

## ABSTRACT

In Kenya, debates about sexual orientation have assumed center stage at several points in recent years, but particularly before and after the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010. These debates have been fueled by religious clergy and by politicians who want to align themselves with religious organizations for respectability and legitimation, particularly by seeking to influence the nation's legal norms around sexuality. I argue that through their responses and attempts to influence legal norms, the religious and political leaders are not only responsible for the nonacceptance of same-sex relationships in Africa, but have also ensured that sexuality and embodiment have become a cultural and religious battleground. These same clergy and politicians seek to frame homosexuality as un-African, unacceptable, a threat to African moral and cultural sensibilities and sensitivities, and an affront to African moral and family values. Consequently, the perception is that homosexuals do not belong in Africa—that they cannot be entertained, accommodated, tolerated, or even understood. Ultimately, I argue that the politicization and religionization of same-sex relationships in Kenya, as elsewhere in Africa, has masked human rights debates and stifled serious academic and pragmatic engagements with important issues around sexual difference and sexual orientation while fueling negative attitudes toward people with different sexual orientations.

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### Keywords

Africa Kenya Pentecostal church in Kenya LGBTQ rights in Kenya religion and culture in Africa Constitution of Kenya