


# Landman's pioneering work at UNISA's Research Institute for Theology and Religion

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This article explores the historical evolution of gendered theological scholarship at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion (RITR), University of South Africa (Unisa), with a particular focus on the pioneering contributions of Professor Christina Landman, the only academic female staff member at the RITR until 2021. As one of the early advocates for integrating gender discourse within theological scholarship, Landman faced significant opposition from male scholars entrenched in patriarchal academic structures. Despite this resistance, she persistently advanced the gendered theological agenda at the RITR. As part of her work, she actively participated in, tracked and documented the work of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, laying a critical foundation for future theological work in the field of gender and religion at RITR. Grounded in African women's theology, this study utilises the oral history method to engage Landman in an in-depth interview, allowing for a nuanced reflection on her experiences and contributions.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** By documenting this historical trajectory, the article aims to foreground the enduring impact of Landman's work on gender within African theological scholarship and highlights the ongoing challenges and developments in advancing African theological scholarship in the field of gender and religion at the RITR.

**Keywords:** Christina Landman; Research Institute for Theology and Religion; African women's theology; gender justice; oral history.

## Introduction

This study explores the historical development of gender and religion scholarship at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion (RITR), University of South Africa (Unisa), with a focus on the pioneering contributions of Professor Christina Landman, the RITR's first female academic. Grounded in African women's theology, which prioritises African women's experiences, challenges patriarchal theological interpretations and integrates justice and liberation within spiritual and social discourses (Maseno 2021), this research highlights Landman's groundbreaking work in reshaping theological spaces to reflect the lived realities of women. Despite resistance from patriarchal structures dominated by (predominantly white) male scholars, her unwavering commitment to gender justice laid a critical foundation for future scholarship at the RITR.

The oral history method is employed to document Landman's experiences and contributions through in-depth interviews. This approach aligns with African women's theology, which values personal narratives as a means of preserving knowledge and affirming the agency of African women (Kaunda 2020:228). Landman's academic journey, including her determination to overcome gender-based exclusion and her rise to become South Africa's first female professor of theology at the age of 34 (Interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024), underscores her resilience in navigating and challenging a male-dominated theological landscape. The study also draws on the 'Choreography of oral history' framework (Janesick 2020), emphasising open-ended questions and attentive listening to centre Landman's voice. This process captures her advocacy for including women's perspectives in theology and her participation in key events, such as the 1984 conference on 'Sexism and feminism in theological perspective' (Interview with Christina Landman, 03 October 2024).

**Note:** The manuscript is a contribution to the themed collection titled 'Fifty years of theological and religion research: The history of the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa (1975–2025)', under the expert guidance of guest editor Professor Emeritus Christina Landman.

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2024), which marked a turning point in advancing gender justice within theological scholarship.

Landman's involvement in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (henceforth, the Circle) further illustrates her dedication to institutionalising gender justice and amplifying African women's voices in theology. Through her work in the Circle and other aspects of her scholarship, she challenged patriarchal norms, fostered spaces for future generations of women theologians and reinforced feminist and womanist theology's integral role in liberation discourses (Landman 1996, 2002; ed. Oduyoye 1997). Her career represents a critical moment in South African theological history, particularly in addressing the intersection of race and gender, and her scholarly contributions continue to inspire gender justice within theological debates.

This article begins with a brief overview of the RITR and a biographical description of Landman, followed by an examination of her contributions to gender and religion scholarship at the RITR and beyond. By employing African women's theology and the oral history method, the article highlights her resilience, challenges and lasting impact on South African theological scholarship.

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodological design grounded in the oral history approach to document the pioneering contributions of Professor Christina Landman to gender and religion scholarship at the RITR, Unisa. The research is situated within the framework of African women's theology, which centres the experiences of African women, challenging patriarchal theological interpretations and integrating justice and liberation within both spiritual and social contexts (Kanyoro 2001). The oral history methodology is particularly well-suited to this study as it allows for the in-depth exploration of Landman's personal narratives, experiences and reflections, offering a nuanced understanding of her journey in reshaping theological scholarship in South Africa.

The oral history methodology, as defined by Janesick (2010), involves the collection of stories and reminiscences from individuals who have firsthand knowledge of experiences that have shaped their lives. This approach is inclusive, seeking the testimony of individuals with personal histories to share, particularly those who have been marginalised or whose voices have been silenced historically. The heart and soul of oral history is to uncover these testimonies, which serve as authentic, firsthand accounts of significant events. Oral history enables rich, thick descriptions and analyses of people's lives, offering a unique lens to understand both the past and its ongoing impact on the present (Janesick 2007). Viewed in this context, oral history becomes a form of social justice, preserving the stories of those often on the periphery of mainstream narratives. In this case, Professor Landman's testimony is essential for documenting the lived experiences of a pioneering woman who faced considerable opposition and challenges within the male-dominated theological academy.

The methodology employed in this article values the personal and subjective nature of Landman's experiences, allowing her to reflect on her career and contributions, while also ensuring that her voice is central to the historical record. African women's theology underscores the importance of creating inclusive spaces where women's voices are amplified and their agency affirmed (Maseno 2021). The oral history method is well aligned with this framework, as it offers a space for Landman to lead the narrative, detailing the challenges, strategies and triumphs that characterised her academic journey. Through this process, Landman's role in advancing gendered theological discourse and her involvement in institutionalising gender justice within African theology are foregrounded.

The 'Choreography of oral history' (Janesick 2020) framework guides the interview process, where open-ended questions and reflective listening allow the participant to steer the narrative. This process mirrors the central tenets of African women's theology, which stresses the significance of narrative as a vehicle for understanding and transformation. In this study, the 'Choreography of oral history' involves not just the recollection of facts but a deep engagement with the subjective experiences of the individual. It is a dynamic, iterative process that invites personal reflection and critical engagement with key moments in Landman's career, such as her advocacy for gender justice in the theological academy. These reflections offer valuable insights into how Landman navigated entrenched patriarchal structures and advanced feminist and womanist theological concerns at a time when such ideas were often dismissed.

Landman's contributions to the Circle are also explored through oral history interviews, providing a deeper understanding of her efforts to heed the voices of African women theologians and institutionalise gender justice within theological scholarship. This engagement with oral history allows for a layered narrative that reveals both the institutional barriers Landman faced and the broader socio-political and cultural contexts in which her work was situated. By documenting these testimonies, the study not only honours Landman's achievements, but also positions her contributions as part of a larger movement towards gender equity in theology. The oral history method, as a social justice project, ensures that Landman's experiences, struggles and successes are preserved for future generations. As oral history has increasingly been used to document the stories of marginalised groups, it provides a powerful tool for capturing the lived experiences of individuals who have historically been overlooked or excluded from mainstream historical narratives (Janesick 2020). In Landman's case, her pioneering work in feminist and womanist theology and her leadership in the field of gender and religion at the RITR form a critical part of South African theological history, particularly for future generations of scholars who will build upon her legacy.

In addition to the documentation of Landman's personal journey, the oral history methodology also reveals the intersectional nature of her work, highlighting how race, gender and academic structures shaped her experiences. This approach allows the study to capture not only the professional

and academic dimensions of Landman's life, but also the social and cultural forces that informed her contributions to gendered theological discourse. By preserving and analysing these stories, the research contributes to a broader understanding of how feminist and womanist theology in South Africa has evolved and the ongoing challenges it faces in a post-apartheid academic context.

## The Research Institute for Theology and Religion

Founded in 1975, the RITR, Unisa, has played a pivotal role in shaping theological and religious scholarship on the African continent. Initially established as the Institute for Theological Research, it adopted its current name in 1997, reflecting a broader vision that embraces diverse religious studies within Africa and globally. Over nearly five decades, the RITR has aligned itself with Unisa's values of equity, community-centredness and innovation, emerging as a centre of excellence in research and scholarship. Its mission encompasses transdisciplinary research, impactful community engagement and the pursuit of innovative academic contributions that are firmly rooted in African contexts and aligned with both national and global developmental goals, including the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The RITR's achievements are significant. Through its robust focus on research output, strategic alignment with Unisa's broader goals and its emphasis on local and continental impact, the RITR has cemented its reputation as a leader in theological and religious scholarship. Furthermore, the RITR has excelled in advancing the study of theology and religion as tools for addressing pressing societal issues, particularly those affecting African communities (The RITR 2024).

Landmark contributions by scholars such as Christina Landman have deepened the RITR's commitment to interrogating theology through a gendered lens, emphasising the inclusion of lived experiences and the needs of marginalised communities in academic discourse. Landman's work remains foundational in the RITR's engagement with gender and religious studies, inspiring a new generation of scholars. However, despite its considerable achievements, one of the most glaring shortcomings of the RITR is its historical lack of gender equity in permanent academic positions. Since its founding in 1975, the RITR has had only two permanently employed female academics, Christina Landman and Linda Naicker, over its nearly 50-year history. Even more glaring than this is the lack of black African<sup>1</sup>

1. The term 'black African' is used here in reference to the racial categories imposed by apartheid's racial classification system, as outlined in the *Population Registration Act (Act No. 30 of 1950)*. While I do not ascribe to or endorse the apartheid-era racial classifications, I use this term to highlight the historical context of racial oppression and privilege. Under apartheid, South Africans were divided into distinct racial groups: white people, Natives (black Africans), Coloureds and later Indians, with various subgroups for each. This legal and institutionalised classification system entrenched racial separation and inequality, aiming to maintain white superiority and privilege. Black African women occupied the lowest rung of this hierarchical ladder, bearing the brunt of intersecting racial, gendered and class-based oppression, and were consequently the most disenfranchised and oppressed demographic. Although I am South African Indian according to the apartheid system, I identify as black in the broader context of resistance to racial oppression. While I acknowledge the contested nature of such racial categories, I use them here to reflect the continuing vestiges of apartheid, particularly in how spatial and social divisions persist in contemporary South Africa. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/race-and-ethnicity-southafrica#>

women, emphasising the need for greater effort to recruit and retain black African women academics at the RITR, so that it can boast greater racial and gender inclusivity and representation. Addressing this gap is critical for the RITR to fully embody its stated principles of equity and transformation and to continue its role as a progressive force in theological and religious studies. The RITR's journey underscores both its successes and the challenges that remain. While its contributions to theological scholarship and societal transformation are undeniable, a deeper commitment to fostering gender equity within its structures will ensure its continued relevance and impact in the years to come.

## Christina Landman: Early life, education, ministry and career

Christina Landman was born on 08 February 1956 in Lyttelton, Pretoria, into a prominent Afrikaner family with deeply conservative political views. Her parents were influential members of the Afrikaner community and active in the white Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), a denomination that was closely aligned with the apartheid regime. As a child, she attended all-white schools, beginning with Fleur Laerskool and later Lyttelton Hoërskool, both Afrikaans-medium institutions. Like most white South Africans under apartheid, her contact with black people was limited to the domestic workers employed by her family, reflecting the widespread segregation of the time. During her primary school years, Landman's father accepted a professorship at the newly established University of Port Elizabeth, prompting the family to relocate to the Eastern Cape for two years. While in Port Elizabeth, Landman had the opportunity to learn some English, although her mother forbade its use at home because of lingering anti-English sentiment following the Anglo-Boer conflict. After two years, the family returned to Lyttelton when her father secured another professorship at the University of Pretoria (Oral history interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024).

Landman matriculated from Lyttelton Hoërskool in 1973, earning the title of *Victrix Ludorum*.<sup>2</sup> She recalls that only a few girls from her class pursued further education, with herself and Lynette Reynders – who later became a gynaecologist – being the exceptions. It was her father who encouraged her to study theology at university, largely because, as a professor, his children were entitled to free tuition. Landman excelled in her studies, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree with distinctions in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. However, when she attempted to enrol at the Theological Faculty of the University of Pretoria, she was denied entry solely because she was a woman. Landman vividly recalls her response to the professor: '*Julle sal nog sien, ek sal 'n dominee word*' [You will see, I shall become a pastor!]. It would take 30 more years before this declaration came to fruition, with her ordination in 2008, after she obtained her licensure in 2006. Notably, she chose to be ordained in the African Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa,<sup>3</sup> rejecting ordination in the white DRC. Her first

2. A Latin term which connotes achievement, distinction and excellence in competition.

3. See: <https://rff.christians.co.za/the-uniting-reformed-church-in-southern-africa-urcsa/#:~:text=URCSA%20was%20formed%20in%201994,Kroonstad%2C%20Free%20State%2C%20merged.>



congregation was in Sakhelwe, a township in Dullstroom, Mpumalanga, where she served from 2008 to 2018, before being called to serve in Karlienpark, a Coloured township in Rustenburg (Oral history interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024).

After being barred from studying theology in 1977, Landman enrolled for a postgraduate Baccalaureus Divinitatis degree at Unisa, the same degree pursued by men at the University of Pretoria. While working on a contract basis at the Institute for Theological Research (now the RITR), she secured a permanent position in Unisa's Department of Church History in 1980, even before completing her final exams. In 1987, Landman married at the age of 31. However, the marriage quickly turned abusive, and after 4 months, she filed for divorce. Despite the ongoing abuse even after the birth of her son, the police were largely indifferent to her situation, and it was only with the help of friends that she was able to flee to safety (Interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024). Landman's experience in an abusive marriage underscores the deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes that shaped her personal and professional journey. Her struggle for safety and the lack of institutional support reflect the broader societal failure to acknowledge women as equals to men and to protect women from domestic violence, an issue she later addressed through her work on gender justice in theology.

Despite facing a lack of support from some colleagues in the Department of Church History, many of whom held conservative views on women's roles in theology, Landman's career advanced significantly under the mentorship of Professor David Bosch. In 1990, she achieved the milestone of becoming the first female Professor of Theology at a South African university. Landman's scholarly journey reflects an impressive academic record, encompassing theology and interdisciplinary fields, with an extensive body of books and popular works, along with numerous peer-reviewed articles in accredited journals. Her leadership roles include serving as Actarius for the Northern Regional Synod in 2010 for two terms and for the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) National Synod in 2019. Landman's engagement with feminist and womanist theology began in 1984 with Professor Maimela's introduction of a feminist theology module at Unisa. She observed that the DRC's discriminatory practices discouraged women from exploring feminist theology or challenging patriarchal structures, and she later partnered with other white women theologians from historically white universities to further the study of feminist theology (Kgatla 2019:2). Significantly, Landman published *The Piety of Afrikaans Women* in 1994, a critical work that explored how the Calvinism practised by most Afrikaners during apartheid was not only deeply racist but also profoundly sexist. She argued that this theology positioned white women as subordinate to white men in the 'order of creation'. Significantly, Landman's analysis of Afrikaner Calvinism critically examined its oppressive impact on white women, raising for me, important questions about the compounded struggles of black women who faced race, class

and gender subjugation. This omission highlights a significant gap in Landman's early works, as it did not address the layered oppression experienced by black women within the same theological framework, who were positioned even lower in the socio-religious hierarchy. Nevertheless, this omission could be attributed to the lack of black women in theological academia at the time, which limited both the perspectives available within the field and the broader recognition of black women's distinct experiences under patriarchal and racial oppression. However, from 1990 onwards, Landman addressed this gap by actively collaborating with the Circle, where she engaged more deeply with the intersectional challenges facing black women and contributed to advancing African feminist and womanist theological scholarship (Interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024). As Landman's career progressed, her involvement with the Circle grew. Undoubtedly, this collaborative participation in the work of the Circle significantly enriched her understanding of feminist and womanist theology, as she critiqued the patriarchal cultures that perpetuate women's oppression.

## Breaking gender barriers in theological academia

Landman observes that, although a few individuals at Unisa were engaged in gender-related work, the feminist theological project struggled to gain substantial traction within the institution. This reflects the broader challenges of advancing feminist and womanist theological discourses in a predominantly conservative academic and religious context. The lack of collective action and limited institutional support further hindered the development and mainstreaming of these critical frameworks, particularly during the formative years of the RITR. As Landman explains:

At UNISA then [apartheid and early post-apartheid], I experienced very little interaction with women and gender work. There was Louis Kretzschmar and Annalet van Schalkwyk but we didn't really succeed in driving the feminist theological project or forming any sort of group. And then in 1994 I published a book, 'The Piety of Afrikaans Women'. There was a loud outcry against that... I went there [to the Netherlands] to study them [the ego-texts (diaries) of Dutch-Afrikaans women]; my son was like three and four years old. I put him on my back, and I went to the Netherlands and wrote that book there. I indicated from the women's own writings what women had to suffer in the Afrikaner subculture, and eventually under local Calvinism – and that the latter was as sexist as it was racist. Afrikaners were angry with me for the book, and the book became famous for the wrong reasons. And that is because I called the woman's monument in Bloemfontein, a phallic structure. And pointed out that there are no women even buried there, only men. The women baked a lot of cookies to pay a guy [raised funds] to write their history: the history of the Afrikaner women, which was absolutely dreadful. It was that time when all the women in the Netherlands got the vote. The women here [South Africa] were excluded from voting. A women's soul is too pure for politics! their historiographer wrote! You know, it

was that type of a thing. A woman's soul, the soul of the Afrikaner woman, is too pure for politics, te suiwer vir die politiek. In framing it this way, they romanticised ways to **not** give [white] women the vote. Not in the church and not in the in Parliament to give them the vote. So, women didn't get the vote. I think many years later, Afrikaner women got the vote simply to keep out the blacks. You know, something like that. So that's the history of the Afrikaner women, how they were used for political reasons, without political voice. The book was published in 1994... I went overseas in 1991 to study feminist theology since training in this – or having academic conversations on this issue – was unavailable in South Africa at the time. I met Catharina Halkes in Nijmegen in the Netherlands, the first woman in Europe to hold a professorial Chair in feminist theology. She was a big name there, but she's just retired and in her place was Dr Hedwig Meyer-Wilmes with whom I studied. She wrote a book: 'Rebellion auf der Grenze' (Rebellion on the borders), her doctorate, in which she tried to bring the gender issues from the borders to the centre of the theological discussion. She influenced me a lot. I was also influenced by another Dutch theologian, Grietjie Dresen, whose dissertation was published as 'Onschuldphantasieën'. It was about women who committed unspeakable crimes but convinced themselves of their innocence through religion. Women were co-opted into gruesome acts, like the Nazi women. When Hitler got into power, he removed all the women who were heads of Women's Organization and replaced them with Nazi women. And later these women said, what have we done? We were forced as women to support Nazism. They then engaged in religious fantasies to regain their innocence. And I was extremely influenced by this book because when I wrote 'The Piety of Afrikaans Women', I also met with women who were forced into political roles for the racism of the men and maintained their innocence through religion – while they themselves were politically raped (Interview with Christina Landman, 3 October 2024).

An analysis of Landman's statement and her life and career highlights the intersection of race and gender that shaped her theological journey and activism. As a white Afrikaans woman, Landman occupied a dual position – oppressed by patriarchal norms while benefiting from the racial privileges of apartheid. This duality informed her critiques of racial and gender inequalities within Afrikaner Calvinism. Her work, particularly *The Piety of Afrikaans Women* (1994), reveals how theological doctrines reinforced racial and gender hierarchies, intertwining religious teachings with Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid ideologies. Landman's exclusion from spaces of religious authority exemplifies the institutionalised patriarchy in South African theology. Despite facing systemic barriers as a woman in a male-dominated field, she pursued ordination, symbolising her resistance to the gendered marginalisation within the church. Her defiance extended beyond personal struggles, as she actively opposed apartheid and the patriarchal structures that silenced women in both religious and societal contexts. Through her writings and public engagements, she became a key figure challenging the theological justifications for apartheid and the gendered hierarchies within the Afrikaner church.

Landman's position also reflected the nuanced interplay of complicity and victimhood. White women in apartheid South Africa, although oppressed by patriarchy, benefited from racial privilege and often upheld apartheid structures. Landman's critiques capture this complexity, addressing her victimhood under patriarchal norms while acknowledging the complicity of her racial group in creating, maintaining and sustaining systemic injustices. Central to Landman's work is her critique of Afrikaner Calvinism's role in perpetuating oppression. She examined how its doctrines legitimised both racial segregation and the subordination of women, embedding these ideologies into the fabric of Afrikaner society. By challenging these theological foundations, Landman sought to dismantle the religious and social structures underpinning racial and gender-based injustices in South Africa. Christina Landman's introduction to Mercy Amba Oduyoye and the Circle marked a transformative moment in her academic and personal journey. During her pivotal trip to the Netherlands in 1991, Landman met Mercy Amba Oduyoye. This encounter would prove to be life changing (Oral history interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024).

## Landman's journey into the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

The Circle, founded in 1989 in Accra, Ghana, under the leadership of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, emerged as a significant platform for amplifying African women's voices within theological and cultural discourses. At the time, Oduyoye served as the Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, further enhancing the Circle's influence and reach. With a mission centred on the development of theological scholarship grounded in African women's lived experiences, the Circle seeks to reinterpret religious traditions to empower women and their communities. It addresses the impact of religion on women's lives and explores intersections between gender, race, culture, economics, health and the environment. Through academic inquiry, the Circle has played a crucial role in advocating for gender justice and societal progress (Ayanga 2016:1; The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians 2024).

Christina Landman's connection with the Circle began in 1991 when she met Oduyoye in Geneva during a brief yet impactful meeting. Oduyoye, who was working to establish the Circle's presence in South Africa, identified Landman as a potential collaborator. Landman was tasked with working alongside Brigalia Bam, then General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, to organise a gathering in Johannesburg. The event, attended by nearly 100 women, revealed a stark racial disparity, with only four attendees possessing formal theological training – Landman and three other white women. Despite concerns over the racial imbalance, Oduyoye invited Landman to participate in Circle meetings from their inception in the early 1990s. This participation marked a significant turning point in Landman's

career, as she regularly travelled to Accra, Ghana, to engage with African women theologians, particularly alongside Denise Ackerman, as one of the few white women included in these gatherings (Oral history interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024).

Landman's involvement with the Circle deepened her engagement with African women's theology, shifting her theological perspective to better understand the intersection of gender, culture and religion in African contexts. Initially, the Circle was an exclusive space for black women, with white women such as Landman only being included under exceptional circumstances, reflecting the racial dynamics of the time. Despite this, Landman's inclusion enabled her to gain insight into the struggles faced by black women theologians and to contribute to the broader theological community's efforts to address issues of gender, race and power. As she became more involved in these discussions, Landman's work began to bridge racial divides within the theological community, while also pushing gender issues to the forefront (Oral history interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024).

In her own theological context, Landman found that gender issues were often sidelined in favour of topics such as science and religion. Undeterred, she worked independently to challenge this marginalisation by using various media platforms, including the *Beeld* newspaper and radio programmes, to popularise feminist theology, particularly within Afrikaans society, which was resistant to feminist perspectives. Landman faced significant opposition, both from conservative segments of the Afrikaans community and from the academic and ecclesial spaces in which she worked. Nevertheless, her involvement with the Circle exposed her to a broader network of African women theologians, such as Teresia Mbari Hinga, whose work further inspired her and reinforced her commitment to gender justice and theological reform (Oral history interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024).

Landman's experiences in South Africa and within the Circle highlight the systemic barriers that African women theologians faced because of entrenched racial and gender inequities. Despite these challenges, Landman remained resolute in her advocacy for gender equality and worked tirelessly to initiate changes within the theological academy. For instance, she spearheaded the development of short learning programmes at the RITR, which aimed to reach students from independent churches who lacked formal university qualifications. However, she encountered difficulties in making gender-focused courses financially viable because of limited student enrolment (Oral history interview with Christina Landman, 11 October 2024).

Throughout her career, Landman also faced direct opposition from the DRC, where she was involved in several court cases challenging the church's discriminatory racial and gender

policies. Despite these setbacks, Landman's perseverance and commitment to theological transformation never wavered. Her work with the Circle has had a lasting impact on African women's theology, influencing future generations of scholars and activists dedicated to gender justice and reforming theological practices. Landman's journey within the Circle reflects her pioneering role in addressing the intersections of gender, race and power in theological academia. Her commitment to challenging these issues, coupled with her engagement with African women theologians, has significantly shaped the trajectory of African women's theology and set the stage for future developments in the field.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Christina Landman's work at the RITR exemplifies her profound engagement with the intersections of gender, race and theology in South Africa. Her commitment to challenging institutionalised gender and racial inequities within theological academia was a significant step in breaking barriers that had marginalised women in theological discourse. Landman's contributions to gender-focused theological scholarship have reshaped African theology, particularly in relation to gender justice, social transformation and African women's theology. Landman's involvement with the Circle provided a transformative space to deepen her understanding of the challenges faced by African women theologians. The Circle created a platform for addressing the intersectionality of gender, culture and religion in African contexts. Although Landman's initial inclusion was an exception because of her racial identity, it marked a pivotal moment in her intellectual development. Her connections with other African women theologians broadened her perspective on gender issues and fostered a sense of solidarity and shared purpose across the continent.

At the RITR, Landman encountered significant challenges in introducing gender-focused theological programmes. Her initiatives faced resistance, reflecting broader societal reluctance to embrace feminist theology. However, her perseverance in advocating for the inclusion of gender perspectives in theological education demonstrated her commitment to fostering a more inclusive and transformative theological community. Her work laid the foundation for the integration of gender justice at RITR and beyond, influencing future generations of theologians. Ultimately, Christina Landman's contributions have been instrumental in shaping the discourse on gender, race and theology in South Africa. Her work has had a lasting impact on African women's theology, providing a platform for critical engagement with issues of gender justice and social transformation. By creating spaces for marginalised voices and advocating for theological reform, Landman has contributed to the growth of more inclusive, equitable and transformative theological scholarship. Her legacy continues to inspire scholars, activists and theologians committed to advancing gender justice and social equity within religious and academic communities.

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### Ethical considerations

This article is based on an oral history interview conducted with Professor Christina Landman. The transcript of the interview was shared with Professor Landman for her review and comments. She provided final approval of the transcript and consented to its use in the writing of this article. The interview transcript is securely stored in a password-protected folder on the author's personal computer. It is available on reasonable request, in compliance with ethical research and publication practices.

This article has been written with the explicit permission of Professor Christina Landman, who conducted the oral history interview in the interest of full disclosure. Professor Landman has consented to the inclusion of identifiable elements and personal information within the article. Therefore, there is no need to anonymise, mask or hide any identifiable details.

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee, and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

### Data availability

The data used to compile this article is an oral history interview with Professor Christina Landman and is available

from the corresponding author, L.W.N., on reasonable request and in compliance with ethical research and publication practices.

### Disclaimer

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