

Conference Call for Contributions



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Resisting Anti-Gender Ideology and Feminist Backlash

Hosted by the SARCHI Chair in Gender Politics at Stellenbosch University
At the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS)
12-13 October 2026

Background and Rationale

The SARCHI Chair in Gender Politics at Stellenbosch University produces multi-disciplinary research on women's activism and mobilisation, gender justice policy, reproductive health, gender-based violence, and broader feminist political analysis, serving as an institutional home for critical engagement with the contemporary anti-gender movement. Recent scholarship has shown that anti-gender actors operate through transnational networks and increasingly target feminist gains, sexual and reproductive rights, and the rights and recognition of LGBTIQ+ communities, including trans and gender-diverse people. This conference responds to the urgency of these developments by creating an interdisciplinary platform for scholars, activists, policymakers and artists to share grounded research, analyse the current backlash, and imagine effective strategies of resistance and solidarity.

The conference will explore how anti-gender discourse and mobilisation shape public debate, law, policy, educational institutions, religious spaces, media ecologies, and everyday life. Particular attention will be given to how backlash politics affect struggles for feminist freedom, reproductive justice, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, and the dignity, safety, and citizenship of trans and gender-diverse communities. By bringing these conversations together, the conference aims to deepen South African, African, and global dialogue on authoritarianism, populism, democratic backsliding, homophobia, transphobia and a backlash against feminism and gender justice at a moment of intensifying contestation.

Conference Aims

- To generate critical interdisciplinary dialogue on the rise, strategies, and effects of anti-gender movements.
- To examine contemporary backlash against feminism, sexual and reproductive justice, and trans and gender-diverse identities.

- To foreground research and activism on sexual and gender-based violence in contexts of democratic erosion, conservatism, and social precarity, and gender binarism with a focus on Africa.
- To connect academic, policy, and movement-based perspectives on resistance, organising, and transformative justice.
- To foster scholarly networks and collaboration across South Africa, the African continent, and the global South and North.
- To support emerging scholars and practitioners working on gender justice, feminist politics, and queer and trans studies.

Thematic Areas

The organisers invite contributions that engage with, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Genealogies and political economies of anti-gender mobilisation
- Backlash against feminist movements, feminist institutions, and gender studies
- Reproductive justice, abortion politics, bodily autonomy, and healthcare access
- Sexual and gender-based violence, accountability, carcerality, prevention, and survivor-centred responses
- Trans and gender-diverse identities, recognition, belonging, safety, and citizenship
- Law, policy, and constitutionalism in relation to gender and sexuality rights
- Religion, culture, and morality politics in anti-gender campaigns
- Digital publics, media, disinformation and hate speech in the circulation of anti-gender narratives
- Universities, schools, and curricula as contested sites of gender knowledge
- African, decolonial, and intersectional feminist responses to backlash politics
- Movement-building, coalition politics, and solidarities across struggles
- Creative, methodological, and pedagogical interventions for gender justice

Conference Format and Participants

The conference is envisioned as a two-day event, 12- 13 October 2026 and will include keynote presentations, academic paper panels, roundtables, activist dialogues, postgraduate sessions, and selected creative or community-engaged contributions. The organisers welcome participation from academics, independent researchers, civil society actors, legal practitioners, health professionals, policymakers, artists, and postgraduate students whose work speaks to the conference themes.

Call for Abstracts and Panels

We invite abstracts for papers, panels, roundtables, and creative or community-engaged presentations that critically address the anti-gender movement and ideology, and its implications for feminist politics and gender justice. We particularly welcome contributions that are theoretically rigorous, empirically grounded, historically attentive, and politically engaged.

Submissions are encouraged from across disciplines, including political science, sociology, law, anthropology, history, public health, media studies, education, theology, development studies, gender and sexuality studies, masculinity studies and related fields. Comparative, regional, and international perspectives are welcome, with strong encouragement for submissions that engage African contexts, decolonial feminist analysis, and collaborations between scholarship and activism.

Submission Categories

- Individual papers: Abstracts of 250–300 words
- Panel proposals: A 300-word panel overview plus abstracts for up to four papers
- Roundtables: A 250–300-word rationale with proposed participants and format
- Creative or community-engaged contributions: A 250–300-word description of the proposed presentation, exhibition, performance, dialogue, or intervention

Submission Guidelines

- Each submission should include a title, author name(s), institutional or organisational affiliation, email address, and a short biographical note of 80–100 words.
- Abstracts should clearly state the central argument, research question, methodology or approach, and relevance to the conference theme.
- Please indicate the thematic area most relevant to your submission.
- Selected papers may be considered for inclusion in a special issue, edited collection, or post-conference publication project, subject to a separate review process.
- Presenters are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation unless otherwise indicated by the organisers (a few scholarships will be given to scholars from other African countries where the need arises).

Important Dates

- Abstract submission deadline: 15 July 2026
- Notification of acceptance: 30 July 2026
- Registration opens: 1 September 2026
- Conference dates: 12-13 October 2026

Submission and Enquiries

Abstracts and enquiries should be sent to Prof Amanda Gouws ag1@sun.ac.za or

Ms Jean Cilliers jcc@sun.ac.za

Subject line: Conference Abstract Submission 2026

For further information, please contact: Dr Marion Stevens

marionstevens@iafrica.com

The organisers look forward to receiving submissions that advance critical analysis, collective reflection, and transformative dialogue on the urgent challenges posed by anti-gender politics in our time.