



EDITORIAL

Education, Emigration, Ethnicity and African-Australians

Tanya Lyons

Editor, Australasian Review of African Studies
President, African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific
School of History and International Relations, Flinders University
Research Fellow, Centre for Africa Studies,
University of the Free State, South Africa
editor@afsaap.org.au

In this issue of ARAS we deal with the important issues of education, emigration, ethnicity, the perception and representations of, and the challenges and opportunities experienced by African-Australians. In a global collaboration of scholars, the first article explores the involvement of parents in the education of their children in Northern Uganda. Betty Akullu Ezati, Cornelius Ssempala and Peter Ssenkusu from Makerere University, Jody McBrien from the University of South Florida, and Jan Stewart from the University of Winnipeg have all presented their research conducted between 2007 and 2015 in Northern Uganda in their article entitled *Parents, Pay Attention! Factors Related to Parental Involvement with Education in Northern Uganda*. What is striking about their original research is that the findings have lessons for all involved in the education of children. The fact that Uganda's civil wars, and in particular the impact of the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, and subsequent insecurity has 'disrupted' many aspects of people's daily lives, is investigated by these authors in terms of the resilience of communities in educating their next generations. Although, they found that parents have reduced their involvement in children's education, the reasons for this are complex, but are integrally linked to the consequences of war, and also post-conflict government policies. Ezati *et al* use an 'ecological approach' to ask in what ways academic achievement might be enhanced overall, and provide some useful recommendations on how to improve parental involvement in their children's education. Lessons for us all!

One of the many traumatic consequences of war is forced migration. Fleeing your home to search for somewhere else to settle is an all too common scenario in the world today with over 65 million people forcibly displaced or as refugees. Australia has welcomed many refugees and migrants from African countries over the years, and scholars David Lucas and Barbara Edgar from the Australian National University have provided us with ongoing statistical analyses of these migrations and settlements (for example see Lucas, Jamali & Edgar, 2011; Lucas, 2008a; Lucas, 2008b). In this latest instalment, *Zimbabwe's Emigrants: Growth and Change in Australia*, Edgar and Lucas examine the growth and change in emigration from Zimbabwe to Australia. What is interesting about their findings is that between 2001-2006 the number of emigrants from Zimbabwe doubled, making them the “second most numerous birthplace group from Sub-Saharan Africa” in Australia. These demographers also examine the ancestry of these increasing numbers of immigrants from Zimbabwe, and demonstrate that there has been a shift from predominately ‘white European’ to ‘black-African’ migrants. Edgar and Lucas provide a fascinating account of the history of migration from Southern Rhodesia, then Rhodesia, then Zimbabwe to Australia and account for the ‘push factors’ affecting this shift in demographics and migration over time.

For the African-Australian community, whether settled through the humanitarian schemes as refugees, or welcomed as skilled-migrants, as many from Zimbabwe have been, a number of ongoing challenges face them on a daily basis. Danielle Horyniak and Megan Lim from Monash University, and Peter Higgs from both Monash and La Trobe Universities, have conducted important research into the representations of African-Australians in Australia’s news media reporting. The title of their article *News Media Reporting on Substance Use Among People of African Ethnicity in Three Australian States, 2003-2013*, indicates that they have chosen to specifically look at the issue of ‘substance use’ such as alcohol and illicit drugs, which have increasingly been “identified as an emerging health concern” within these communities, and correspondingly of increasing interest to the media. Their research reveals that in particular, the Victorian press compared to other Australian states, has more coverage of these issues. Significantly, these media representations are contributing to the ‘alienation and othering’ of African communities in Australia, especially through the “failure to acknowledge the socio-political and cultural diversity of African communities.” The authors provide some important recommendations for the media, in particular to train journalists in ethnic diversity and awareness of different cultural groups, and to

basically stop focussing on the ethnic origins of the person when discussing other factors, such as substance use.

Continuing this theme of the representations of African-Australians, but shifting the focus from popular media to more serious academic literature, Naduni Wickramaarachchi and Edgar Burns from La Trobe University have reviewed the publications on South-Sudanese migrants in refereed journals. This research is based on the authors concerns that ‘compartmentalised’ and so-called Fields of Research (FoR) basically limit the availability of relevant research to respective researchers and service providers. They argue that the wide spectrum of research which has been conducted on this community of former-refugees must be available and “accessible in a cross-referenced platform to better serve southern Sudanese migrants’ needs”. Wickramaarachchi and Burns demonstrate six multidisciplinary themes which have emerged from the research publications, and these include the psycho-social; adaptation and acculturation; families and health; education; the media and legal system; and community development. By bringing this literature together here in their review they have revealed a number of gaps in the research including those relating to economic activities and issues for the elderly.

Wickramaarachchi and Burns have tapped directly into the purpose of the *Australasian Review of African Studies* (ARAS), to be ‘that multidisciplinary platform’ for research on African studies, and African-Australian issues and research. Indeed, this journal has been publishing articles on this topic for a number of years, and, as a multidisciplinary journal, often gets overlooked by scholars searching for discipline specific research. For the record (editor’s prerogative), I cite here the other articles published in the back-issues of ARAS that relate to the African diaspora in Australia, but have not been cited by Wickramaarachchi and Burns, whose focus was on the specific South-Sudanese diaspora research and publications, hence these articles may have missed their key word searches. Clearly however, these articles will have some relevance for other future researchers examining similar issues (see Ndhlovu, 2015; Hebbani & Preece, 2015; Lawson, 2014; O’Byrne, 2014; Warsame, Mortensen & Janif, 2014; Harte, 2013; Muchoki, 2013; Muchoki, 2012; Oliver, 2012; Harris, 2012; Deng & Pienaar, 2011; Marete, 2011; Saffu, 2010; Wakholi, 2010; Dhanji, 2010; Matereke, 2009; Kifle, 2009; Mapulanga-Hulston, 2009; Correa-Velez and Onsando, 2009; Zwangobani, 2008; Kifle & Kler, 2008; Bitew, Ferguson & Dixon, 2008; Arfish and Olliff, 2008; Robinson, 2008; and Dimock, 2008). In particular, this last reference to Liz Dimock’s 2008 *Bibliography of Africans in Australia*, provides an important and additional list of sources, references and publications on this significant issue prior to

2008. Dimock (2008) should really be one of the first ports of call for any researcher investigating the African-Diaspora in Australia.

Another article that can be added to Wickramaarachchi and Burns' ongoing analysis, is published below by William Arbur and Ramón Spaaij, both from Victoria University, and the latter also based at the University of Amsterdam. These two authors have prepared an important report on the employment experiences of the South Sudanese community in Melbourne, Australia. Their article is particularly concerned with the barriers to employment, such as negative discrimination, among this cohort of former refugees, and how this effects their attempts at settlement in Australia. Arbur conducted interviews for this research and the voices of the participants are important for all researchers and settlement service providers to hear.

The final article in this issue of *ARAS* is an interesting and personal reflection from Eugen Bacon, based at Swinburne University of Technology. Bacon uses narrative strategies to explore trauma, and engages with autoethnography to express her emotional journey in navigating the different worlds that African-Australian migrants necessarily exist within. Entitled *Narrative and Narrative Strategies to Explore Trauma: 'Up Close from Afar' – An African Migrant's Story*, Bacon critically reflects on her own creative fiction exploring life and death, and questions her own African-Australian identity. This is a unique article and makes an interesting contribution to the pages of *ARAS*.

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