

ABSTRACT

QUEER TRAVEL STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH: A STUDY OF SOUTH TO NORTH QUEER TOURISM

Contemporary studies of queer tourism overwhelmingly focus on white upper middle-class gay and lesbian travel experiences (Puar, 2002) and rarely discuss queer tourism emerging from the Global South, and more specifically Africa. At the same time, Africa has gained global notoriety as a homophobic continent (Nyong'o, 2012 & Wahab, 2016) and these two factors reinscribe the image of a rights-stripped queer Africa rendering the continent itself incapacious for queer tourism.

This thesis examines the intersection of race, sexuality and geopolitics that render African queer mobility invisible within contemporary queer tourism studies. I argue that the result of situating the queer consumer and tourist exclusively within the Global North is a perpetuation of colonialist and racist stereotypes of queer Africans as impoverished victims of homophobic states and perpetual asylum seekers. Throughout this thesis, I wrestle with the question of how the queer African subject negotiates his / her / their

identity as queer citizens of the Global South, whose queer Black bodies become the sites upon which Western driven gay rights are negotiated and projected.

Through a qualitative study of their leisure-travels in Europe and the United States, I explore the experiences of queer Africans, and how they navigate their queerness and racial identity in Euro-American queer spaces that are predominantly White populated. I problematize contemporary transnational sexuality studies' erasure of non-Western queer mobility. I also interrogate the Western driven LGBT rights discourses that mark Black queer rights as inconceivable in the Global South. While these discourses posit equality for all queers, I contend that they fail to account for global structures of inequality, such as customs and border control policies and practices that overwhelmingly limit international mobility for queer citizens of the Global South while rendering their governments incapable of the socio-political capital to guarantee protection of human rights for their citizens.