

Lecture Series “African FeminismS Past and Present”

Intersectionality from the Margins:

Historical Subjects/Subjectivation in the Global South

Intersectionality theory has come closest to a response to the question regarding how identities function in relation to multiple injuries. Its paradigmatic utility, however, remains in question, precisely because it is built upon a presumption that stabilises certain forms of oppression for Black women (the triad of race, gender and class), without illuminating how it is that Black women find themselves permanently located at that intersection. Stated differently, in intersectional theory, Black women cease to be historical – and thus political – subjects. What is left out of our purview are the specific historical trajectories through which women emerge (or which demand women’s appearance) at the ‘intersection’ as either female, or Black, or both. It is, in other words, not enough to simply highlight discrimination, but rather to also ask what it is that different forms of discrimination do at particular historical conjunctures.

Drawing on these concerns, this lecture examines the limitations of intersectionality theory in relation to historical subjects whose identities and injuries have been shaped by colonialism and its legacies in the global south.

Discussants:

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