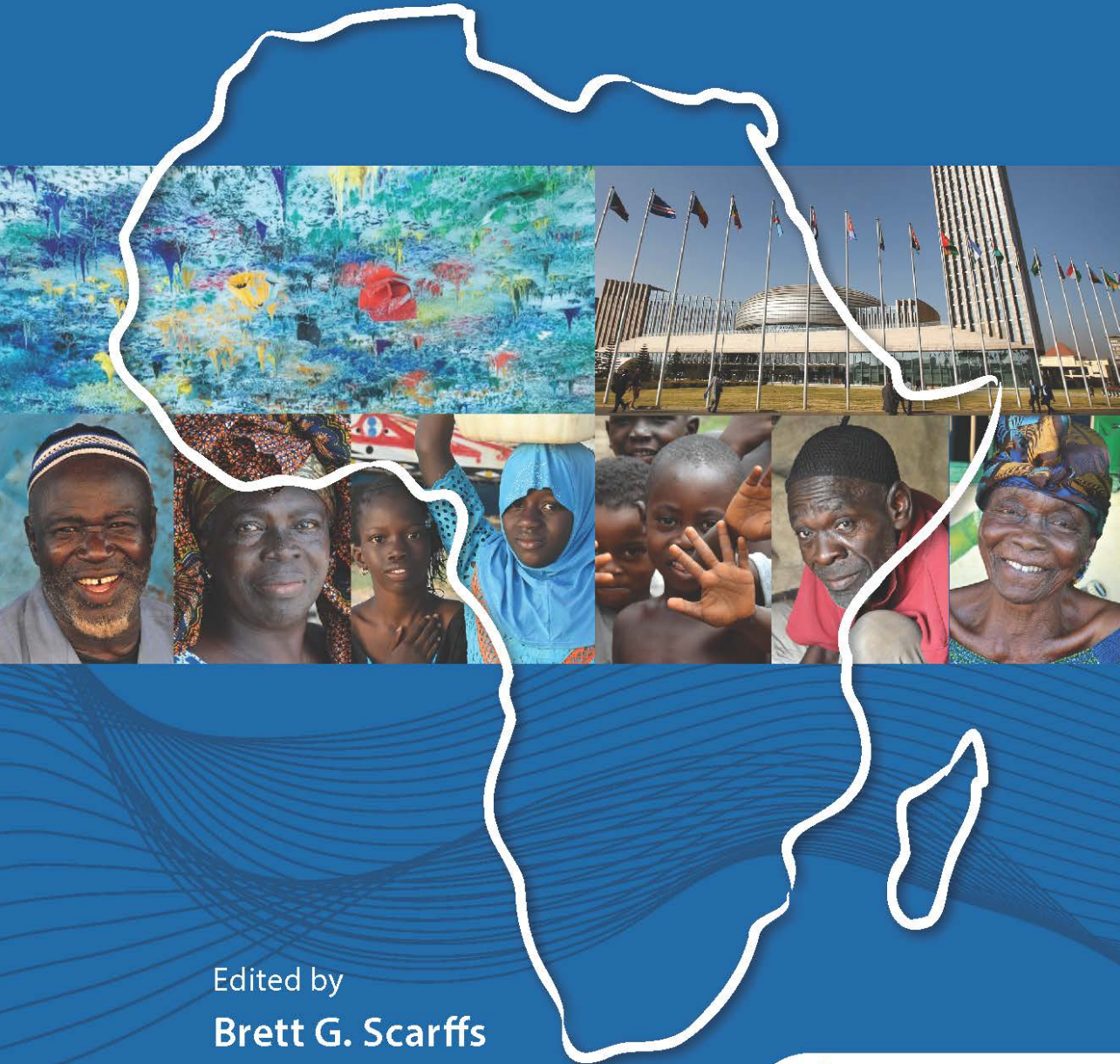


# African Conceptions of Human Dignity



Edited by

**Brett G. Scarffs**

**M. Christian Green**

**Simeon O. Ilesanmi**

<https://doi.org/10.52779/9781991260253>

## AFTERWORD

### Fortune Sibanda<sup>1</sup>

The pages preceding this afterword are filled with insights and examples centred on the fact that African conceptions of human dignity is a vast and intricate subject, contextual and sometimes elusive. As the world celebrates the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, it is vital to look back and self-introspect into the degree of success and the challenges that lie still ahead to attain human dignity for everyone everywhere. This task comes at a time when Africa and its people remain an enigma, because the continent is endowed with rich and rare natural resources, but yet the inhabitants are counted among the poorest and most underdeveloped the world over.<sup>2</sup> Poverty and underdevelopment have eroded the human dignity of most Africans and have turned them into beggars and recipients of “dead aid”.<sup>3</sup> Poverty affects human dignity, as it leads to its loss and even the Bible says that living the life of a beggar is torturous and is to be avoided at all costs in order to maintain one’s humanity and dignity.<sup>4</sup> Yet, depending on context, human dignity is not always a given in the African context, despite the fact that it is acknowledged in Article 1 of the UDHR as universal and inherent to all human beings.<sup>5</sup> The human dignity of the general populace in some contemporary African countries has been gobbled up by the vicissitudes of normalcy that encompass endless wars, bad governance, corruption, disease, hunger, famine, despotism and human rights abuses.

Tapping into history, it can be noted that human dignity was initially lost when Africa and the Africans were dismembered through the infamous trans-Atlantic slave trade and then further fragmented at the 1884 Berlin Conference. Diasporic Africans were dismembered from the continent and exploited, just as Africans on

- 1 Fortune Sibanda is a Professor of Religious Studies, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Eswatini and an Academic Associate, Institute for Theology and Religion, UNISA, South Africa. He is also member of ACLARS Board and the ACLARS Publication Committee.
- 2 Ngambi H. 2014. “RARE Leadership: An Alternative Leadership Approach for Africa”, in Kondlo K (ed). *Perspectives on Thought Leadership for Africa’s Renewal*. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 458-478. See also Sibanda F. 2017. “Servant Leadership and the Paradox of Africa’s [Under-]development Predicament”, in Mawere M, Mubaya TaR nd Mukusha J (eds). *The African Conundrum: Rethinking the Trajectories of Historical, Cultural, Philosophical and Development Experiences of Africa*. Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG, 243-266. Chitando E. 2007. *Acting in Hope: African Churches and HIV/AIDS 2*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 27. As Chitando aptly says, “Africa’s poverty is a scandal: there is so much poverty amid so much wealth.”
- 3 See, Moyo D. 2009. *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- 4 See, for example, Sirach 40:28-30 cf. Eccl 40:28ff. In the African context, a beggar can be equated to a *rombe* (one who is good for nothing and is only a person by having a name).
- 5 See Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc A/810 at 71 (1948) art 1.

the continent lost natural and human resources as colonial subjects.<sup>6</sup> What emerges from this background is a quintessential image of Africa as a “continent in crisis”,<sup>7</sup> based on socio-economic, political and leadership indicators. Despite the negative impact of external elements on human dignity such as slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism on Africa and the diaspora, which is Africa’s sixth region<sup>8</sup>, this afterword reimagines the subject of human dignity through the lens of RARE leadership model in Africa. The model of RARE leadership is anchored on the need to be Responsible, Accountable, Relevant and Ethical,<sup>9</sup> which is juxtaposed to the need to restore human dignity among Africans. It has to be asked: To what extent does the call for equal dignity for everyone everywhere influence the debates surrounding law, religion and leadership in Africa?

As one of the signatories to the Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere and having been among other participants in its discussion at the 2019 annual conference of the African Consortium of Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS), I consider myself deeply connected to the formative discussions that culminated in this 75th UDHR anniversary commemorative book, *African Conceptions of Human Dignity*. It was in Botswana that a statement on African Perspectives on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere was drafted and endorsed by more than forty scholars who shared their thoughts about human dignity in Africa at the conference. Thereafter, the coordinators of this inspirational initiative invited me to be part of this book project, which was to commence with issuing a statement for the commemorative book. I fulfilled the later request where I contributed the following statement on human dignity:

In the history of humankind, human dignity is one of the core values encapsulated in the philosophies and teachings of all the religions of the world and endorsed in the UDHR. Though sometimes elusive to attain in practice, I perceive human dignity as an important ethical ideal founded on the principle of interdependence and the “we-orientation” associated with Africa’s *Ubuntu* ethic. Essentially, human dignity lends credence to an atmosphere of “I-Thou” relationship in contrast to an “I-It” relationship. While human dignity has been upheld in different cultures, histories and faiths on African continent, there are regrettable episodes of toxic leadership, human domination, neglect, marginalisation and cruelty that have compromised this universal God-given gift to remain a *forlorn* ideal

- 
- 6 Thiong’o NW. 2009. *Re-membering Africa*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 3.
  - 7 Jackson H. 2002. *AIDS Africa: Continent in Crisis*. Harare. SFAIDS.
  - 8 According to the African Union, the “Diaspora” are “Africa’s Sixth Region”, a position declared at their 2003 AU Summit. See, for example, State of the African Diaspora (SOAD). 2017. “The 6th Region of Africa: From the Diaspora to the Sixth Region”, [thestateoftheafricandiaspora.com](http://thestateoftheafricandiaspora.com)
  - 9 Ngambi, “RARE Leadership”. See also Sibanda “Servant Leadership and the Paradox of Africa’s [Under-]development Predicament”.

to the detriment of establishing a better world that promotes unity and human flourishing.<sup>10</sup>

Building up on the sentiments raised in the foregoing statement, I explore this important topic by connecting African perspectives on human dignity to the concepts of leadership, which will be the theme of the 2024 ACLARS conference in my home country of Zimbabwe. Therefore, this afterword provides my reflections on significant developments that look into the future of human dignity through RARE leadership model in Africa. The journey of reimagining human dignity in Africa through RARE leadership is not one to be taken for granted, as it requires a corroborative approach that combines the efforts of scholars, legal experts, civil society, policymakers and the public at large. Undoubtedly, this is not the last word on the topic, but it serves as window to a much larger narrative, which must stimulate further research and thoughtful analysis towards the promotion of human dignity in Africa. African human dignity and leadership evoke critical questions of yesterday as well as today's questions, which are crucial for human flourishing. But again, it has to be asked: How can we redefine and restore human dignity against the backdrop of human rights violations on the basis of gender, age, religion, race, disability status, political and sexual orientations in contemporary Africa?

The perceptions on human dignity vary from one context to another, with some people claiming to have a prerogative of this value more than others on the basis of class, gender, age, race or religion, among others. For instance, for a long time the hegemonic white racial and colonial philosophy resulted in jaundiced landscape of a centre-periphery dichotomy in which the humanity of black people was denied and inferiorised because of the colour of their skin as what transpired in apartheid South Africa. Apartheid created a theology of the margins, a socially constructed reality that unfortunately is resurging after more than 26 years of democracy in post-apartheid South Africa.<sup>11</sup> Such human rights violations must be challenged and reversed to restore human dignity. In a historic "War" speech delivered at the United Nations General Assembly on 4 October 1963, the leader of Ethiopia, His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I, referred to an unprecedented ultimate challenge facing humanity, which called for self-introspection so as to promote healthy human relationships. In that speech, he noted that God Almighty raised humanity above animals and endowed them with intelligence and reason, which was a more privileged position demanding actions of greater responsibility. The most informative part of Haile Selassie's speech in the context of human dignity is where he asseverated thus:

---

<sup>10</sup> The present author issued this unpublished and slightly edited statement on 7 July 2020 as a response to an invitation that had been extended by the coordinators of the commemorative book.

<sup>11</sup> Noyoo N. 2021. "Resurgent Racism in Post-Apartheid South Africa and the need to Promote Healthy Human Relationships", in N. Noyoo (ed). *Promoting Healthy Human Relationships in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Cham: Springer.

And we must look into ourselves, into the depth of our souls. We must become something we have never been and for which our education and experience and environment have ill-prepared us. We must be bigger than we have been: more courageous, greater in spirit, larger in outlook. We must become members of a new race, overcoming petty prejudice, owing our allegiance not to nations but to our fellow men within the human community.<sup>12</sup>

The major take-home points from the speech encompass the need to create one gigantic global family with healthy human relationships where all “become members of a new race”. This is significant to situate in the context of contemporary African challenges that continue to compromise human dignity due to gender inequality, racial discrimination, class differences, lack of freedom of religion and belief and suppression of sexual minorities, among others. The speech coming from Selassie, one of the leading Pan-Africanists, who was also the pioneering chairman of the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union), which had just been formed, implies that the starting point to attain human dignity was not only confined to “re-membering Africa”<sup>13</sup> to create a Pan-African United States of Africa, but to have a global approach to healthy human relationships. The call to “become members of a new race” it was a revival of the African communitarian approach that nurtures the spirit of common humanity and places the welfare of fellow human beings at the centre of decision-making and all actions. Emperor Haile Selassie was reinforcing the ideal of “equal dignity for all” copiously expressed and etched in the UDHR.

In the interest of limited space, a few illustrations suffice to demonstrate how the components of the RARE leadership model are interconnected and are required at all levels of society in order to promote and protect human dignity. Responsible leadership, which is about being committed to the well-being of the citizens, demands that in the public sphere, political leaders must develop and implement progressive plans of action that can transform the lives of the poor. Responsible leadership promotes human dignity by reducing poverty and supporting health, education, economic growth and climate actions as part of the fulfilment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that world leaders agreed to achieve by 2030,<sup>14</sup> notwithstanding the harmful effects of the global economic order to Africa and its people. Without much justification, the budgets of most African states continue to direct more resources towards the military at a time when their health delivery systems are facing challenges and have become death traps to the majority. Out of their misplaced priorities, some African politicians overinvest in presidential security ahead of fulfilling the needs of their citizens.<sup>15</sup>

12 Extract of Selassie H. 1963. Speech delivered to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, 4 October .

13 See Thiongo, *Re-membering Africa*.

14 See, for example, Aikins ER and Du Toit Mcachlan J. 2022. “Africa is Losing the Battle against Extreme Poverty”, Institute for Security Studies Africa (ISS Africa), 13 July.

15 See, for example, Chitando E. 2007. *Acting in Hope: African Churches and HIV/AIDS 2*. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 73.

Mere sloganeering during political campaigns without fulfilling the promises made throughout their tenure in office is taking people's dignity for granted. Both religious and political leaders have to take active steps that would offer alternative models of leadership to transform the "carcasses of good policies"<sup>16</sup> into practice in order to promote human dignity, currently being compromised by the impact of poverty, disease, environmental degradation, homelessness and xenophobic attacks. Although policy formulation does much, practical implementation beyond paying lip service does more to promote human dignity.

The responsibility of leaders (including the government, traditional and religious leaders) should seriously focus on strategies of curbing the scourge of child marriages in Africa. Although child marriage is a worldwide challenge cutting across nations, cultures and religions, sub-Saharan African countries remain the hotbed of this practice affecting up to one third in this region.<sup>17</sup> The child brides are victims of socio-cultural practices, which expose them to sexual and gender-based violence, abortion, stillbirth, miscarriage and failure to continue with their education. In some cases, they are used as pawns in a cultural game of restituting for *ngozi* (avenging spirits) and bailing out the family of its debts through the practice of *kuzvarira* (child pledging).<sup>18</sup> This practice is unethical and shatters the future of the child brides, affecting the attainment of SDG 5 as well as violating their human rights and human dignity. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Article 16(2) categorically says that "women should have the same right as men to freely choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent ... betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect."<sup>19</sup>

Paradoxically, 90% of sub-Saharan countries have legislated the minimum age for marriage as 18 years, but yet one third of the children are permitted by their parents to marry below the age of 18 years, due to some customary laws and practices.<sup>20</sup>

- 16 See Egero B. 2004. "To fight AIDS successfully requires unconventional approaches" in A. Sisask (ed) *One Step Further – Response to HIV/AIDS*, Sida Studies No. 7, Stockholm: SIDA/ UNRISD, 208.
- 17 Yaya S, Odusina EK and Bishwajit G. 2019. "Prevalence of Child Marriage and its Impact on Fertility Outcomes in 34 Sub-Saharan African Countries", *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 19: Art 33.
- 18 See Sibanda F. 2016. "Avenging Spirits and the Vitality of African Traditional Law, Customs and Religion in Contemporary Zimbabwe" in: Coertzen P, Green MC and Hansen L (eds). *Religious Freedom and Religious Pluralism in Africa: Prospects and Limitations*. Stellenbosch: Africa Sun Media, 345-359; Konyana EG and Muyambo T. 2018. "Shona Marriage in Zimbabwe and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a Global Context: An Ethical Critique", in Okyere-Manu B and Moyo H (eds). *Intersecting African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Western Knowledge Systems: Moral Convergence and Divergence*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 151-163; Mawere M. and Rambe P. 2012. "Violation and Abuse of Women's Rights in the Customary Practice of Kuzvarira among the Ndaup People of Mozambique", *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance* 3(3):1-20.
- 19 United Nations Population Fund. 2012. *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage*. New York, NY: United Nations Population Fund.
- 20 Yaya, Odusina and Bishwajit, "Prevalence of Child Marriage".

Therefore, in some countries there is legal incoherence in light of the perpetual cultural leeway for child marriage, which affects their rights to education, health and life. Due to the lack of full implementation of the law, the dignity of girls and women remains a challenge, despite the existence of some legal provisions that promise them dignity, justice and equality. One may ask in wonder: For how long shall we continue to hear of stories of child marriages in Africa? Where is ethical leadership whilst this cultural genocide thrives? To what extent can the political, religious and legal landscapes be entrusted with the task of reaching out to communities and gather the collective consciousness of people to uphold human dignity of the most vulnerable groups in society? These are some of the questions on human dignity that the “Law, Religion and Leadership” theme at the ACLARS conference could interrogate in light of the pillars of the RARE leadership model.

Again, in striving to become “members of a new race”, the African perspective of human dignity should balance outward looking with inward reflection in order to forge pathways for sustainable development. The case of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers continues to attract emotions, divisions and controversies over the severe violations of rights and abuses associated with migration in Africa. The migrants are often identified as economic and political refugees whose lives are at risk because of civil wars, lack of employment, political victimisation and economic downturn in their countries of origin. These vulnerable black African immigrants are regarded as illegal immigrants, border jumpers and are victims of rape and xenophobic attacks. Francis Nyamnjoh, a South African-based anthropologist, observes that the African migrants in South Africa and Botswana (whether legal or illegal) are known as “Makwerekwere” and were regarded as “dangerous outsiders” in contrast to the “deserving citizens”.<sup>21</sup>

Ironically, only the dignity of black Africans from other African countries is being targeted in this process of Afrophobia, which criminalises their migration. Afrophobia is self-hate as it demeans fellow Africans whilst celebrating the colonial boundaries that divided the African people. Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican black nationalist and Pan-Africanist, is remembered for saying: “Africa for the Africans, those at home and abroad”.<sup>22</sup> Through evoking principles of RARE leadership model, the current political leaders should urgently restore African unity, dignity and eventually devise common citizenship among all Africans. The quest of relevant leadership comes to the fore, which stresses the importance of leaders to stay abreast to the ever-evolving challenges and opportunities of the African continent. African leaders must not only focus on addressing the issues of today but also anticipate those of tomorrow, thereby forging long-term stability, coexistence and prosperity. What comes to mind is the issue of removing the visa requirements among fellow African nations, which a few African countries are beginning to

21 See Nyamnjoh FB. 2006. *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa*. New York: Zed Books. In Eswatini, the African migrants are known as “Magangawani”. These names are used to malign and dehumanise fellow Africans.

22 Garvey M. 1986. *Message to the People: The Course of African Philosophy*. Dover, MA: The Majority Press.

implement.<sup>23</sup> In the long run, this is should spread to all African countries. Is it not the height of paradox to imagine that it is easier for white non-Africans to travel to African countries than it is for a black African to travel within the continent? How well are the legal frameworks and constitutions of African nations and what are the barriers to their implementation in support of human dignity? Surely, the future of law and governance in Africa remain at the crossroads and attendees at the ACLARS conference on “Law, Religion and Leadership” are well placed to interrogate this question.<sup>24</sup>

In closing, it is important to note that reimagining human dignity through RARE leadership is not an elusive and inconsequential enterprise, but an achievable target in the African context. African history is filled with leaders such as Emperor Haile Selassie I, Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu who have embodied principles that promoted human dignity and healthy human relationships and whose successes must be celebrated whilst we should learn from their shortcomings. As “members of a new race”, Africans should leadership founded on the principles of responsibility, accountability, relevance and ethics can bring transformative change that would lead to increased access to education, improved healthcare systems, thriving economies, promotion of gender equality, suppression of xenophobia, shunning corruption and the enhancement of the full potential of the youth who are tomorrow’s leaders. However, this journey does not rest solely on the shoulders of the traditional, religious and political leaders. Each citizen is invited to take up the individual and collective responsibility of elevating the dignity of every African, regardless of their background, or circumstances, through ethical leadership. State obligations must require leaders to be held accountable, pressed for ethical governance and questioned over failing to fully implement the provisions that their countries pledged as signatories in support of human rights and human dignity and called to take part actively in the growth and sustainable development of African nations. Finally, RARE leadership is not a destination; it is an ongoing commitment where people can further explore, understand and catalyse change through rigorous research, analysis and practical application in the context of human dignity. In spite of the current shortcomings, let us continue to reimagine human dignity through the lens of law, religion and RARE leadership, because together we can make a difference and build a brighter future for Africa.

23 “5 African Countries that Every African can Visit Without Visa”, *Business Day*, 4 November 2023. So far, the visa-free countries are Seychelles, Gambia, Kenya, Rwanda and Benin.

24 See Kabira N. 2023. “The Future of Law and Governance in Africa”, Public Lecture, University of Nairobi, 10 October. Kabira revisited a London Conference of 1960, at the height of African Independence, which sought to discuss the future of law in Africa. The idea was how to fit all the laws in Africa to make a unified “Code of African Law” using principles of classical legal thought – certainty, predictability, stability and uniformity – as the future of laws in Africa. Perhaps, this is the “Gordian Knot” that the present African leaders must cut in order to repair the broken African dignity.



# INDEX

## A

- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (see also Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa), ix, xi, xvi, 11-12, 15, 25, 27, 54-59, 61, 62, 69, 86, 103, 138, 143-144, 148, 149, 162
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 148
- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 11, 53, 55-58, 60-61
- African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, ix, 53, 55, 56, 59, 60, 61
- African Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere, vii-viii, xiii-xviii, 165
- African Traditional Religions (ATR) (see also customary law), x-xi, 2, 4-7, 100, 115, 120-124, 129, 157-162
- African Union, 53, 86, 142
- age-grade system (see also youth), 21-22
- Akan people, x, xi, 18, 22, 32n6, 51, 53
- ancestors, ix, xvi, 4, 7, 9, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 52, 96, 121, 123, 124, 126, 127, 129, 159, 161
- animals, xvii, 6, 21, 30n3, 34, 48, 56, 72, 75, 77-78, 121, 157, 158, 159-162
- anthropocentrism, viii, xi, 123, 153, 155-157, 164
- anthropocentric value theory, xi, 153-157, 164
- apartheid, 10, 11, 53
- Aristotle, 33-34, 80

## B

- Benin (see also Fon people), x, 16, 104, 121, 124, 125, 127
- Bible, 116, 117, 118-119, 127, 100, 154, 155, 156, 164
- Boko Haram, x, 97, 108
- Botswana, viii, xi, xiii, xiv, 21, 25, 55, 160
- environmental laws of, 162-163
- Britain, 19, 20, 106
- Bujo, Bénézet, 123, 125
- burial (see funerals)

## C

- Catholicism, x-xi, 77n64, 84, 115-29
  - and the concept of the human person, x-xi, 115-29
  - and the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 115-120, 125, 128
  - and the Second Vatican Council, xi, 115, 116, 119, 128
- children (see also child marriage; Convention on the Rights of the Child; youth, vii, ix, xi, xiv, xvii, xxi, 1, 5, 7, 20, 21, 24, 25, 29, 30, 48, 59, 61, 64, 66, 73, 78, 90, 91, 92, 93, 100, 118, 119, 123, 124, 132, 133, 137, 147-148, 149, 150, 151)
- Christianity (see also Catholicism), vii, xi, xvi, xxv, 2, 7, 18, 22, 26, 34, 76, 77, 82, 97, 100, 101, 105, 115, 116, 119, 122, 125, 128, 139, 155, 156
- Cicero, 49, 60, 71
- cieng* (see Dinka people)
- civil society, x, 10, 80, 81
- child marriage, 150, 151, 169-179
- clan (see also *clan vitale*), ix, 3, 22, 25, 52
- clan vitale*, 19-20, 24
- Cobbah, Josiah AM, 51, 60
- colonialism, x, 30, 31, 47, 53-54, 67, 83, 89, 98, 104, 105-107, 111, 166, 167, 170
  - and pre-colonial era, 2, 3, 50, 98, 104-105, 110-111
  - and post-colonial era, 83n2, 98, 104, 107-110, 111-112
- communality (see solidarity, *Ubuntu*), 21, 25, 97, 125, 142
  - and human dignity, ix, xi, xiv, 69
  - and nature of African societies, x, 3-6, 9, 19-20, 35, 44, 80, 123, 125, 129
- conflict, ii, iv, viii, 10, 11, 66, 84, 87, 90, 102, 109, 112, 148, 154
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 137, 139, 142, 143

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),  
137, 147  
corruption, xxiii, xxiv, 42, 84, 87, 95, 109  
Côte d'Ivoire, 57, 61  
Covid-19 pandemic, 62, 192  
crime, ii, v, 10, 23, 26, 47, 65, 75, 86-87, 113,  
142, 154  
customary law, ix, 150

## D

death, 5, 8, 21, 87, 94, 95, 105, 108, 118, 121,  
140, 142, 154, 161  
death penalty, 23-24, 52, 55-56,  
Deng, Francis, 6-7  
*dheeg* (duty) (see Dinka people)  
Dinka people, ix, x, 6-7, 51-52, 53, 59, 60, 61  
    concept of *cieng* (moral order) in, ix, 7,  
    52-52  
    concept of *dheeg* (duty) in, ix, 51-52  
disability, vii, viii, ix, xi, 59, 61, 62, 78, 125,  
132, 133, 134, 137, 140, 145, 146, 148-149,  
151  
discrimination (see also CEDAW), 10, 58, 65,  
69, 106, 109, 141-151  
disease, viii, 11, 91, 117, 127  
domestic violence (see gender-based  
    violence)  
Dube, Musa Wenkobi, 159-160

## E

economy, vii, x, xv, xx, xxi, 3, 10, 14, 15, 21,  
27, 31, 42, 45, 54, 68, 69, 75, 79, 80, 83n2,  
84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92-94, 95, 96, 97,  
99, 105, 109, 111, 112, 113, 126, 128, 136,  
138, 139, 140, 143, 146, 147, 152, 154, 162,  
163  
education, iii, iv, xiv, xv, xxiii, xxiv, 25, 40-41,  
65, 78, 83, 85, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 96, 99,  
101, 117, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 151  
elders, xvii, 4, 22-23, 24, 29, 59  
environment (see also anthropocentrism,  
    anthropocentric value theory), xiii, xvi,  
    xvii, 86, 126, 128, 129, 139, 153-164  
    exploitation of, 31, 128, 157, 158, 163, 164

human care and protection of, xi, 31, 123,  
127, 128, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158,  
160, 163, 164  
    and human dignity, 154, 158, 159, 164  
human relation to, viii, xi, xvii, 116, 153,  
163  
policies toward, xi, 162-163  
sacredness and dignity of, 158-159, 160,  
162, 164  
and sustainability, vii, 127, 157-158, 163  
*Ubuntu* ethic toward, 157-159, 160-162,  
163  
*eudaimonia*, 33-34  
euthanasia, 5, 118, 136

## F

family (see also ancestors, elders, unborn),  
xii, xiii, xv, 4, 17, 20, 22, 24, 34, 35, 51, 52,  
53, 55, 56, 58, 59, 61, 62, 64, 84, 87, 110,  
122, 151, 153  
humanity as, i, iii, 57, 74, 79, 128  
and human dignity, 20-21, 91, 93, 94-95,  
96, 99, 110, 117, 122, 124, 139, 143,  
149  
nuclear, xxi, 3, 21  
extended, 3, 17, 51, 52, 59, 87  
feminism, xi, 21, 63, 84, 132, 133, 137, 140,  
143  
food, xv, 33, 56, 64, 127  
    as a basic need, 83, 84, 117, 154, 156-157  
    and human dignity, 93, 96  
    and food (in)security, 92, 146, 162-163  
Fon people (see also Benin), 121, 124  
France, 48, 49, 65, 84, 136  
freedom of religion (see also individual  
    countries), vii, xii, xix, 22, 25, 26-27, 94,  
110, 111, 150  
funerals, 5, 45, 118, 122, 124

## G

*Gaudium et Spes* (see Catholicism)  
*Gbèto* (see human person)  
gender (see also gender-based violence), vii,  
xi, xvii, xx, xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxiv, 10, 11, 17,  
36, 63, 99, 105, 106, 123, 131-152, 167,  
168, 171

gender-based violence (GBV), 133, 144, 151, 164, 169  
 Gelaye, Tsega Andualem, 51, 56, 100  
 Ghana, ix, 16, 18, 22, 32n6, 51  
 Gikuyu people (see also Kenya), ix, x, 52-53, 59, 60, 61, 69

## H

health (see also medicine; reproductive health), 8, 11, 24, 56, 77, 78, 90, 94, 140, 151, 162  
 and access to healthcare, xxiv, 56, 83, 85, 88-89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 96, 99, 110, 144, 146, 147, 148  
 environmental, viii, 127-128, 129, 154, 158, 160-162  
 and human dignity, 68n19, 117, 151, 158  
 and human rights, 69, 88, 92, 145, 147  
 social, xx, xxixiii, 124, 129, 151  
 and traditional healing, 17, 38, 158, 159  
 Hegel, GWF, viii, 1-2, 50  
 Hobbes, Thomas, 75-76  
 human dignity (see environment, family, food, health, *Ubuntu*)  
 African indigenous conceptions of, 1-2, 5, 7-10, 11-12, 15, 25, 29-45, 165, 170  
 communal, ii, 6, 19-24  
 concepts, definitions and understandings of, 1-2, 27, 47-62, 66-67, 69, 70, 71, 84, 85, 91, 92, 97, 98-99, 101, 111, 123, 128, 132, 134, 136 137, 138, 139, 141, 142, 144, 145, 151, 155  
 diverse experiences of, 83, 84, 91, 99, 151, 167  
 as emancipation, 66-71, 80  
 and equality, 1, 134, 138, 140, 150, 154, 167  
 Greco-Roman antecedents of (see also Aristotle; Cicero), 84  
 and human rights, 1, 10, 11, 47-48, 54, 55, 56, 61, 68, 70, 79-81, 85, 91, 97, 99, 101, 103, 104, 107, 108, 112, 131n2, 137, 141, 142, 149, 150, 151, 162  
 and *imago Dei*, xi, xii, 76, 100, 116, 128

individual (see also communality; *Ubuntu*), ii, 24-25, 27, 47, 59, 62, 101n16, 134, 140  
 inherent 5, 48, 49, 50, 54, 55, 70, 71, 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 101n16, 102, 103n30, 104, 131, 133, 135, 138, 141, 142, 145, 144, 146, 147, 148, 159, 165  
 inviolable, 32, 63, 103n30, 117, 132, 135  
 material dimensions of (see also food, shelter, water), 83, 96, 165, 168  
 philosophy of, 12, 16, 77n64, 117, 136  
 promotion and protection of, 11, 17, 60, 61, 96, 98-99, 100, 101, 103-104, 110, 111, 113, 123-128, 129, 132, 136, 141, 143, 146, 149, 167, 168, 170, 171  
 recognition and respect for, iii, iv, vi, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 29, 44, 50, 56, 61, 62, 63, 64, 70, 76, 85, 86, 87, 97, 98, 101, 132, 136, 141, 143  
 reimagining, 166, 167, 171  
 religious perspectives on, 100-101, 115-129  
 social contract perspectives on, 102-103  
 and the state, iv, 97, 98, 99, 103, 104-112, 171  
 and status, ii, 71-75  
 universality of, 27, 54, 58, 68, 133, 135, 138, 151, 165  
 as value, 51, 69, 76, 136, 141, 165  
 violations of, 11, 22, 29, 55, 56, 57, 59, 63, 67, 97, 101, 103, 104, 105, 107, 108, 109, 111, 112, 113, 118, 133, 137, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 150, 165-166  
 human person, x, xi, xii, xiv, 1, 4, 5, 7, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57, 63, 69, 75, 76, 79, 98, 100, 115-129, 142  
 and protection of dignity by the community, 124-126  
 as *Gbèto* or guardian of life, 121-127  
 and the need to protect the environment, 126-129  
 theocentric dignity of, 123-124  
 human rights, i-v, vii-xii, xiii-xvii, xix-xxvi, 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13-15, 25, 47, 48, 50, 53, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 68-70, 73, 79-82, 84-85, 91, 94, 101, 102-103, 104, 107-108, 109, 117, 131-152, 165, 167, 169, 171

## I

Ifa (see Yoruba people)  
 Igbo people, 5, 7, 20, 22, 23, 100, 105, 106n39  
 Ikuenobe, Polycarp, 62, 159  
*imago Dei* (see human dignity)  
 indigenous, vii, viii, ix, xii, xiv, xiv, xx, 2, 3, 31-32, 33, 34, 35, 36-44, 61, 77, 108, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 164  
 inequality, xxiv, 64, 138, 147, 149, 150, 151, 152  
 informal economy, 29, 93  
 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 13, 14, 24, 26, 68, 85, 101, 131, 141, 147  
 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 13-14, 68, 85, 141  
 Islam, xii, xvi, xix, xx-xxv, 2, 14, 22, 26, 97, 100, 138

## J

Judaism, 7, 76, 155

## K

Kant, Immanuel, 6, 48, 75-77  
 Kenya (see also Gikuyu people), ix, xxv, 47-48, 52-53, 56-57, 60, 61  
 Kenyatta, Jomo, 52-53, 61

## L

leadership, xii, 22, 44, 53, 61, 166-171  
 Locke, John, 75

## M

Marx, Karl, 48, 95, 154  
 Mandela, Nelson, xiii, 171  
 McCrudden, Christopher, 48, 54, 84, 133  
 Macklin, Ruth, 48, 66  
 Mahlmann, Matthias, 1, 3  
 marginalisation, xi, xx, 9, 10-11, 66, 79, 109, 147-148, 146, 148, 149, 151  
 marriage (see also weddings), 21, 52, 64, 86, 94-95, 96, 105, 106, 125, 131, 144, 150, 151  
 Mbiti, John S, 21, 35, 60, 159  
 medicine, 11, 16, 40, 55, 78, 85, 86, 92, 159, 161

migration, ii, 10, 57, 66, 109, 112  
 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 86, 140  
 Mozambique, xv, 83-84, 86-96  
 Mtukudzi, Oliver, ix, 29-45  
     indigenous notions of human dignity and, ix, 36-44  
     life of, 32-33  
     music of, ix, 36-45  
     and the "Zvigamba Tambanevana" folktale, ix, 29-30, 40, 44  
 Muslims (see also Islam), xvi, xx, xxiii

## N

Nigeria (see also Igbo people; Yoruba people)  
     viii, x, xv, 16, 20, 22, 64-65, 81, 97-98, 100, 102, 104-112, 113, 160  
     constitution of, 68, 99, 103-104, 112  
     women's rights in, 131, 134, 150  
 Nkemnkia, Martin Nkafu, 121, 122, 123

## O

Olodumare (see Yoruba, divine beings)  
 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (see also African Union),  
*orishas* (see Yoruba, divine beings)

## P

patriarchy, xi, 64, 137, 150  
 plants, 6, 78, 121, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162  
 poverty, viii, xv-xvi, xx, xxiii, xxiv, 63, 64-65, 66, 78, 84, 94, 97, 101n16, 109, 148, 151, 156, 162, 163, 165, 168-169  
 pregnancy, 50, 64, 142, 151  
 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), xi, 134, 144-146, 149, 150-151  
 Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere, i-v, vii, xiii, 14, 165

## Q

Quran, xvi, xx, xxi, 100, 138

## R

rape (see gender-based violence)

reconciliation, vi-v, xiii, 4, 23, 87, 110, 124  
 religious freedom and religious liberty (see  
 freedom of religion)  
 reproductive health, 135, 136, 145, 151  
 rituals, 3, 16, 21, 47, 64, 75, 95, 96, 118, 150  
 Roman Catholicism (see Catholicism)  
 rural areas, 44, 162, 163

## S

Savigny, Friedrich Carl von, 15  
 Second Optional Protocol to the International  
 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  
 (ICCPR), 24  
 secular/secularism, iii, vii, 34, 49, 78, 158  
 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (see  
 Catholicism)  
 shelter, 84, 85, 89, 117  
 Shelton, Dinah, 155-156  
 Shona people (see also Zimbabwe), 30, 31, 32,  
 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43  
*chiremera* conception of dignity in, 35, 37  
*hunhu* philosophy of (see also *Ubuntu*),  
 ix, 32, 35, 42, 44  
 slavery, 6, 49, 54-55, 63, 76, 84, 104, 105-106,  
 109, 118, 165-166  
 social justice, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxiv, xxv,  
 90, 95, 103  
 solidarity, i, vii, xiv, 6, 59, 126, 136, 142  
 South Africa, 10, 19, 20  
     constitution of, xv, 10, 68, 89  
     jurisprudence of, 101, 143-144  
 South Sudan (see Dinka people)  
 sub-Saharan Africa, 4, 7, 9, 40  
 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 86,  
 140, 152

## T

torture, xxii, 6, 54, 55, 56, 63, 103n30, 107,  
 112, 132-133, 150  
 totemism, xiv, 20, 30n3, 78, 110, 158, 159-160  
 Tutu, Desmond, 171

## U

*Ubuntu* (also *hunhu*, *unhu*; see also  
 communality), viii, ix, xi, xxiii-xxiv, 7-10,  
 11, 164

as African indigenous philosophy, viii, ix,  
 xii, xix, xx, xxiii-xxiv, xxv, 8, 19, 32,  
 35, 36, 44, 153, 163  
 definition of, viii, xx, xxiii-xxiv, 19, 37,  
 164  
 ethic of, 35, 42, 153, 154, 156, 157-159,  
 163, 164, 166  
 and human dignity and, viii, ix, xi, xiv, xv,  
 xx, xxiii, 7, 9, 153, 154

## U

Uganda, 14, 36, 111  
 unborn, 51, 123, 125, 127  
 unemployment, 36-37, 81, 89, 93, 96, 112  
 UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial  
 Prejudices, 26  
 United Kingdom (see Britain)  
 United Nations (see also Convention  
 on the Elimination of All Forms of  
 Discrimination Against Women  
 (CEDAW); Convention on the Rights of  
 the Child (CRC)), vii, 26, 65, 81, 85,  
 86, 147, 162  
 United Nations Charter, 50, 85, 137, 142  
 United Nations Convention Against Torture  
 and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading  
 Treatment or Punishment, 132-133  
 United Nations Convention on the Rights  
 of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD),  
 148-149  
 United Nations Declaration of Basic  
 Principles of Justice for Victims of  
 Crimes, 23  
 United Nations Declaration on the  
 Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance  
 based on Religion and Belief, 26  
 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of  
 Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic,  
 Religious and Linguistic Minorities, 26-27  
 United States, 13, 16, 65, 84  
 Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
 (UDHR), i, ii, vii, xii, xiii, 13, 14, 53, 65,  
 68, 70, 85, 86, 103, 138, 141, 146, 147, 151,  
 165, 166, 168  
 United Nations Principles for Older Persons,  
 149  
 urbanisation, 4, 10, 31, 90

## V

vitality (see also *clan vitale*), 4, 10, 11  
vulnerability, vii, vii, 10, 59, 61, 62, 78, 79,  
109, 132, 147, 148, 151, 170

## W

Waldron, Jeremy, 72,73  
Warren, Rick, 34  
water, xxiv, 89, 121, 127, 154, 161, 162, 163  
weddings (see marriage)  
Western culture, vii, viii, xix, xxi, 3, 7, 13, 34,  
35, 48, 50, 59, 62, 65, 72, 75, 102, 109, 120  
witchcraft, 47-48, 52, 64, 140  
women (see also gender), viii, ix, xi, xx, xxiv,  
5, 7, 10, 21, 29, 36, 37, 38, 59, 76, 64, 67,  
69, 70, 83, 84, 88, 92, 93, 94, 95, 106, 108,  
109, 118, 123, 131-152, 163, 164  
World War II, 13, 50, 84, 134

## Y

youth, (see also age-grade system, child  
marriage, children) 21, 22, 27, 96, 108,  
137

Yoruba, viii, ix, xiv, xv, 15-24

*clan vitale* of, 19-20, 24  
cultural profile of, 16-17  
concepts of human dignity of, 15-26  
divine and supernatural beings of, 16, 17,  
18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 110  
freedom of religion among, 22, 25, 26-27  
human dignity among, 15-24  
Ifa knowledge system of, 13, 16-17, 18-19,  
25  
moral and theological traditions of, 18-19,  
25, 27  
*Ori* concept of human dignity among,  
24-25

## Z

Zimbabwe (see also Mtukudzi, Oliver; Shona  
people), viii, ix, xi, xiv, xxv, 29-45, 89, 160,  
161-162, 167  
Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic  
Front (ZANU-PF) 39, 45  
Zulu people, 20, 32n7