FEMINIST AFRICA



Call for Submissions

Beyond Backlash: African Feminists Reframing Anti-Gender Politics

Deadline for Abstract Submissions: 30 November 2026

All **submissions** and enquiries should be emailed to: **contact@feministafrica.net** with copy **info@feministafrica.net**

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Introduction

Across Africa, anti-gender and anti-rights mobilisation has become increasingly visible within political, religious, educational and media spaces. These mobilisations frequently organise around opposition to sexual and reproductive health and rights, LGBTQ+ rights, comprehensive sexuality education, feminist organising and the language of gender itself. These campaigns are connected through transnational advocacy networks, shared narratives and forms of policy diffusion across Eastern, West and Southern Africa. Recent initiatives organised around "family values", sovereignty and resistance to supposedly external gender norms further illustrate the increasing institutionalisation of these agendas.

There are several analytical moves invoked through these campaigns and movements but three are foregrounded here. The first is the construction of the family as a singular, apolitical, natural institution grounded in an unchanging heterosexual unit. Second, is the conversion of gender and sexuality rights, including those concerning heterosexuality, into a threat to the family. Third, converting bodily autonomy into a sovereignty question linked to the identity of a people that therefore falls within the purview of institutions (Kanchan, 2026).

There is significant work documenting these movements: their funding, transnational networks, religious infrastructures, political strategies and effects on gender and sexual rights. Yet an exclusive focus on anti-gender actors can obscure a much longer and richer history of African feminist intellectual production, political organising and narrative contestation. African feminists have continuously produced alternative accounts of freedom, family, sexuality, community, citizenship, justice and African political futures. From the Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists to contemporary feminist organising, African feminisms have articulated a politics committed to dismantling patriarchy while simultaneously challenging colonialism, racism, capitalism and other structures of domination. Through coalitions, litigation and advocacy to contest anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and civil society observer status at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, feminist movements and scholars have challenged a wave of attacks on bodily autonomy across the continent. These have been coupled with community-level work, provision of alternative knowledge and services, public health advocacy, comprehensive sexuality education and a grassroots social-justice approach in politically hostile environments (African Union Executive Council, 2019; Odoi et al., 2024; Oloka-Onyango et al., 2014)

This special issue proposes a deliberate analytical shift from studying anti-gender discourse primarily through the actors who produce it to examining the feminist ideas, political practices and narrative infrastructures through which it is contested. It begins from the proposition that African feminist responses to anti-gender politics should be recognised as counter-narratives, counter-publics and alternative political imaginaries through which feminists contest who has the authority to define African culture, morality, gender, sexuality, family and political community.

This distinction is significant. Anti-gender actors frequently position feminism, gender equality and sexual rights as externally imposed ideas that threaten African sovereignty and cultural authenticity. The work of African feminist scholarship and movements complicates and contests these discursive moves. This special issue will give particular attention to knowledge production itself as a site of political struggle.

The special issue is framed around **three central questions:**

1. What intellectual, cultural and political resources are African feminists drawing upon to contest anti-gender politics?
2. How are feminist movements constructing alternative narratives about African societies and futures?
3. What can feminist movements' intellectual and political engagements tell us about the relationship between narrative power, knowledge production and movement building?

Core Themes

We invite contributions that are anchored in the three questions above and explore some of the following themes.

1. **Feminist Sovereignties: Bodily, Economic and Political Autonomy**
   Feminist reconceptualisations of sovereignty that centre bodily integrity, economic justice, political autonomy and collective self-determination, including challenges to nationalist and anti-gender appropriations of sovereignty.
2. **African Feminist Approaches to Kinship, Care and Belonging**
   Feminist reimaginings of family, kinship, intimacy, care and belonging that challenge heteropatriarchal and exclusionary constructions of the family, while developing alternative narratives grounded in the diversity of African social and familial formations.
3. **Faith, Feminist Theology and Reproductive Justice**
   African feminist theology, progressive faith-based organising and religious counter-narratives addressing reproductive justice, gender-based violence, sexuality and bodily autonomy, including feminist challenges to the mobilisation of religion within anti-gender politics.
4. **Counter-Narrative Infrastructures: Feminist Communications, Knowledge and Evidence**
   Feminist communications, strategies, movement-generated evidence, research, media, cultural production and alternative knowledge infrastructures that contest anti-gender narratives and strengthen African feminist capacity to shape public discourse.
5. **Queer Archives, Memory and African Histories of Gender and Sexuality**
   African queer archives and practices of historical recovery that complicate dominant accounts of gender and sexuality, challenge claims that gender and sexual diversity are external to African societies and recover alternative histories of intimacy, identity, community and resistance.
6. **African Feminist Solidarities and the Making of Feminist Futures**
   African and transnational feminist solidarities, coalitions and movement infrastructures that enable collective resistance across borders, movements and generations, with particular attention to how solidarity can generate alternative political imaginaries and build feminist futures.

Nature of submissions:

We are inviting submissions within the following categories:

1. Feature articles
2. Profiles
3. Standpoint pieces
4. In conversation pieces

For more information, download the *Feminist Africa* Editorial Policy and Style Guide.

Deadline for 300-word abstract submissions: 30th November 2026.
Submission of full papers: 31st May 2027
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Direct all enquiries and submissions to: contact@feministafrica.net and copy info@feministafrica.net

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