

## RETHINKING RELIGION, POLITICS AND SOCIAL CONTRACT

ANGELA ODAH, RLS PROGRAMME MANAGER



Photo: Sam Ajufoh

Action for Community Development (ACD) hosted an International Conference on Religion and Politics on 29 and 30 November 2017 at the Astoria Conference Centre, Lekki Peninsula, Lagos. It attracted student union leaders and young religious leaders from across Nigeria and other West African countries. The theme of the Conference was “Rethinking Religion, Politics and the Social Contract”.

According to Executive Director of ACD, Sam Ajufoh, the idea for the conference was born out of his organisation’s careful observation of the evolution of politics and governance in Nigeria and Africa in general.

Presenter, Ms Yop Rwang Pam, provided an overview of the history of media development in Nigeria and how religion and politics shape our conversations. Religion shapes conversations around politics and, to a large extent, determines the clothes we wear, the food we eat, our choice of education, etc. Politics shapes every aspect of human development. She highlighted the need for young political and religious leaders to set the agenda for public discourse around conversations that foster positive change in society so that Nigeria can advance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The guest presenter was Dr G D Hamilton, Chancellor of Rhema International Seminary and Bible College, First Black Commissioner in the city of Charleston South Carolina, and author of the best-selling book, the Black Messiah. He spoke from a Christian perspective and encouraged participants to make a difference in their communities by participating in politics and using their Christian or Islamic beliefs to foster the promotion of justice, equity and poverty eradication. He encouraged Christians to realise that God instituted marriage, church and government and once they adhered to biblical

principles, they had the power to operate from a position of strength not weakness. He added that Africa is the cradle of civilisation and his historical, genealogical and anthropological data and findings all point to the fact that Jesus was a black man. The findings of his research were published in his book, *The Black Messiah*. He encouraged youths to be inspired by this ground breaking information to work in power and with confidence to change the fortunes of Africa by providing credible governance that is focused on the common good and eradication of extreme poverty.

Issues raised during the very lively interactive sessions included concerns about the media being used as a tool of manipulation by the government. Media in Nigeria is being run solely for profit, which impacts on the credibility of news. Media needs to focus more on investigative journalism to reveal malpractices and corruption in government rather than on gossip about celebrities. Paid political space by politicians and television evangelists and government-owned media is a tool for government propaganda. On the other hand,

the private media industry focuses on profit rather than to educate and create awareness for social change.

Both private and government-sponsored media are like ships that have drifted off course, youths should set the agenda for issue-based discussions around governance and electoral activities. Pastors and other religious leaders should use the media to preach the gospel and provide recommendations and alternative ideas for development, rather than focus on miracles and preaching about tithes. The youth can use social media to create social awareness and enrich discussions on development and social change.

Affirmative action is a useful strategy to foster inclusive governance. African consciousness of populism should be promoted to discourage exploitation and oppression in government. It is intellectually and morally wrong to call Africans black and Caucasians white.

*The International Conference on Religion and Politics is the fourth in the series supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation West Africa.*

All articles published on this website have been independently written. The views and opinions expressed by authors are therefore their own and do not necessarily represent those of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG  
WEST AFRICA

Sotrac-Mermoz Villa 43 BP : 25013 | Dakar-Sénégal  
Téléphone: +221 33 869 75 19 | Fax: +221 33 824 19 95 | Website: [www.rosalux.sn](http://www.rosalux.sn)

**ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG**