

## **Call for Papers for Special Issue (*Afika Focus*, edited by Dr. Olúwábùnmi Bernard)**

### **Filth, Fertility, and Flux: Interrogating Body Waste in African Societies**

Conference: 10th Annual Conference of Lagos Studies Association

Conference Theme: The State of African Studies in the 21st Century: The Century: The Lagos Studies Association (LSA) @10

Format: Hybrid (In-person, University of Lagos and Virtual)

Conference Date: June 16-20, 2026

Abstract Deadline: December 1, 2025

Panel Organizer: Dr Olúwábùnmi Bernard (Ghent University, Belgium)

Perceptions of bodily waste are a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon which is heavily influenced by religious traditions, beliefs about purity and pollution, and psychological factors like disgust and fear. While the physical act of waste production is a universal biological necessity, how it is handled, viewed, and integrated into society varies significantly across cultures and history, ranging from deep taboo to a potential resource. The belief among many African cultures is that whatever has been inside of or has touched the body even when it leaves those spaces, should not be treated with levity, and must be properly disposed of. With this in mind, scholarship that sheds light on how waste, often deemed 'abject' or 'polluting' in many global narratives, is understood, managed, utilized, and imbued with meaning within African societies cultures, and knowledge systems is important and timely.

We invite submissions for LSA panel and a special issue exploring the complex diverse cultural, social, political, religious, and economic perceptions of human body waste across the African continent. This theme seeks to understand how traditional beliefs, modern practices, and policy interfaces shape the meaning, management, and ultimate destiny of body waste (including hair, urine, nails, spit, feces, menstrual blood, seminal fluids, human placenta, deceased remains, and other forms of body waste) in various African communities.

#### **Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:**

- \* Traditional/Indigenous beliefs, taboos, and ritual significance of bodily waste.
- \* Indigenous knowledge systems and classifications of bodily secretions and excretions.
- \* The depiction of body waste in African literature, film, visual arts, and oral traditions.
- \* The socio-cultural dimensions of sanitation, hygiene, and public health.
- \* The intersection of bodily waste perception with gender, class, and urban/rural divides.
- \* Body waste and ancestor veneration (e.g., burial or other forms of disposal of the deceased).

\* Economic value and transformative use of human waste (e.g., fertilizer, bioenergy, circular economy models).

\* Bodily waste and environmental sustainability.

\* Policy challenges and community resistance related to formal bodily waste management and treatment.

\* Historical and contemporary technologies for collecting, treating, and disposing waste.

**Submission Guidelines:**

Please submit an abstract of 300 words and a short biography to Dr Olúwábùnmi Bernard (oluwabunmi.bernard@ugent.be) by **December 1, 2025, using LSA Abstract as email subject**. Please submit your abstract, including a clear statement of your research question, methodology, key findings, and theoretical contribution to the email above. Submissions must be original and not currently under review.

**Notification of Acceptance: January 15, 2026.**

**Full paper submission deadline: May 30, 2026.**

The selected papers will be invited for publication in a special issue of *Afrika Focus* following peer-review. *Afrika Focus* is a multidisciplinary journal dealing with Africa. It is published biannually, and it is subject to international peer-review. Further details on manuscript preparation will be provided upon abstract acceptance.

**We welcome contributions from anthropologists, sociologists, public health experts, religious studies scholars, environmental scientists, urban planners, and other related fields.**