

African Critical Inquiry Programme Announces 2024 Ivan Karp Doctoral Research Awards

The African Critical Inquiry Programme has named Sasha Rai and Phindile Tabata as recipients of the 2024 Ivan Karp Doctoral Research Awards. Rai, a South African student in the History Department, is working on her PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand. Tabata is also at the University of the Witwatersrand, a South African student in African Literature with a background in Publishing Studies. Support from ACIP's Ivan Karp Awards will allow each of them to do significant research for their dissertations. Rai will do archival work and interviews in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Pietermaritzburg for her project, *What We Do in the Shadows: A History and Culture of Kink in South Africa*. Tabata will work in Gauteng province, interviewing authors, publishers, book sellers, book club members, and literary organisations for her project *Black Women's Self-published Literature and the Publishing Ecosystem in South Africa, 2010-2020*.

Founded in 2012, the African Critical Inquiry Programme (ACIP) is a partnership between the Centre for Humanities Research at University of the Western Cape in Cape Town and the Laney Graduate School of Emory University in Atlanta. Supported by donations to the [Ivan Karp and Corinne Kratz Fund](#), the ACIP fosters thinking and working across public cultural institutions, across disciplines and fields, and across generations. It seeks to advance inquiry and debate about the roles and practice of public culture, public cultural institutions, and public scholarship in shaping identities and society in Africa through an annual ACIP Workshop and through the Ivan Karp Doctoral Research Awards, which support African doctoral students in the humanities and humanistic social sciences enrolled at South African universities.



About Sasha Rai's project:

From the early utterances of vice and nefariousness in the colonial era to the politicisation of sexual freedom and expression during high apartheid, the history of kink comes to be located at the nexus of legal frameworks, cultural expectations, political motivation, and individual desire. South Africa has a long history of policing sexualities to better control populations and maintain the values and authority of ruling parties. *What We Do in the Shadows: A History and Culture of Kink in South Africa* contends with state understandings of sex and sexuality through the lens of kink and contributes to and extends scholarship on race, gender, and sexuality. It also speaks to the challenges faced by minority communities whose struggles are based in historical oppression. By tracing the political, legal, and social values within the colonial era, apartheid era, and in the new democratic South Africa, *What We Do in the Shadows* explores an underdeveloped area of sexuality studies in the

Global South. Tracing how kink practices evolved during these three periods will create deeper insights into subversive and counter-culture sexualities, and shed light on how intimacies were formed and negotiated under different political systems. The policing of sexuality and intimacy has been a mechanism of control by oppressive regimes, but they have always been and remain sites of resistance. Kink culture is one of these historical

sites that has yet to be meaningfully examined. This project not only substantially develops understanding of a unique and underexplored community, it also enriches South African and Global South discourses around sexuality, gender, resistance, and development.



About Phindile Tabata's project:

Black Women's Self-published Literature and the Publishing Ecosystem in South Africa, 2010-2020 will investigate the extent to which self-publishing, with the assistance of digital technology, as an independent means of book production, has reconfigured the publishing ecosystem in South Africa. The study is specifically interested in the processes of book production and marketing and the ways in which self-publishing and digital technology have redefined the conventional roles of author, publisher, distributor, and reader in the publishing ecosystem. Using the complex system approach as the theoretical framework for analysis, the research will look at how the different elements of the publishing ecosystem interact with each other in order to meet the objectives of the whole system and explore how the ecosystem and the roles within the system have

changed with the rise of self-publishing. The essence of the publishing ecosystem is that it illustrates the long-standing role of various stakeholders in the book production process. Using a qualitative approach, the research will include semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to explore the experiences of key stakeholders in the self-publishing landscape, including self-published authors, mainstream and independent book sellers, literary organisations like professional associations and book festivals, and book club members.

Information about the 2025 Ivan Karp Doctoral Research Awards for African students enrolled in South African Ph.D. programmes will be available in November 2024. The application deadline is 1 May 2025.

For further information, see <http://www.gs.emory.edu/about/special/acip.html> and <https://www.facebook.com/ivan.karp.corinne.kratz.fund>.