

# Modernizing without Westernizing: Reinventing African Patriarchies to combat the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Africa<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper argues that men remain vital to any effort to curb the HIV and AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa given the often critical roles they play in spreading the HIV virus. Accordingly, it explores the plausibility of reconstructing and modernizing contemporary African masculinities within an African cultural prism to progressively engage men in combating HIV and AIDS in the continent. This modernization would require a cultural paradigm shift from the present worldview of masculinities that view women as sub-humans to one that acknowledges them as part of a whole web of interdependent relationships without which their own (men's) existence is empty (ubuntu).

Therefore, the paper proposes three broad strategies for reinventing African patriarchies to progressively engage men in efforts to curb the HIV and AIDS epidemic: one, a cultural re-enlightenment and re-socialization of men to abhor the socio-cultural worldviews and images that undergird their dangerous behaviors and actions; two, using gender-friendly men to encourage other men on behavioral change aimed at fostering preventive behaviour like faithfulness as well as caring for the infected; and three, co-parenting, (the rearing of children on an equal basis with women) in order to dismantle the basis of patriarchy in society and in the process enthrone a new kind of African civilization. These have the utility not only of meeting African men at their own cultural levels, but also enabling them to rightly perceive and accept gender equality actions in post-colonial Africa as innately African rather than as a Western imposition.

Full text:

[http://www.thembosdev.com/african\\_patriarchies\\_hiv\\_aids\\_christopher\\_isike\\_&\\_ufo\\_uzodike\\_2008.htm](http://www.thembosdev.com/african_patriarchies_hiv_aids_christopher_isike_&_ufo_uzodike_2008.htm)

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