

KEEPING OUR HEADS BUT LOSING OUR HEARTS: SOME CURRENT SEXUALITIES AND GENDER DEBATES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The sexuality debate within South Africa currently cuts across several different political issues. In exploring this issue, this article begins by sketching a brief history of sexualities and gender within a South African context; secondly it links the concept of citizenship to debates on sexualities; the third and fourth sections present two case studies which illuminate current debates on sexualities and gender for South Africans. The first case study is the Jacob Zuma rape trial, while the second is an analysis of the Civil Unions Act of 2006, which permitted same sex marriage. These case studies suggest that far from being “the progressive” African state (as it is often believed because of the Constitution’s position on gender, sex, and sexual orientation), South Africans are deeply involved in aggressive, and sometimes archconservative contestation about what can be considered “normal” in terms of masculinity, femininity, and sexual culture.