

Gender, Identity and Youth Empowerment in Morocco

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

March 15-16, 2019

As part of KSU's award-winning Annual Country Study Program, the goal of this conference is to examine ever-changing Moroccan identities with a special focus on the cultural, economic, political and social agency of young women and men.

The kingdom of Morocco has a history rich in Amazigh, Arab, African and European cultural influence. Its geographic location and natural resources make it a strategic business hub and an African destination like no other. The country's historical and modern cities offer a unique mixture of diverse experiences.

From the 17th century to the present, Morocco has been governed by the Alawite monarchy. Successive kings have maintained the stability of the country and support of the people. Today, the current King Mohammed VI has established several projects that aid in growth and development.

Human rights and individual freedoms, empowerment of women and gender equality, improved access to education for girls and adult education for women, are all enshrined in the current Moroccan constitution. However, while the moudawana and other economic reforms have given women a place within the labor force, gender and class disparities persist contributing to discrimination that generally limits women from advancing to positions of leadership (Boutouba, 2014). Research on gender and development suggests that targeting illiteracy and socio-economic marginalization are both vitally important for advancing the cause of women, but there must also be improved engagement with young men who feel alienated from women's movements and other efforts that advance the inclusion of marginalized groups (Skalli, 2011: 344). While formal political participation is low among youth, they are civically engaged in other forms of activism especially through social media. For example, young men and women have organized against sexual harassment using online platforms such as Women-Shoufouch where they combine "on the ground mobilization with cyber activism that maximizes the use of new communication technologies (Internet and cellphone) and social networks (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube)" (Skalli, 2013).

The high percentage of youth population in Moroccan society makes it one of its most important and critical resources. With only 1% of youth participating in political associations, Morocco continues to struggle to engage this demographic in the national life of the country (Zerhani, 2017: 9). Typically, the younger population expresses themselves through visual and performance artistic outlets, such as music, theatre, dance, painting, social media, and other forms of creative expression. While high profile rap musicians such as Al Haqed have faced repression, many young people have been inspired to find their voice and contribute to society (Hedgecoe, 2017). Potential topics in the "Year of Morocco" Conference, include, but are not limited to:

- Morocco at the intersection of Amazigh, Arab, African and European identities
- Colonialism's impact on Moroccan Identity
- Women in Morocco's history and development



- The new constitution and its impact on women's empowerment
- Women and social entrepreneurship in Morocco
- Education and urban/rural accessibility across Morocco
- Multilingual literacy in Morocco
- Youth's involvement and role in Morocco's development
- Civil society and social movements in Morocco
- The role of youth in the Moroccan Arab spring
- Youth, popular culture, communication technology and social transformation in Moroccan society
- Expression of Moroccan Identity through Art and Music
- Moroccan architecture and identity
- Islam and Interreligious Dialogue in Morocco
- Gender identity and LGBTQ rights in Morocco
- The role of youth in Morocco's environmental initiatives

Guidelines for Submission of Abstracts: To participate, please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words describing the focus of your proposed paper or panel, the methodology employed, and the general argument. At the top of the abstract, type your name, institutional affiliation, position or title, contact phone number, and e-mail. If you wish to propose a panel, please submit the title and abstract for each paper, along with the names and institutional affiliation of all panelists. Save in one Word or RTF document and attach the document to an email message. Type "Year of Morocco Conference" in the subject line and send it to Dr. Dan Paracka at dparacka@kennesaw.edu.

Deadline for Submission of Proposal Abstracts is October 1, 2018. Select Papers will be eligible for publication in a Special Issue of KSU's peer reviewed Journal of Global Initiatives focused on Morocco. <http://dga.kennesaw.edu/content/journals>

References:

- Boutouba, J. (2014). The Moudawana syndrome: gender trouble in contemporary Morocco. *Research in African Literatures*, 45(1), 24-38.
- Hedgecoe, Guy (2017, May 10) Moroccan rappers voice anger of the Arab Spring generation. The Irish Times. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/africa/moroccan-rappers-voice-anger-of-the-arab-spring-generation-1.3078043>
- Skalli, L. H. (2011). Generational Politics and Renewal of Leadership in the Moroccan Women's Movement, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13:329-348.
- Skalli, Loubna Hanna (2013) Young Women and Social Media Against Sexual Harassment in North Africa, *The Journal of North African Studies* 19(2): 244-258.
- Zerhouni, Saloua (2017, May) Explaining Youth Participation and Non-Participation in Morocco. *POWER2YOUTH* Working Paper No. 36. Istituto Affari International, Rome: Italy.