

Boys in Africa Roundtable

Date: 25 October, 2011

Time: 10h00 – 16h00

Venue: Library, Seminar Room 1, University of South Africa

How does one parent boys to become good men?

How do we reconnect boys with their fathers?

How do we teach boys and their parents to share the burden of domestic labour?

How does one raise boys to believe in equality?

How do we keep boys at school?

How do we teach boys not to respond to problems with aggression?

How do we keep boys alive?

How do we teach boys self-love?

How do we raise happy, confident, kind and caring men?



African boys and men are pathologised and stereotyped either as hapless victims or as inveterate criminals. While it remains important to keep challenging such representations, it is surprising that relatively little work and discussion has been presented on raising boys to become good men.



Especially given the conditions of poverty, oppression and violence the African continent continues to be subjected to, what does it take to raise a healthy, happy, confident and caring African man?

African boys are not a monolithic group, of course. Their life-chances and development are influenced by a range of factors. Race, class, neighbourhood and the concomitant infrastructural opportunities or lack thereof, their emergent sexualities, their able-bodiedness or otherwise, and very importantly the socioeconomic and historical burdens and triumphs of their parents are all necessary in thinking about ***how to raise well-adjusted, joyful, secure and kind men.***

It is self-evident to state that the experience of being a white, middle-class boy is very dissimilar to being a poor, black boy or even a middle-class black boy in South Africa. Regardless of other identity markers and the differences between boys, however, to be a boy is not to be a girl; and gender is constitutive of the expectations and socialization of boys.

Raising good African men obviously requires us to look at the boy first. Building positive masculinities that are generative of social well-being, responsive to egalitarianism, desirous of resolving conflict in productive and nurturing ways for whom toughness, violence and bravery are not the ultimate masculine ideals demands a focus on boyhood.

To this end the *Roundtable* will centre on the series of questions. We hope the question provokes fertile discussions and start a durable generative conversation within and outside the university towards building young positive masculinities and further engender democracy in the public sphere and the home.

Boys in Africa Roundtable is hosted by UNISA's Psychology Department and the Institute for Social and Health Sciences' Programme on Traditions and Transformation. The Roundtable is the second of three events of the *Changing Traditions Project* and will culminate in the biennial travelling *pitso* in Ethiopia on 28-30 November 2011.