

# African Studies Centre

2020 Newsletter



## The Challenges of Protecting Our Oceans

President Faure of Seychelles  
speaks at the ASC African  
Leaders Lecture Series



*President Danny Faure of the Seychelles during his presentation hosted by the African Studies Centre*

*President Faure and students*

# George Floyd and Racial In/Justice

Wale Adebani

The revulsion that I felt watching the killing by the police of yet another black man in the United States is difficult to describe. As he struggled to hold on to life, George Floyd, an unarmed black man in the custody of Minneapolis police, cried: "I can't breathe!" Even the echo of yet another black man pleading "I can't breathe!" after Eric Gardner died in similar circumstances about six years earlier, was insufficient to deter the policeman who pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds.

This killing, though following a pattern of (police) brutality against black bodies and invoking the shameful legacy of lynching in the United States, seems to have provoked an unprecedented wave of national and global protests. The ongoing public reckoning over centuries-old racial injustices in the United States is encouraging in terms of the extraordinary nature of the cross-racial and global solidarity that it has activated – despite the verbal debauchery that this solidarity has attracted from the highest quarters in America. However, the global project of anti-racist political, economic and social mobilisation, actions, legislations, etc. must seize a new impetus from this moment.

In such a moment as this, as the Director of the African Studies Centre, I wish to reaffirm our "unequivocal abhorrence of racism and discrimination in all its forms," as the Head of the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA), Professor Tim Power, stated in his message to the OSGA staff and students on the death of Floyd.

As Americans of all races – and the rest of the world – come together to protest this particular and other forms of racial injustices in and beyond the United States, it is incumbent upon those of us who study Africa (and its Diaspora) to reaffirm our intellectual and social commitments to anti-racist intellectual endeavours, in general, and police brutality, in particular. The Centre is committed to supporting our faculty, staff and students in this very difficult moment and beyond in the reaffirmation of the equality of all human beings and the sanctity of all human lives.



## African Studies Newsletter 2019–20 Director's Report

The 2019–2020 academic year started on an excellent note at the Centre. We welcomed an outstanding cohort of students in October 2019. Everyone was looking forward to an exciting and smooth academic year. Little did we know that a relentless and vicious global enemy that would transform contemporary understanding of our individual and collective vulnerability was lurking in East Asia and would soon upturn everyone's plans. But we had had two remarkable terms before the coronavirus pandemic overtook the world and disrupted our activities – while forcing the staff and students to rethink the modes of teaching, studying, researching and staying alive.

Though the Hillary Term was also seriously impacted by the UK university teachers' 14-day strike in February and March 2020 over pensions, pay and conditions – reflecting a particular form of precarity provoked by the ascendancy of neoliberalism – nothing can compare with the disruption experienced since various governments around the world started taking the threat of the pandemic seriously. As these governments and eventually the UK government announced the shutting down of the borders, we had to scramble to recall our students, some of whom had left for their fieldwork.

I thank my colleagues and the leadership and administrative staff of the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA) who ensured a smooth process of communication with our students to ensure that all those who could return to Oxford (or their home countries outside Africa) did so promptly, and that the couple of students who either had no choice or chose to remain in their home countries in Africa – where they were scheduled to conduct their research – stayed out of harm's way.

In these unprecedented era, every academic discipline is being forced to rethink, not only the conditions of our morbidity and mortality, but also the overarching questions of what it means to be human under exceptional conditions of vulnerability. Yet, even under these conditions, we must reaffirm the value of our collective and individual lives....

In this academic year, we pressed on with our efforts to bring African leaders to speak at Oxford. We renewed our commitment to this in the previous academic year by hosting five African leaders. In this academic year, we hosted the President of Seychelles, Mr Danny Faure, at St Antony's College on 18th October, 2019. As you will find in this newsletter, President Faure spoke about the ecosystem, in general, and the world's oceans, in particular [see story on page 4].

Earlier on 7th June, 2019, in association with Brasenose College, we hosted President Julius Maada Bio of Sierra Leone at the Amersi Foundation Room, Brasenose College. I thank the Principal of Brasenose College, Mr John Bowers, for the opportunity to work together on this initiative. President Bio spoke on the challenges of post-war Sierra Leone and his experiences as a two-time head of state [see story on page 32].



President John Kufour, former president of Ghana receiving a copy of the Centre's newsletter during Adebani's fund-raising visit to Accra, Ghana.

Our International Advisory Board continues in its mission of supporting the Centre in various ways. I thank the former Chair of the Board, Mr Tito Mboweni for his services. Mboweni resigned last year because his duties as Finance Minister in South Africa made it impossible for him to continue as a member of the Board. We look forward to welcoming him back at the expiration of his tenure. Professor Ibrahim A. Gambari was unanimously elected at the meeting of the Board in October 2019 as the new chair. I thank him for accepting this role and also congratulate him on his new appointment in May 2020 as the Chief of Staff to the President of Nigeria. I like to welcome the newest member of the IAB, Mr Thomas Svanikier, a Ghanaian entrepreneur and philanthropist.

We started a new initiative to provide financial support for African students in Oxford. The initiative, which will be operated in conjunction with The Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx), is named the "African Graduate Thrive Fund (AGTF)." We thank Mr Thomas Svanikier who committed USD100,000.00 to this fund through the IAB. (See story on AGTF on page 23). We will also like to thank another member of the IAB, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, the Governor of Kaduna State, who, also through the IAB, pledged and redeemed on behalf of the Kaduna State Government of Nigeria two full scholarships for Nigerian students. The students who qualify for these scholarships will be those who are ordinarily resident in Nigeria before their admission to the University and are admitted to Oxford as 'foreign students'. (See story on the scholarship and the first winner of the scholarship on page 23).

We expanded our fund-raising efforts to increase scholarship and fellowship opportunities for African students and scholars, respectively – among other strategic plans. In line with this, I visited Accra, Ghana in July 2019 to meet potential donors, including seeking the support of two former presidents of Ghana, Presidents John Kufour and John Mahama. Both former presidents received me warmly in their homes. I am grateful to them.

This is the last of my three-year tenure at the director of the Centre. I will therefore like to thank all those who have supported and worked with me in the last three years. I thank all my colleagues in the Centre and the Centre's past and current administrators. I am grateful to the immediate past head of OSGA, Professor Rachel Murphy and the current head, Professor Tim Power. I also thank the Warden of St Antony's College, Professor Roger Goodman, the Dean of the Said Business School, Professor Peter Tufano, the Director of the Middle East Centre, Professor Eugene Rogan, and the administrative staff of the College and OSGA, particularly Head of OSGA Admin and Finance, Mrs Erin Gordon.

The next Director of the Centre, Professor David Pratten, is a tried and tested hand. He is the longest serving member of the Centre and a former director of the Centre. There is no doubt that the Centre will fare much better under his leadership. I wish him the very best.

**Wale Adebani,**  
Director, African Studies Centre.



President Faure and Wale Adebani during the Q&A

# The Challenges of Protecting Our Oceans – President Faure of Seychelles

Kenza Camara



The Seychelles' lifeline is sustained by its vast ocean. A host to 94,000 people, covering over 452 km of land engulfed in a vibrant blue ecosystem, the Seychelles' story is analogous to other small island nations. Despite continuing to attract 273,000 tourists annually, debris carried by tides in the Indian Ocean pollute its waters causing environmental degradation. Coupled with the overshadowing fear of rising sea levels, small islands of this kind are therefore at the forefront of climate issues. In his lecture at the African Leaders Lecture Series of the African Studies Centre on Friday 18th October 2019, President Danny Faure concluded that, in a time of ecological crisis, only greater international solidarity and global action can mitigate a potential catastrophe. The President's lecture was 'Protecting Our Oceans: The Seychelles Experience.'

President Faure was received at the St Antony's College by the Warden of the College, Professor Roger Goodman, the Head of the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA), Professor Tim Power, and the Director of the African Studies Centre, Professor Wale Adebawo.

This is not the first time President Faure posed this pertinent issue. In fact, his commitment to marine conservation led him to take a 400 feet dive below the ocean's surface facilitated by the Oxford-based Nekton mission (<https://nektionmission.org/>) to present an address to the world to encourage global action, an effort unprecedented amongst world leaders ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cf\\_F-9sbMmM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cf_F-9sbMmM)). President Faure's position was clear: 'Oceans cover over two-thirds of the world's surface but remain, for the most part, uncharted'. Refusing to be hampered by uncertainty, Faure has instilled the need for greater research in the Seychelles surrounding waters. Since the beginning of his term in 2016, Faure has striven to propel the Seychelles as a leading force in marine technology. Having just realised middle income status in 2015, the Seychelles economy with the help of blue bonds investment has rapidly expanded to become what Faure calls a 'blue economy'. Over this period, 300 research deployments have taken place, helping the Seychelles reach its goal to protect almost a third of its national waters by 2020.

But what of his global appeal? All over the world the issue of climate change continues to gain salience in national discourses, although, with limited results. The question remains whether enough is being done to meet environmental targets. On the African Continent, Faure expresses optimism in strengthened alliances and greater African unity. He asserted that the 'Oceans are the next frontiers of the world', adding that the oceans therefore should not be left to ruins for future generations. Building partnerships across the globe to achieve his marine strategy, President Faure believes that Seychelles has become a 'global thought leader in sustainable governance'.



Warden of St Antony's College, Professor Roger Goodman, welcomes President Danny Faure to the College



The President with the Head of OSGA, Tim Power, and St Antony's Warden



President with members of the ASC's International Advisory Board

Before his lecture, President Faure and his entourage which included Ambassador Barry Faure, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and The Blue Economy, Mrs Aude Labaleine, Secretary of State for Presidential Affairs, Ambassador Derick Ally, Seychelles High Commissioner to the UK, Mrs Jacqueline Moustache-Belle, Chief of Presidential Protocol Affairs, and Mr Terry Romain, Principal Counsellor in the Seychelles High Commission, were hosted to a reception at the Investcorp Building in the College. They were joined by ASC staff, students and members of the Centre's International Advisory Board, Mr Alex Duncan, Mr Ivor Agyeman-Duah, and Mr Thomas Svanikier – and his wife, Ambassador Johanna Svanikier.

After the president's lecture, the Q&A session, moderated by Professor Wale Adebawo, the Director of African Studies Centre, reminded us that the Seychelles isn't without its obstacles, high rates of tourism and social ills put pressure on the socioeconomic situation of its inhabitants. However, with Seychelles marine territory making up three times its landmass, it has had little choice in making ocean conservation its priority. The onus is now on developed nations and neighbours responsible for ecological damage to engage further in technological exchange, information sharing and, most of all, in action.

## Staff Articles

Peter Brooke



## Researching African Media History in French Archives

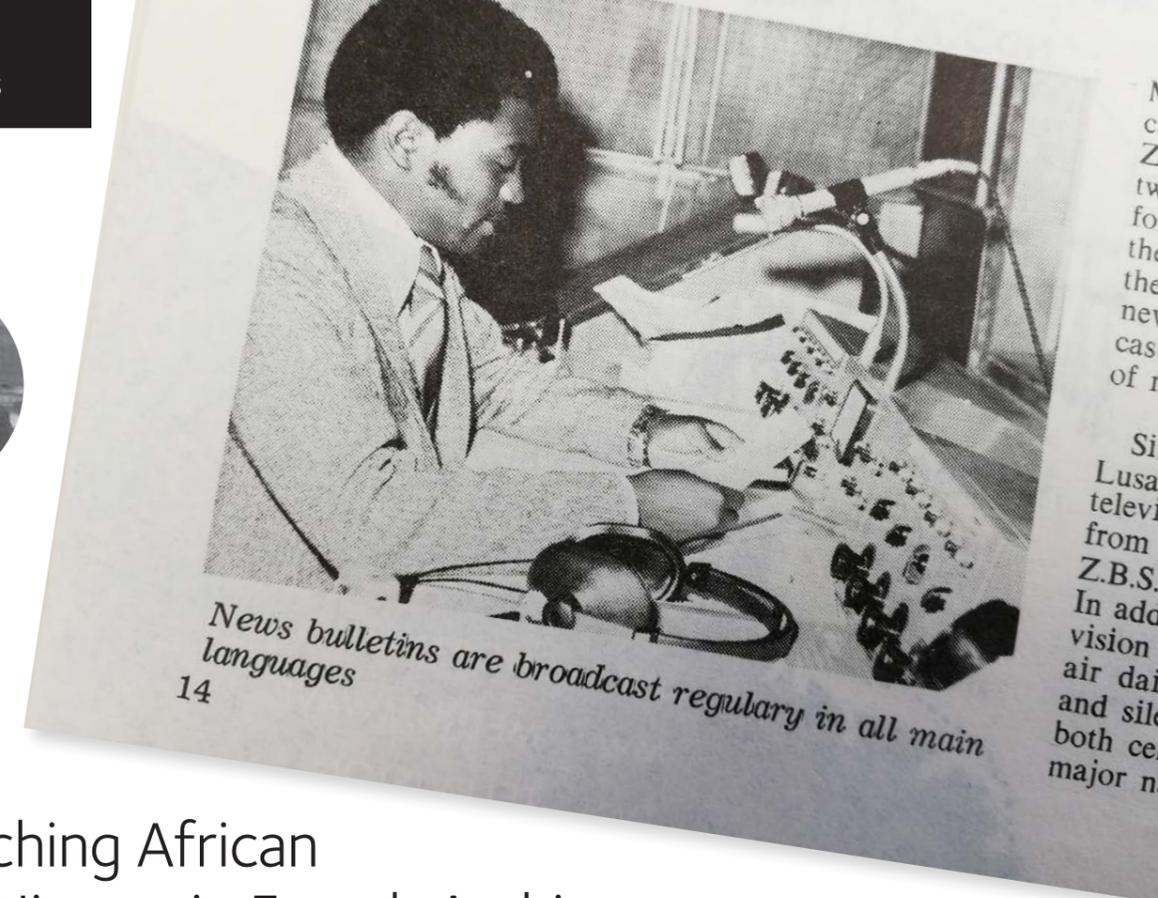
France's archives offer historians an excellent and underused source of documentary material on Africa's media history. Earlier this year I spent a few weeks exploring what they have to offer. The study is part of a wider project on African broadcasting and press during and after decolonisation that also draws on archives in Zambia, Kenya, South Africa and Britain. The research was kindly supported by the University's Beit Fund.

Unusually (some might say unhelpfully) the French National Archives are dispersed around the country. My first port of call was the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer at Aix-en-Provence. This archive is dominated by the records of French rule in North Africa. I already knew that the Francophone colonial media was heavily controlled, even more so than in Anglophone colonies. This was particularly true of the press. But control of the airwaves proved a much greater challenge for the French colonial state thanks to the ready availability of short-wave broadcasts by the mid-1950s, first from Egypt's Radio Cairo and then from Radio Free Algeria broadcasting from newly-independent Morocco. I was interested to explore the impact of these external broadcasts on the Algerian population and to test Franz Fanon's theory that radio held the key to liberation. Writing in Algeria in 1959, Fanon recalled that when RFA started broadcasting Algerians rushed out to buy radios to hear the 'story of the Liberation on the march'. The archives at Aix confirmed that RFA was hugely popular and played a critical role in the collapse of colonial rule. According to a French military report, 'radio is to the Algerian War what the machine-gun was to the war of [19]14 and the tank to the war of [19]40'. The archives revealed that the French response was to establish one of the most extensive jamming operations ever mounted by a colonial power, secondly only to the USSR. Despite its huge cost, the results were mixed and RFA continued to attract a large audience

throughout the Algerian War of Independence.

Leaving Aix, I went north to Paris. At the Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC) in St Denis I found that what had started in French North Africa in the 1950s continued in sub-Saharan Africa into the 1960s and beyond. Across Africa the decolonisation period coincided with a boom in radio ownership, helped by the popularisation of battery-operated transistor sets from the late 1950s. Audience research files demonstrated that in French colonies, as elsewhere, decolonisation was hastened by liberation radio's attack on the colonial empires of knowledge. Radio Cairo offered an 'open mic' to liberation groups across the continent and as decolonisation gathered pace it was soon joined by dozens of newly-liberated national stations which emulated its aggressive anti-colonialism. In 1960 the number of independent African stations quadrupled.

Transnational radio-listening not only hastened decolonisation but also created a robust culture of cosmopolitan media consumption after independence, despite the repressive policies of post-colonial states. Over time international influences outstripped intra-African broadcasts. Audience research surveys at CAC revealed that by the 1980s about a quarter of the urban population in francophone West Africa was regularly listening to the Voice of America. However, the most popular foreign radio station was Radio France Internationale, with a listening audience of nearly half of the population in cities such as Dakar. France's post-colonial influence on Francophone Africa's media continues to this day, thanks not only to RFI broadcasts but also Agence France-Presse, mirroring the influence of the BBC and Reuters in Anglophone Africa.



News Broadcast, 1973, Lusaka.



# Producing Knowledge, Reproducing Power?

Miles Larmer



'Comparing the Copperbelt', which started in 2015 and will reach its completion in 2021, is a major research project into the social history of the cross-border mining towns of Zambia and Haut Katanga in the DR Congo. These towns were in the 1950s the subject of research by a largely western social scientific community who sought to understand what they considered new 'modern' urban African societies. While researchers uncovered revealing information about these growing communities, their analysis was distorted by their tendency to counterpose a 'tribal', superstitious, unchanging rural Africa – to this new urban one – capitalist, cosmopolitan, dynamic, Christian – that understood progress and development in entirely Western terms.

Later generations of researchers from many disciplines have returned to the Copperbelt to investigate many issues – labour relations, gender dynamics, political change, cultural expression such as music and painting, economic boom and bust, urban agriculture and environmental pollution, to name a few. The community of Copperbelt researchers has diversified – most are now African and some grew up in the region or work at its universities. Many have criticised the modernist gaze of the first generation of researchers, most notably James Ferguson in his landmark study *Expectations of Modernity* (1999). It is one of the most studied regions

of Africa, particularly given the relative marginalisation of the continent in academic analysis.

The 'Comparing the Copperbelt' project takes as its starting point that the region's social history has shaped, and been shaped by, its interaction with these intellectuals and the knowledge they produced. On the one hand, Copperbelt communities sought to influence academic research for their own ends, understanding its potential to advance their own political and social position. On the other hand, this research, developed in unequal relationships with Copperbelt communities, influenced the policies of colonial and post-colonial governments, businesses, civil society and labour and ethnic associations, among others. The project then analyses the ways in which these societies (and their scholars) have come to understand their distinct sense of self and community, how it has changed over time and how it differs between the Zambian and Katangese copperbelts.

All this means that as historians of these processes, we are acutely aware of the need to avoid the mistakes of our predecessors in distorting the underlying reality of these societies and ensuring we don't impose our worldview in our own work. While the colonial system that influenced the early study of Copperbelt societies may be a thing of the past, the continued inequality of global academia means that intellectual

resources for research still concentrate in universities and centres such as ours. Here are three ways in which our research seeks to recognise and begins to address these historical legacies and contemporary inequalities:

**1. Listening and learning:** our research has involved hundreds of interviews with longstanding Copperbelt residents. Many earlier researchers focused only on narrow sections of the region's population, most often senior male mineworkers, whose experiences were often presented as representing these diverse communities. We've spoken to women entrepreneurs and farmers, musicians and painters, environmental activists and many others. We've conducted open-ended life history interviews that allow respondents to tell us what is important to them, rather than imposing our priorities and pre-conceived views on them.

**2. Cooperation:** the best place to find expertise about the Copperbelt region is in the Copperbelt itself: its residents of course, but also its organisations – churches, non-governmental organisations and of course its universities. We've worked closely with colleagues from Zambia's Copperbelt University and the University of Lubumbashi in Katanga throughout the project: learning from the expertise and research they have carried out for decades; encouraging their professors and students to write for

the project's publications and websites; and co-organising events in the region where speakers from these universities and from civil society take a leading role. In July 2019 Prof Donatien Dibwe dia Mwembu of UNILU and I organised a conference at UNILU, bringing together Congolese, Zambian and international speakers to discuss Copperbelt history and society (see picture).

**3. Dissemination:** Copperbelt residents have long complained to western academics that they never see the results of research in which they participate – some liken this to mine companies that extract the region's mineral resources and leave nothing behind. All our publications – including contributions from academics from the region – are being made available online for free download from our website and these will be added to over the next 18 months as the project reaches completion, enabling them to be read by anyone in the region.

None of these approaches will fundamentally alter the inequality of power and wealth within the global academy or by themselves overcome the legacies of past distortions of Copperbelt society. However, in drawing attention to and explaining how the region has been (mis)understood, and by partnering with and learning from African expertise, we hope to go some way to addressing this historical imbalance.

# 'Remembering Rwanda' wins Oxford's Vice Chancellor Award for Public Engagement

Julia Viebach



In 2019 Dr Julia Viebach (together with Jozie Kettle, Pitt Rivers Museum) won one of the prestigious Vice Chancellor Awards for Public Engagement for her project 'Remembering Rwanda' that demonstrated a long-lasting legacy and passionate engagement. Remembering Rwanda encompasses two engagement activities: Kwibuka Rwanda ('we remember' in Kinyarwanda), a photographic exhibition (2018) and Traces of the Past (2019-) that features a case display and video installation; both displayed at the Pitt Rivers Museum. The project draws on Julia's research with survivors of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi to capture the nature, narratives and the materiality of Rwanda's genocide commemoration.

About the project: Kwibuka Rwanda is a photographic (traveling) exhibition that delves into the world of survivors working at memorials who have pledged their lives to care, clean and preserve the dead bodies of their loved ones that are often displayed at such sites. The exhibition features quotes from survivors and photographs and integrates Rwandan fabric into its design to surround the dead with a sense of 'home'. Kwibuka Rwanda was developed in consultation with Rwandan partners and survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi living in the UK and displayed at the Pitt Rivers Museum in 2018, attracting over 70,000

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Caritas Umulisa (survivor of the 1994 Genocide and project participant), Jean-Baptiste Kayigamba (survivor of the 1994 Genocide and project participant) and Dr Julia Viebach



Conference at UNILU

visitors and has also travelled internationally and attracted global attention. Traces of the Past builds on and expands the collaboration with the Rwandan community and Julia's work on diaspora commemoration on occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Genocide against the Tutsi last year. In Traces with the Past, Rwandan community members now living in the UK tell their stories of survival and meaning-making and lend objects that embody precious memories of loved ones who they lost.

Remembering Rwanda raises awareness of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and in doing so fights apathy towards the distant suffering of 'others' in times of rising right-wing populism. This work fostered relationships and a unique collaboration with the Rwandan community and inspired new research into diaspora commemoration.



Left to right – Zozie Kettle (Pitt Rivers Museum), Caritas Umulisa (survivor of the 1994 Genocide and project participant), Timothy Power (head of OSGA), Jean-Baptiste Kayigamba (survivor of the 1994 Genocide and project participant), Professor Julia Viebach, Katherine Clough (exhibition designer).



The objects in this case connect the survivors who have lent them with the family members and friends they have lost. Here a milk container (Icyansi), drum (Ingoma), radio batteries, Mancala Board Game (Igisoro game), a bible and family photographs. Watch the film to hear survivors explain why they picked these particular objects and hear them share their memories of lost loved ones.

This research into diaspora commemoration entitled 'Memory Figurations' is funded by the Oxford University Press John Fell Fund; it is concerned with the life stories of diaspora survivors in the UK and US; with how they experienced the Genocide in 1994; how they remember their loved one and how they rebuilt lives in their diaspora localities. Based on the oral history interviews undertaken for Bearing Witness and further interviews, the aim of the project is to build an online oral history archive featuring the life stories of diaspora-survivors.

Here: Apollinaire Kageruka shares his memories of his lost parents and explains what remembering means to him. Link to the video: <https://vimeo.com/383248624>



# Thinking about work and economic security during a pandemic

Dr Liz Fouksman  
Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at ASC



I was in Cape Town when things started looking ominous. It was the first days of March, just the start of autumn in South Africa, and it was hard to believe the rumblings of a global pandemic under a warm blue sky, especially as South Africa has only had a small handful of cases at that point. In any case, I was too busy tracking people down for interviews – I was just getting going on what was intended to be an extended fieldwork trip. The plan was to first do interviews with civil society leaders, trade union activists and perhaps, if I was lucky, government bureaucrats and MPs, and then follow this on with a month or so of rural fieldwork.

But by the end of the first week of March, it was becoming clear that I had to return to Oxford immediately. Instead of chasing up activists and learning about the views of the long-term unemployed in a rural village, I have been watching spring unfurl from the window of my study in east Oxford. And yet, despite missing crucial fieldwork time, it has been a fascinating couple of months for the sorts of questions I ask in my research. Fundamentally, I am interested in the link between money and work – and why it is so hard for us to let go of the belief that the first can only be accessed via the second. The idea that 'you shouldn't get money for nothing' holds even in a place like South Africa, where unemployment is at nearly 40%. To put it even more broadly, I am fascinated by the normative value we give to productivity and hardworkingness, even as work become ever more unstable and precarious, and the world needs less and less human labour to ensure human survival.

The global coronavirus pandemic has turned the insistence that only the hardworking deserve money on its head. Now governments insist, often against the wishes of citizens, that people must not go to work. The only way that they can do so is to give cash to people who are not working – precisely the policy that many have long feared would lead to laziness and moral and economic decay. Many countries – including a list as varied as Brazil, the US, Spain and South Africa – have decided to give cash to anyone below a certain income level, regardless of whether they were employed before the pandemic or not, a step that has long been resisted by governments. It has also become clear that the work that remains essential to keep society running – the work done by bus drivers, postal workers, delivery drivers, supermarkets cashiers, rubbish collectors – is some of the lowest paid, and is often outsourced, short-term and unstable. The link between how essential or socially valuable a job is and how well compensated it is by the labour market clearly does not hold.

This contradiction is even more prescient for care work. With schools and nurseries closed, and vulnerable people unable to

leave the house, many more people have had to juggle paid productive labour with the unpaid (and unacknowledged) reproductive labour of caring for others. This has highlighted how ill-equipped our current structure of work is to enable us to also engage in care. After all, the full time job was designed for someone (a man in most cases) who had another family member (usually a woman) to devote themselves to performing essential but unpaid and unseen full-time reproductive labour. What is surprising is that the structure of full time work remained unchallenged when women began to move en masse into paid full-time work. This was a moment when paid labour and care work could have been more equitably shared out between all – but instead paid work is given primacy, and care is outsourced. Now that this outsourcing is no longer possible, we are forced to learn how to truly balance the two, or the impossibility of doing so within our current job structures.

Finally, the pandemic has underscored the deep inequities and dangers of precarity. Most governments around the world have put in place economic support for workers in permanent jobs who are furloughed, or for the self-employed. But what of the precariously employed, who work on-demand, or to zero-hour contracts, or whose employment just end, or will end soon, in the midst of an enormous global recession? While this will especially affect the sort of people I typically do research with – the underemployed, or those employed on short-term or outsourced contracts in service industries – these questions cut across class. For instance, universities themselves are replete with highly qualified workers on cheap part-time and short-term contracts, hired in order to cut costs and grow endowments. The African Studies Centre, like all of the University of Oxford, relies on teaching and research staff who are on one-year, two-year and three-year contracts. Though termed 'early career', most of us have been on such contracts repeatedly. As universities across the globe (including Oxford) implement hiring freezes, this academic precariat faces extreme economic insecurity – and academics as a whole, despite much dismay at the state of things, cannot seem to stop the institutions which in theory are run by them from moving ever deeper into the neoliberal logic of on-demand hiring.

The global coronavirus pandemic underscores the ongoing contradictions of labour markets. Though it curtailed my fieldwork in South Africa, it has forced me to think about the contradictions inherent in a system that devalues essential labour, refuses to view care as work, and normalizes precarity across all occupations and backgrounds. It remains to be seen what lessons, if any, will be adopted by us from this moment of clarity.

# Adebanwi Presents Harvard AAAS 50th Anniversary Keynote Lecture

The Director of African Studies Centre and Rhodes Professor of Race Relations, Wale Adebanwi presented one of the two keynote lectures at the 50th Anniversary of the Department of African and African American Studies, Harvard University on Saturday, 29th February 2020. The theme of his lecture was “Contesting Africa’s ‘Dissimilarity’: Reflections on Global African Studies.” The other keynote, delivered on Friday, 28th February by Professor Farah J. Griffin, the Chair of African American and African Diaspora Studies at Columbia University, was entitled, “Fixed and Calmly Brilliant: Fifty Years of African and African American Studies at Harvard.” Adebanwi, who argued for studying the continent and its diasporas as ‘Global Africa’ rather than focusing on the continent in isolation, stated that, in pointing to some of the challenges in the contemporary study of Africa in Africa, North America and Europe, his ‘purpose is not a criticism of African Studies, but rather a critique that points to existing tensions and some of the surviving elements of the old attitudes and paradigms and the consequences of the enduring study of Africa as an *essential and negative difference* (which looks to the past), as a fundamentally dissimilar system, no less promoted by African scholars as by non-African Africanists.’

‘This *‘Africa-as-difference’* perspective,’ he argued, ‘is particularly problematic because the *difference* has been deployed, on the one hand, as a means of inferiorizing the continent as well as the humanity and experiences of its people, and/or on the other, as a way of claiming that Africa and things African must be defined as or by anything that is not the West.’

Adebanwi was introduced by Professor Emmanuel Akyeampong, the Ellen Gurney Professor of History and of African and African American Studies and Oppenheimer Faculty Director of the Center for African Studies, Harvard University.

Many leading scholars in the field of African and African American Studies attended the two-day celebration. These included Harvard Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Professor Claudine Gay, Dean of Social Science, Professor Lawrence D. Bobo, History Department chair Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Professor Henry Louis “Skip” Gates, Jr., Professor Cornel R. West, Professor, Orlando H. L. Patterson, Professor Jacob K. Olupona and Professors Jean and John Comaroff.



Professors Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Wale Adebanwi, and Cornell West



Professor Emeritus William Beinart, Governor Nasir El-Rufai and Professor Kevin March of the Africa Oxford Initiative at a reception in 2018.

## Emeritus Professor William Beinart

William Beinart retired from the African Studies Centre in 2015 but continues to write, convene the South Africa Discussion group and occasionally supervise masters students. With Saul Dubow, he completed an overview book in May 2020 entitled *The Scientific Imagination in South Africa, 1700 to the Present* to be published by Cambridge University Press in 2021. It begins with scientific travellers in the eighteenth century and ends with an analysis of debates about science and indigenous knowledge – as well as big sciences such as astronomy – in the early twenty-first. Our aim has been understand key areas of scientific work and their impact on economy and society over the long term.

He has also written articles and short pieces for the media on land tenure and land reform, largely with Peter Delius, which argue for a pragmatic and production-oriented approach. Since our book on *Rights to Land* (2017), we have focussed on developing alternatives to the arguments being made for a ‘fast-track’ approach in South Africa, in which 60 per cent of remaining agricultural land would be redistributed to smallholders. In another project, with Luvuyo Wotshela and Sonwabile Mnwana, he has been researching changing relationships on the land in the Isidenge valley near Stutterheim, Eastern Cape; an article was published in *Transformation* 2020.

# Racialisation and Street (Re)naming in Post-apartheid South Africa

Wale Adebanwi

Returning to South Africa in 2019, after a few years, to resume my research on street-(re)naming in the post-apartheid era was a very exhilarating experience. A lot has happened in the country since my last visit. While the fever of street renaming which gripped the country, particularly its major cities, at different points since 1994 seemed to have abated, the country’s historical legacies and contemporary challenges which provoked the agitations for (re) naming, in general, and street (re) naming in particular, remain.

The research project focuses on the country’s four major cities, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. During my last visit, I focused on Johannesburg and Pretoria. With my local research assistant, Jonathan Botes, who is completing his MA in History at the University of Witwatersrand, we went round the two cities to see the latest changes to street names and signage. We also met and interviewed officials of the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality and the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, leaders of some interest groups, including AfriForum, and youth groups.

Two of the most remarkable things I noticed during the fieldwork were the huge volume of bureaucratic paperwork and data, including requests for and against street name changes, in the possession of the officials in the Directorate of Arts, Culture and Heritage – in charge of street (re)naming – in both municipalities, and the formidable challenges faced by those who live in the townships in both municipalities where there are no street names/signs. The latter added a new dimension to my research on the intersection of race/class and street (re)naming in contemporary South Africa. My encounters with some of the young people in the townships again emphasize how the vestiges of the *original dispossession* continue to



In Pretoria, Hans Strydom Drive (named after apartheid-era prime minister and Afrikaner nationalist) renamed Solomon Mahlangu Drive (after activist and member of the military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe, who was hanged by the racist regime in 1979). © Wale Adebanwi.

activate new forms of dispossession and precarity among the urban youth in South Africa – including the denial of the cognitive maps which street names and signs represent in modern times.

In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that ‘Naming the fact ... already imposes a reading and many historical controversies boil down to who has the power to name what.’ As

the debate among the country’s racial groups and political parties continues on the best way to reconcile the past with the present and the future, toponymic struggles represent one of the most important cultural ways of mapping this important debate while accounting for the transformation of the country’s landscape.

# The 2019–2020 academic year has been a year of not-doing.

Portia Roelofs



Oxford has always been a paradox for productivity: it promises both perfect solitude and a wealth of distractions. The ASC, with AfOx, invites Africa-based scholars to the University for a year, so that they can escape everything they have to do back home and hunker down to write. Yet, nowhere do the daily interruptions for lunch, or coffee, or dinner proceed so lazily. Coming from LSE where every conversation is cut short by someone looking at their watch and rushing off, these deviations from constant motion are a guilty pleasure. The Centre's Thursday seminar is a first-rate example: lunch with the speaker in the clattering din of the Hilda Box can turn into coffee, by which time people are arriving for the seminar, with drinks after, which continue to the Royal Oak and then it's dark and time to go home to bed.

In October 2019, as students arrived in Oxford from across the world to enjoy this mix of secluded industriousness and slow-motion conviviality, national politics was threatening to break loose from its established rhythms. In order to move forward with his domestic and international agenda, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that Parliament would be paused. We learnt a new word for not-doing: prorogation. As I was in the middle of reviewing Gavin Williams's re-released *State and Society in Nigeria*, the spectre of a strong man suspending politics to better allow politicians to serve the national interest was familiar. Brexit continued to not happen, as it had been not happening for three years already.

In the middle of Michaelmas, Johnson called a General Election. We – British and Commonwealth citizens – had an opportunity to vote out the Conservative government and reverse the changes that had made Universities and British society as a whole a hostile environment for our visitors from Africa and people of colour. Writing was put on hold and for a couple of weeks you were more likely to bump into the leading lights of Oxford African Politics on the rainy streets of what we optimistically termed 'swing seats' in Wycombe, Reading or Swindon than in the corridors of the library.

Late November and early December saw eight days of strike action, where we painstakingly did nothing together. In an increasingly competitive world of higher education, securing the conditions for life and work to be sustained required us to stop. As Cathy Elliot recently wrote in *Renewal*: "As students and academics, we are accustomed to feeling good about ourselves because we are working. Being busy is our virtue, our achievements are our identities. But striking brings it all juddering to a halt. Suddenly our solidarity and our political commitment reminds us that we have to stop all this dashing around. We are required, instead, to stand around on picket lines, to engage in the patient work of making signs and banners, to talk to each other without the discipline of ... the tightly-timed meeting agenda."

We'd barely started up again after Christmas, when another strike was called, the second in two months.

Though we didn't know it at the time, this strike marked the start of the process by which our plans for the rest of the year were unpicked. At first, it was a carefully controlled cessation of activities: seminars and lectures cancelled in solidarity. I found myself with a collection of unused train tickets to Leicester, Cambridge and Leiden, and wondered if I could include on my CV everything that I meant to do but didn't.

Everyone at the Centre will have their own story of what happened next. For some it will have been a gradual slowing to stop, for others a mad scramble through airports and visa queues to get to a place where they could safely do nothing, and go nowhere. Securing the basic conditions of life has taken on a new centrality: buying food, caring for loved ones.

Amidst the disruptions described, I have nonetheless been lucky enough to get stuff done. During the few months we were together, I went to stimulating talks by Carli Coetzee, Simukai Chigudu, Nanjala Nyabola and Miles Tendi, and listened to students question documentary makers, elections observers and state governors. I went to the "20 years of Democracy in Nigeria" conference, which crammed two decades' worth of effervescent discussion into one day. My work on interfaith peacebuilding in Nigeria has been accepted for publication, another article on political thought in Kenya revised and resubmitted, and draft two of 'What Nigeria can teach us about good governance' is starting to look like a real book. This carving out of a space to keep doing, in the face of disruption, has been a privilege and a joy. Yet, it is a joy that has to be put to work to sustain the privilege: work is the route to the financial security necessary to secure the ever more precarious conditions of life.

In the 2019 ASC newsletter Muhammad Sanusi II, CON, Emir of Kano wrote about his connection to the African Studies Centre and his plans to re-establish a library in the Emir's palace: "Centuries from now, when hopefully this library will have millions of volumes, the Kirk-Greene collection will remain at its core."

Anthony Kirk-Greene, as many readers will know, arrived in Oxford in the 1960s and worked on Nigeria for over 60 years.

Amidst the pandemic, such time horizons are difficult for many of us to imagine. In comparison, the time we will spend as members of the Centre is a mere speck. This year's masters students have served barely two thirds of their allotted nine months in Oxford. Among my post-docs peers, employed across a patchwork of colleges, grants, consultancies and departments, a contract longer than a year is a luxury. We are temporary.

Libraries and universities are monuments to the transmission of knowledge over a scale that outstrips any one human life. In a moment when the idea of 'the foreseeable future' has melted away, we have to hope that the things we have done and the things we have carefully not done in the past months stand the test of time. In different ways this year it has shown

how sometimes we have to drop everything to secure the conditions needed for us to live and to do our work. This was a lesson to me but no doubt obvious all along to my African colleagues; I hope it can be the basis of a renewed solidarity.

*Dr Portia Roelofs is an Associate Member of the African Studies Centre and Junior Research Fellow in Politics and Political Thought at St Anne's College*



## International Studies on Angola Congress

Rui Verde

The First International Angolanistic Congress (Primeiro Congresso Internacional De Angolanistica) took place on the 17th and 18th of October 2019 at the National Library of Portugal, in which I had the pleasure of being a co-host. This Congress was an initiative of the Angola Research Network. It established a paradigm for the study of Angola, as it brought together, for the first time, a body of experts from around the world, who debated studies about Angola.

Academics from Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Agostinho Neto University and Howard University, Lusíada Institute of Benguela and the University of Rio de Janeiro, CNRS de France and the Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, among other institutions, met and discussed the revival of the Jonas Savimbi's memory, the return of the "returnees" to Angola, the influence of the Sobas, the teaching of history in Angola, the introduction of VAT, the "de-berlinization" of research, the election campaigns, amid multiple subjects.

The Congress is necessitated by the need to establish permanent contact between those who are dedicated to the study of Angola. Interest in Angola is truly global. But to this day the results of such research have been subsumed in African studies or Lusophone studies, in general. Angolan Studies can and should have its place, encompassing all aspects of the country's fascinating reality that individualizes, characterizes and distinguishes it.

# 'My AfOx-ASC Fellowship: An Enriching Academic and Cultural Experience'

Audrey Gadzekpo (AfOx-ASC Fellow, 2019)



The expression that readily comes to mind when I reflect on the eight weeks spent at the University of Oxford as an AfOx-ASC fellow is: What an opportunity!

The fellowship was an intellectually and culturally fulfilling experience. It provided a conducive getaway that enabled me to concentrate on my research project – interrogating African contributions to World War II through the lens of broadcasting – and to experience the uniqueness of Oxford.

Much of my time was spent at the Charles Wendell David Reading room on the fifth floor of the Weston Library. From this vantage position I accessed Oxford's vast repository of archival material and academic literature to inform my work. Additionally, Oxford's easy proximity to Reading afforded me the chance to visit the BBC Written Archives in Caversham where I was able to obtain a treasure trove of primary material on the subject I was exploring.

Expanding my literature search at Oxford and Caversham confirmed my earlier thesis on the dearth of scholarship regarding the wide range of contributions Africans made during the Second World War. Furthermore, the rich exchange of ideas I had with my host, Professor Wale Adebaniwa, other colleagues at Oxford and elsewhere in the UK has helped to refine the nature and scope of my work. In addition to goals I set myself to achieve – completing a journal article and annotating an unpublished manuscript – I have now started working on a book.

Finally, the icing on the cake was the cultural spaces that were available to me to explore. I enjoyed the magnificence of Oxford's colleges, including Keble where I resided, the remarkable exhibits at the Pitt Rivers and Ashmolean museums and plays such as *Wuthering Heights*, which I saw performed at Wadham College.

What next? Maintaining closer ties with the African Studies Centre, spreading the good news about the AfOx-ASC fellowship and completing the book, tentatively titled – *Broadcasting during World War II: African Battles at the Microphone*.

*Gadzekpo is a professor in the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana.*

## 'Afro-Critical Perspective on Violence'

Dr. Nyenyezi Bisoka (AfOx-ASC Fellow, 2019)

The period I In 2019, I got the opportunity to join the African Studies Center at Oxford University at in a peculiar time in my young career. I had just launched myself to develop an Afro-critical perspective on violence from francophone scholars. I had to carry out a genealogy starting from authors of the 1930s that have written about negritude. The Center offered me a quiet work space which has been a great source of inspiration for me. It was an invaluable innovative space which has offered me many research perspectives and opportunities.

Firstly, I had numerous interesting exchanges with colleagues of diverse disciplines touching my research. I developed the habit to stroll around in the rich libraries of the university, visiting the treasures of philosophy and literature. Everything is at your fingertips in Oxford. In a small library of the Centre, I discovered old books that revealed remarkable links between social criticism from black scholars that took root at the same time in Harlem and Paris during the interbellum. While the Harlem critique strongly influenced by anglophone African academics, the Paris critique has left permanent marks in social critical debates among francophone scholars. I have come to understand that we can not understand Africa without taking into consideration its linguistic diversity. This linguistic diversity corresponds with different experiences and therefore with different ways of making sense of the world. This has led me to establish a dialogue with two academic and linguistic African worlds that do not interact a lot: the francophones and the anglophones. In this way, my stay at Oxford University has been an opportunity to refocus my research and to recalibrate my research agenda.

For me personally, being at the African Studies Center gave me the time to reflect and to write. The environment was perfect for this. Several of my articles published in the period 2019-2020 in renowned reviews are a long-lasting memory of my stay in Oxford. Two of these articles were written based on my talk at Christ Church Oxford in September 2019. These articles will be published in World Development and Journal of Paysan studies. While being at Oxford, I also worked on an article titled « The Great Lakes in Africa: Regional Politics and Dynamics » which has been published the same year in « The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Politics ».

Finally, my stay at the African Studies Centre has offered me the opportunity to establish contacts with other universities. I have participated in many work meetings that have given me the opportunity to present and discuss my work. At the London School of Economics, I have spoken about the political situation in the DRC and I have had the opportunity to talk about it with the UK department for International Development. Since then, we have worked on several projects together. At Kings college, I have met colleagues with whom I'm working ever since on the subject of Ebola and Covid-19 in post-conflict contexts in Africa. I also had the opportunity to get in contact with colleagues of the University of Cambridge, with whom I worked very intensively the past year. This collaboration has been so interesting that I wanted to return there in the future. This is why I have returned as a visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge in 2020.

I am very grateful to professor Wale Adebawo for welcoming me and for agreeing to stay in touch. His passion and determination for this important African Centre are inspiring. With his team, he gives his all for the Center to grow and he continues to welcome young Anglophone and Francophone African researchers that want to participate to unravel the challenges of our continent.

Many thanks to his team and in particular many thanks to the Africa Oxford Initiative that makes this adventure possible.

## OUCAN Seminar Series

Yuan Wang



The Oxford University China-Africa Network (OUCAN) is an academic, multi-dimensional organisation that seeks to forge cross-disciplinary and trans-regional links between researchers, practitioners, and officials around the emerging phenomenon of Chinese engagement with Africa.

Throughout the academic year, OUCAN hosts seminar series to share the latest ideas in China-Africa engagement. OUCAN seminar series call for applicants on a rolling basis from early career scholars to share their most updated research in any field relevant to China-Africa engagement. In Michaelmas and Hillary term in 2019-2020, OUCAN held five seminars covering a wide range of topics of China-Africa cooperation in media, health, agriculture, and

infrastructure, featuring scholars from SOAS, LSE, Open University, and Oxford.

OUCAN seminar series also welcome established scholars and practitioners to have book launches and share their experience. In 2017, OUCAN invited the former director of Ethiopian Railway Corporation, Getachew Bechu, to share with us his experience of developing the railway networks in Ethiopia. In May 2020, OUCAN scheduled two book launches: Christopher Alden and Daniel Large on New Directions in China Africa Studies, and Arkebe Oqubay's China-Africa and an Economic Transformation. Due to the pandemic, these seminars will be rescheduled in the 2020-2021 academic year.

OUCAN will not be able to host these seminar series without the generous support from African Studies Centre, China Centre, St. Antony's College, and the Department of Politics and International Relations.

## South Africa discussion group, Trinity term 2019

The South Africa discussion group has run over many years in different forms: as a forum for post-graduate students to present their research, as a visiting speaker seminar, and as a vehicle for staff and students to discuss key developments in the country and the region. The group gives those interested an opportunity to hear formal presentations and to participate in informal debate. William Beinart convened the group in Trinity Term 2019; it has not run since then. Our first session was to join a fundraising screening of a film at St Antony's on Mozambique after Cyclone Idai. Anne Heffernan former doctoral student at Oxford, post-doc at Wits, now lecturer in African history at Durham, launched her book on Limpopo's Legacy: Student Politics & Democracy in South Africa. This focusses especially on the significance of the University of the North, Turfloop, as a centre for politicisation during the apartheid era. Michael 't Sas Rolfes, a doctoral student at the School of Geography, spoke on Rhino poaching and lion farming: the political economy of contemporary South African wildlife conservation, a sobering event that touched on the global wildlife trade in rhino horns and lion bones as well as debates about sustainable utilisation of wildlife.

We were lucky to have three talks by visiting South Africans. Deborah Posel, Leverhulme Visiting Professor at University College, London presented a chapter of her book the history of consumption, focussing on Car Troubles: Race on the Road, which opened fascinating routes into the social history of white and black South Africans. In an event co-hosted by the African Studies Centre and the student Afrisoc, Max Price, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, addressed a packed Nissan Lecture Theatre on Decolonisation Dilemmas: Challenges for University Leadership. This explored some central episodes in the tumultuous student protests at UCT during 2015-6 and examined the university's responses. Crispian Olver, author of How to Steal a City, on which he spoke a couple of years ago, talked on municipal financing in South Africa - Rent Seeking or Growth Coalitions? a Comparative Study of Governance Models in South African Cities. Our sessions ended with a discussion on the South African elections led by Saul Musker, doctoral student at the Blavatnik School, and occasional writer for the Daily Maverick.

# All Things Africa in Oxford

Avni Gupta



In 2019 AfOx supported 5 African graduate students to undertake a summer internship at the Nuffield Department of Medicine (file name NDM interns)



AfOx Visiting Fellows presenting their research at a seminar at Christ Church College (file name IMG-3890)

The Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx) is a cross-university network supporting research and academic excellence by facilitating sustainable and equitable research partnerships between researchers based in African institutions and the University of Oxford.

Africa is a rapidly changing continent, whose future demographic and economic growth will have a major influence globally. By the year 2050, majority of the world's student age population will be in Africa. AfOx is working with colleagues across Oxford to develop a university-wide strategy to increase the number of African students studying at Oxford and increase the University's engagement with research institutions and universities based in Africa.

## Connecting researchers for impactful collaborations

AfOx uses its considerable expertise of the dynamic African academic landscape to mobilise resources for

Africa-focussed research, working with departments and colleges across the University of Oxford and with universities, research institutions, governments and NGOs across African countries.

To enable effective partnerships that are genuinely co-developed, AfOx offers two researcher mobility schemes—the AfOx Visiting Fellowship Program and the AfOx Travel Grant.

AfOx Travel Grants are open to all disciplines and support the establishment of new collaborations between researchers based in African research institutions and at the University of Oxford. The Travel Grant is a flexible fund which covers research and travel costs in either direction i.e. from University of Oxford to an institution in an African country or vice versa. Since 2016, AfOx has awarded over 200 travel grants that have facilitated new collaborations between 70 departments within the University of Oxford and 114 African institutions across 32 countries.

The AfOx Visiting Fellowships Program enhances academic mobility and network building by supporting leading African scholars and researchers to spend periods of flexible time in Oxford, utilising the University's facilities and undertaking collaborative research with Oxford based colleagues. AfOx collaborations seek new breakthroughs in the fields of medical sciences, big data engineering and astrophysics, conserving environments and ecosystems, archaeology, preservation of ancient languages amongst other research areas.

## Supporting student experiences in Oxford

Postgraduate degrees provide a superb opportunity for making transformative changes to a person's career and often form the basis for sustained institutional partnerships with the graduate's home institutions.

In partnerships with the Oxford University Africa Society, AfOx runs academic support programs to enhance the graduate experience at Oxford, promote a sense of belonging and enhance the academic success of emerging African leaders in Oxford. These targeted programs include essay writing workshops and tips on pursuing DPhils in Oxford. AfOx also hosts an annual virtual open day for prospective African graduate applicants. In a live-streamed video, colleagues from Oxford's graduate recruitment and scholarship teams as well as current students answer admissions related questions from prospective students.

## Meetings and events

Throughout the year, AfOx hosts engaging conversations on Africa related issues. The AfOx insakas and Focus on Research Africa (FORA) Conference bring together researchers, students, alumni, the wider University community and guests from around the world to share ideas and knowledge about Africa-focused research. Keep up to date with all things Africa through our website here: <http://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/>

# 20 Years of Democracy in Nigeria Conference

Brenda McCollum



Governors Tambuwal (left) and Fayemi exchange banter before their presentations.

On December 6th, 2019 the African Studies Centre hosted a one-day conference on the theme of "20 Years of Democracy in Nigeria". We began our day with a keynote lecture from Professor Larry Diamond from Stanford University. Professor Diamond presented the history of 'semi-democracy' in Nigeria over the past twenty years, outlining the issues that have kept the country from obtaining full democracy. He examined the progress that has been made in Nigeria as it works towards becoming more democratic. The presentation finished with an analysis of the future challenges that will face Nigeria as it continues to strive for a more democratic state.

Professor Diamond's keynote address was followed by three panels. The first panel was titled "The Nigerian State: Structure, Agency and Institutional Processes". In this panel Eghosa Osaghae, Rotimi Suberu, Aliyu Modibbo Umar, Adigun Abgaje, and Matthew Page examined topics relating to the theme of the panel. Their presentations ranged from discussions of political elites, constitutional reform, governance, political parties, and Nigeria's relationships in the international community. These presentations explored in depth the structural and institutional forces that shape Nigeria's democracy.

The second panel was titled "The Political Economy of Oil". Peter Lewis, Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, and Zainab Usman discussed topics regarding the political power and role of oil in Nigeria. The presentations grappled with the complex issues surrounding how Nigeria's political leaders have regulated Nigeria's oil industry, the political economy of Nigeria's oil trade, and the different groups of people in Nigeria who are working to change the way Nigeria's oil economy is currently run. Oil plays a crucial role in Nigeria's economy and these presentations sought to discuss and understand the complexities around the current state of the

oil industry and how necessary changes can be undertaken. The final panel was titled "Electoral Governance, Civil Society, and (In)Security". Jubrin Ibrahim, Ebenezer Obadare, Idayat Hassan, Nic Cheeseman, and Adam Higazi discussed topics ranging from Nigeria's civil society to the political economy of insurgency and counter-insurgency. The importance of elections and voter turnout during elections over the past twenty years in Nigeria was also discussed. These presentations sought to discuss and understand the way that Nigeria's civil society has evolved over the past twenty years and how the populace has worked to shape and reshape Nigeria's political landscape.

The conference was finished with lectures from Dr Kayode Fayemi, Governor of Ekiti State, Nigeria and Rt Hon Aminu Tambuwal, Governor of Sokoto State, Nigeria. Both governors gave insightful presentations into how their states are doing and on the topic of the day, Nigeria's democracy over the past twenty years. It was a thrilling day of discussion, debate, and comradery, with attendees visiting from all over the world. The African Studies Centre once again wishes to thank all those that attended and presented and looks forward to the next time when we can host such an event.



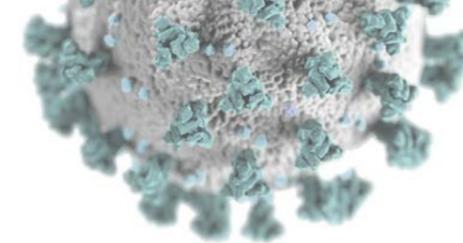
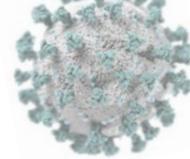
The first panel of the day taking questions from the audience.



Professor Larry Diamond, the keynote speaker, delivering his lecture.



Speakers pose at the end of the day with Governor Kayode Fayemi



## Tim Moller (MSc Class 2019 – 2020)

I conducted my fieldwork in The Sudan on the cusp of the international lockdown in response to the spreading Coronavirus crisis in March 2020. My subject, elephant hunting in ancient Nubia, was examined through visits to archaeological sites in Butana. While dealing with material from two thousand years ago, the work is keenly relevant to contemporary African study. The trade in elephants, both for their ivory and as a weapon of war, offers an unparalleled window into a variety of issues that are pertinent to our discipline today.

I am concerned with agency, working to understand how local actors shaped both their own fortunes and that of their society using the elephant as a catalyst, as well as picking apart the relationship between an organized state infrastructure, centered on the control of water reservoirs, and the nomadic communities which surrounded it. I am perhaps most interested in the symbol of the elephant itself, from depictions Meroitic in art and architecture as well as literary references from outside observers. I am keen to understand not only its intended significance, which to some extent remains esoteric, but equally conduct



an historiographic examination of how the symbol has been interpreted from antiquity to today, drawing on issues of potential exoticism and helping to frame the region in a nexus of ancient connectivity which extended well beyond the reaches of the African continent.

Working in the field at an extraordinary time, I was given a privileged insight into how the Sudanese transitional government operated in the face of global emergency. While a knee-jerk reaction to close the country's borders on the very evening I was due to take my rearranged flight home caught me off guard, I valued the time subsequently spent waiting at the Acropole Hotel in Khartoum for the conversations I was able to have, with Sudanese, foreign NGOs, diplomats and journalists, all with the impression that a new level of transparency was being introduced to the apparatus of state. This, combined with the time I spent in the field camping beside ephemeral wadis, combined to make an electrifying experience. I look forward to returning.

## Mary Brooks

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown some unexpected hurdles our way as Master's students. At the start of the program, my thesis was meant to focus on teacher training programmes in Tanzania. I have been involved with a non-profit in Arusha over the years and was working with them to plan my fieldwork. I was to examine teacher attitudes towards the non-profit's teacher training programme and see how such attitudes were reflective of their wider professional knowledge and capabilities in the classroom. Two days before I was meant to travel to Tanzania for my fieldwork, I made the difficult decision to cancel it seeing how things were progressing so quickly with the pandemic. It ended up being the right call, but it was extremely upsetting and frustrating to have to make. I had to start my thesis over and am now working on an entirely different project.

While my initial project used only qualitative methods, my current project is entirely quantitative. I am now studying teachers' professional knowledge in northern Nigeria looking specifically at how teachers' educational histories affect their level of professional knowledge and capabilities. I am working on this project alongside a wider project with my supervisor which studies teacher knowledge in Africa, and it has been an amazing opportunity. I am using multivariate logistic regression models on Stata to analyse the data collected by my professor and his colleague a few years back, and have developed my quantitative analysis skills a lot in doing so. While this drastic change has been difficult and very time-consuming, I am grateful for the new opportunity I have been presented with and the skills it has allowed me to develop. As I apply for jobs, it has been extremely helpful to have such advanced quantitative analysis skills, as well as a strong background in qualitative-based research. I also appreciate the applicability and relevance of education, and am realizing how critically important it is to understanding to many things. While studying during this pandemic has been difficult and a new change of pace as I am back in the US, I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to learn alongside such esteemed professors and like-minded peers.



## Studying During COVID – 19

### Arshan Barzani

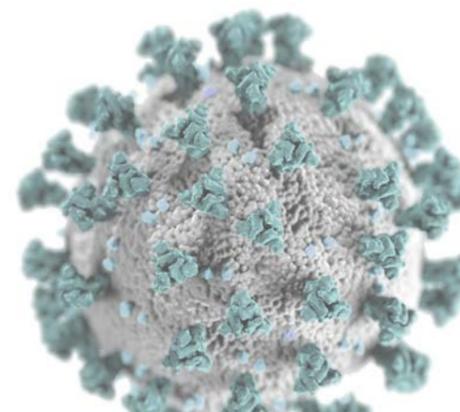


I left Britain on the last nonstop flight for Phoenix. That morning, I was supposed to be going to Equatorial Guinea for fieldwork. Instead, I was going home.

Never did I expect that the sandglass of my time at Oxford would drain so suddenly. I had learned only the day before that I had one last chance to go straight back. That was when I booked my tickets and packed my room at St Antony's. Only my sub fusc stayed behind in my closet, a vain hope that I would return for exams.

Now nearly two months have passed, and my fears that I would accomplish little at home have given way to a routine. Wake up at 8:30, do mostly coursework until 4, then practice languages, exercise, and read. Repeat it all again tomorrow. It has all reinforced my belief that discipline is life's most meaningful habit, even if in this case it results in a Groundhog Day of monotony. But I am happy, healthy, and productive. The dissertation is coming along, too, helped by feedback via email and Skype from my supervisor, Wale. Had coronavirus stricken in the year of my birth, students would have been less lucky. Today I have access to countless online sources, records I digitized before leaving Oxford, and interviewees who make themselves available with ease. It cannot compare to shaking hands in Equatorial Guinea or browsing the shelves of the Bodleian, but I will get by.

Our African Studies cohort will also miss out on Trinity term, and Trinity is what one thinks of when one thinks of England—the balls, regattas, horse races, garden parties, parades. We will instead be writing our dissertations and taking our exams in our rooms. That will feel more normal than the unfamiliar Examination Schools, and that is a shame. The commonplace is not what drew us to Oxford: its exciting absence is what I will miss most.



### Nokuzola Songo

I left Oxford on the 13th of March to carry out my field research in South Africa for my thesis about displacement and homecoming during the political violence of the 1990s. I arrived here before all of the travel bans took effect; I was still hopeful and inspired and I felt that I could still find a way to carry out my field interviews for data collection for my thesis. Soon the in-person interviews I had scheduled had to turn to phone interviews as one of the strictest lockdowns in the world came into effect, preventing me to even leave the house for a walk. Inspiration dwindled at this point, as face to face interaction with the interviewees is very important as these are individuals who have suffered tremendous physical and psychological conditions and I am essentially asking them to re-immers themselves in their traumatic past.

While studying in a competitive environment like Oxford is, to say the least, challenging without the added pressures of a worldwide pandemic, the South African lockdown put me in a position where I had to often choose between focusing on my work and helping people in my ancestral community who had an immediate need to access basic services like hospital appointments or visiting food banks, with public transport restricted. My flights back to Oxford, originally scheduled for the 11th of April, got cancelled and postponed to the 9th of May, only to be cancelled again indefinitely and now I am looking at a return date in the UK of July as the best-case scenario. This instability induced a level of anxiety that I had never experienced before and I am still working through. At the time of writing, in the middle of writing my thesis, I still need to choose on a daily basis which battle I am going to fight on that given day.

While South Africa is home, I live at my grandmother's house with my cousins when I am here thus I don't have my own room to retreat into to focus and study and I do not have reliable network coverage, often struggling to access online resources. Finding an affordable place to stay where I could study during the lockdown has been a real struggle, with the greatest challenge been financial constraints as I cannot afford to rent a place in both Oxford and in South Africa for an extended period. This has proven to be burdensome, forcing me to choose between compromising my ability to do academic work and living beyond my means.

Worrying about financial issues and at the same time working on essays, preparing the final exam and, most of all, a thesis without reliable access to the internet has proven to be an all-consuming challenge. In all my enthusiasm for my academic experience at Oxford University, I was most definitely not prepared to find myself in a tug of war between retaining my mental health and academic success.



## And the band played on ...

Sasheenie Moodley



During this time of lockdown, social distancing and Covid-19, it is not unusual to feel that the world is spinning out of control (perhaps at a faster rate than normal). For those of us privileged enough to be in stable quarantine locations, each day can feel like a stalemate. The global community is working hard to checkmate Covid-19, and vice versa. In the meantime, thousands of people suffer and fade.

The faster things spin, the more work there is to do. In my safe and somewhat stable world, I feel that my DPhil responsibilities have accelerated. I 'finished' my fieldwork at the end of 2019. This year, I have been analysing and writing. I am fortunate that my work has remained on schedule, unlike so many others for whom fieldwork is not feasible.

Like many other students, I feel that the outbreak has forced me work in a context of pressure, worry, and anxiety. These tensions plague my write up and analysis processes, even though I endeavor to overcome them in earnest. The already tricky write-up task seems even more difficult to navigate. It is more challenging to find some semblance of a 'writing routine' when flights, incidence, and restrictions are in constant flux. These tensions are also taxing for my mental and emotional health. If you are an "empath" like me, you are probably working hard to guard your peace and maintain healthy boundaries. Perhaps it is better to be compassionate instead of empathetic.

I cannot exactly offer a 'glass-half-full' anecdote here - but I can offer solidarity. Indeed, what some peers are experiencing in the United States echoes what others are observing in China and the United Kingdom. This Covid-19 crisis has given us the gift of perspective. They say this is one of the most important things a person can learn during her DPhil.

*And the band played on* - the namesake for this piece - is an iconic 1993 American film about the first decade of the AIDS epidemic, and the respective implications for biomedical culture, and the discourse on infectious disease globally. This film asks the audience to recognise a profound sense of humanity. One of my favorite quotes is delivered by the character Dr. Dennis Donohue: "When the doctors start acting like businessmen, who do the people turn to for doctors?" I fear that this quote has salience now, during the global Covid-19 situation, more than ever.

Ultimately, life goes on. The band plays on. All things will, inevitably, come to an end - no matter how wonderful or challenging they may be. In the meantime, I continue working on my DPhil. Every day, I do my best to keep falling in love with my work so that this journey retains some joy.

## The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on graduate research: My experience

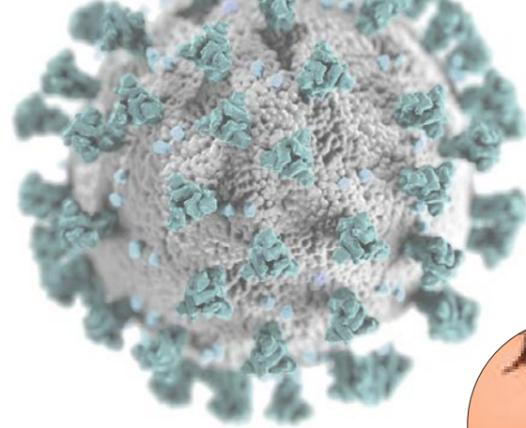
David Damtar

The first five months of this year 2020 has not been ordinary. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only challenged and changed our working patterns as humans across the world, but it is also exposing and deepening the levels of inequalities across human society and impacting us on different scales.

As a final year doctoral student with interest in extractive industries in Africa and their relations with societies, I consider myself to be one of the lucky researchers at this period. I returned to the UK from data collection in Asante, Ghana, before the international borders were closed. My current research, which focuses on the social histories of unequal actors in gold mining communities during decolonisation and early post-independence Ghana, would have suffered a significant blow if I had not completed fieldwork before the virus hit the country. The data gathered, among which were the lived experiences of long-term residents and former mineworkers from Obuasi and Konongo mining communities, is essential to my research. My thesis seeks to contribute new ways of exploring the enduring historical legacies and developmental asymmetries in gold mining communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

One of the experiences of fieldworkers is balancing time with accomplishment where, the researcher must consciously, and sometimes painfully, bring the fieldwork to an end. I was anticipating obtaining access to a private archive which contains potentially useful information. I had made a successful application to access it and was planning a short-term return to Ghana to see this particular archive. Sadly, with Ghana's borders now closed, and with the current pandemic remaining unpredictable as it seems, it remains to be seen whether my hopes of accessing this archive will materialise. Appraising data and writing my chapters have also not been without their challenges. The situation prompted the closure of university facilities and useful resources key to my research, which means I have to make do without the comfort of the College and Bodleian's workspaces, as well as essential reference materials. This situation has somewhat affected my rate of productivity negatively.

Indeed, these are not ordinary times, and all students will need all the help they can get to strike a proper balance between accomplishing usual time-bound academic responsibilities—as the clock counts down—and navigating the social, cultural, and psychological shifts this pandemic has brought.



## Matipa Mukondiwa

How I thought my fieldwork and final months of the MSc. African Studies would go and what ended up happening were very different. I am grateful that where I was doing research when travel restrictions were put in place was also home however, finishing my degree at home has its own set of challenges. Ultimately, I have learnt that it is good to plan ahead as a student but sometimes we can be very arrogant with the assumed certainty of what tomorrow will bring. Time management is important but so is flexibility.

There have been days where I have been very productive and then there were days where I felt as if all my concerns about my future would swallow me whole. It has been hard experiencing this in another country away from the cohort I had just started getting to know. It is also hard experiencing this at what is meant to be the most intense time of my degree.

Nevertheless, being a student during the pandemic made me appreciate the cohort and all our different personalities in a way that I had not done before as we encouraged each other through numerous WhatsApp group chats and FaceTime calls. I am also very grateful to my research participants who spoke with me at such an uncertain time. Initially, I thought my thesis would be about the braai solely from the perspective of those who go to the braai for leisure purposes, but due to the Pandemic, most of my interviews ended up being with people who work at the braai and accepting this avenue of research has been so thought provoking. As a student and aspiring researcher, I have seen myself grow through this experience and I am grateful to the Duncan family, the African Studies Centre and my supervisor whose support has facilitated this growth.

## A Tale of State Power: The Indian State's Response to the COVID Crisis

Gayatri Sahgal



Last term in the "Politics of Life in Africa" option course class, we spent considerable time debating the state's power and capacity to protect and preserve life. Our theoretical debates, however, found empirical application with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the initial weeks of the crisis, I found the Indian government's response to the crisis to be particularly pertinent and revealing. On March 24th, 2020, the Government of India hastily implemented a country-wide lockdown by giving the country less than four hours of notice. In doing so, the Indian state demonstrated its particular reading and understanding of the state's Bio-power.

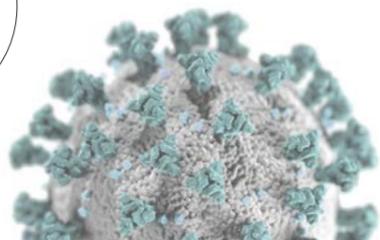
Bio-power rests on the institutions of health and welfare that the states have at their disposal for ensuring the survival and preservation of their populous. However, the exercise of Bio-power is a political exercise that requires states to ask the deeper and colder questions of 'whose lives matter' and 'which lives are worth saving'. Bio-power and the resulting measures that are directed in the interest of preserving life, ultimately privilege one life over another. As Butler contends - all lives are not equally valued and the structures of power and the distribution of resources, differentially dispose lives to precarity.

In imposing the lockdown without either preparing the public, allowing state governments sufficient time and resources to deal with the repercussions or offering a comprehensive aid package, the Modi government demonstrated whose lives the Indian state was trying to secure. The lockdown forced many migrant families to return home to their villages and left states to deal with the burgeoning population of the hungry and the destitute. Social distancing became a distant dream as millions struggled to make their way home on foot; finding refuge in each other and not the cities that they had helped build. In the weeks since the humanitarian disaster continues to unfold with recent surveys indicating that 84 percent of Indian households have experienced a decrease in income and 34 percent won't be able to survive another week without assistance.

The lives that are considered as worth saving are then not of the people who constitute 70 percent of the country's workforce and are employed in the informal sector. Without any savings to draw upon or social security protection, these groups are being pushed to the brink of survival. The lives that the government considered in its calculus are (by implication) those of the rich and the middle class. These are groups who have the capacity and the ability to heed the government's advice and to emerge from the lockdown perturbed but unscathed. The result has been that these lives continue to be lived as 'bare' and outside the ambit of the state's protection and care.

From an outside perspective then, India appears to have taken a proactive stance in imposing strict lockdown measures. However, quite distinct from the experience of European countries, India had a head start and could have, in the early stages, initiated strategies of rigorous testing and containment. Further, a nationwide lockdown of a country of India's size and limited social protection benefits, should not have been taken overnight without sufficient preparation. The priority should have been to provide an extensive relief package: ensuring food security, providing wage compensation and increasing the scope of existing social safety nets (for full-scope of the measures suggested, see: Citizens Response to COVID Relief).

The Finance Minister's recent package of measures seems to be a step in the right direction, but for many, it may be too little, too late. Thus, rather than a baton wielding response, a more appropriate strategy would have been to include (from the outset) the many lives that have thus far received scant mention in the state's cost/benefit calculus.



## IAB-Kaduna State Government of Nigeria Scholarship

The Kaduna State Government through the Centre's International Advisory Board (IAB) has instituted an IAB-Kaduna State Government of Nigeria Scholarships for two students from Nigeria who applied to the Centre as 'foreign students'. The scholarship was announced by the Governor of Kaduna State of Nigeria, Governor Nasir El-Rufai, during the annual meeting of the International Advisory Board (IAB) on October, 2019. The new chair of the Board, Professor Ibrahim Gambari, thanked the governor and government of Kaduna State on behalf of the Centre for its commitment to providing opportunities for young people from Nigeria to be able to study at Oxford.

The Scholarship, which is based at St Antony's College, pays for full tuition, living allowance and other fees up to £46,000 for each of the two students that will benefit from the Scholarship. The winner for the 2020-2021 academic year is Mr Temilorun Olanipekun.

**Congratulations to Temilorun**

## Thomas Svanikier Joins IAB



*Photo of Ambassador Johanna Odonkor Svanikier (extreme right) Mr Thomas Svanikier, Wale Adebani, President Danny Faure and Dr Anne Makena of AfOx at the African Leaders Lecture Series delivered by President Faure.*

Ghanaian entrepreneur, Mr Svanikier, the Founder and Executive Chairman of Svani Group, an automotive conglomerate based in Accra, Ghana and the Founder and Chairman of the Advisory Board of Fidelity Bank, a growing international financial institution, has joined the Centre's International Advisory Board (IAB). Mr Svanikier attended his first meeting of the IAB in October 2019. He is married to Ambassador Johanna Odonkor Svanikier, Ghana's former Ambassador to France and Portugal, and an Oxford alumna.

## Gambari is New Chair of IAB – and new CoS to Nigerian President!

The Centre's International Advisory Board elected Professor Ibrahim Gambari, a scholar, diplomat, and former Under Secretary-General of the United Nations for Political Affairs, as new chair during its annual meeting on October 2019. He succeeded the inaugural chair, Mr Tito Mboweni. Mr Mboweni, currently the Finance Minister of South Africa, resigned from the Board because of his commitments in South Africa. He was appointed his country's Finance Minister by President Cyril Ramaphosa just a few weeks before the formal inauguration of the Board in October 2018. We thank Mr Mboweni for his valuable service to the Centre.

At the Board's meeting in October 2019, Professor Gambari thanked his colleagues for the confidence reposed in him and promised to lead the Board in providing massive support for the Centre's mission. Three members of the Board announced new two scholarships (the IAB-Kaduna State Government of Nigeria Scholarships), one renewed scholarship scheme (the Patrick Duncan Scholarship which was extended for another three years – after the initial five years) and a hardship fund (African Graduate Thrive Fund, AGTF).

The Board also decided to organise three fundraising events for scholarships in three locations in the continent, Lagos, Accra and Johannesburg in 2020. However, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has put this plan on hold.

The meeting was attended by the new chair, Mr Alex Duncan, Governor Nasir El-Rufai, Ms Linda Mabhena-Olagunju, Mr Ivor Agyeman-Duah and the newest member of the Board, Mr Thomas Svanikier. Other members of the board, Madame Monica Geingos, Dr Charlotte Harland-Scott, and Mr Gareth Ackerman, were unavoidably absent.

**As we were going to press, the President of Nigeria appointed the chair of the IAB, Professor Ibrahim Gambari as his Chief of Staff. (A faculty quipped that it seems that anyone elected as the Chair of the Centre's IAB is targeted for appointment by an African president!) We wish Professor Gambari all the success in his new task.**



*IAB members and ASC Msc and DPhil Students*



*First Lady of Namibia, Madame Monica Geingos and former Chair of the IAB and Finance Minister of South Africa, Mr Tito Mboweni chatting before the inauguration of the IAB in October 2018.*

## African Graduate Thrive Fund (AGTF)

Through the beneficence of a member of the Centre's International Advisory Board, Mr Thomas Svanikier, the African Studies Centre (ASC) in partnership with the Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx) has established the African Graduate Thrive Fund (AGTF) for African students at the University of Oxford. Mr Svanikier is the Founder and Executive Chairman of Svani Group, an automotive conglomerate based in Accra, Ghana as well as a Founder and Chairman of the Advisory Board of Fidelity Bank, a growing international financial institution.

Any Oxford University graduate student who is ordinarily resident in any African country before their admission to the University is qualified to apply for the AGTF. The Fund will (i) support any activity that will ensure the pursuit of excellence in graduate studies; (ii) help the students to meet unexpected and urgent financial circumstances; and (iii) support other urgent needs that might be considered by the award committee.

**The award to individual students is limited to £500 (five hundred pound sterling) in each academic year.**

### Submission of Applications and Award Committee

Applications should be submitted to the Award Committee through AfOx. Applications should include a clear statement of the circumstances which necessitate the need, the amount required, as well as how the fund will be used. The Award Committee is made up of representatives of the African Studies Centre and AfOx.

### Temilorun OLANIPEKUN: IAB-Kaduna State Government Scholar

I was almost discouraged from submitting my admission application to Oxford because I had no sponsor, or any guarantee of a scholarship to fund my study. This is why I am profoundly humbled by, and grateful for the news of my IAB-Kaduna State Government scholarship award to study for an MSc in African studies at St. Antony's College, Oxford. The news of the award came to me at a time I had lost hope of studying at Oxford. Yet, my postgraduate study was of utmost priority to me, and I have always dreamt of pursuing it at Oxford – a dream that this scholarship award will make possible.

I feel very fortunate to be an awardee of this scholarship as it makes an invaluable contribution to my education – a privilege that I do not take for granted. The IAB scholarship award has reinforced my commitment to academic excellence. And thanks to the award, I can peacefully anticipate the commencement of my study later this year with great enthusiasm. As a grateful awardee, I have resolved to embody, and be an exemplar, of the values expected of an IAB-Kaduna State Government Scholar during my time at Oxford and beyond.

I hold a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Bowen University, Nigeria. Upon resumption at the Oxford African Studies Centre, I hope to write my dissertation on the forced displacement crisis in Northern Nigeria. I will be exploring the link between Boko Haram insurgency and internal displacement as it affects the livelihood of the displaced persons, inhibit their mobility to preferred destinations, and affect their integration into host communities.

– OLANIPEKUN, Temilorun A. (Nigeria)

# OSGA News

## European Area Studies Networking Workshop

European Area Studies Networking Workshop  
 On Friday, 31st January 2020, the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies convened a workshop with several key European partners to discuss inter-institutional collaboration in the post-Brexit world. The meeting was held in St Luke's Chapel (Radcliffe Observatory Quarter) and was joined by colleagues from INALCO (Paris), the Free University of Berlin, the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), the University of Leiden, the Higher School of Economics (Moscow and St Petersburg), the University of Warsaw, and Charles University (Prague). The partners discussed collaboration in the areas of doctoral training and institutional best practices in Area Studies.



Head of OSGA, Professor Tim Power speaking at the meeting of the representatives of European Area Studies Centres



Group photograph at the end of the European Area Studies Networking Workshop

# Photo Gallery



ASC Faculty and Members of the IAB after the IAB meeting at the Centre in October 2019. (L-R) Mr Thomas Svanikier, Dr Julia Viebach, Prof Wale Adebani, Governor Nasir-El-Rufai, Chair of IAB, Prof Ibrahim Gambari, Ms Linda, Mabhena-Olagunju, Mr Ivor Agyeman-Duah, Mr Alex Duncan, Dr Liz Fouksman, Dr Peter Brooke, and Prof Miles Tendi.



IAB members, Mr Thomas Svanikier (L) and Mr Alex Duncan discussing during the reception for IAB members.



Dr Julia Viebach and Ms Linda Mabhena-Olagunju discussing during the reception for the IAB members in October 2019.



Prof Gambari and ASC MSc student and former UK High Envoy to Zambia, Fergus Cochrane-Dyett



IAB member, Mr Thomas Svanikier (l) and Dr Peter Brooke

# Photo Gallery



ASC students and fellow with President Danny Faure of Seychelles



ASC students, Kenza Camara (extreme left), Amidu Mutaru (extreme right) and Visiting Fellow, Akin Osuntokun (second left) with President Faure



Ambassador Johanna Odonkor Svanikier, Ghana's former Ambassador to France and Protuga and Ambassador Barry Faure, Seychelles' Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs



ASC former administrator, Martha Mas hugging Dr Julia Viebach after receiving farewell flowers from the latter.



Caroline Moore (left) and Jacob Moss of St Antony's College Servery section at the reception for President Faure.



Chair of IAB, Prof Gambari with Governor El-Rufai and Deputy Governor Hadiza Balarabe (right) at a fund-raising meeting in Kaduna, Nigeria



Dr Zoe Cormack of ASC presenting a gift to President Faure at the end of his lecture

## Update from Shaeera Kalla

Shaeera Kalla (2018 – 2019)

Shaeera is exploring the use of film making and data visualisation to enhance her activism. She is extending her Masters research on digital work, specifically on platform capitalism and domestic work in South Africa with the aim of conceptualizing alternatives to platform capitalism which are centered around new forms of worker organisation through cooperatives. This research sits at the nexus of historical labour struggles, debates around formal and informal labour, apartheid geospatial planning and its continuation through persisting racialized accessibility to labour markets, migration and attitudes of xenophobia, evolving understandings of work in the digital age, and the gendered performativity of labour. She also the co-founder of an organisation called The Mbegu Platform which is an ideation generator and incubator for socially impactful ideas which are community-driven. Their current focus sectors are in sustainable agriculture, renewables, service cooperatives and waste management.



## Panzi Foundation DRC

Nicole Batumike (2018 – 2019)

After Oxford, I moved to Bukavu, DRC, where I am working at the Panzi Foundation DRC. The Foundation was co-founded by Nobel Peace Prize Winner Dr. Denis Mukwege in 2008 to support the Panzi Hospital he founded in 1999. The Foundation ensures the provision of services completing the medical pillar, such as legal assistance, psycho-social support and socio-economic programmes. Together, Panzi Hospital and Foundation offer a holistic model of care for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. At the Foundation, I am the project manager for the National Survivors Network, which organises advocacy and community outreach activities on a national level. The Mouvement is also active on a global level as part of the global Network, SEMA. Besides that, I am also managing a socio-economic reintegration program which consists in the establishment of ethical, women-led, gold and semi-precious stones value chains.



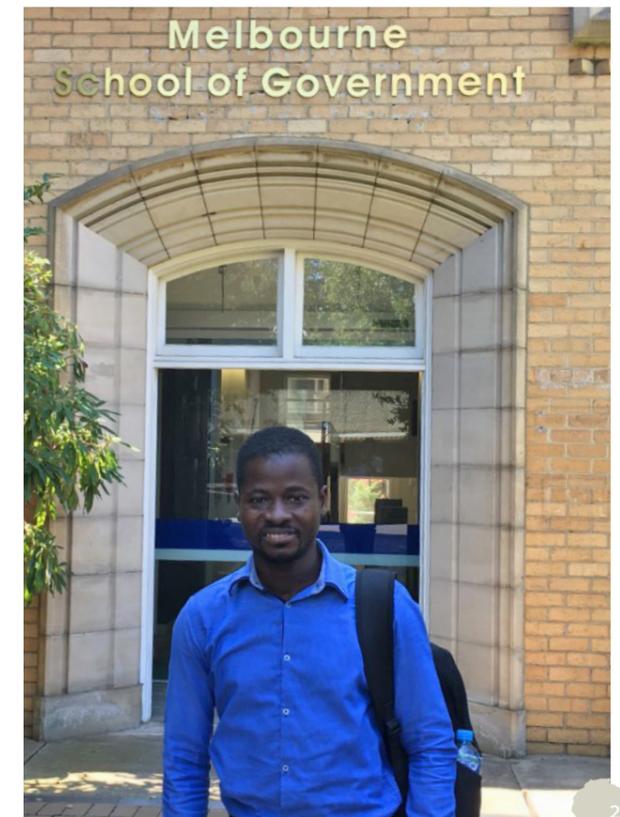
## Danielle Del Vicario

After completing the MSc in African Studies in 2018, Danielle Del Vicario started a DPhil in History, researching the life, death and memorialization of John Garang, the founder of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) which fought a twenty-two-year war against the government of Sudan. Over the past year and a half, she has conducted research in Kenya, South Sudan, South Africa and the UK, seeking out different histories and interpretations of Garang. In October 2019, she also started working as a teaching assistant for the MPhil in International Development course, History and Politics of the Global South.



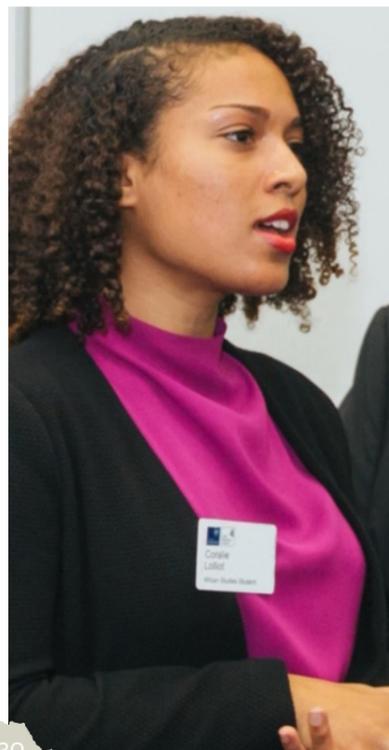
## Kofi Bediako

I have had lots of amazing experiences since leaving the African Studies Centre of Oxford University. I won a PhD Scholarship at the University of Melbourne some few months after. But the start of the program was still seven months away, so I took the opportunity to engage other activities. One of them was my participation in an International Conference on Peace and Education at the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace, Liverpool, where I presented a paper on the legacies of Ghana's Transitional Justice process based on my MSc thesis. I also worked with McDonalds for six months as a means of gaining some valuable experiences outside academics and meeting new people. This was lots of fun as I was able to gain deeper insights about life in Oxford. I then visited my family back in Ghana before moving to Melbourne. I am currently working on my PhD and it is very exciting. I am building on my Masters thesis on Ghana's Transitional Justice process by comparing it the Liberian experience. The aim is to examine the Characteristics, processes, and outcomes of the complex interactions between the International and the Local in Transitional Justice in Africa. My supervisors are supportive, the city is welcoming, and the university is great. But I always look back at the wonderful training I had at the African Studies Centre as the energy that keeps me going. Greetings from Melbourne with Love.



## Coralie Lolliot-Bright

I am a French and an Ivorian citizen who just graduated from the Master of Science in African Studies, St Antony's College. I'm currently seeking a career in international development, ideally with a focus on the Sub-Saharan African region. Most recently, I joined the Education Sector of the UNESCO's Headquarters (Paris) as a Project and Research Assistant (Intern) in order to support quantitative and qualitative analysis on the possible futures of technological, market, and environmental disruptions and how education might be affected by these futures. Just as important, I've joined the UNESCO's 'Covid-19 Educational Disruption and Response' task force where I'm monitoring the immediate impact of school closures in sub-Saharan Africa until the end of May. Without a doubt the MSc in African Studies has reinforced my ability to address these issues across the continent. Moving forward, I truly hope to apply my strong expertise of African Affairs and educational policies in the international development sector.



## 2019 Annual Lecture by Prof Manthia Diawara

ASC 2019 Annual Lecture was delivered on Friday, 7th June 2019 by Professor Manthia Diawara, cultural theorist, art historian, writer, filmmaker, producer, and Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature and Film at New York University, USA. The title of Professor Diawara's lecture was 'Edouard Glissant and the Right to Opacity: some Trembling Thoughts on the State of Critical Theory in Francophone Africa.'



Prof Diawara and ASC staff



Prof Diawara making a point during his lecture



Prof Diawara and MSc and DPhil students

## Book Launch: Telephone Conversations

Brenda McCollum

Mr Ebenezer Asante, the VP of MTN Group Southern and East Africa and Ghana Region, began this book launch by introducing himself and telling us about his background in academia and industry. Although a graduate of Cambridge, with aspirations to become an academic, he went into industry and never quite made it back to academia. Mr Asante described to the listeners how all academic studies are tied to one another, whether we realize it or not, and how this influenced his interest in Area Studies.

The VP went on to discuss development questions on the African continent and the influence that they have in all spheres of life. Technological advances in last few decades have critically changed how development will and needs to happen. His role in MTN has shown him the role that telecommunication technology can play in developmental strategies.

While appreciating the good that technology can do on the African continent, Mr Asante discussed how it can also have negative side effects. This is especially significant when we look at the ways leaders have misused communication technologies. As we move further into the 21st century and begin relying more and more on technology, the VP warns us to be careful about how much we use and trust different technological advances.

Mr Asante stated that MTN serves 240 million people, with Ghana being one of its biggest operations. He recognizes that there have been criticisms of MTN, but that is to be expected with a company this large. Providing this number of people with telecommunications technology comes with both opportunistic and problematic sides. The VP discussed the role that MTN has played in Ghana's development, but states that everyone must work together to move Ghana forward. Collaborations such as that between MTN and Ivor are done purposefully to further Ghana's developmental goals. The VP is confident that MTN will be an African success story as he looks forward to the future of the technology revolution.

Ivor, the author of Telephone Conversations: A History of Telecommunication Economics and MTN in Ghana, introduced his book by saying that he was surprised when researching for his book that MTN never questioned what he was writing. He says that this is evidence of the confidence MTN has in its work. Ivor's work was inspired by his belief that for a country to move forward, it has to understand its history.

Africa is connected to the global economic development stream. This perspective of the continent is the starting point for Ivor's work. Ivor begins his book by examining communication technologies through time, beginning in the pre-colonial era during the Asante wars. He then analyses communication during the colonial era and the work that

Nkrumah did to develop Ghana's telecommunications infrastructure. Ghana was the first Sub-Saharan country to experience true postcolonial growth. Ivor outlines the role that communications technology played in Ghana in the decades following independence. The book finishes by describing the role of technology in the 21st century and speculates on how this will continue to change as technology evolves.

The book launch was finished by a Q and A where the Mr Asante and Ivor were questioned about MTN's future coverage goals in Ghana, problems with how MTN is viewed, and discussions between MTN and Chinese companies.



Mr Ebenezer Asante, the VP of MTN Group Southern and East Africa and Ghana Region (left) and Mr Ivor Agyeman-Duah, author of member of ASC IAB at the book presentation

# President Bio Speaks on the anti-corruption agenda in Sierra Leone

By John Bowers, Principal, Brasenose College, Oxford.

On 7 June, the Amersi Foundation Room was packed for the visit of the President of Sierra Leone, Julius Maada Bio, which we co-hosted with the Africa Studies Centre. He brought with him the Attorney General and the Ministers of Finance, Agriculture and Tourism. They were in the UK for an Economic meeting on the previous day in London and the Trooping of the Colour on the following day. He has been President of Sierra Leone since 4 April 2018. He is a retired Brigadier General in the Sierra Leone Army and he was the military Head of State of Sierra Leone from January 16, 1996 to March 29, 1996 under a military Junta government. The President is part way through a PhD in International Relations in Bradford University but probably has little time for that now!

He first addressed a lunch for Fellows where he answered questions. At 2pm he spoke to about 130 about the challenges faced by his country which is one of the world's poorest but is keen to develop. A consistent strand of the speech was that the West (in particular its media) did not understand Africa. The President also emphasised his desire to stamp out corruption (which he said had been rampant under the predecessor regime) and to extend free education to all. He has set up an independent commission of inquiry focused on corrupt officials from past administrations, with the aim of recovering money that was pilfered from public funds, and using it toward the new development goals.

He emphasised that he wanted trade rather than aid. There was a lively Q&A and many members of the Sierra Leonian diaspora asked questions. He spoke about his decision during the civil war to meet the rebel leader.

It was a great opportunity to hear about a fascinating country.



The President of Sierra Leone delivers his presentation in Brasenose College.



L-R: Sierra Leonian High Commissioner to the UK, Ambassador Tamba Lamina, Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford, Mr John Bowers and President Bio after the president's lecture.

# The Oxford Africa Society

The Oxford Africa Society continues to be a platform dedicated to Africa and Africans in Oxford and the 2019/2020 academic year was no different as our social and academic events continued to provide great value to our members.

The year started with induction and welcoming of new members who had arrived from the continent and the diaspora to resume their degrees in Oxford. A highlight of Michaelmas term 2019 was the globally publicised campaign for justice for Mr Ebenezer Azamati who was assaulted by the Oxford Union. The extent to which the society was able to mobilise and organise members as well as coordinate a global media engagement illustrates how much of a powerful voice it has become for African students in Oxford.

Furthermore, the 2019/2020 Scholarships and Access Programme was also launched in Michaelmas term. This is one of the core programmes of the society which supports prospective African applicants to Oxford by pairing them with current Oxford students who can guide them through the application process. The Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOX) was very generous in the provision of application fee waivers reduce the financial burden on applicants who those fees.

The Africa Society was also a beneficiary of the Oxford Foundry Booster grant. This grant was used to support entrepreneurship initiatives by inviting leading entrepreneurs on the continent to Oxford to share their experiences of navigating the business landscape in Africa. In addition to these, we organised research and debates events under the Graduate Research and Innovation (GRAIN) Townhall platform through which members could discuss topical issues on the continent.

In terms of social activities, our AfroBops, one the highly anticipated events on the society's social calendar, organised to celebrate African dance and music were completely sold out in both Michaelmas and Hillary terms. We held a Telegram event at the end of Michaelmas term where we celebrated food, music and games from across the continent. We also

relaunched our T-shirt merchandise which was positively received and purchased by members.

Unfortunately, the Coronavirus pandemic led to the cancellation of the annual Oxford Africa Conference which is a highlight of Trinity term. To support members affected by the pandemic, we launched a welfare fund to help with minor living expenses and received a generous contribution from a supporter of the society to support this welfare intervention. In Trinity term 2020, we are also focused on consolidating and completing outstanding projects. This includes concluding our constitutional review, building a new website and constituting our Advisory Board. We believe these are important projects that's strengthen the institutional fabric of the society.

We are proud of the progress the society has made in the past year and highly confident that the future is very bright for the society.



Students demonstrating at the Oxford Union



Students at a Graduate Research and Innovation Townhall event



Left: Students at the AfroBop. Right: President of the Oxford Africa Society, Nwamaka Ogonna and the General Secretary, Ingrid Viban with the Outreach Manager of the Oxford Foundry, Jonathan Thomson

# African Studies

## Class of 2019–20



**Richard Adjei**  
Ghana

Traditional Medicine in Ghana: A Study of Postcolonial Reforms and Policies



**Arshan Barzani**  
USA

To Stop a Coup: Regime Survival in Equatorial Guinea



**Mary Brooks**  
USA

An Analysis of the Professional Knowledge and Capabilities of Teachers in Northern Nigeria



**Kenza Camara**  
France

Women's Meaning-Making in Liberia: Does the Truth Heal?



**Fergus Cochran-Dyett**  
UK

Nigeria's 1993 Failed Transition to Civilian Rule and the UK's Post-Cold War Africa Policy



**Matipa Mukondiwa**  
Zimbabwe

Getting by at the Braai: Performance and Survival in Present Day Harare



**Amidu Mutaru**  
Ghana

Towards a Moral Anthropology of Internet Fraud: Perspectives from Small-Town North East Region of Ghana



**Khathutshelo Nematswerani**  
South Africa

Agricultural Investments: The impacts of Joint Ventures on Livelihoods and Land Rights



**Ruth Nyabuto**  
Kenya

Is a Good Life Viable in a Protracted Refugee Camp Setting? A Critique of Refugee Self-Reliance



**Katherine Oldham**  
UK

Internal Party Democracy and Gender within Opposition Parties in Africa: the Case of Zimbabwe's MDC



**Carine Conriade**  
South Africa

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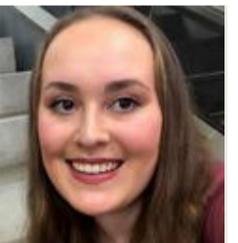
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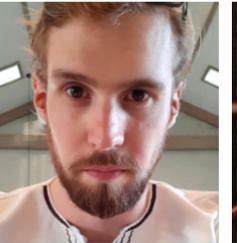
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