives. To be gendered as women, men, and sexual and gender minorities does not only affect one's ability to move from one social position to another, but even perceptions about gender often (de) limit the aspirations of mobile/would-be mobile persons.

Despite their late start in cities, women have historically been mobile in Africa (Akurang-Parry 2002, 2010). Side by side with the historical female mobility is the imposition of gendered expectations and limitations around how people gendered as women and men can move across place, and vertically (up or down) the social ladder. This gendered imposition is taking a more profound turn with the ongoing conservative mobilisations in parts of Africa against non-heteronormative ways of life. Anecdotal evidence points to these mobilisations affecting the physical movement and the opportunities available for sexual and gender minorities to improve their lives and livelihoods. Sexual and gender minorities may have to move to be safe or restrict their movement to be safe. And when they move, access to resources such as healthcare can be daunting. Varied motivations, opportunities and limitations shape physical mobility decision-making and processes and these are further differentiated by gender and social class. These three broad dimensions (re)create different pathways and strategies for social mobility. This issue focuses on a deeper engagement of this interaction of gender, sexualities, class, and the experience of mobility, as mediated by various social, economic, geographical and political factors.

The issue adopts Issa Shivji's (2017) conceptualisation of class as the relationship to life-sustaining goods through wage labour, and/or survivalist activities by those in employment and the unemployed who constitute the working people. This conception transcends the division of the working class and the lumpenproletariat given the social interdependence of both groups and the ease with which people move between the two groups. By gender, we refer to the assignment of social roles, obligations and expectations based on assumptions about biology with context variations across communities and social groups. Linking gender with social class in the process and experience of physical and social mobility foregrounds gender as mediating who moves and how they move, and how this in turn (re)produces social class. The gendered experiences in the host societies often determine the social position of a migrant. To illustrate, female domestic workers in the Gulf have limited opportunities to move up the social ladder from their class position as working people. This does not suggest a linear relationship between the three concepts, or their lived experience, rather they relate in a manner where one or more, in the context of other factors, are amplified or hushed.

We draw on African feminisms and feminist decoloniality work in pushing towards a critical analysis of mobility that foregrounds gender, patriarchy, and knowledge production as featured strongly in the works of African feminists (Amadiume 1987; Oyewumi 1997, 2011) and others (Lugones 2007, 2008, 2011). We also draw on the critical hetero-patriarchal discourse (Woodson and Pabon 2016) of Black feminist thought to further understand (gender, patriarchy, migration, class, etc.) and analyse the status of women (and other

genders). Contributions are expected to engage a textured and nuanced debate on the status of women (and other genders) on the move and/or on the social ladder. This volume seeks contributions that anchor migration and social mobility around gender and how the latter intersect with notions and embodiments of social class, race, and other markers of social differentiation (Crenshaw 1991), from the 1980s to the present. This issue therefore focuses on these developments with a view to imagining possible liberatory and transformative politics around the mobility and (immobility) of working-class women and other social groups whose interests are served by fundamental social transformations. Contributions are invited in varied forms addressing the following themes and more, from the 1980s:

- Gender and class in the historical pattern(s) of physical/social (im)mobility in Africa.
- Physical and social (im)mobility as agency and precarity for women (and other sexual and gender minorities) and working-class African people within and outside the African continent.
- Women (and other sexual and gender minorities) migration and solidarity in the face of patriarchy and other struggles in (and of) Africa.
- The changing nature/dynamics/persistence/family/kin in migration of women (and other sexual and gender minorities) and their (re)negotiation of social class.
- Theory and the politics of knowledge production on African subjects.
- Politics, social transformation, gender, and mobility.
- Possibilities and limits of cross-class, gender-sensitive solidarity in the midst of patriarchy and homophobia in Africa.
- Masculinities and social differentiation in Africa.
- Gendered work, feminised labour, care work and social (im)mobility.

The closing date for full paper submission is 30th September, 2024. Direct all enquiries and submissions to: contact@feministafrica.net and copy info@feministafrica.net

Do also specify that your submission is for “**Gender, Class and Mobility from the 1980s**”

Download the Feminist Africa Editorial Policy and Style Guide at: <https://feministafrica.net/>

References

- Akurang-Parry, Kwabena Opare. 2002. “‘The Loads Are Heavier than Usual’: Forced Labor by Women and Children in the Central Province, Gold Coast (Colonial Ghana), CA. 1900-1940.” *African Economic History* 30: 31-51. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3601601>
- Akurang-Parry, Kwabena Opare. 2010. “Transformations in the Feminization of Unfree Domestic Labor: A Study of Abaawa or Prepubescent Female Servitude in Modern Ghana.” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 78(1): 28-47. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0147547910000104>
- Amadiume, Ifi. 1987. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Books.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Lugones, María. 2007. "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia* 22(1): 186-219. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2007.tb01156.x>
- Lugones, María. 2008. "The coloniality of gender." In *On the De-colonial (II): Gender and Decoloniality*. Volume 2, Dossier 2. Web-dossier of Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise (WKO) Program, Center for

Global Studies and the Humanities. Accessed 10 December 2023.

https://globalstudies.trinity.duke.edu/sites/globalstudies.trinity.duke.edu/files/documents/v2d2_Lugones.pdf

Lugones, María. 2010. "Toward a decolonial feminism." *Hypatia* 25(4): 742-759.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01137.x>

Oyewumi, Oyeronke. 2011. *Gender Epistemologies in Africa: Gendering Traditions, Spaces, Social Institutions, and Identities*. 1st edition. United States: Palgrave Macmillan.

Oyewumi, Oyeronke. 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Shivji, Issa Gulamhussein. 2017. "The Concept of 'Working People'." *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 6(1): 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2277976017721318>

Woodson, Ashley and Amber Pabon. 2016. "'I'm None of the Above': Exploring Themes of Heteropatriarchy in the Life Histories of Black Male Educators." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 49(1): 57-71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2015.1121456>