

Toward an Africa without Borders Conference 2007: From Theory to Practice

Toward an Africa Without Borders, an organization dedicated to opening borders, both physical and metaphorical, and promoting unity and solidarity between groups in the Diaspora and Africa by facilitating strategic alliances and discussions that can lead to partnerships for positive action in the name of Pan-Africanism invites scholars and activists from all disciplines and professions to submit abstracts or panel proposals for consideration for their third international conference to be held in Durban, South Africa July 5-8, 2007, featuring keynote speakers Horace Campbell, Andile Mngxitama, and Chengiah Rogers Ragaven.

The conference will consist of various panels and round-table discussions, and thus highlight four thematic panel presentations: “Activism Across Borders, Africa & the Media: Borders of Perception, Pan-Africanism: Theory and Practice, and South Africa’s Role in Africa and the World”.

- *The Activism Across Borders* panel will ask how can activism [and scholarship] cross and break down borders, be they geographic borders or borders dividing gender, class, language, ethnicity, religion, age, etc., and second, what are the benefits or drawbacks of conceptualizing activism in terms of such “borders”?
- *The Africa & the Media: Borders of Perception* panel will ask how do media affect the perception of Africa in both Africa and the Diaspora, how can international and domestic African media work to expand understanding or facilitate cooperation, and what is the role of state and journalist control/censorship in this process?
- *The Pan-Africanism: Theory and Practice* panel will investigate how can Pan-African ideas and theories be put into practice in today’s Africa, how can Pan-African theory facilitate positive action and collaboration throughout Africa and the Diaspora, and what are the benefits and/or pitfalls of Pan-Africanism in the context of activism and scholarship?

- *The South Africa's Role in Africa and the World* panel will discuss how does the idea of "South African Exceptionalism" complement or impair the Pan-Africanist agenda? Is South African Exceptionalism a myth or reality, how does South Africa's role within SADC and the African continent affect issues such as immigration and domestic and foreign policy, in general, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of the model of social change employed by South Africa post liberation?

In addition to these featured panels, the conference also welcomes scholars and activists to discuss such issues as (but not limited to):

- *Arts/performance & Pan-Africanism* asking what role does culture play in today's Pan-African movement, how can the arts and performance better serve to bridge Pan-African ideology and activism, and how effectively does art bring politics to the people and vice versa?
- *Literature of Africa and the Diaspora* detailing what recent and historical works of African and Diaspora literature contribute to Pan-Africanism, how is contemporary literature mobilizing a new vision of Pan-African identity and politics, what borders are constructed between continental and Diaspora artists regarding these issues; and do writers in Europe and the United States share the same conception of Pan-Africanism as their continental peers?
- *African Women: Struggle and Strength* probing what role do African and Diaspora women play in the struggle toward an Africa without borders, what challenges do they face, and what strengths do they contribute?
- *Language and Africa* will question how does language factor into the Pan-African debate today, do linguistic and language barriers pose viable threats to Pan-African possibilities, or should linguistic diversity be embraced, how practical and how problematic is English as the lingua franca of the Pan-African movement, and how accessible – and how relevant – is Pan-African discourse to the general public?

- *Globalization, Africa, and the Diaspora* will seek answers to: what is Africa's role in globalization, how has globalization altered Africa and the Diaspora, has it been for better or worse? Does globalization build or erase borders, and where does Pan-Africanism stand in relation to other models of global identity, nationhood and/or belonging?
- *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Africa and the Diaspora* will investigate the role of religion, ethnicity, and/or identity in erecting or destroying borders in Africa and the Diaspora, how can these concepts contribute or detract from cooperation, understanding, and collaboration between peoples, and how can these borders be negotiated to end genocide in Africa?
- *Africa and Foreign Relations* will review what is the impact of African nations' foreign policy on cooperation and understanding across geographic borders, and how can Africa benefit from improved and continued partnerships with not only the West, but also the Middle East and Asia?
- *Health and Medicine in Africa* will explore what are the borders affecting improvements in health care and medicine distribution/availability in Africa, and how can breaking down these divisions help Africa cope with and eliminate the major health issues affecting the continent?
- *Africa and the Environment* will probe how can Africa work to improve the environment, what is Africa's role in the global climate crisis, and what is the impact of environmental change on African peoples?
- *Refugees, Immigration, and Pan-Africanism* will examine how can applying the ideas and ideals of Pan-Africanism assist the continent and the Diaspora in dealing with refugee and immigration issues?

- *Government Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Development* will question what are the roles of these organizations in development projects in Africa, what are the borders that affect their work, and how can re-conceptualizing these various borders better facilitate their work?
- *Emerging Global Powers in Africa* will discuss what role do emerging global powers, such as China and India, and their growing economic involvement, play in Africa, how does this new involvement compare with previous involvement of “traditional imperialists”, and what is the impact of this involvement on African-based initiatives for trade, development, social and political advancement?
- *African Sexuality* will ask are gender and sexuality the least porous of African frontiers? What are the borders that prevent the acknowledgment or acceptance of homosexuality in Africa? Does Pan-Africanism have a role in eliminating sexualized borders, and if so, what is that role? What affect will South Africa's marriage inclusion law have upon sexual identities across the continent? How does Pan-Africanism benefit or deter the discussion of sexuality in Africa?

Submission of abstracts & activists' proposals for discussion topics: abstracts should be limited to 250 words, and should include the author's name, title, affiliation, and full address (including telephone, fax, and e-mail). Thus, if you would like your abstract to be considered for one of the featured panels, please clearly indicate that on your submission.

Activists are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for round-table discussions on these and related topics. Please visit www.towardanafricawithoutborders.org for more information and to submit abstracts and proposals online. Should you have any questions, please e-mail Durban2007@towardanafricawithoutborders.org, or call Denise St. Clair at 608-226-0535. If you are unable to access the web site, you can also submit proposals by mailing them to Toward an Africa Without Borders, c/o Denise St. Clair, 4518 Maher Avenue, Madison, WI, 53716. Or, you can fax them to 608-694-4118. The deadline for submission: April 15, 2007 [however, make contact for possible extensions].