

## Amina Mama



### African Feminist Thinkers: Our Voices <sup>[1]</sup>

My early heroes included Amina of Zazzau, the socialist-feminist activists Gambo Sawaba and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, and my grandmothers. During the 1960?s and 1970?s I had the benefit of a sound solid education in Nigeria?s post-independence primary and secondary schools, followed by universities Scotland and London. As a young adult I took myself on a series of exploratory journeys overland across Africa, Europe and into Asia, and later to North America and the Caribbean, witnessing the upheavals in Afghanistan and Iran in the early 1980?s, and the Grenadian revolution. I read a lot on the side of the formal scientific training I received in universities, allowing my ideas to be shaped by my readings of Marx, Althusser, Gramsci, Sartre and de Beauvoir, before moving on to Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Walter Rodney, CLR James, Nkrumah and other African nationalists, and later finding much of value in Edward Said and Foucault?s early works. I also discovered and read feminist literature from all over the world ? the usual northern feminist classics of course - but also discovering with delight the work of Bessie Head, Nawaal El Sadaawi, Alifa Rifaat, Ama Ata Aidoo, Flora Nwapa, and later embracing Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, and many other revolutionary thinkers, feminists and friends.

During my student days in the 1980?s, I joined the socialist feminist national organization Women in Nigeria and took up community activism in London, developing an appreciation of the power of activist research in the process.

I spent the 1990?s and 2000?s working with colleagues to develop feminist studies in Africa, first in Nigeria and then at the African Gender Institute in Cape Town South Africa, until 2009. I remain involved with African and international feminism through various movement affiliations and career choices, and am currently working with colleagues in West Africa to develop a transnational activist research project to address gender transformations in militarized and conflict prone contexts.

I strive to honor my core commitment to women?s liberation and social justice for all in my personal life and relationships, as well as in my professional life. I strongly believe in building strong feminist networks, and in pushing mainstream movements to take feminist analyses and methodologies more seriously.

Amina Mama is founding Editor of *Feminist Africa* ([www.feministafrica.org](http://www.feministafrica.org) <sup>[2]</sup>) and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Global Fund for Women. She holds a full time day job as the

Director of Women and Gender Studies at the University of California, Davis.

### **Selections of Published Articles**

Towards Academic Freedom for Africa in the 21st Century [3]

Challenging Subjects: Gender and Power in African Context [4]

Demythologising Gender in Development: Feminist Studies in African Contexts [5]

Feminist Studies in the African Contexts: The Challenge of Transformative Teaching in African Universities [6]

Is It Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom [7]

Khaki in the Family: Gender Discourses and Militarism in Nigeria [8]

Restore, Reform but do not Transform: The Gender Politics of Higher Education in Africa [9]

Strengthening Civil Society: Participatory Action Research in Militarised State [10]

Violence against Black Women: Gender, Race and State Responses [11]

### **In Conversation:**

## **The Ghanaian Women's Manifesto Movement** [12]

Posted : Thu, 2010-08-05 14:55

Feminist Africa

Women Mobilised - Issue 4.2005 [13]

Amina Mama spoke to three of Ghana's leading feminist activists about the mobilisation that resulted in the Women's Manifesto.

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The African Gender Institute is a research grouping within the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Cape Town

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