



INVITATION

Panel on Women's Rights in Practice

28 May 2025, 11:00 -12:30

Register on Zoom

The Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria, cordially invites you to a panel discussion on the Opportunities and Pitfalls for Access to Justice for Women under the AU "2025 year of justice for Africans and Peoples of African Descent through reparations" which will take place on 28 May 2025 from 11:00 to 12:30.

Background

In December 2013, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2015 to 2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent, with the theme “People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice, and Development.” The African Union (AU) 2025 theme focuses on addressing historical injustices, including slavery and colonialism, through a variety of reparations mechanisms. Building on already existing initiatives, the AU seeks to address the lasting impact of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism on African nations and communities. Considerations of appropriate reparations in a variety of forms is central to the issues under consideration under this theme. Within this broader discourse on reparations is the call for the consideration of the manner in which women have experienced harms and violations as a consequence of systematic discrimination on the basis of gender and race. These violations are a result of the successful entrenchment of patriarchal systems flowing from slavery and colonialism within the colonised states. The manner in which to adequately address the restitution needs of women should be considered as distinct from the collective reparations for the communities at large.

Whataboutism in discussions on gendering reparations

‘Whataboutism functions rhetorically to redirect attention from the specific case in hand, oftentimes to an, arguably, similar case or towards an opponent’. Whataboutism is a tactic often used by the movement to undermine women’s rights. In this context, the case at hand is the need for a gendered approach to reparations owing to the intersecting discrimination entrenched by colonialism and slavery that has had a compounding impact on women. To redirect discussants from this issue, the attention is often drawn to the fact that colonisation and slavery similarly dehumanised and invisibilised African men and men of African descent. In the form of remarks or questions at events convened to consider the need for a gendered approach to reparations, the argument presented is that the systematic nature of discrimination under

colonialism and slavery affected men and women in equal measure. Why then should women be singled out for special consideration?

In developing strategies to support women's rights organisations and other stakeholders advancing the case for a gender-sensitive approach to reparations, this panel will reflect on arguments appropriate to counter this recurring resistance.

Objectives

- Elaborate on instances of violations on women's bodies that demonstrates historical and ongoing harms to women that is not the case with respect to men.
- Illustrate the need for and opportunities to present a gendered approach to the question of reparations for Africans and Peoples of African descent in engaging with the AU, the UN and former colonial powers.
- Disseminate key findings of the Report and highlight the gaps in the approach of international treaty monitoring mechanisms addressing the intersecting discrimination of African women and women of African descent.

Panelists

- Prof Fareda Banda, Faculty Member of SOAS University of London
- Prof Annika Rudman, Faculty Member of Karlstad University
- Dr Satang Nabaneh, Faculty Member of University of Dayton Human Rights Centre (Affiliated Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria)
- Ms Gaynel Curry, Faculty Member at the University of The Bahamas and a member of the Permanent Forum on People of African descent

Moderator: Dr Brenda Akia, Vice Chair & Rapporteur, UN-CEDAW Committee

Agenda

Area	Detail
<p>Breakdown of the session</p> <p><i>11:00 – 11:55</i></p> <p><i>(55 minutes)</i></p>	<p>Introductory remarks: Continuous nature of the violations of women</p> <p>Dr Brenda Akai (5 minutes)</p> <p>Panel Discussion: The moderator will pose questions to each panelist. Each panelist will then have 10 Minutes to respond to each question.</p> <p>The moderator will ask you the following questions:</p> <p>1. Prof Farida Banda (African perspective)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With reference to an example of a violation experienced by women as a consequence of apartheid, colonisation or slavery, please speak to your perception of what appropriate reparations would be in that context and the need for a gendered approach to the question of access to justice for violation arising from the example you have cited. <p>2. Ms Gaynel Curry (Caribbean perspective)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With reference to an example of a violation experienced by women as a consequence of colonisation or slavery, please speak to your perception of what appropriate reparations would be in that context and the need for a gendered approach to the question of access to justice for violation arising from the example you have cited. <p>3. Prof Annika Rudman (Pitfalls and mitigation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women in the region continue to have limited opportunities for access to decision making spaces within the AU. With this in mind, what pitfalls can you perceive in ensuring gendered

	<p>justice for women in the processes of determining reparations for historical and ongoing harms arising from apartheid, colonisation and slavery?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can these be mitigated? <p>4. Dr Satang Nabaneh (Opportunities and research findings)</p> <p>Report Title: 'Looking Back and Reaching Forward: Commemorating the International Decade for People of African Descent and the Human Rights of Women and Girls' available here</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline opportunities for access to justice and accountability based on the research findings
<p>Plenary Discussion</p> <p><i>11:5 - 12:25</i></p> <p><i>(30 minutes)</i></p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Wrap up & Closing</p> <p><i>12:25 - 12:30</i></p> <p><i>5 minutes</i></p>	<p>Dr Brenda Akai</p>

