

BOOK REVIEW

Jessica Johnson and George Hamandishe Karekwaivanane, eds. *Pursuing Justice in Africa*. Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2018. 342 pp. Contents. Bibliography. Index. \$75.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-08214423356.

Pursuing Justice in Africa, edited by Jessica Johnson and George Hamandishe Karekwaivanane, offers a refreshing perspective on the issue of justice in different African countries. Dissecting the concept of justice is not an easy task, but the editors have succeeded in taking this on by using an interdisciplinary approach that includes the fields of law, humanities, philosophy, and anthropology, among other disciplines.

Part I of the book consists of four chapters that tackle this subject. Chapter One, “Competing Conceptions of Justice in Colonial Buganda” by Jonathon L. Earle, unpacks the concept of justice within colonial society by turning to a discussion that cuts through issues of morality, religion, and language. It also takes to task western concepts and their theories.


Chapter Two, “Legal Pluralism and the Pursuit of a Just Life” by Felicitas Becker, examines the parallels that tie justice together while at the same time separating it from other concepts. Using Zanzibar’s Muslim communities as an example, this chapter explores religion and its relationship to justice. Chapter Three, “Social Justice and Moral Space in Hospital Cancer Care in Kenya” by Benson A. Mulemi, exposes the tragic injustice of health care policies, focusing on the care of cancer patients who face treatment at government hospitals where international standards of oncology are not observed. Chapter Four, “Relational Justice and Transformation in Postapartheid South Africa” by Duncan Scott, argues that South Africa is riddled with problems within its governmental institutions that stem from corruption and increased crime rates. To combat this issue, Scott proposes that South Africans employ Ubuntu to meet the standards of relational justice.

Part II deals with the concept of gender justice. Chapter Five, “Chilungamo and the Question of LGBTQ + Rights in Malawi” by Alan Msoa, offers an important voice that addresses the numerous persecutions of LGBTQ + individuals by using language as a means to highlight their plights. Chapter Six examines “Justice Intervention” (by Patrick Hoening) in the context of mobile courts in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Hoenig shows that mobile courts were formed to address human rights atrocities, mainly committed against women. Chapter Seven, “Conflicting Conceptions of Justice and the Legal Treatment of Defilement Cases in Malawi” by Ngeyi Ruth Kanyongolo and Bernadette Malunga, examines the rape of Malawi’s young girls. Men target these girls because of traditional practices, and because of the belief that such sexual encounters will protect them from contracting HIV/AIDS. Chapter Eight, “Home People and People of Human Rights” by Holly Porter, analyzes the responses to rape in Northern Uganda. This chapter exposes leaders, relatives, and elders who participate in the protection of the rapists rather than the female victims they have defiled through unprotected sex. Adding insult to injury the state fails to provide antiretroviral therapy and the necessary medical treatment for these women.

Part III covers resources, conflict, and justice. Chapter Nine, “Out of the Mouth of Babes: Tracing Child Soldiers’ Notions of ‘Justice’” by Stacey Hynd, documents the forgotten role of child soldiers. The author reframes and redefines this concept to illustrate that their narratives form part of the need for justice and healing. Chapter Ten, “Good and Bad Muslims: Conflict, Justice, and Religion among Somalis at Dagahaley Refugee Camp in Kenya” by Fred Nyongesa Ikanda, unpacks the concept of being Muslim. Nyongesa complicates this identity by showcasing different values and practices by members who do or do not adhere to Sharia Law. Chapter Eleven, “Land Restitution (Old and New), Neotraditionalism, and the Contested Values of Land Justice in South Africa” by Olaf Zenker, postulates that the land restitution policy does not restore the relationship between the farmer and the interloper. Instead, the farmer remains uncompensated financially. Chapter Twelve, “Transitional Justice and Ordinary Justice in Postconflict Acholiland” by Anna Macdonald, is an invaluable chapter that examines the dearth in the literature regarding transitional, restorative, and retributive justice.

This is an impactful, powerful, well-written book for scholars who are deconstructing the concept of justice within an African context. This book adds an emboldened voice to the current literature and affirms the position that more needs to be done to address the inequalities within vulnerable groups such as women and children in Africa.

Rashri Baboolal-Frank 
 University of Pretoria
 Pretoria, South Africa

Rashri.baboolal@up.ac.za

doi:[10.1017/asr.2021.32](https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.32)

For more reading on this subject, the ASR recommends:

Ashforth, Adam. 2015. “Witchcraft, Justice, and Human Rights in Africa: Cases from Malawi.” *African Studies Review* 58 (1): 5–38. doi:[10.1017/asr.2015.2](https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2015.2).

- Byfield, Judith A. 2012. "Gender, Justice, and the Environment: Connecting the Dots." *African Studies Review* 55 (1): 1–12. doi:10.1353/arw.2012.0017.
- Rettig, Max. 2008. "Gacaca: Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation in Postconflict Rwanda?" *African Studies Review* 51 (3): 25–50. doi:10.1353/arw.0.0091.