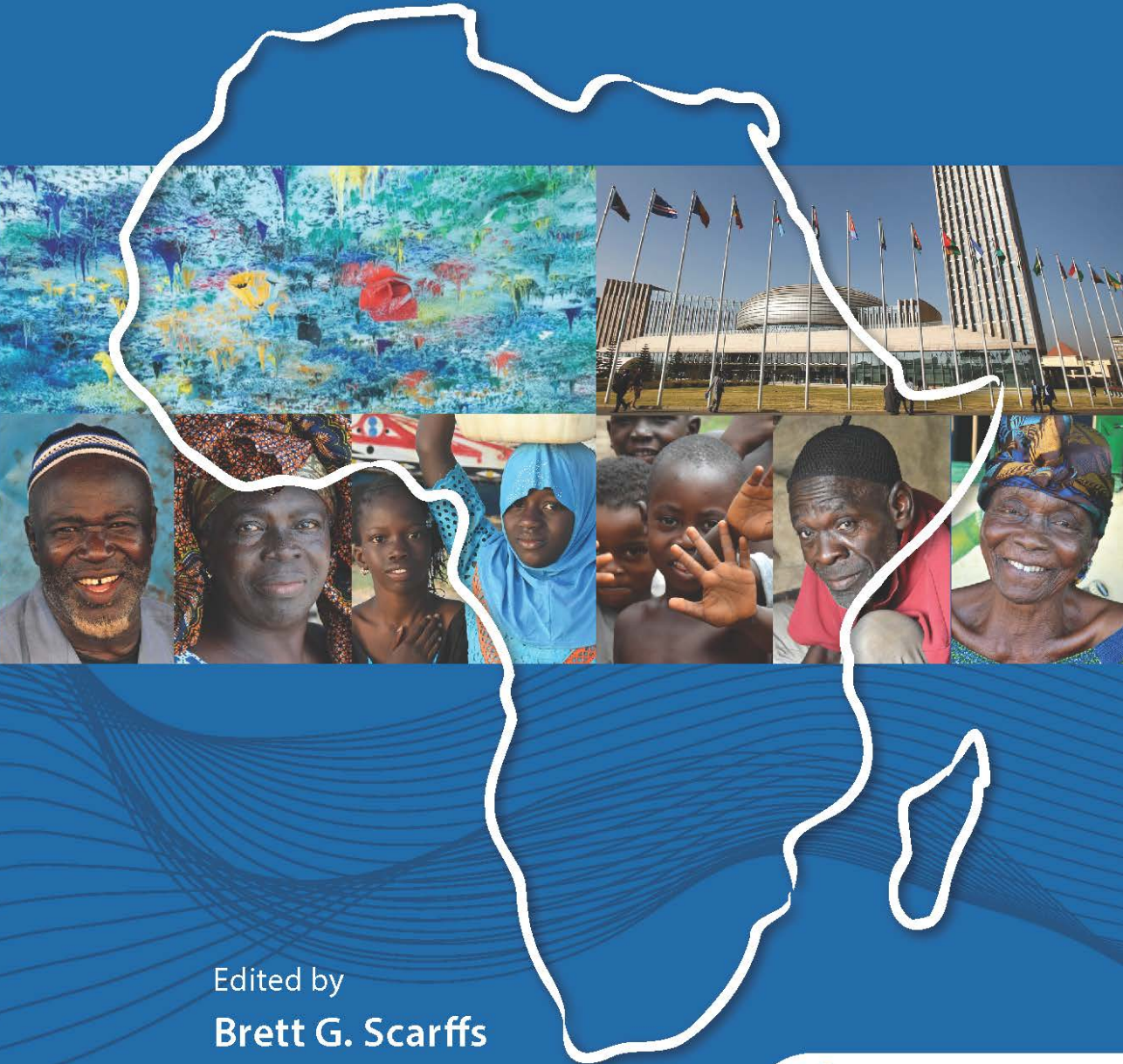


African Conceptions of Human Dignity



Edited by

Brett G. Scarffs

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 **PROSS**

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PUNTA DEL ESTE DECLARATION ON HUMAN DIGNITY FOR EVERYONE EVERYWHERE: 70 YEARS AFTER THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

December 2018

PREAMBLE

Whereas seventy years ago in the aftermath of World War II, the nations and peoples of the world came together in solidarity and solemnity and without dissent adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations;

Whereas the Preamble of the UDHR declares that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”;

Whereas Article 1 of the UDHR proclaims that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”;

Whereas the equal human dignity of everyone everywhere is the foundational principle of human rights and reminds us that every person is of value and is worthy of respect;

Whereas it is important to remember, reaffirm and recommit ourselves to these basic principles;

Recalling that it was grave violations of human dignity during the wars of the twentieth century that preceded and precipitated the UDHR;

Recalling the international consensus that domestic law alone had not been sufficient to safeguard against and avoid the human rights violations of the World Wars;

Recalling that in spite of all of their differences, nations of the world concurred that the dignity of all people is the basic foundation of human rights and of freedom, justice and peace in the world;

Recalling that human dignity is the wellspring of and underpins all the rights and freedoms recognised in the UDHR as fundamental;

Recalling that the UDHR has served as the inspiration for an array of international and regional covenants and other instruments, as well as numerous national constitutions, bills and charters of rights and legislation protecting human rights;

Recognizing that human dignity is not a static concept but accommodates respect for diversity and calls for a dynamic approach to its application in the diverse and ever-changing contexts of our pluralistic world;

Recognizing that although the notion of dignity has been criticized by some as being too abstract, it actually has been and remains a powerful organizing force that points humanity towards its highest ideals and has proven itself as an influential heuristic in constitutional and human rights discourse;

Recognizing that the concept of human dignity emphasizes the uniqueness and irreplaceability of every human being; that it implies a right of each individual to find and define the meanings of his or her own life; that it presupposes respect for pluralism and difference; and that it carries with it the responsibility to honor the dignity of everyone;

Recognizing that severe violations and abuses of human dignity continue to this day, including through wars, armed conflicts, genocides, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the global crises concerning refugees, migrants, asylum seekers and human trafficking and that such depredations continue to threaten peace, justice and the rights of all;

Recognizing that human rights can easily be fragmented, eroded, or neglected and that constant vigilance is necessary for human rights to be implemented, realized and carried forward in the world;

Recognizing that human dignity for everyone everywhere and at every level is threatened when the needs, interests and rights of one group or individual are placed ahead of those of other groups and individuals;

Emphasizing that equal human dignity is a status with which all human beings are endowed, but also a value that must be learned, nurtured and lived;

Emphasizing that violations of human dignity require appropriate redress;

Emphasizing that human dignity is now a time-tested principle that can help find common ground, reconcile competing conceptions of what justice demands, facilitate implementation of human rights and guide adjudication in case of conflicts and that can also help us respond to distortions, abuse and hostility towards human rights;

Believing that human rights discourse might be less divisive than it often is and greater efforts might be made to find common ground;

Believing that human rights must be read and realized together;

Believing that the concept of human dignity can help us understand, protect and implement human rights globally; and

Hoping that the present century will be more humane, just and peaceful than the twentieth century;

We, the undersigned, do solemnly reaffirm:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights continues to be “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping the Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by

teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, local, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance.”

We, the undersigned, do solemnly issue the following Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere:

1. FOUNDATION, OBJECTIVE AND CRITERION.

The inherent human dignity of all people and the importance of respecting, promoting and protecting human dignity for everyone everywhere is the foundational principle and the key objective or goal of human rights, as well as an invaluable criterion for evaluating laws, policies and government actions for how well they accord with human rights standards. Protecting, promoting and guaranteeing respect for the human dignity of everyone is a fundamental obligation of states, governments and other public bodies, whether local, regional, national, or international. Promoting human dignity is also a responsibility of all sectors of society and of each of us as human beings. Doing so is the key to protecting the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family and remains the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

2. GENERATING AGREEMENT AND BUILDING COMMON UNDERSTANDING.

The inherent dignity of every human being was the key idea that helped generate agreement and a common understanding at the time of the adoption of the UDHR about human rights of all people, in spite of diversity and deep differences, notwithstanding divergent political and legal systems. Human dignity for everyone everywhere is valuable as a point of departure for exploring and understanding the meaning of human rights, as a basis for finding common ground regarding human rights and consensus about their content and meaning. It provides an approach to building bridges between various normative justifications of human rights, including those with religious and secular theoretical groundings. Respecting human dignity for everyone everywhere facilitates discussions on different conceptions of shared values. Human dignity is a broad concept that nevertheless invites in-depth reflection within differing traditions and perspectives. Human dignity for all reminds us that human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

3. DEFINING AND SPECIFYING HUMAN RIGHTS.

Dignity is an essential part of what it means to be human. Respect for human dignity for everyone everywhere helps us define and understand the meaning and scope of all human rights. Focusing concretely and in actual situations on human

dignity and its implications for particular human rights claims can help identify the specific content of these rights as well as how we understand human dignity itself.

4. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Human dignity for everyone everywhere emphasizes the concept in the UDHR that rights include accompanying obligations and responsibilities, not just of states but also of all human beings with respect to the rights of others. Dignity is a status shared by every human being and the emphasis on everyone and everywhere makes it clear that rights are characterized by reciprocity and involve corresponding duties. Everyone should be concerned not only with his or her own dignity and rights but with the dignity and rights of every human being. Nonetheless, human dignity is not diminished on the ground that persons are not fulfilling their responsibilities to the state and others.

5. EDUCATION.

Recognition of human dignity is a vital basis for teaching and education. Human rights education is of importance to promoting respect for the equal dignity of everyone. Such education is essential for sustaining dignity and human rights into the future. Equal access to education is a crucial aspect of respecting human dignity.

6. SEEKING COMMON GROUND.

Focusing on human dignity for everyone everywhere encourages people to search for ways to find common ground regarding competing claims and to move beyond exclusively legal mechanisms for harmonizing, implementing and mutually vindicating human rights and finding solutions to conflicts.

7. IMPLEMENTING AND REALIZING HUMAN RIGHTS IN LEGISLATION.

Recognition of human dignity for everyone everywhere is a foundational principle of law and is central to developing and protecting human rights in law and policy. The richness of the concept of dignity resists exhaustive definition, but it encourages the pursuit of optimum mutual vindication where conflicting rights and values are involved. It is critical for moving beyond thinking exclusively in terms of balancing and tradeoffs of rights and interests.

8. RECONCILIATION AND ADJUDICATION.

Recognition of human dignity for everyone everywhere is an important constitutional and legal principle for reconciling and adjudicating competing human rights claims, as well as claims between human rights and other important national and societal interests. Mutual vindication of rights may be possible in

adjudication and may be further facilitated if all involved focus on respecting the human dignity of everyone. When mutual vindication of rights is not possible, dignity for all can help us to delineate the scope of rights, to set the boundaries of permissible restrictions on the exercise of rights and freedoms and to seek to bring into fair balance competing rights claims. Respect for dignity plays an important role not only in formal adjudication but also in mediation or other forms of alternative dispute resolution.

9. POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES INVOLVING COMPETING HUMAN RIGHTS CLAIMS.

Respecting the human dignity of everyone everywhere supports effective human rights advocacy. Recognizing the universal and reciprocal character of human dignity is a corrective to positions claiming rights for some but not for others. It helps to defuse the hostility that is often associated with human rights controversies and to foster constructive dialogue. It also helps mitigate the distortion, avoidance and selective recognition of human dignity.

10. MOST EGREGIOUS AND MOST FEASIBLE.

Human dignity for everyone everywhere reminds us to work toward the elimination of the most egregious abuses of the human rights of individuals and groups, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other atrocities. It also reminds us to protect those human beings most at-risk of human rights violations. At the same time, it encourages efforts to respond to problems that may be amenable to practical and feasible solutions.

INTRODUCTION

Brett G. Scharffs, M. Christian Green and Simeon Ilesanmi

As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) reaches its 75th anniversary, human rights are more relevant than ever. In some parts of the world, democracies are threatened by rising autocracy and terrorism. At the time of this writing, the wars between Russia and Ukraine and between the terrorist organisation Hamas and the state of Israel rage, with all of the attendant humanitarian disaster. In still other parts of the world – and ultimately for all of us – the effects of climate change on our environment represent an existential challenge. Fratricide, genocide and maybe even terracide seem to be the order of the day. All of these forces threaten some more than others, particularly those made vulnerable by gender, age, disability, or indigenous or religious minority status among others. The effects are unwelcome, unequal and sometimes unimaginable. The larger project from which this book emerges is centred on the unique declaration known as the Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere, signed in Ecuador in 2018 upon the 70th anniversary of the UDHR. That Punta del Este Declaration was the product of a conference convened in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from 2-4 December 2018, by the International Center for Law and Religion Studies under the auspices of the European Academy of Religion with the participation of an international group of scholars and human rights experts. The purpose of that gathering was to remember, reaffirm and recommit to human dignity as the basis of human rights as that concept developed in the post-World War II period, particularly through the establishment of the United Nations and the promulgation of the UDHR in 1948.

Particularly in recent decades, critiques and outright skepticism of human rights have emerged in some circles. Are human rights truly universal? Are they primarily Western or Christian? Have they been imposed hegemonically in some parts of the world? Are economic, social and cultural rights more basic or fundamental than civil and political rights and the latter more the province of the able and affluent? How should we conceive of “third generation” human rights, those “solidarity rights” to sustainable development, peace and a healthy environment? Are some rights, particularly freedom of religion, the “first freedoms” or to be privileged above other rights in a world that vacillates between rising secularism or religious resurgence? All of these are valid and important questions, but they should not detract from what is truly fundamental in human rights – namely, their grounding in a dignity that for many is not just human but divine. Human rights have value, both intrinsically as located in human dignity and instrumentally to protect a range of dignity-driven rights. It is this human dignity framework that is offered in the Punta del Este Declaration.

The latest fruit of the Punta del Este Declaration is the one chronicled in these pages. The African Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere, which we publish here on the 75th anniversary of the UDHR, is a collection of perspectives

on human dignity from perspectives that were largely not at the drawing table at the dawn of the modern human rights era in 1948. The ten principles of this African declaration were collected through interviews with scholars and participants at the 2019 conference African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies at Gaborone, Botswana, under the theme of “Law, Religion and the Environment in Africa”. These are African perspectives that serve to inspire some of the most substantive and far-reaching policies and programmes on human rights and human dignity today – often in the face of ongoing forces of poverty, disease, climate vulnerability and other ills. They do so with the rich cultural resources of traditional African religions and customs, but sometimes in ways that challenge the same.

A key theme running through all of these chapters is the importance of the concept of *Ubuntu*, referenced in many ways around the African continent, but always pointing to the core concept “I am because we are.” *Ubuntu* is at the core African conceptions of human dignity. *Ubuntu* captures the way in which human dignity is an African and indigenous concept grounded in relationship and community. The *Ubuntu* concept of human dignity is not always univocal or uncontested. Within this broad conception there can be many meanings found, many other rights nurtured and many basic concrete needs to meet. Moreover, this does not always happen. *Ubuntu* may be imperfectly realised – after all, relationships and community can be very good, but they can also be very bad. States may fail at their basic obligation to protect, defend and enable human dignity. Religious and theistic foundations of human dignity are deep, but they can also lead to conflict and violence, or even the subordination of people within religious groups. Human dignity can be denied to especially vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled. Human dignity can complicate the relationship of humans to their environment if interpreted in ways that lead to anthropocentric dominion. *Ubuntu* may be a core concept or an imperfect concept, but it remains an aspirational concept and an indispensable framework for human rights and human dignity.

The chapters in this book engage the panoply of human dignity in Africa. Zimbabwean Ezra Chitando starts the discussion of human dignity as an African concept. Chitando begins with a point also picked up in a subsequent chapter by Faith Kabata – namely the philosopher G.W.F. Hegel’s descriptions of Africa as a “land of childhood” in which people exist in a “completely wild and untamed state”. Against this errant philosophical backdrop, Chitando, in his opening chapter, “seeks to demonstrate how, contrary to Western perspectives, African societies recognise and respect human dignity”. Chitando initiates the discussion of *Ubuntu*, which becomes the book’s core theme, as a “clear example of how a particular society does not have the exclusive right to ownership of human dignity and human rights”.

Following an account of the emergence of the concept of universal human rights in international law, Nigerian law scholar Akinola Ibidapo-Obe takes up the relational and community dimensions of human dignity through the oral traditions of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. Among the Yoruba relational and

communal understandings of human dignity are framed within an overarching canopy of the supernatural and the sacred. This *clan vitale*, or living clan, includes ancestors, families, clans and an assortment of supernatural beings reflecting the spirit of Ubuntu seen across the content, but which are also deeply embedded in oral traditions, including the notable *Ifa* knowledge tradition, along with verses, proverbs, songs, stories, individual and community praise poems, as well as the history, myths and legends passed down from generation. These oral traditions influence do not only reflect religious cosmogonies of creation and the relationship of the human to spiritual beings and the natural world. They also become part of the customary law of the people, imbricating relational and communal notions of human dignity into the life and law of the community in ways that are also buttressed by international human rights laws.

Elias Konyana, a scholar of religious and philosophical ethics and the law, provides a brilliant discussion of the indigenous dimensions of human dignity through an analysis of the songs of Zimbabwean musician Oliver Mtukudzi, whose life and music embody and exhort to human dignity. Konyana connects Mtukudzi's work and philosophy to a popular Zimbabwean folktale of a man called "Zvigamba Tambanevana", known early in his life for his tattered clothes and playing with children, who became a successful businessman and pillar of his community. As Konyana described the lesson of this folktale "Zvigamba Tambanevana" would always remind the men and women who came to him for help to remember how they used to treat him as a "useless" person. He often reminded them that everyone deserved some respect for *who* they are and not *what* they are because *what one is today* can change at any moment. He told everyone he helped that people should focus on respecting the dignity of other human beings and not the materials that they lack or possess." Konyana analyses Mtukudzi's songs as reflections of the moral of the "Zvigamba Tambanevana" story and as epitomes of the indigenous Shona *hunhu* (variant of *Ubuntu*) philosophy of human dignity based on decency through industriousness and productivity, on peaceful coexistence and nonviolence and on humility, hard work and respect for humanity. Like Ibidapo-Obe's analysis of human dignity among Nigeria's Yoruba people, Konyana's analysis of human dignity among Zimbabwe's Shona draws notably on how human dignity is conveyed not only through laws and religious precepts, but through popular art and folk cultures.

Then legal scholar Faith Kabata examines the many meanings of dignity from African conceptions. She examines the concepts of *cieng* (moral order) and *dheeg* (duty) among the Dinka people of Sudan, along with the human dignity concepts among the Akan people of Ghana and Gikuyu people in her native Kenya. Kabata also examines several cases before the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights for what they say about human dignity under two key organising strands: (1) the inviolability of the person and (2) legal personhood conferring both rights and obligations, as well as the state obligation to protect human dignity in both of these respects. This African Charter jurisprudence, along with the social organisation of the

Akan, Dinka and Gikuyu people attests to the centrality of both the communitarian paradigm and individual duty in African concepts of human dignity.

Dignity as a right and the “mother” of rights is the topic of religious ethicist and legal philosopher Simeon Ilesanmi’s chapter the philosophy of human dignity and its relation to other rights, beginning with the unforgettable story of how he got his middle name: OLESEGUN. Clearly, “mother” of rights is not, to him, just an idle expression. In a richly philosophical exploration, Ilesanmi examines concepts of dignity as a language of emancipation, as elevated status, as inner worth, before turning his attention to the ways that human rights remain both unrealised for many in Africa as well as subject to contestation. As he puts it:

To contend is to argue, usually with someone, about shared moral meanings or a common moral frame. An example of these shared moral meanings in Africa are the dignitarian affirmations in many national constitutions that certain conditions are crucial for personal and communal flourishing. . . . To the extent that all these conditions still elude many Africans, many civil society organisations have emerged not just as surrogate institutions that provide services that state governments are unwilling or unable to provide, but as social movements that help channel, through structured contestation, the anger and outrage of politically and economically disenfranchised citizens.

This observation connects human rights and their nurturance with effective state protection of human dignity, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Idowu Akinloye uses the abduction of schoolgirls in Chibok, Nigeria by the Boko Haram terrorist group – an event which shocked the whole world – as the departure point for examining state obligations to support and protect human dignity and the tragic results that can occur when state’s fail at this basic responsibility. As Akinloye observes, “the degree to which citizens enjoy their dignity is contingent upon the state’s obligations to observe same”. An Anglican priest as well as a barrister and law scholar, Akinloye examines religious understandings human rights and social contract understandings of human dignity. He also examines the periods before, during and after colonialism for their positive and negative impact on human dignity and how the troubled colonial legacy may have precipitated the Boko Haram insurgency, more recent #EndSARS protests directed against a unit of the Nigeria Police Force and the ongoing struggles in Biafra – all of which raise questions about the state’s capacity to secure human rights and human dignity. Ultimately, Akinloye argues, “Unless states and their apparatuses at all levels fulfil state obligations in terms of the social contract to protect human dignity, conflicts and civil unrest will persist. Thus, the only pathway to peace in Nigeria and the African continent is for states to have effective structures and mechanisms to protect human dignity.”

Jean-Baptiste Sourou of Benin addresses religious and theistic foundations of human dignity at the intersection of Roman Catholicism and African traditional religions. Starting with the foundational understanding of the human person and human

dignity as expressed in the pastoral constitution that emerge from the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, Sourou examines the Christian understanding of the human person as created in the image of God (*imago Dei*), as a unity of body and soul and in community with others. Sourou then turns his attention to analogous concepts in African traditional religions, including God as Creator, the immortality of body and mind and the community dimension of the human person. Blending these Catholic and African traditional religious understandings to assess how dignity must be promoted in modern societies, Sourou focuses on the theocentric dignity of the human person, the protection of dignity by the community and what is generally regarded as the greatest issue affecting humanity today, namely, the need to protect the environment. Overall, Sourou argues for the congruence of Roman Catholic and African traditional understandings of the relationship of the human person to God, the community and the natural world.

Noted human rights and women's rights scholar and advocate Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi examines the effects of gender, age and disability from a feminist legal perspective. Like Simeon Ilesanmi, she begins with the experience of her mother, in this case an experience of inter-ethnic marriage and language barriers that posed a threat to her human dignity, especially in a patriarchal society. Akiyode-Afolabi provides a feminist and intersectional reading of the effects of gender, disability and age, particularly of girl children and elderly women, on human dignity. She addresses the contested notions of dignity and gender, but also the ways that gender and dignity have been the basis protection for protection in international and regional human rights law instruments, particularly the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, known as the Maputo Protocol, as well as under the Nigerian Constitution. In the end, Akiyode-Afolabi argues for the continued importance of human rights and the human dignity framework for addressing women of all ages and other groups marginalised by gender, age and disability in Africa.

Senzokuhle Setume concludes the reflections from the declaration with a discussion of human dignity in relation to the environment. As in previous chapters, *Ubuntu* forms the framework for Setume's discussion of human dignity, but addressing questions of human dignity in relation to the environment prompts her to take up problematic issues of anthropocentrism and the anthropocentric value theory. Setume notes that her analysis "adopts an anthropocentric approach despite the wide criticism that this approach has drawn in some context", hypothesizing ultimately that "humanity will preserve the environment for the sake of preserving itself". This is, thus, a realist perspective in the face of what Setume identifies at root as greed that threatens to produce broken relationships to the detriment of *Ubuntu* and the Earth. Fortunately, it is a problem that Setume's home nation of Botswana has been addressing with some of the most forward-thinking environmental policies on the African continent.

It should be noted that the book begins with a foreword by ACLARS vice president Ahmed Garba that both welcomes the chapters to come and offers some distinctively

Islamic reflections on human dignity. The book also concludes with an afterword from ACLARS board member Fortune Sibanda that connects human dignity to concepts of leadership, which will be the theme of the 2024 ACLARS conference in his home country of Zimbabwe. We have been fortunate to benefit from their wisdom in conceiving this book.

As the UDHR reaches its 75th anniversary milestone, human dignity remains the bedrock of human rights. For people of faith, human dignity is also deeply connected to the divine through the *imago Dei* and through the divine Creator as conceived in indigenous religions in ways that implicate the crucial right to freedom of religion. As noted above, the African perspectives collected and analysed in this volume by scholars of law and religion all notably connect with the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* and the conviction that “I am because we are”. Though each human person is a bearer of rights, we do not bear them alone, but in the communities of family, nation, the global community and even the non-human beings and inanimate features of our earthly home. Most importantly, human rights and human dignity are not optional or luxuries to be enjoyed only by some – they are the moral right of every person and all humanity. Brutal wars and climate disasters are evidence of our failure to attend to this moral reality, but human rights and human dignity will remain clarion calls for people in distress and in need of liberation and justice as human rights, conceived in a human dignity framework move toward a centennial celebration.

AFRICAN DECLARATION ON HUMAN DIGNITY FOR EVERYONE EVERYWHERE: 75 YEARS AFTER THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

An endorsement and elaboration of the Punta del Este Declaration on Dignity for Everyone Everywhere by the African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies at its Seventh Annual Law and Religion in Africa Conference Law, Religion and the Environment in Africa Gaborone, Botswana, 19-21 May 2019.

Whereas the Seventh Annual Conference on Law and Religion in Africa of the African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS) was held in Gaborone, Botswana, on 19-21 May 2019, with the conference theme, Law, Religion and the Environment in Africa;

Whereas the conference participants wish to add their collective voices to the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by endorsing and elaborating upon the Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere;

Whereas there are many unique and characteristic understandings of human dignity that arise from African perspectives and it is our hope that these perspectives can enhance and enrich the global and universal appreciation of human dignity as the foundational principle of human rights;

The following statement was drafted and welcomed by delegates and participants at ACLARS' Seventh Annual Law and Religion Conference in Africa.

1. African conceptions of human dignity. Human dignity is a foundational societal, religious, cultural and legal concept in Africa. There is no one single African concept of dignity, but rather many different and often complementary conceptions. Dignity is a concept that has widespread purchase in African cultures, religions and languages. As with many concepts, there is in Africa an ongoing contestation or negotiation about the meaning of human dignity. Nevertheless, there are African characteristics of the concept that are widespread and widely shared. For example, Sir Seretse Khama, the first President of the Republic of Botswana said, "Human dignity, like justice and freedom, is the common heritage of all men." The legacy of South African president Nelson Mandela is also as a champion of human dignity and freedom. As U.S. President Bill Clinton said upon the passing of Nelson Mandela, "History will remember Nelson Mandela as a champion for human dignity and freedom, for peace and reconciliation." We reiterate the Punta del Este Declaration's emphasis that human rights are interdependent, universal, indivisible and interrelated and each one is critical for achieving human dignity.

2. Relationships and community. Africans think of dignity not solely as an individual human characteristic or right, but as a concept that implicates our most important relationships, including family, community, tribe and nation. Human

dignity is a concept that is understood as existing in relationships with others. As such dignity implicates understandings of human duties and relationships, not just individual claims against others. There is a natural reciprocal understanding of human dignity. Part of our human dignity is recognizing and respecting the dignity of others. An African perspective on dignity is outward looking, not just inward reflecting.

For example, in southern Africa, the Nguni Bantu concept of Ubuntu (in isiXhosa/botho in Setswana) and in Eastern Africa's Kiswahili concept of Utu are closely related to human dignity and clearly involve a relational character of human lives existing in connection and community with others. In some African cultures such as Botswana, the concept of totems is closely related to the idea of familial ties, which extend broadly, creating connections with others. African thinking about dignity necessarily includes the idea of equality; a concern for dignity is a concern for the equal dignity of all.

The meaning of dignity is taught first of all in the home, by parents and grandparents and should then be reinforced by primary and secondary education and through societal institutions such as mosques and churches.

In some African countries, including Zimbabwe, the idea of dignity is closely associated with the idea of solidarity. This communal ideal of unity and sharing confirms a communal dimension to human dignity.

3. An indigenous concept. While "human rights" is a concept that can be difficult to translate into some African languages, the concept of human dignity is much easier to integrate linguistically. Rights are claims of what someone owes us, whereas dignity is something that is inherent in the human person. For example, in the Yoruba language rights (eto) are assertions of a claim of something owed to you, whereas dignity (iyi) lies at the foundation of rights. While the idea of rights resonates with Africans, in African languages such as Yoruba, dignity (iyi) is a noun, a state or quality of being. Even when there is not agreement about the specific definition of human dignity, it is a concept that resonates widely and meaningfully. We believe there is much that can be learned from various African perspectives on dignity that will enrich not only African understandings of this concept, but global understandings as well.

4. Many meanings of dignity. There are many different meanings of dignity in African contexts, including the idea of living a dignified life (which can be related to ceremony and honor), dignity as rank or status (which can be hierarchical), dignity as a moral ideal (reflected in dignified behavior, including dress), dignity as a right, dignity as a personal responsibility (the duty to behave in a dignified manner), as well as dignity as describing the inherent value and worth of the human person. In a fundamental sense, because they are human, all human beings have dignity, even if they behave in ways that are undignified. We can urge others, such as our children, to behave with dignity without questioning the inherent human dignity of all regardless of how they behave.

There are dimensions of dignity that include living a complete and virtuous human life, for example reflected in the Yoruba people's concept of *omoluwabi*, which suggests the ideal of someone who has a good character in all dimensions of life, reflecting virtue or good character in every sphere. This idea of being completely trustworthy, courageous, hard-working, humble and of good character and of treating others with respect, is also an ideal that is closely related to the ideal of dignity.

Discussions of human dignity, as with discussions of human rights, should take place in a spirit of genuine dialogue, including between the northern and southern hemispheres, rather than in a spirit of instruction or direction. When we focus on one perspective of human dignity, we should not mistake it as an "African" perspective, since there will be many African perspectives. Dignity eludes definition and capture by any one group or viewpoint.

5. Dignity as a right and as a "mother" of rights. In some countries, such as South Africa and Nigeria, human dignity is a recognised fundamental constitutional right and there are important judgments of these nations' highest courts elaborating the meaning of human dignity and related concepts such as Ubuntu. Even in places where human dignity is a recognised constitutional right, there are challenges in definition, scope and implementation of the right. In other countries, human dignity is a foundational concept, but is not itself a legal right. It can be understood as the "mother" of rights, or lying at the genesis of rights. While dignity is foundational, this is not to understate the importance of rights or of the duty of states to respect and protect rights. Dignity is a common concept in African society and in the contemporary world, human rights can be seen as a way of operationalizing human dignity. The concept of human dignity can reinforce what we know and have as human rights. Human dignity should not be used as a nebulous concept that governments can invoke to limit or deny rights to people.

6. Concrete concern for basic human needs. African discussions of dignity are less abstract and theoretical than some other discussions of dignity, focusing on basic human needs that must be satisfied in order to be fully human and to enjoy one's basic human dignity, including food, clothing, shelter, gainful employment and the ability to care for oneself and one's family. Social and economic rights are the cornerstone of human dignity. In many African contexts, including Mozambique, dignity is understood as relating to the basic capacity to fulfill one's human needs and then to be able to help fulfill the needs of others, including family and extended relations. Thus, discussions of dignity need to focus on basic human needs and capacities, such as the ability to find meaningful and remunerative work that is sufficient to provide for oneself and one's family. Discussions of human dignity will be regarded as too theoretical and abstract if they do not include an emphasis on basic economic and social rights, including not just problems of poverty, but of extreme poverty. The rising generation, including university students, will not have patience with theoretical discussions of human dignity when their education does not empower them with basic capacities to make a decent living.

An African perspective on human dignity is also to be mindful of the most serious violations of human dignity, including genocide, other atrocities, forced migrations and displacements and extreme poverty. Hence, the saying that, “a person possesses no ‘utu’” among Kiswahili speaking communities. Extreme disparities of wealth and poverty will be viewed as a violation of human dignity.

7. State obligations. An important obligation of states is to enable its people to live lives of dignity, in light of the broad African recognition of the importance of dignity. Former presidents Julius Nyerere and Ian Khama, have respectively stressed its importance. In Julius Nyerere’s farewell 1985 speech he recalled that, “The single most important task, which I set out in my inaugural address in December 1962, was that of building a united nation on the basis of human equality and dignity”; and this he reinforced in his socialist concept of ujamaa. And for Ian Khama, it formed a part of the 5 Ds Roadmap: Democracy, Discipline, Dignity, Development & Delivery.

In spite of the broad African recognition of the importance of dignity by some governments, there are places in Africa where dignity is often violated and places where governments do not do enough to protect human dignity and ensure it is taken seriously. Occasionally governments in Africa use references to duties in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights as a pretext for not protecting human rights including human dignity.

8. Religious and theistic foundations. African understandings of human dignity are usually based upon a belief in God, a creator who made human beings in God’s image. As such, there is an element of reverence and a dimension of humility in understanding human dignity. The idea of human dignity implicates relationships beyond those in this life, including with our creator and with our ancestors who live in an afterlife beyond the visible world. Thus dignity implicates our treatment of the dead. Dignity implicates the departed as well, recognising that belonging and being recognised does not just involve the present.

In some parts of Africa, understandings of dignity are inextricably connected to Islam. Muslims in Africa are familiar with the Quranic verse that God honored human beings in creating Adam as God’s vice-regent or steward and that human beings reciprocate this by treating other human beings with dignity. This is evident even in architecture (that is, in the environment), where a room of the house is dedicated to providing hospitality to strangers. This has implications for how we should treat all people, including beggars. While from a Muslim perspective, human rights may seem like a foreign concept, the concept of human dignity is not foreign, but an accepted and intrinsic part of the Muslim faith.

Christian and indigenous religions also have deep and meaningful teachings about human dignity and each of these perspectives adds depth and flavor to an African understanding of dignity.

In spite of deep reservoirs of reverence and a sense of the sacred that infuse African understandings of dignity, it is not an exclusively religious concept; it is

meaningfully significant to those who have no religious beliefs but who are morally righteous and scrupulous.

9. Gender/age dimensions. There may be gender dimensions in discussions of dignity that must be noticed. If dignity is understood primarily as a matter of status (the dignity of the King or of tribal elders), it can have a gender dimension that distorts the universal and inherent value of all human beings that is the hallmark of dignity. We also caution that dignity should not be comprehended mainly as a matter of age, where the dignity of the elder is opposed to that of the young.

Human dignity has deep implications for relationships involving gender difference and age groups, including domestic violence, which is an affront to dignity. If, for example, a man disrespects the woman or the young girl-child acts impolitely towards an elderly person then that person is described as someone who has no *utu*.

10. Human dignity and our environments. This conference has focused on the relationships between law, religion and the environment in Africa. An important recurring theme has been the relational character of human rights and human dignity and that it implicates and impresses upon all of our relationships, not just with other people, but with other animals and with our natural environments. Just as concepts like isiXhosa's *Ubuntu*, Shona's *hunhu* and Kiswahili's *utu* extend concern for human beings beyond rights and into relationships, they also extend our concern beyond human relationships and into other relationships, such as with God, with the world and the various environments in which we live.

FOREWORD EXPLORING HUMAN DIGNITY IN AFRICA

Ahmed Salisu Garba¹

INTRODUCTION

In a world where people are battling for human rights and social justice while simultaneously recognising and promoting their diversity, it is becoming more and more crucial to understand the various points of view that contribute to the global discourse about human rights and human dignity. Although the concept of human dignity is frequently discussed, few individuals truly get what it implies. Despite its widespread importance, conversations about it have frequently been dominated by Western perspectives, which ignore the range and diversity of non-Western philosophical traditions. By highlighting the distinctive perspectives and knowledge that African thinking has to contribute on this crucial subject, the present book, *African Perspectives on Human Dignity*, seeks to close this gap.

This volume provides a distinctive and in-depth look at how Africans understand human dignity, the principles that inform this view and how this view fits into the greater global discussion about this crucial subject. Its important and groundbreaking chapters bring together scholars and philosophers from Africa and its diaspora to look at human dignity from an African point of view. This collection of essays looks at the cultural, historical and philosophical roots of dignity in different African contexts in order to show how African perspectives can add to our global understanding of human dignity and help with social justice, human rights advocacy and policy making.

In this foreword, I first wish to lift up some of the significant themes of this volume against the backdrop of African diversity. I then offer some reflections on these themes from a Muslim perspective, given the significance of human dignity in Islamic thought. I also comment on the congruence between the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* and the Islamic philosophy of human dignity and how this can assist in confronting compelling problems facing the African continent before offering some final conclusions in appreciation and recommendation of this volume.

AFRICAN THEMES AND AFRICAN DIVERSITY

To begin the fascinating voyage across the pages of this book, we must first understand how vast and diverse Africa is. More than 1.3 billion people live on the

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continent, which is made up of 54 nations, each with its own unique history, culture and philosophical approach. Despite the stark contrasts, there are certain shared values and concepts that result from a complex interplay of native beliefs, cultural practices and outside influences. Human dignity is one of them.

The contributors to this volume go beyond studying history and politics to look at the philosophical roots of human dignity in African thought and as an indigenous African idea. Through personal reflections, critical engagement and legal, philosophical and theological analysis they show the complexity and richness of African thought on human dignity and the need for approaches to human rights and social justice that are sensitive to culture and fit the situation for a peaceful and stable world. This demonstrates the interconnectedness of these principles in African moral thinking.

African conceptions of human dignity stand out because they place strong emphasis on interdependence and community values. People in many African communities care a great deal about their relationships with each other and the health of society as a whole. A good example of this is the African idea of *Ubuntu*, which comes from the Bantu-speaking people of southern Africa. *Ubuntu*, which loosely translates as “I am because of you,” emphasises interdependence and the notion that our personal pleasure is directly connected to that of others. But this concept of human dignity is not merely conceptual and theoretical – African views on human dignity play out in real life.

Another significant theme in the work is the relationship between human dignity and issues of gender, racism and socioeconomic class. The authors discuss the place of women in both traditional and contemporary African communities. They examine how gender stereotypes and expectations impact how men and women perceive their own sense of worth. Additionally, they discuss how resilient and strong Africans are in the face of institutional racism and prejudice. They also discuss the continuous struggle against racism and marginalisation, as well the threat to human dignity posed by poverty and how social and economic policies impact the sense of dignity among the most at-risk communities in Africa. All of these themes indicate the salience of this volume and its reflections and conclusions on human dignity for African leaders and policy makers.

HUMAN DIGNITY IN ISLAMIC THOUGHT

Human dignity is as much of a concern for African Muslims as it is for other religions and communities on the continent. Islam’s emphasis on social justice, individual worth and human dignity teaches and inspires many contemporary African communities, and it provides solutions to the issues that endanger human dignity on the continent. The relationship between Islam and human dignity in Africa has not been discussed extensively in scholarly literature. I assert that the majority of studies on Islam in Africa focus on certain aspects of the religion, such as its impact on politics, its rate of spread or the function of Muslim organisations

in furthering social welfare.² Moreover, the concept of human dignity has been analyzed predominantly from Western philosophical and theological perspectives.³ As such, there is a need for a comprehensive study that examines the concept of human dignity in Africa through a Muslim lens. In fact, the idea of human dignity is a strong part of Islamic thought and it is seen as a guiding principle for the religion's moral and legal rules.⁴ Some scholars have even showed that the concept was derived from a divine origin that one can have as a virtue ".⁵

The Quranic verse "We have certainly honoured the children of Adam" can be read as explicit recognition of human dignity.⁶ This passage emphasises that every person has inherent value, regardless of race, gender or social standing.⁷ The Islamic view of human dignity derives from the conviction that all people are formed in God's image and equipped with special abilities that distinguish them from other living things, such as reason and free will⁸.

Islamic teachings about human dignity are tied to the ideas of social justice, equality and kindness. In the Quran, believers are told to stand up for justice even if it goes against their own interests or the interests of close family members.⁹ Additionally, the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad stress the significance of treating everyone with respect, regardless of their socioeconomic standing, as seen by his adage, "He who does not show mercy to our young ones or honour our elderly is not one of us."¹⁰ These precepts serve as the cornerstone of Islamic ethics and guide the creation of legal and social frameworks intended to uphold human dignity.¹¹

Some scholars have examined the idea of human dignity in Islamic theology and what it means for social justice and human rights.¹² For example, Malaysian Islamic law scholar Mohammad Hashim Kamali maintains that the Islamic notion

- 2 Levtzion N and Pouwels RL. 2000. *The History of Islam in Africa* Columbus: Ohio University Press (as reviewed by Glover J. 2002. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 33(2):411-412).
- 3 Kateb G. 2011. *Human Dignity*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 5.
- 4 Sadat Hoseini AS. 2022. "Human Life; Human authority or Human Trustee: The Origin of Dignity in Islam", *History and Philosophy of Medicine* 4(1):8. See also Uwaezuoke Okonkwo U. 2022. "Islam and human dignity: the plights of Almajiri street children during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria", *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 9:1, 2139796.
- 5 Addis A. 2013. "The Role of Human Dignity in a World of Plural Values and Ethical Commitments", *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* 31(4):403-444.
- 6 Quran, 17:70.
- 7 Muftugil O. 2017. "Human dignity in Muslim perspective: building bridges", *Journal of Global Ethics* 13(2):159ff.
- 8 Aramesh K. 2007. "Human Dignity in Islamic Bioethics", *Iran Journal of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology* 5:25-28.
- 9 Quran, 4:135.
- 10 Bukhari M. 1966. *Sahih Bukhari*. Karachi: Muhammad Sarid, 14.
- 11 Mozaffari MH. 2011. "The Concept of Human Dignity in the Islamic Thought". *Hekmat Quarterly Journal*. Canadian House of Wisdom 4:11-27,
- 12 Kamali MH. 2002. *The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective*, vol 1 Fundamental Rights and Liberties Series, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1-73.

of human dignity serves as a foundation for human rights in Muslim-majority cultures, highlighting the necessity for a context-sensitive approach that takes into account the cultural and historical uniqueness of these societies.¹³ In a similar vein, Malaysian Islamic and civil law scholar Abdul H. Ansari emphasises the significance of the concept of human dignity in Islamic law, especially in light of concerns for the defence of religious minorities, gender equality and the outlawry of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.¹⁴

As one of the major religions in Africa, Islam has the potential to contribute to the enhancement of human dignity on the continent. Its teachings emphasize the inherent worth of every human being, regardless of race, gender or social status.¹⁵ Moreover, Islam promotes social justice, compassion and cooperation, which are essential values in addressing the challenges that undermine human dignity in Africa.¹⁶ A study of human dignity in Africa from a Muslim perspective must consider the many facets of human dignity that Islamic teachings and values influence. These factors can be roughly divided into three groups: personal, social and political. All of these groups are linked to each other and affect each other.¹⁷

From the perspective of personal dimension, Islam's idea of human dignity at the level of the individual is based on the belief that each person is unique and created by God with qualities like reason and free will that make them different from other things.¹⁸ This intrinsic value is a quality that all people possess that transcends a person's race, gender, social standing or any other distinguishing qualities.¹⁹ The social concern aspect of human dignity is reflected in the guiding principles of social justice, equality and compassion in Islamic ethics.²⁰ These values acknowledge and encompass the rights and wants of others, allocating resources fairly and creating supportive networks and communities that advance the wellbeing of all individuals.²¹ The political aspect of human dignity in Islam is about putting in place fair and just systems of government that protect and advance the rights and freedoms of all people.²² This involves promoting peace and stability both within and between societies, upholding democratic accountability, protecting the rights of minorities and upholding the rule of law.²³

The historical and modern experiences of Muslim communities in Africa, as well as the ways in which Islamic teachings and values have influenced the development of social, political and cultural institutions and practises that promote human dignity,

13 Kamali, *The Dignity of Man*.

14 Ansari AH and Salman RK. 2011. "Human Dignity and Justice: The Islamic Perspective", *Journal of Islamic Law Review* 7(1):91-124.

15 Mozaffari, "The Concept of Human Dignity in the Islamic Thought".

16 Mozaffari "The Concept of Human Dignity in the Islamic Thought".

17 Kamali, *The Dignity of Man*.

18 Quran, 17:70.

19 Mozaffari, "The Concept of Human Dignity in the Islamic Thought".

20 Kamali, *The Dignity of Man*.

21 Ansari and Salman "Human Dignity and Justice".

22 Ansari and Salman "Human Dignity and Justice".

23 Kamali, *The Dignity of Man*.

can be used to examine the interrelationships between Islam, human dignity and African societies. From a historical point of view, Islam has deeply influenced the social, political and cultural life of many parts of Africa. It has affected how governments, legal systems, educational institutions and creative traditions have grown.²⁴ These contacts have promoted the adoption of Islamic ideals and beliefs in different facets of African society, assisting in the development of inclusive, diverse communities that support social justice and human dignity.

Poverty, political instability, corruption and gender inequities are some of the modern problems that Africa is facing. They have an effect on whether people on the continent are treated with respect and as bearers of human dignity.²⁵ In this situation, Islamic teachings and principles can give direction and ideas for how to deal with these problems and encourage a culture of respect, fairness and working together among African civilisations.²⁶ The experiences of the Muslim communities in Africa shed light on the struggles that threaten human dignity on the continent. Islamic social welfare organisations, such as *zakat* (almsgiving) and *waqf* (endowments), for instance, can be used to advance social justice and fight poverty.²⁷ Similarly, Islamic teachings on gender equality and minority rights protection can serve as a foundation for the creation of inclusive policies and practices that uphold the dignity of all people.²⁸ The above specification of principles is unique to Islam, but it is not unique on the African continent – indeed, African Muslims are deeply connected to Africans of other religions and cultures through the concept of *Ubuntu*.

AFRICAN UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY AND ISLAMIC VALUES

Nearly all of the chapters in this volume reference the importance of *Ubuntu* for African concepts of human dignity. From a Muslim perspective, too, the African *Ubuntu* philosophy provides a complementary theoretical framework toward the advancement of human dignity in Africa. *Ubuntu* is an African philosophy that emphasises the interdependence of all people and the value of empathy, cooperation and mutual assistance in fostering peaceful and inclusive societies.²⁹ *Ubuntu* emphasises the relational aspect of humanity, emphasising the value of creating healthy relationships and communities based on respect and understanding for one another.³⁰

24 Levitzion and Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa*.

25 World Bank/IBRD-IDA. 2020. Supporting Countries in Unprecedented Times: Annual Report 2020. Washington, DC: World Bank, September, 44-63.

26 Kamali, *The Dignity of Man*.

27 Benthall J and Bellion-Jourdan J. 2009. "The Charitable Crescent: Politics of Aid in the Muslim World", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15(4):881-882.

28 Ansari and Salman, "Human Dignity and Justice".

29 Gade CBN. 2012 "What Is 'Ubuntu'? Different Interpretations among South Africans of African Descent", *South African Journal of Philosophy* 31(3):484-503.

30 Swartz E. and Davis R. 1997. "Ubuntu – the spirit of African transformation management – a review", *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 18(6):290-294.

Ubuntu encourages people to have compassion and empathy for others, to recognise their needs and suffering and to work to lessen those sufferings.³¹ *Ubuntu* encourages the growth of peaceful societies where people work together and help each other to reach common goals and keep society together.³² Muslim and non-Muslim populations in Africa may be able to communicate and work together because of the African *Ubuntu* philosophy's many parallels to Islamic teachings on social justice, equality and compassion.³³

In modern Africa, people's dignity is threatened by many things, such as poverty, political unrest, corruption, unequal treatment of men and women and fighting between different ethnic groups and religions.³⁴ Nearly half of the population of the continent lives below the international poverty line, making poverty in particular a recurrent issue.³⁵ The unequal distribution of resources, high unemployment rates and restricted access to essential services like clean water, healthcare and education further exacerbate this scenario.³⁶

Another key issue that threatens human dignity in Africa is political instability. Many of the continent's nations have seen protracted wars, military takeovers and authoritarian rule, which has resulted in a great deal of misery, displacement and violation of human rights.³⁷ Additionally, corruption is still a major problem that undermines public confidence in institutions, diverts funds from necessary services and worsens inequality and social exclusion.³⁸ Furthermore, political manipulation, resource competition and historical grudges all contribute to the persistence of religious and ethnic tensions across most of the continent.³⁹ Millions of African women and girls suffer from gender inequality, which compromises their dignity since they frequently encounter prejudice, violence and limited access to opportunities for education and employment.⁴⁰

Given these problems, promoting human dignity in Africa requires a comprehensive plan that addresses their root causes and encourages a culture that is respectful, fair

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- 31 Bowen A. 2008. "The Most Reverend Desmond Mpilo Tutu (1999)", *Cambridge Orations, 1993–2007: A Selection*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 94-95.
 - 32 Muriithi T. 2006. "Practical Peacemaking Wisdom from Africa: Reflections on Ubuntu", *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 1(4):25-34.
 - 33 Metz T. 2011. "Toward an African Moral Theory," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15(3):321–40.
 - 34 World Bank, "Supporting Countries in Unprecedented Times", 44-63.
 - 35 World Bank, "Supporting Countries in Unprecedented Times", 44-63.
 - 36 Mangayi LC. 2022. "Re-imagining a new social contract to address exclusion and marginalization in Africa: Insights from the "Golden Rule and Ubuntu" as value frameworks", *Missionalia* 50(1):119-135.
 - 37 Pettersson T and Wallenstein P. 2014. "Armed Conflict, 1946-2014", *Journal of Peace Research* 51(4):541-554.
 - 38 Transparency International. 2023. "CPI 2022 for Sub-Saharan Africa: Corruption Compounding Multiple Crises", [transparency.org](https://www.transparency.org), 23 January.
 - 39 International Crisis Group. 2019. "Eight Priorities for the African Union in 2019", [crisisgroup.org](https://www.crisisgroup.org), 6 February.
 - 40 World Health Organization (WHO), Africa Region. 2023. "Women's Health: Overview".

and works together. In this way, the tenets and principles of Islam, as well as the past and present struggles of Muslim communities in Africa, can help us understand the problems that threaten human dignity on the continent and come up with possible solutions. The cooperation of African Muslims, Christians and traditional religions, through the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, can be a path toward these solutions.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

The concepts, stories and analysis in this volume demonstrate how dignity, rights and social justice are issues that African communities deal with on a daily basis, from campaigns for land rights in Zimbabwe to the fight against female genital mutilation in Kenya. These accounts convey what it means to respect others in their own societies and cultures. According to its content, the book looks at the many and different cultural, intellectual and spiritual traditions that shape and define African views on human dignity. By looking at the history and current events that have shaped these ideas, this book shows how African philosophy can help us understand human dignity in a way that respects cultural differences and includes everyone.

The present volume is thus an important and necessary addition to the discussion of human rights and dignity that is going on all over the world. As we try to solve the problems of the twenty-first century, it's important to understand and learn from different cultures and traditions. As you read, may the rich cultural and intellectual past that forms the basis for African perspectives on human dignity inspire you. May you also learn more about the values and principles we all share, even though we come from different places, different religions and have different points of view. It is crucial that we recognise our shared humanity and cooperate to advance the worth and welfare of everyone in an increasingly interconnected and globalised world. By gaining a better understanding of how Africans view human dignity, we can work to create a more compassionate, just and equitable world for all.

41 Murithi T. 2006. "African Approaches to Building Peace and Social Solidarity", *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 6(2):9-33. Also see, Murithi, "Practical Peacemaking Wisdom from Africa". See also Ujomu PO. 2020, "Africa's Crises of Social and Political Order and the Significance of Human Values for Peace and Development", *Culture and Dialogue* 8(1):97-115. See also Ujomu PO. 2022. "Some Human Values of Ubuntu and an African Philosophical View of Self-Concept and Integration", *Culture and Dialogue* 10(1):47-59.

