

Itohan Mercy IDUMWONYI, (Ph.D.)
Religious Studies Department, Gonzaga University, Spokane WA, 99257-0057
Idumwonyi@gonzaga.edu; fessyito@yahoo.CO.NZ; (509) 279.1395 (Cell)

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

August 2019 – Present -	Gonzaga University , Spokane, WA Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies Affiliate Faculty, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
2018 – May 2019	- University of Benin , Nigeria, Lecturer I -
2013 – 2014	- Rice University , Houston, TX Teaching Assistant -
2004 – 2010	- University of Benin , Nigeria, Lecturer
2002 – 2004	- Centre for Democracy & Development, Benin City, Nigeria Research Fellow
2001 – 2002	- African Women's Empowerment Senior Program Officer/Office Manager

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

2018	Ph.D. in Religions , Rice University, Houston, TX Research Focus: In the field of Religions with broader research interest in African and Diasporic Religions, African Christianity, Women and Gender Studies, African Women's Religious History, Womanist Theology
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Monograph Title: [Crashed Realities?: Gender Dynamics in Nigerian Pentecostalism \(Brill, Dec. 2023\)](#)

Monograph Description: The book titled *Crashed Realities?* posits a sociological and theological construal of female identity that defies the myths of women as "not fit" for significant leadership positions in African Pentecostal tradition. With a prescriptive lens, this research proposes a "corrective" model of gender and identity construction. It analyzes the trajectories of female Pentecostal members who aspire to assume significant leadership positions. My ethnographic work shows that although Pentecostal tradition claims to empower its adherents, aspects of its apparatuses are utilized to construct gender "boundaries" that perpetuate dysfunctional relationships. These dysfunctional aspects subtly "boom" in the node of cultural domination and relegation loaned from African religions. This tradition continues to perpetuate gender inequality so that women in African Pentecostal traditions are held to different standards than their male counterparts. The corrective method is evident in the push for an alternate model that underscores and embraces inclusivity. The book frames a bridge that provides Africans a path to inclusiveness founded on the *Pentecostal Experience*.

- 2018 - **Rice University**, Graduate Certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
 2015 - **Rice University**, M.A. in Religious Studies
 2014 - **Rice University**, Certificate in Developing Teaching Skills
 2012 - **Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, MA**, Master of Theological Studies
 (African Religions, and Program on Women, Gender, and Sexuality)
 2002 - **University of Ibadan, Nigeria**, M.A. in Religious Studies (Distinction)
 Master Thesis: *The Rights and Privileges of Women in Ancient Israel and Traditional Benin: A Comparative Analysis*
 1998 - **University of Ibadan, Nigeria**, B.A. in Religious Studies
 Honors Thesis: *Women in Missions: A Study of Deborah the Prophetess and Nigerian Women in Christian Missions.*

CURRENT RESEARCH FOCUS

- 2024 - *Widow's Succession: A Socio-Historical Study of an Emerging Trend in African Pentecostalism*
 2022 - *Dynamics of Gender Relations in African and African Diaspora Religions in the United States*

COURSES TAUGHT

Gonzaga University (2019 – Present)

- RELI 371: African Religions and Migration in Catholic Europe
- RELI 287: African Religion & Christianity in Catholic Europe
- RELI 390: African Traditional Religion
- RELI 256: African Religious Traditions
- RELI 287: New Religious Movements in Africa & Diaspora
- RELI 387: Africa's New Religious Movements
- RELI 371: Religion & Gender in African & Diaspora Literature

Gonzaga in Florence (May–June 2023):

- RELI 287: African Religion & Spirituality in Catholic Europe

University of Benin, Nigeria (2018 – 2019):

- REL 222: Traditional Religions in Africa
- REL 120: Introduction to the Study of Religion

RESEARCH AREAS

- African Religions and Indigenous Traditions
- Afro-Pentecostalism in the Diaspora
- Gender Dynamics within Benin Religious Culture
- Contemporary African Christianity and Religious Movements
- Nigerian Pentecostalism, Women, and Gendered Politics
- Ethnography of Religious Movements in Africa and Diaspora

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND GRANTS

2025/26:	Resident Fellow, Princeton Theological Seminary/Overseas Ministries Study Center
2025/26:	Wabash Large Grant for research on “Enacting and Embracing Wholeness: Strengthening Faculty Practices and Wellbeing for Religion and Theology Teachers of African descent and Africanist.” (\$29,996)
2024:	Gonzaga International Education Council Award for research in Botswana and South Africa (\$3,500)
2024:	Gonzaga Faculty Research Council Award for research trip to Nigeria (\$3,000)
2023:	GU’s College of Arts & Sciences, Dean’s Discretionary Fund for project on “Widowhood Succession: <i>A Socio-Historical Study of an Emerging Trend in African Pentecostal Tradition</i> ,” (\$1,700)
2019:	GU’s College of Arts & Sciences Start-up Funds for research & publication (\$5,000)
2017:	Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE), Doctoral Fellow, (\$25,000)
2017:	Rice University, Center for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality (CSWGS), Fellow, Visionary Partner’s Dissertation Fellowship (\$7,500)
2016:	Rice University, Research Travel Funds (\$1,000)
2015:	Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) Fellow (\$20,000)
2014:	African Studies Association Student/Royal Air Morocco Travel Award
2014:	Rice University Humanities Research Center, \$500
2014:	Rice University, Graduate Studies Association, Travel Grants \$500
2013:	American Asso. of University Women (AAUW) International Fellowship (\$20,000)
2013:	Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory HASTAC Scholar, \$300.
2013:	Rice University, Center for Women, Gender, and Sexuality, \$500
2011:	Harvard Uni. Committee on General Scholarship, Calvin & Lucy Ellis Fund (\$8,500)
2011:	Harvard Divinity School, Reverend Karen Vickers Budney Scholarship (\$13,991)
2008:	Society of Biblical Literature, “Status of Women in the Profession Committee,” Travel Grant, Boston, MA.
2007:	The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Travel Grant (Protestant University of Central Africa (UPAC), Yaoundé, Cameroon)
2002:	The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
2000:	The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Kumasi, Ghana.

SELECTED PUBLISHED WORKS

Monograph

- *Crashed Realities?: Women and Gender Dynamics in Nigerian Pentecostalism* (Studies of Religion in Africa, 52) (Leide, Boston: Brill, December 2023).

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles:

- Itohan M. Idumwonyi, “Polygamy Re-Imagined and Re-Negotiated: A Postcolonial Reflection on Gender, Sexuality, and Narrative Theology in Africa Christianity,” *Journal of Africana Religions* 11, no. 1 (2023): 98–118

- Itohan M. Idumwonyi, "Ekpen'owa: Conceptualizing the Human-Animal Relationship in Benin (City, African) Worldview" in *Concilium: Revista Internacional de Teologia (Animal in/ and Theology Series)* (397) Sept. 2022/4 <https://concilium.hymnsam.co.uk/issues/>
- Itohan M. Idumwonyi (b), "Beyond a dance: The Resonance of Ugie Ekaba as God's Conduit to "Play" with Humans" in *Umwaen: Journal of Benin and Edo Studies*. Vol.7, issue of 2022.
- Itohan M. Idumwonyi, "The Relationship between Social Justice, Gender Justice and the Gospel of Jesus Christ: An African Perspective: in *Sacrum Testamentum: An International Theological Journal* (Vol. 1) (Black Reflections on Christian Studies Series) <https://sacratestamentum.wixsite.com/sacrum-testamentum/volume-1-1>

Book Chapters (Peer Reviewed):

- Idumwonyi, Itohan. M., "The Life History Interview: Exploring the Dynamic Identities of an Enigma," in Toyin Falola, (ed.) *The Philosophy of Nimi Wariboko*, Carolina Academic Press, 2020, pp. 391–414.
- Idumwonyi, Itohan. M., and Eduviere, O.O., "Women and African Traditional Religion," in Yacob-Haliso O., Falola T. (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Other Publications

- Itohan M. Idumwonyi and Enoch O. Gbadegesin, "The Social and Religious Impacts of Popular Gospel Music in Nigerian Pentecostal Christianity and Its Implication for Women," in Sati U. Fwatshak, eds., *Contemporary Nigeria: Transitional Agencies of Change* (Austin, TX: Pan-African University Press, 2016), 171-182.
- Itohan M. Idumwonyi and S. I. Ijeweimen, "The Dynamics of Language Politics in Religious Expression in African Indigenous Churches," in A. Salawu and M.B. Chibita, eds., *Indigenous Language Media, Language Politics, and Democracy in Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 195-210.
- Itohan M. Idumwonyi and Wilson Ehianu, "Igwe Festival among the Benin People: Response and Resilience of Indigenous Religion," in David O. Ogungbile, ed., *African Indigenous Religious Traditions in Local and Global Contexts: Perspectives on Nigeria* (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 2015), 227-44.
- Idumwonyi Itohan M., and S. I. Ijeweimen, "Resurgence of the Traditional Justice System in Postcolonial Benin (Nigerian) Society," in *African Journal of Legal Studies* 6 (2013): 1-13. Brill.com.ajls
- Itohan M. Idumwonyi, "Silence is Violence: Towards the Re-construction of the Woman's Identities," in *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. XLIV/2 (December 2012): 137-156.
- Idumwonyi, Itohan M. "Rites and Power: Conceptualizing Menstruation and Ancestral Veneration as a Symbolic Tool for the Exclusion and Legitimization of Power in Benin (Nigerian) Religious Tradition," in *Culture: The Graduate Journal of Harvard Divinity School* (Online Issues 2012) <http://cultandculture.org/culture/index.php/issues/23-culture-2012-spring-issue/65-rites-and-power.html>
- Itohan M. Idumwonyi, "A Biblical Model of Sexuality: The Nigerian Perspective," in U. U. Ukagba, ed., *The Kpim of Feminism: Issues and Women in a Changing World* (United Kingdom: Trafford Publishing, 2010), 401–11.

- _____ "The Evolvement of Prophet and Prophecy in the Old Testament: A Historical Perspective," in E. O. Oyelade, ed., *Readings in Religion and Philosophy* (Benin City, Nigeria: Teredia Publishers, 2006).
- _____ "The Dynamics of the Inter-testamental Era: Towards a History and Process of Apocalyptic Literature," in E. O. Oyelade, ed., *Readings in Religion and Philosophy* (Benin City, Nigeria: Teredia Publishers, 2006).
- _____ "Religious and Cultural Sustenance of Patriarchy in Africa: The Benin Woman's Dilemma," in D. O. Akintunde and H. Labeodan, eds., *Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa* (Ibadan: Sefer Books Ltd, 2002), 92-107.
- _____ "A Deborah in World Pentecostalism: The Story of Margaret Ekhoeragbon Idahosa," in *Journal of Constructive Theology*. Vol. 8, No. 2 (December 2002).
- _____ "Tradition, Poverty and the Church: Challenges for the African Woman," in D.O. Akintunde, ed., *African Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights* (Ibadan: Sefer Books Ltd., 2001), 113-24.

IN-PROGRESS AND FUTURE PUBLICATIONS

Article (Peer-Review)

- Itohan M. Idumwonyi, "Beyond Aesthetics: Reflection on the Art of *Okuku* Headdress in Benin Religion and Culture." *Journal of Religion in Africa*.

Book Chapter (Peer-Review)

- "Dorcas O. Akintunde: Re-Imagining Gender and African Biblical Hermeneutics" in Telesia Kathini Musili & Rosalind Flynn Hinton (eds.) *Hear our Voice: Amplifying Unheard African Women Theologians*, (SCM Press, 2026).
- "The 'Move of the Spirit': Contextualizing Sexploitation and Mapping Sexual Topographies in Black/Global Pentecostal Terrain," in *Afterlives of Slave* (Bloomsbury Press, 2026).

Encyclopaedia

- Itohan M. Idumwonyi¹ and Solomon I. Ikhidero "Restorative Justice vis-à-vis the Functioning Criminal Justice System in Pre- and Postcolonial Benin City, Nigeria" in Kerry Clamp & Ivo Aertsen (eds.) *International Encyclopaedia of Restorative Justice* (IERJ), 2026.

Invited Book/Article Review

- *Spirit on the Move: Black Women and Pentecostalism in Africa and the Diaspora*. (ed.) by Judith Casselberry and Elizabeth Pritchard. Durham, NC: Duke Uni. Press, 2019. X + 248 pages. Published online by Cambridge Uni Press: 08 March 2024.
- "Currents and Cross-Currents in Pentecostal Studies in Africa: 'Minding the Pentecostal Paradox'" in *Religion Compass* <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rec3.12509>
- We Honor Our Dead Relatives Just as you Indirectly Do: Interrogating Second Burial Phenomenon in Esanland, Edo State of Nigeria." In the *Journal of Benin and Edoid Studies*. (Dec. 2023).
- *Religious Beliefs and Knowledge Systems in Africa* for Rowman & Littlefield International, 2020.
- "If a Woman knows [the] Cult Secret, she must Never tell": Ritual Consecration, Secrecy and Female Power in Egungun Pageantry" in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, (March 2020).

- "Expansion of Witches Battlefield by the Emergence of a New Church in Southern Benin" in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, (Dec 2020).
- "Ennobling qualities of the Edo woman for peace and conflict resolution: Past, Present, and Future" in *Umewaen: Journal of Benin and Edo Studies* (Jan 2020).
- *The Church in a Secular Age: A Pneumatological Re-construction of Stanley Hauerwas' Ecclesiology* in Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018, pp. 319 - 320).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

- Invited to the 2025 College and University Educators Workshop, CFR, New York, March 10 – 11, 2025
- Selected Participant for the Wabash 2024 Early Career Faculty Teaching Undergraduates in Religion, (Indianapolis, June 24 – 28, 2024).
- Forum for Theological Exploration-Wabash Center Teaching Workshop. A Virtual workshop was held from Sept. 24 – 26, 2020.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

- “Crashed Realities?: Revisiting Women (In)Visibility and Gender Dynamics in World Christianity,” at the 5th International Interdisciplinary Conference on World Christianity, themed: “Revisiting Women and Gender in World Christianity, University of Ghana, Legon, March 11-15, 2024.
- American Academy of Religion (AAR), (San Diego, Texas, Nov. 23 – 26, 2024)
- American Academy of Religion (AAR), (San Antonio, Texas, Nov. 18 – 21, 2023)
- 3rd International, Interdisciplinary Virtual Conference on World Christianity and History of Religions on March 3-6, 2021. (Princeton Theological Seminary, NJ, USA)
- Virtual Conference on "Ethics, Economy, Society, Religion, and African Social Traditions" (the University of Texas at Austin), on November 21, 2020.

Book Panels on *Crashed Realities: Gender Dynamics in Nigerian Pentecostalism*

- Author-Meets-Critics Session: *Crashed Realities?: Gender Dynamics in Nigerian Pentecostalism*, at the 5th International Interdisciplinary Conference on World Christianity with the theme: “Revisiting Women and Gender in World Christianity, held at the University of Ghana, Legon from 11 – 15 March 2024.
- Author-meets-Readers Session: *Crashed Realities?: Gender Dynamics in Nigerian Pentecostalism* held during the 8th Lagos Studies Association Conference held at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, with the theme, “African Identities: Peoples, Cultures & Institutions in Motion” from June 25 – 29, 2024.

PLENARY LECTURES

- “*Vbo r’eni rue?* (What is your Name?): Towards Reclaiming our Benin (African) Identity,” 2nd edition of the Edo Language Day, Worldwide, University of Toronto August 9-13, 2024).

- "Pay It Forward: Remembering *Others* on the Bottom Side of the Ladder." A-Zoom presentation at the 10th Annual Lecture of The Esther Folorunso Ayantayo Foundation (EFA-F) on August 21, 2020.
 - "Beyond Aesthetics: Reflection on the Art of *Okuku* Headdress in Benin Religion and Culture," a Zoom/Webinar presentation at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art for the *Global Religions of Africa Series* held on June 23, 2020.
 - "The Continuity of Life in African Traditional Religion: An Illusion?" Presented at the South Hill (Spokane Public) Library on March 7, 2020.
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CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- "The Woman Called Man: The Woman Called Man: Rethinking Gender Roles and Inclusivity in African Pentecostalism," Polin Institute of Abo Akademi, Finland (August 27-20, 2024).
- "The Woman Called Man: A Lens into the Gender Dynamics and Import Transformation in African Pentecostalism" at the Regional Pacific Northwest American Academy of Religion, (May 17, 2024).
- "Archbishop Margaret E. Idahosa: An Insignia of Gender and Social-Cultural Twist in Global Pentecostalism," presented (Virtually) during the 14th Global Pentecostalism Conference, by European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism, held in Germany from Feb. 9 – 10, 2024.
- "Crashed Realities?: Revisiting Women (In)Visibility and Gender Dynamics in World Christianity," presented (virtually) during the 5th International Interdisciplinary Conference on World Christianity with the theme: "Revisiting Women and Gender in World Christianity, held at the University of Ghana, Legon from 11 – 15 March 2024.
- "*Boundaryless Spirituality: The Transnational Migration of Nigerian (African) Pentecostal Gospel Music Across the Global in the Time of the Pandemic.* The 4th Biennial Conference of the African Society for the Study of Sociology and Ethics of Religions (ASSOSER), themed *Religion and the Challenges of Digital Turn* at the Uni. of Ibadan, Nigeria on June 19 – 21, 2023
- "Ubuntu: Navigating Modern Struggles with Ancient (Theological) Wisdom for Human Flourishing," for the Humanities Washington Speakers Bureau on June 12, 2023.
- "Globalization and Transnationalism: Engendering & Reshaping New Religious Movement." Guest Lectured at Princeton Theological Seminary on November 1, 2022.
- "Ubuntu: Navigating the Theology of Human Virtues." The GU Center for Global Engagement's monthly team building/professional Development meeting on May 4, 2022.
- "Ubuntu: Navigating the Theology of Human Virtues." The GU, Colleagues of Color's Meeting on April 4 2022.
- Panelist on the Hagiology Roundtable in the AAR in Denver, Colorado, from November 19 – 22, 2022.
- "Sociological Conceptualization of Values, Religion, and Social Transformation in Nigeria." Conference of the African Society for the Study of Sociology and Ethics of Religion (ASSOSER) that was held at the Uni. of Ibadan, Nigeria, May 15 – 17, 2016.
- "Conceptualizing Humor: Violence in Everyday Life and Patterns of Reconstructing Violence and Social Suffering in Nigeria" in *Morality at Issue* Panel. At the 57th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Asso. (ASA) held in Indianapolis, IN, on Nov. 17-20, 2014.

- "Towards a Postcolonial Reflection on Gender, Sexuality, Narrative Theology in Africa" in *The Bible in Racial, Ethnic, and Indigenous Communities* Panel. At the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature (AAR/SBL), held in San Diego, CA, November 20-23, 2014.
 - "Policing the Boundaries, Minding the Gender Gap in Nigerian Pentecostal Churches." Rice University, Center for The Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality Graduate Symposium, April 11, 2014.
 - Itohan M. Idumwonyi and Enoch O. Gbadegesin, "The Social and Religious Impacts of Popular Gospel Music in Nigerian Pentecostal Christianity and the Implication for Women." The University of Texas Africa Conference on *Social Movements, Religion, and Political Expression in Africa* was held at the University of Texas at Austin, March 29-31, 2013.
 - Itohan M. Idumwonyi, "Iha Omin'gbon – Divination and Ritual Sacrifice: Re-Imagining Social Re-Ordering in Benin (Nigeria) Society," Southwest Commission on Religious Studies, Irving, Texas, March 8- 10, 2013.
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SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

International & National:

- Vice President, Regional Pacific Northwest American Academy of Religion (2024–2026)
- Member, American Academy of Religion (AAR) 2 African Religions Steering Committee, (2023–2027)
- Member, American Academy of Religion, Religion and Migration Steering Committee (2022–2026)
- From Thesis to Book: A Roundtable of First Book Authors, done at the 8th Annual The Lagos Studies Association (LSA) Conference held at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, with the theme from June 25 – 29, 2024.
- Author Meets Readers, Abimbola Adelakun, *Powerful Devices: Prayer and the Political Praxis of Spiritual Warfare* (Rutgers Uni., Press, 2022) at the 7th Annual Lagos Studies Association Conference, titled, “Rethinking Decoloniality: African Decolonization and Epistemologies in the 21st Century at the University of Lagos, Nigeria on June 20 -24, 2023,
- Guest Coordinator/Facilitator, Graduate Training, “Gender Dynamic in Nigerian Pentecostalism: A Hands-on Field Experience” at the 2023 Summer Ife Institute of Advanced Studies, themed: “Advancing Africa Through the Academy: Innovation, Creativity, and Service,” at Obafemi Awolowo Uni., Ife, Nigeria on July 23rd – August 4th, 2023.

Reviewer

- *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 2020
- *Umewaen: Journal of Benin and Edo Studies*, 2020
- The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group International, 2020

University - Gonzaga University

- Member, Planning Committee, Symposium on Diversity: Healing, Strength, & Collective Action, Gonzaga Office of Inclusive Excellence, May 1, 2025.
- Co-chair, CURCI Internal Programs Subcommittee, 2025
- Member, Speaker Series Committee, 2024

- Host: Dr. Abraham Jenero: An Overview of African Migrants (Religion) in Catholic Europe (The US Border), 2024.
- Foley Library Committee, 2023.
- Guest Lecture on “Ubuntu & Development: An African Conception of Development” in Dr. Albana Dwonch, POL. 359: Third World Development class, 2023
- Dissertation Committee for a doctoral program in G.U.'s Leadership Studies, 2022.
- Member, Planning Committee, Civil Rights Lecture, 2022.
- Volunteer, Active Study, Project title: *Power and Privilege in the Ivory Tower* (Qualitative Analyst and Cultural Expert), 2022.
- The Gonzaga University Council for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (GUCDEI), 2022
- Member, Fulbright Committee, 2022.
- Member: The Global Studies Designation Core Committee, 2022.
- Host/Collaborate with the Foley Library. Dr. Kelly O'Brien and Anthony Tardif teach research strategy and the responsive use of AI, 2021.
- Host/Collaborate with the Career and Professional Development Unit: Ray Angle give a talk on career professional development strategies, 2020 – till date.
- Career Kindler, 2019 – till date

College of Arts & Sciences

- Committee member, CAS Career Preparation, 2023 till date
- IDEAS in Action (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity in Arts and Sciences Committee), 2021

Department of Religious Studies

- Co-Director, Colloquium Committee, spring 2025
- Co-director, The Religious Studies Undergraduate Program, 2023 – 2024.
- Religious Studies Department Program Review Working Group, 2022.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC OUTREACH

- Featured Speaker, Humanities Washington Speakers Bureau, 2024-2026.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- African Studies Association (ASA)
- African Society for the Study of Sociology and Ethics of Religion (ASSOSER)
- American Academy of Religion (AAR)
- The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians
- Nigeria Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS)