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## CONTENTS

## Articles

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# EDITORIAL

## African Studies and the 'National Interest'

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If there was ever a time that African Studies scholars in Australia could demonstrate a 'national interest' in their (officially unrecognised) 'Field of Research' – is now! With the media attention on so-called 'African-crime gangs' (as seen on ABC Four Corners, 5 November 2018) impacting negatively upon the lives of so many African-Australians, now is the time to be heard! These last 39 volumes of the *Australasian Review of African Studies* have amply analysed, discussed and presented the evidence based research on the issues facing the African diaspora and African-Australian/NewZealand community, and it is clear this academic research is needed now more than ever. The 'shock jocks' in the commercial media outlets continue to find angles to exaggerate and implicate Africans (with black skins) into 'the horror, the horror' of suburban crimes – despite the figures revealing their minute involvement. Thankfully, as a result of the 2015 Annual AFSAAP Conference held at University of Western Australia, two academics led a panel on the theme of race and racism in Australia, and now here as our guest editors for this *Special Issue* embedded within the pages of ARAS Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo and Virginia Maphedzahama are able to present the outcomes of that evidence-based research. Their editorial below sets out the debates and background context for these ongoing tensions and challenges within Australian society, that are explored in depth in the five articles devoted to this *Special* theme.

The 'National Interest' of African Studies is also demonstrated in the articles included within this issue of ARAS, but in addition to those on Kwansah-Aidoo and Mapedzahama's theme. Firstly, Margaret O'Callaghan

has prepared and shared with us her painstaking research into the mining sector, so crucial to the business and trade justifying Australian foreign policy interests in African states. Her article titled *Africa Focussed Mining Conferences: An Overview and Analysis,* is a comprehensive analysis of the mining conferences held in Australia and Africa, where she examines the roles of government, non-government and activist perspectives.

Helen Ware's contribution to these pages is also timely and relevant in terms of the national interest when it comes to African Studies. She provides a critique of governance across Africa and compares the rhetoric with reality, with a particular focus on the impact on the lives of actual people living their lives day to day in this context of charters, elections, 'democracy' and governance. Ware concludes as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was stated – *people should be judged on what they do, not on what they say*. A state can sign as many agreements and charters as they need to, to gain international support, but unless they implement those ideas or requirements, it means nothing. This would also apply to the mining companies and their rhetoric on sustainable development and environmental management, which O'Callaghan notes in her article.

Ashley Bulgarelli's contribution here is a timely examination of Ghanaian nationalism with the demarcation of the Volta Region. Entitled *Togoland's lingering legacy: the case of the demarcation of the Volta Region in Ghana and the revival of competing nationalisms,* Bulgarelli argues that the demarcation and thus creation of the new Oti Region 'threatens to redefine the future of nationalisms' and 'give rise to a dominant Voltarian identity'.

The final article in this issue of ARAS is poignantly the last word for volume 39. Biko Agozino's papyrus demonstrates from an African historical perspective, the concept of forgiving the unforgiveable. Agozino calls "for people of African descent to apply this philosophy of forgiveness to one another and demand that the principle be integrated into public policy along with policies for reparations of historic wrongs." This beautifully woven argument is further demonstration of the 'national interest' to African Studies, given the importance of African traditions to global peace and security – forgiveness being something for all peoples, communities and states around the world.

This brings me to reflect on the last 40 years of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific and its journal ARAS. Has anything really changed in this time? Has the focus on African Studies in Australia and New Zealand provided a forum of understanding from which we can demonstrate an effect of positive relations between Africans or African states and Australia and New Zealand? Judging by the array of

articles published in these volumes of ARAS – yes – the effect and impact has been positive and outstanding (see Lyons, 2018). As the outgoing editor of ARAS for this last decade, I have had the privilege of working with many of these researchers at varying stages of their academic careers. They have chosen to focus their academic interests on African Studies as their field of research, and publish their articles in these pages, which has created an enduring legacy of the importance of African Studies in Australia and New Zealand. Now it's their turn to take AFSAAP and ARAS into the future and ensure domestic and foreign policy in Australia is an expression of social justice for all. My only hope for the forthcoming volumes of ARAS is that the articles published on the African diaspora and racism in Australia will all be historical.

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*Special Issue* - Editorial

# Towards Afrocentric Counter-Narratives of Race and Racism in Australia

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When in 2001 the United Nations (UN) enthusiastically adopted the Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DDPA) – a document which proposed measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance – it was done with optimism in what it could achieve particularly where racism towards people of African descent was concerned. Yet, not much progress had been made when over a decade later in 2014, the General Assembly through its resolution 68/237 proclaimed 2015 – 2024 as the 'International Decade for People of African Descent' (United Nations, 2014). At the launching of the Declaration, the then United Nations Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon noted: "[W]e must remember that people of African descent are among those most affected by racism" (UN, 2014, n.p.). In making the Declaration, the UN cited the need to reinforce national, regional and international cooperation to ensure "the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of African descent, and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society" (United Nations, 2014, n.p.) as a reason for the heightened focus. The concerns of the UN remain highly relevant and perhaps more urgent than even before when thinking about the Australian context.

In Australia, racism against people of African descent (read: black Africans) and indeed the indigenous population who are also black, albeit, not of direct African descent, is rife. In 2017 for example, a United Nations envoy criticised the country "for 'deeply disturbing' levels of racism" (Taylor, 2017, n.p.). In fact, as recently as 18 October 2018, Mandisi Majavu of *AfriForum* noted that "Anti-black racism is rife in Australia, and the trope

of associating blackness with criminality and gangsterism is widespread in the Australian mainstream media" (Majavu, 2018, n.p.). The fact that the occurrence of racism is an ongoing concern in Australia is very worrying, but even more disturbing within the Australian context, is the fact that in spite of its history of racism and discrimination etched in its racist colonial policies such as the 'White Australia' policy (overturned in 1973), a 'denial of racism' still dominates Australian public and popular discourse on race relations and there are usually subtle and not so subtle attempts to silence those who want to speak boldly about racism within Australian society (see, for example Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017).

Since the beginning of 2018, and particularly the second half of the year, an even more worrying trend has been emerging over the political horizon; what Dr Tim Soutphommasane, the immediate past Australian Race Discrimination Commissioner called "The return of racial politics", in his final official speech as Commissioner, delivered on 6 August 2018. In the said speech, he warned:

> We must remain vigilant because race politics is back… In one sense, race and racism have never gone away. This is the paradox of our multiculturalism: for all we have been transformed into a diverse and vibrant nation, racism remains alive in our society, and not only as a vestige of an old bigotry and chauvinism. (Soutphommasane, 2018, n.p.)

This quote provides the Australian 'race' context within which this special edition of *ARAS* is being published. While Soutphommasane's warning and indeed his entire speech reaffirms the existence of racism, Australia is still very much characterised by colour-blindness and colour-mutism when it comes to race. During his 2017 visit to Kununurra, the *New York Times* National Correspondent John Eligon (who writes/reports on race issues in America), observed that the "conversation about race in the US is a very hard one to have, […] it's even harder in Australia […] Australians [need to] confront the conversation head on. You need to be willing to argue about it" (Eligon, 2017, n.p.).

Where discussions of race and racism occur, they still remain very contentious debates. In fact, we would argue, in tandem with Manglitz, Guy and Merriweather Hunn (2006, n.p.) that current dialogues around race in Australia are "frequently constrained by the emergence of an ideologically conservative, hegemonic discourse that reframes and rearticulates the experiences of [racialised] persons. This rearticulation bears little resemblance to their actual experiences". Most importantly then,

Soutphommasane's warning signals the need for and significance of a multiplicity of voices in 'race talk' in Australia.

Currently, Australian race talk privileges (white) 'majoritarian' stories. Majoritarian stories, as Love (2004) explains, are the "description of events as told by members of dominant/majority groups, accompanied by the values and beliefs that justify the actions taken by dominants to insure their dominant position" (pp. 229-230). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) further note that "because majoritarian stories generate from a legacy of racial privilege, they are stories in which racial privilege seems 'natural'" (p. 28; see also, Love 2004, p. 229). Majoritarian stories are not only mono-vocal master narratives that silence the voices of people of colour, they also mask "the power of white privilege in constructing stories about race" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28). In Australia, denial and deflections of racism dominate majoritarian race master narratives and these abound most noticeably in media and political discourse. In the political arena for example, as Hewitt (2016) notes "politicians use a number of specific, digressive tactics in order to deny accusations […] including: unmitigated denial, total avoidance of the word racism, deflection onto positive presentation through national rhetoric, and deflection onto other societal problems such as unemployment and poverty" (p. 1).[1] The dominant discourse in the media is not much different. Hewitt further notes that the media "plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse around issues of racism, yet despite its ability to challenge political discourse, the media has repeatedly reinforced positions of denial" (2016, p. 2).

Moreover, "when ethnic minorities occupy a central role in mainstream media, they are often portrayed as threatening to the Anglo mainstream" (*All Together Now*, 2017, p. 9). This is nowhere more evident than in recent reporting of 'out-of-control African-Australian gangs' in Melbourne, particularly since the beginning of 2018. Amid politicians' (unsubstantiated) claims that Melbourne was facing a major crisis from African-Australian (read as: Sudanese-Australian) youth crime, making Melbournians feel unsafe in their own homes; for months the Australian mainstream media was ablaze with such headlines as:

- *Malcolm Turnbull: Sudanese gangs a 'real concern' for Melbourne* (The Guardian, 17 July 2018)
- *10 more examples of the African gang myth* (Andrew Bolt, Herald Sun, 4 August 2018)

[1] A typical example of such national rhetoric is Attorney General Christian Porter's statement that he is uncomfortable with efforts against racial discrimination and prefers to focus on the happier concern of 'harmony' (cited in Soutphommasane, 2018).

- *Three more brutal crimes by African gangs* (Andrew Bolt, Herald Sun, 12 July 2018
- *African gangs: It's not racist to name it for what it is* (Ayaan Hirsi Ali, The Weekend Australian, 21 July 2018)
- *'There is a problem': Tony Abbott questions all African immigration amid gang violence debate* (Michael Koziol & Melissa Cunningham, Sydney Morning Herald, 25 July 2018)

For us, such headlines whether intended or not, hyper-criminalise African youth in Australia, and create a moral panic within the wider (non-African) population. We have previously written about racist media reporting of African migrants in Australia (see Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2015) and these recent reports only serve to continue the trend we have captured in previous writings. In spite of a few cases of 'counter-reporting' from other (predominantly non-mainstream) media outlets (see for example Budarick, 2018) the hyper-criminalisation and hyper-problematisation of African youth in Melbourne (and by extension, Australia) prevailed and even continues. It is not surprising then that Soutphommasane, the former Race Discrimination Commissioner, in the speech referred to earlier, stated that "it feels like there has never been a more exciting time to be a dog-whistling politician or race-baiting commentator in Australia" (2018, n.p.).

Indeed surprisingly (and interestingly coincidental), two days after Soutphommasane's speech, Katter's Australian Party (KAP) Senator Fraser Anning delivered his maiden speech in parliament imbued with highly racial and racist overtones. Senator Anning called for a ban on Muslim immigration on account of Muslims' criminality and overburdening of Australia's social welfare system and subtly implied a preference for a return to a White Australia Policy. While some politicians called out Senator Anning's speech for being highly 'inappropriate', there were no explicit discussions about its racist overtones; 'race' was never mentioned in these political condemnations. In our view, the national debates that ensued (or did not even take place) reflect not only a nation divided on this issue of race and racism, but the increasing popularity of far-right views and a deeply embedded national denial of racism that cripples any productive discussions about race and racism.

Furthermore, a few weeks after Senator Anning's racially charged speech, Australian politician One Nation Party leader Pauline Hanson (no surprises there), submitted a Notice of Motion for the sitting of the Senate on 20 September 2018 to acknowledge that it is "okay to be white". Following the usual trend, Senator Hanson's motion gained national media coverage, but much of this reporting did not critically and/or explicitly discuss the racist

nature of the motion. In other words, much of the media reporting did not unequivocally condemn this as a racist and racially motivated motion, grounded in white supremacist thinking. For instance, mainstream media outlets in the main, did not (at the time of reporting the motion) highlight the long history that the slogan: "it's okay to be white" has in the white supremacist movement (see for example, Dunne, 2018; Pearson, 2018; Latimore, 2018; and Wilson, 2018). Following Cassar's (2016, n.p.) assertion, we would argue that: "the media won't care to admit it, but they've aided Pauline Hanson's career just as much as her own staff", and that the lack of balanced reporting aids Senator Hanson's agenda (intentionally or otherwise). Furthermore, the fact that the motion was only 'narrowly defeated' (31-28) in the initial senate vote in October 2018, reaffirms Soutphommasane's claim that race politics is 'back' in Australia, and that politicians and the media are at the core of this 'return'. It also highlights the need to unequivocally acknowledge his warning that "we must remain vigilant", and to take the necessary steps to ensure that the country does not slip back into habits, behaviours and policies of an era that we consider a blot on Australia's history; these are at odds with the United Nation's efforts at combating racism.

What is needed within this Australian context of increasing popularity in far-right racist thinking, denial and deflections of racism and moral panics about 'African gangs' or escalating African crime then, are narratives that 'counter' the deficit in dominant racial storytelling and racial discourse. These counternarratives can only, and must be "grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of colour" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002 p. 23). Race/racial counter narratives (or counter storytelling), as noted by Merriweather Hunn and Guy (2006), can "expose race neutral discourse to reveal how white privilege operates within an ideological framework to reinforce and support unequal societal relations between whites and people of colour" (p. 244). At their core, racial counter narratives trouble and complicate 'master narratives', or 'false narratives' on race. Merriweather Hunn *et al* (2016, p.244) argue that critical race theorists can employ counternarrative as a methodology to contradict racist characterizations of social life, and we are in full support of such a proposal.

Amidst this socio-political context of denial and moral panics as discussed above, this *Special Issue* of ARAS is very timely as it comes at a time when Australian multiculturalism is not only at cross-roads but perhaps even under threat from the conservative political far-right. It is a time where we are increasingly witnessing what the Soutphommasane called the "politicization and monitisation of racism" (2018). We propose that this Issue

of ARAS is timely for two main reasons. First, and perhaps more obvious, is that the articles (re)present Afrocentric counternarratives to current discourses – in particular discourses that not only racially hyper-criminalise Africans in Australia, but also that continue to frame Africans in terms of a 'deficit' or a problem. The articles in this *Special Issue* are written mostly by African-Australians, about race matters in a community of which they are a part. In most cases, the authors are, so to speak: both the researchers and the researched, and as such their racial counternarratives bring a 'unique person-of-colour voice' to race talk in Australia. The authors have an embodied vantage point from which to talk about race.

Second, more than being 'simply' written from the point of view of African-Australians, the articles constitute counternarratives that are a form of Afrocentric resistance against current dominant forms of race talk in Australia. As Mora (2014, p.2notes,

> the idea of 'counter' - itself implies a space of resistance against traditional domination. A counter-narrative goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power can just tell the stories of those in the margins. Instead, these must come from the margins, from the perspectives and voices of those individuals.

Counter-narratives therefore facilitate "survival and resistance among marginalized groups" (Manglitz et. al, 2006, n.p.). They "contradict racist characterizations of social life and expose race neutral discourse, revealing how white privilege operates to reinforce and support unequal racial relations in society" (Manglitz et. al, 2006, n.p.).

As indicated earlier, this *Special Issue* on racism is being published at an opportune time, given the current socio-political milieu and the concerns raised so far, make the issues discussed in the articles assembled here very timely. Despite the declaration by Liberal National Senator Ian MacDonald earlier in the year that it is "very difficult to find any but very rare cases of racism in Australia" (cited in Soutphommasane, 2018, n.p.), the contribution by Hyacinth Udah and Parlo Singh shows that racism is well and alive in Australia and is in fact very much a part of the everyday experiences and realities of black African migrants and refugees living in South East Queensland. Going by the title - *It still matters: The role of skin colour in the everyday life and realities of black African migrants and refugees in Australia* - the article shows how race, skin colour and immigration status interact in a rather unfortunate way to shape the everyday lives and social relations and relationships of respondents. Much like our *'There is really discrimination everywhere': Experiences and consequences of Everyday*

*Racism among the new black African diaspora in Australia*, published in the previous edition of ARAS (Volume 39, Number 1) (Kwansah-Aidoo and Mapedzahama, 2018), Hyacinth Udah and Parlo Singh's article "illustrates some disturbing trends in our democratic society" (Lyons, 2018, p. 10) and shows that racism is more widespread than many in society, especially our politicians, would want us to believe. With the return of race politics in Australia as highlighted earlier with the quote from Soutphommasane, we would like to re-echo the recommendation made by Lyons (2018, p.10) that these articles become "compulsory reading for all Australian politicians".

Cultural racism continues to present itself in various guises in the Australian society, particularly in the employment market and workplaces where people with different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds or with a non-English name routinely face discrimination (see, for example Booth, Leigh, & Varganova, 2012; Elias & Paradies, 2016). Virginia Mapedzahama, Trudy Rudge, Sandra West and Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo pick up on the theme of cultural racism with their article *Making and maintaining racialised ignorance in Australian Nursing Workplaces: The case of black African migrant nurses*. The article uses the experiences of black migrant nurses as a case to show how ignorance is constructed, maintained and utilised in the nursing workplace, causing structural violence, while retaining and supporting a nursing workplace that is racialised and racialising in its functioning and functionality. This research is particularly significant given Australia's efforts at maximising the gains from its skilled migration program. The article demonstrates how race, gender and history intersect to influence the way/s in which black African migrant nurses are seen, constructed/deconstructed, known and un/known in their Australian workplaces. It also shows how "intersectional epistemological ignorance" (Bowleg et al., 2017, p. 578) influences workplace interactions and relationships and how a variety of forms of ignorance are used to maintain colour-blindness and the racialisation of black migrant Registered Nurses. All of this helps to sustain the dominance of whiteness in the nursing space/workplace by creating a workplace that is fraught with racial micro-inequities and the faces of black nurses are actively and negatively coded with allegorical signs invested with cultural meaning (Benson, 2008). Ultimately, this article by Virginia Mapedzahama, Trudy Rudge, Sandra West and Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo shows that the Australian nursing workplace has structures and strictures in place which result in more than just the underutilisation of the black migrant nurses' skills. These constrictions help to reproduce institutional racism, negate the potential economic benefit of migration and undermine the rationale for the initial recruitment of black

African migrant nurses to the nursing workforce. Given how much time, money and effort goes into the skilled migration program, we call on the health sector, and indeed all Australian institutions and workplaces, to put in place structures and frameworks that address the scourge of institutional violence enacted through racism which ultimately undermines what could be a useful socio-political and economic initiative – the skilled migration program.

Kwadwo Adusei-Asante and Hossein Adibi's contribution comes at a time when according to the immediate past Race Commissioner, Soutphommasane (2018, n.p.), "Australian multiculturalism is at a crossroads". That observation makes the subject matter of their article titled *The 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD) Label: A critique using African migrants as exemplar*, both timely and of immense significance. The article critiques the widely accepted and institutionalised official label CALD, used in political, government, research and popular discourse to refer to non-English-speaking and non-Anglo-Saxon minority groups (other than indigenous Australians). Drawing on labelling theory, the authors argue that the label CALD others, racially profiles, stereotypes homogenises and inferiorises minority groups to whom the label is applied, noting that CALD labelling not only reinforces institutional racism in Australia, but also informs lived experiences of racism. The article shows that people from CALD communities are more likely to be victims of racist attacks and that CALD groups tend to be treated differently. Using Black African Migrants in Australia (BAMIA) as exemplars, the article points out that the CALD label (i) is a racialised and racialising label that overtly divides people into 'us and them', (ii) provides a conceptual pretext for legitimising institutional racism against non-English-speaking and non-Anglo-Saxon minority groups, and (iii) inferiorises migrant communities, projecting the image of an analogous population who need 'fixing'. On the basis of their argument and within the context of the observation that Australian multiculturalism is at a crossroads, and also given the desire for integration and social cohesion, the argument can be made that continued use of the CALD label in Australia can potentially work to hinder social integration and prevent a large number of people from participating fully in Australian society. On that note, it would seem, as the authors argue, that, the CALD label has outlived its usefulness in contemporary Australian society.

Staying within the multiculturalism framework, Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo and Virginia Mapedzahama's contribution titled *Black bodies in/out of place? Afrocentric perspectives and/on racialised belonging in Australia*, touches on very important issues which oftentimes get lost in discussions

about racial diversity and multiculturalism in the Australian society. For the most part, racial discrimination gets enacted through forms of social exclusion, assigning those who experience it to citizenship at the margins of the societies in which they live and this article on belonging touches on how racism affects Black Africans' sense of inclusivity and belonging in an Australian society that is hailed as a success story in multiculturalism. Using data interpreted through the conceptual lens of everyday racism (Essed, 1991) and aided by their own situatedness and autobiographical investment, the authors demonstrate the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in the lives of their participants and point out how that affects their sense of being. Through centering participants' experiences of racism, the article outlines a four-point typology which exposes the complexity and contested nature of belonging when constructed within narratives of subjective experiences of racism. They propose that this should be understood as a typology of belonging – *fractured belonging*, with four dimensions: contestation, negotiation, ambivalence and compromise (for spacio-temporal comfort). Taken together, these four dimensions unmask how experiences of racism construct feelings of 'otherness' and function as an impediment to a sense of national belonging, resulting in a sense of (non)belonging or splintered belonging. One major consequence of the feeling of (non)belonging or splintered belonging, according to the authors, is that, it fuels a desire and fantasy of return to one's homeland, making them cling on to what Chang (1996, p.1) calls the "nativist dream of return". This dream of return is in part fuelled by, and also an outcome of the power play that dislocates them through experiences of racism; through processes that racialise and other them, and through constant reminders that they are not from 'here', embodied in identity questions such as 'where are you from?', which destabilize their sense of citizenship and belonging. Again, just like the article on CALD, this contribution by Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo and Virginia Mapedzahama on belonging is timely and of crucial importance within the context of a desire for social cohesion and inclusivity in Australia and the need to take the right path to forge a way forward from the crossroads where Australian multiculturalism finds itself. The article exposes the complexity and contested nature of belonging when constructed within narratives of subjective experiences of racism and thus argues for more nuanced understandings of *fractured belonging* among Black African migrants in Australia, and the implications of this for their subjective realities and their full participation in the wider Australian society as *bona fide* citizens.

Alfred Mupenzi's article, *Educational resilience and experiences of African students with a refugee background in Australian tertiary education*,

rounds of the contributions. It provides a positive and fitting conclusion to this *Special Issue* by presenting what we would call a 'feel good' story/account to round off the counter-narratives provided here. The article showcases the educational and general resilience that higher education students from refugee backgrounds exhibit in overcoming challenges such as language barriers, culture shock and indeed racism, amongst others, in their new Australian environment. By so doing, the article serves as an intervention in and disruption of the 'deficit logics' that have hitherto shaped research and scholarship in this area. It also works as a 'space opener' for situated and embodied discussions and understandings of the broader resettlement experience for students from refugee backgrounds. When one considers how research shows that a refugee has only a very slim chance of completing even secondary school (Pflanz, 2016) and also that as the UNHCR (2016) has observed, only one in every 100 of the world's refugees goes on to tertiary education, the stories presented in this article should be seen as nothing other than inspiring. This article, premised on the concept of resilience and the aspirations demonstrated by refugee background students to stay in school and finish tertiary education is a welcome breather, especially given the overwhelmingly negative media coverage that young Africans from refugee backgrounds (read: Sudanese youth) have received. We the editorial team, are happy that the central findings in this article run contrary to both research and conventional wisdom regarding refugees, their educational pursuits and achievements. Those featured here have braved the odds and now stand at the threshold of the possibility of experiencing the upward mobility needed as adults to make them full contributors and partners in shaping and participating in the wider Australian society and it is our hope that they will be an example for many within their individual communities and beyond. The stories presented in this article suggest alternative ways of imagining and enacting resilience in students with an African refugee background, which diverge from the focus on constraints related to language, literacy and cultural barriers. On that note, and from a research perspective, this article and all the other contributions in this *Special Issue* taken collectively, show that the current deficit-driven analyses of skilled migrant experiences — which reduce the problematisation of migration to the individual migrant, situating the migrant as '*the*' problem, and fail to expose or challenge the normative assumptions underpinning systemic and systematised processes — are totally inadequate.

To conclude this editorial, we deem it fitting that we return to the beginning — the *UN Declaration of 2015 – 2024* as the **'**International Decade for People of African Descent**'**; a Declaration which was made in anticipation

that it would foster discussions to promote respect, raise awareness, and generate solutions to tackle the challenges of racism faced by people of African decscent (United Nations, 2011, 2014). On that note, it is our hope, that, despite the Australian Attorney-General Christian Porter's expressed discomfort with efforts against racial discrimination and preference for a focus on the happier concern of 'harmony' (Soutphommasane, 2018), the contributions in this *Special Issue* will help to disrupt the silence around discussions of racism in Australia, particularly as it pertains to the 'new' African Diasporas. We are optimistic that the Afrocentric counternarratives provided here can help generate discussions that will go a long way in sensitising all concerned about the social canker that is racism and encourage Australia to adopt a framework that will enable the Race Commission, civil society and other relevant actors to continue to reduce inequality and combat discrimination against people of all races, and particularly those of Black African descent.

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## *SPECIAL ISSUE* ARTICLES

# '*It still matters*': The role of skin colour in the everyday life and realities of black African migrants and refugees in Australia

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**Abstract**

This article looks at the everyday life and realities of some of Australia's most recent immigrant communities, by shedding light on the experiences of black Africans in Queensland. Particularly, this article examines the experiences of black African migrants and refugees living in South East Queensland, to better understand how race, skin colour and immigration status interact to shape their everyday lives and social location in Australia. Data were collected from 30 participants using qualitative research methods. The theoretical approach employed synthesises concepts from identity, blackness, race and racism, whiteness and critical race theory. The subjective experiences of the participants interviewed indicate that skin colour still matters in determining life chances for black Africans in Australia. While the empirical focus is specific to Australia, this article contributes to the research literature in valuable ways, both from a theoretical perspective and in terms of a comparative contextualisation of racism.

## Introduction

Queensland, the third most populous state in Australia, is home to many migrants and refugees. In more recent years, Queensland has accepted many black African migrants and refugees. Many of these Africans have come to build new lives, change their families' circumstances and give new hope to their dreams (Jakubowicz, 2010; Udah, 2018). These African settler arrivals, though a very diverse group, add an important chapter to the history of immigration in Australia broadly and Queensland specifically. This article

looks at the everyday life and realities of black Africans living in South East Queensland (SEQ). In this article, we use the term 'black' specifically to refer to people of African heritage who are socially constructed or racialised as black in Australia. Though of diverse historical, sociocultural and political backgrounds, they share a similar phenotypical appearance— notably their dark skin—and have connections with continental Africa (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). Thus, this article reflects not only an attempt to understand and interrogate their subjective experiences, but also a commitment to bringing about social change. This article focuses on the challenging issue of racism and skin colour (blackness) as an important, if not the most central, factor for consideration in assessing their settlement experiences, as measured by the level of satisfaction and comfort black Africans feel living in Queensland.[1] This is because racial discrimination can make it more difficult for immigrants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to be accepted in Australia (Markus, 2016; Ndhlovu, 2013; Udah, 2018). For black Africans in SEQ, their visible difference—based on physical appearance, skin colour and cultural attributes—can complicate their social acceptance (Ndhlovu, 2013). Thus, critical to understanding the black African experience in SEQ is an elicitation of ways in which their visibility (in terms of difference from the dominant white Australians) interacts with other societal factors to marginalise, exclude and disadvantage them. Before proceeding, we provide a brief historical context of African presence in, and immigration to, Australia.

**African presence in, and immigration to, Australia**

While the African presence in the early days of the making of modern Australia seems to be largely ignored by mainstream historians, Pybus (2006) and Stratton (2006) have argued that Australia has a 'black' African history which dates to the late 18th century. Pybus (2006) indicated that the First Fleet that landed in Botany Bay on 26 January 1788 carried eleven convicts of black African descent who were all sentenced in England for crimes that would, today, be considered petty misdemeanours. As Pybus explained, between 1788 and the middle of the 19th century, almost every convict ship carried people of African descent to New South Wales and Van Diemen's

[1] The Australian Government considers successful immigrant settlement as integral to the achievement of a society which values Australian citizenship and social cohesion. While government agencies define successful settlement outcomes in terms of systemic outcomes (social participation, economic wellbeing, level of independence, and personal wellbeing), most migrants and refugees define settlement in terms of life outcomes such as personal happiness and community connectedness (Australian Survey Research, 2011).

Land (present-day Tasmania). For example, the legendary bushranger 'black Caesar'—as he was referred to by his contemporaries in the new colony—arrived on the First Fleet. He was a runaway African slave known for his leadership and survival skills. He was called black Caesar because he was a black man and had only one name: Caesar, a slave name (Pybus, 2006). Black Africans also participated in the Eureka rebellion of 1854 in Ballarat, Victoria—an uprising against British colonial exploitation and the oppression of the goldfield's poor workers, known as 'diggers' (Udo-Ekpo, 1999). However, it could be that the construction of Australia's convict history as 'white' has led to an almost complete erasure of these black African convicts in Australian history books, stories, film and television. This erasure may not be due to the small number of black African convicts on the First Fleet, but rather due to Australia's explicit aim to create a white utopia (Stratton, 2006; Novak, 2015). In an important sense, when Australia became a federation (nation) it wanted to be 'White Australia', as evidenced by the promulgation of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (the White Australia policy). As Stratton (2006) explained:

> The Immigration Restriction Act, passed immediately after Australian federation in 1901, attempted precisely this, that is, to create a clear boundary round Australia— a utopian channel, we could say — across which non-white people could not travel to reside permanently in the confined space of the new Australian state. (p. 672)

The Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (in force until 1973) was an explicitly racist and discriminatory policy designed to keep Australia 'white', 'British', and 'homogenous' (Castles, Vasta, & Ozkul, 2014). It effectively restricted people of colour from living in and immigrating to Australia. Its legacy has (and continues to have) significant implications, not only for the reluctance to meaningfully acknowledge the black presence in Australia's early settlement, but also for the reception of visibly and culturally different immigrants to modern Australia. One of the factors underpinning the Immigration Restriction Act 1901/White Australia policy was fear that culturally different groups would pollute the society and never assimilate into an Australian way of life, defined as Anglo-Celtic, Christian and white (Jakubowicz, 1985). It privileged whiteness, favoured white immigration to Australia, pushed Indigenous Australians[2] to the edge of economic, cultural, political and social extinction (Warry, 2007) and barred non-white people

[2] Indigenous Australians were only recognised and counted as Australian citizens after the federal referendum of 27 May 1967.

from residing permanently in Australia (though some non-whites did manage to gain entry to Australia on a short-term basis and under strictly defined conditions).

After World War II, during the height of European immigration[3] to Queensland, black African immigration to Australia was restricted by the 1901 act. Only white South Africans and Egyptians of Greek, Italian and/or Maltese origin came from the African continent to Australia (Jupp, 2002; Hugo, 2009). From the mid-1960s/early 1970s, under the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan, Australia accepted some African students (Udo-Ekpo, 1999). The introduction of a non-discriminatory immigration policy by the Whitlam government, saw the final eradication of the White Australia policy in 1973 and paved the way for increased migration by black Africans. Black African migration to Australia reached a peak between 1996 and 2005 with the entrance of African refugees and displaced persons from the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia), Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda accepted by Australia on humanitarian grounds (Markus, 2016). The Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 gave Australia positive media exposure in Africa. It showcased Australia as a "peaceful", "safe", and "well-governed" country with a "good" economy (Louw, Rivenburgh, Loo, & Mersham, 2001, p. 125) and exerted a considerable pull effect on black Africans immigrating to Australia. Since then, there has been a significant and steady increase in arrivals of black Africans to Queensland. To illustrate, while the 1986 census noted 3,522 Africans living in Queensland, this number had risen to 16,902 by the 1996 census. Between 1996 and 2016, the number of sub-Saharan Africans (white South Africans and Zimbabweans included) increased to 67,274[4,] while the number of North Africans increased to 7,117[5]

[3] In the post-1945 period, to fill immigration targets driven by the pragmatic 'populate or perish' slogan, the Australian government took in an almost equal number of refugees and displaced persons from Eastern and Southern Europe. These immigrants were considered non-white and non-British. As the first non-British immigrant group to arrive in Australia in large numbers, they were subjected to racism and suffered economic deprivation (Collins, 2003).

[4] The problem with these statistics however is that white Africans, especially white South Africans and Zimbabweans, are included in this number. In the 2016 census, there were over 23,436 white South Africans and 5,295 white Zimbabweans in Queensland (ABS, 2017).

[5] The ABS includes Sudan and South Sudan within North Africa. Consistent with the 2006 and 2011 censuses, the Sudanese account for over half (3,795) of all North Africans. The 2016 census records 2,370 people born in Sudan and 1,426 born in South Sudan living in Queensland.

(Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017). Although still a small minority group, they account for an increasing proportion of Queensland's total population. Though many of these African migrants and refugees play a role as Australian citizens and productive members of society (Jakubowicz, 2010), they also continue to experience discrimination and racism in everyday life.[6] In what follows, we discuss the theoretical and conceptual framework that we drew on to think about and write up the data collected for the study.

**Conceptual framework: Identity, race and racialisation**

Identity is an important and sensitive issue for many immigrants' sense of citizenship and belonging. Tabar, Noble and Poynting (2010, cited in Collins, Reid, Fabiansson, & Healey, 2011) have argued that identities are not simply symbolic entities through which we represent ourselves and others. For them, identity embodies practices of identification and adaptation and deploys particular kinds of resources (as shaped by an individual's classed, gendered and racialised histories) through which individuals situate and position themselves in diverse social domains.

For this article, it is useful to examine identity construction, especially in both its avowed and ascribed dimensions. While avowed identity is subjectively enacted by people's sense and knowledge of their membership in the social group in which they feel comfortable, affiliated and at ease, ascribed identity is assigned by others who seek to label individuals as members of a given group based on their imagined or presumed phenotypic appearance, physical characteristics, cultural traits (e.g., skin colour,

[6] Some elected Australian politicians have continued to problematise and blame black Africans, particularly African youth, for street crimes in Queensland (Duncan, 2017) and Victoria (Hunter & Preiss, 2018). Speaking on the issue, the Home Affairs Minister, Peter Dutton, told Sydney radio 2GB that "people are scared to go out to restaurants at night time because they are followed home by these groups and are worried about home invasions and cars being stolen…We just need to call it for what it is. Of course, it is African gang violence… We need to weed out the people, who have done the wrong thing, deport them where we can, but where they are Australian citizens; we need to deal with them according to the law" (Hunter & Preiss, 2018). While there are no statistics to support Dutton's claims, the then-Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull also weighed in on so-called African gang violence. Not only are politicians using racial categories to depict black Africans as violent, disruptive members of the community, the media and police also often refer to race when reporting crimes. Referring to race not only perpetuates negative stereotypes of black Africans, but also alienates and targets black African communities in Australia. In this way, focusing on race can serve as a platform for reproducing and enhancing both every day and systemic racism (Essed, 1991; Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2015).

language, name, dress, religion) or other stereotypical associations (Collier, 1997; Antony, 2016). Both identities are, of course, important for understanding intercultural communication, which takes place when individuals influenced by different cultural communities negotiate shared meanings in everyday interactions (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Since social interactions are *ipso facto* relations of power, identity construction becomes a matter of social context and must be situated historically (Castells, 1997).

Our understanding of the concept of identity comes from the work of Anthony Appiah, who has spoken of identity in terms of identification—a process through which individuals shape their lives by reference to the labels used to identify them in public discourse—and individuality—pursued through the exercise of one's autonomy (Appiah, 2005). Appiah (2005) suggested that "[d]eveloping the capacity for autonomy is necessary for human well-being" (p. 6) because it means, among other things, choosing for oneself instead of merely being shaped by the constraints of political or social mores. What is important about Appiah's thinking here is not simply his conceptualisation of identity in terms of individuality and identification, but also that his argument helps to untangle the notion of identity as it pertains to race, gender, class and immigrant status. While Appiah stressed the importance of racial and other ascriptions for identity formation, he avoided any form of determinism (Kerner, 2007). Appiah (2005) argued that freedom matters because without it people cannot develop the individuality that is an essential element of human good.

Appiah also distinguished between two dimensions of identity: personal and collective. Whereas personal identities are often formed by defining oneself in relation to other persons, collective identities reflect how individuals and groups internalise established social categories, such as cultural, ethnic, gender and class identities (Appiah, 2005; Alabay & Çalikoğlu, 2013). For Appiah (2005), the collective dimensions of someone's identity refer to the social categories they identify with and are identified with by others, for example: men, women; straights, gays; Catholics, Protestants; but also blacks, whites, teachers, citizens, migrants, refugees. These social categories or kinds of person are brought into being by the creation of labels that are often organised around a set of stereotypes (which may be true or false). According to Appiah (2005), collective identities have scripts that operate to mould someone's identification. Hence, he suggested that people cannot make their lives as individuals beyond identity, but always as gendered and racialised subjects with a particular colour, sexuality and nationality. The labels created by the collective dimensions of individuals' identities play a role in shaping the way individuals make decisions about

how to conduct a life. Thus, through identification, Africans racialised as black in white Australia are more likely to shape their lives in accordance with their thoughts as to whether something is an appropriate aim or way of acting for black Africans and those living black.

Appiah's conceptualisation of identity is relevant to understanding the identity ascribed by skin colour. As Dei (1999, cited in Gismondi, 1999) explained, there is a permanence to the identity of skin colour because, throughout history, skin colour has been a permanent and conspicuous marker of distinction, used for establishing difference and assigning racial belonging. The identity of skin colour, blackness to be precise, is real for those racialised as black in white-dominated spaces. People still use the marker of skin colour to identify, define, construct and distinguish individuals for the purposes of discrimination, marginalisation, exclusion, disempowerment and disadvantage (Fanon, 2008; Yancy, 2008; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). To understand the identity of skin colour and the signification of blackness in white contexts in relation to the lived experience of black Africans in Australia, it is necessary to conceptualise racial identity and racialised identity.

By racial identity, we refer to the notion of being black or white or Asian or Aboriginal. According to Dei (1999, cited in Gismondi, 1999), this is different from a black racialised identity, which is the political act of becoming black. A person's racial identity is often signified through their skin colour, which becomes a counterfactually specifiable information-bearing trait that can be used for inclusion or exclusion (Taylor, 2007). As Taylor (2007) indicated, classical racialism led people to believe that nature had sorted individuals into distinct and hierarchically ranked types, each with its own complement of physical, moral and mental traits. In this account, racism is defined as the belief that justifies the superiority of one race over another. From this belief stem theories of white supremacy, which underpin white domination and privilege (Mills, 2007), as codified in the legal, political, economic, and cultural systems through which whites control power and material resources, on the basis of conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement (Gillborn, 2005; Sullivan, 2006). In the field of critical whiteness studies, whiteness is a category of power and privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This privilege—white privilege—operates as an unseen, invisible, unmarked and even seemingly non-existent habit (Sullivan, 2006). For many critical race theorists, whiteness is a racialised identity and the absent centre against which others (non-whites) are perceived as inferior, marginal, undesirable, ersatz, uncivilised, ugly, deviant or points of deviation (Frankenberg, 1993; Ahmed, 2007; Yancy,

2008). Ahmed (2007) defined whiteness as an ongoing and unfinished history that orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they "take up" space and what they "can do" (p. 149).

As an effect of racialisation, whiteness is real, material and lived. By racialisation, we mean the set of historical practices, cultural norms and institutional arrangements that reflect and help to create and maintain race-based outcomes in society (Powell, 2012). According to Sithole (2016), blackness is created by whiteness because of what Fanoncalls the "constant comparison of what is at the centre of whiteness, as that which is supposed to live, and blackness, being dispensable to life" (p. 36). Blackness, as used here, is not merely about skin colour; it has become a social construct that is persistently distorted and conceived of in opposition to whiteness. As Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2017) have argued, blackness is "not only that which defines whiteness but is also inferiorised by it" (p. 1). According to Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2017), the black body in white spaces (such as Australia) is and always has been "constructed as a problematic difference to whiteness: an inferiority and an 'other'" (p. 1). From the perspective of whiteness, blacks are—contrary to the existentialist credo—an essence ('blackness') which precedes their existence (Yancy, 2008). Whites see the black body through the medium of historically structured forms of knowledge that regard it as inferior, evil or an object of suspicion to be avoided or disciplined (Yancy, 2008; Sithole, 2016). As Fanon (2008) observed, "not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (pp. 82-83).

In this article, therefore, blackness as it pertains to black African migrants and refugees in Australia is "not limited to blackness as only a visible marker or blackness in relation to ancestry but also blackness as a socio-political relationship and political ontology" (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017, p. 2). In the white world, whiteness is superior and blackness inferior. Blackness is seen and constructed not only as the ontological other, but also as the very basis of lack and deficit, thus imposing a burden that those with black skin cannot escape (Fanon, 2008; Yancy, 2008; Sithole, 2016; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) can help to make sense of the complexity, interplay and intersections between race and skin colour (blackness) in the everyday realities and experiences of black subjects in Australia, where race and racialised preferences are core organising mechanisms within the socio-political and cultural structure (Stratton, 2006). CRT begins with these basic tenets: that racism is ordinary, natural, everyday and pervasive; that race is socially constructed; and that racism advances white privilege and advantage.

For CRT scholars, issues of race and racism in society must be challenged and minority people's voices must be recognised and valued (Yosso & Solórzano, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Following CRT scholars, we recognise race and skin colour as central to black people's lives and, likewise, place the relationship between race, racism, skin colour and whiteness at the centre of our analysis. In the remainder of this article, we draw on ideas from these theories to explore and analyse the role skin colour (blackness) plays in the everyday life and realities of black Africans in SEQ.

**Methodology**

This study was conducted in SEQ[7], a region of Queensland where both skilled and unskilled job prospects are very high. The primary purpose of the study was to obtain a better understanding of the lived experiences of African immigrants in Queensland, Australia. Although the broad scope of the study was African immigrants, the main research focus was black African migrants and refugees in SEQ. First, black Africans were chosen because, while black Africans' experiences with racism in Australia are not new, they nevertheless remain neglected and under-reported in the literature (see Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). Second, black African migrants and refugees were included to stratify the research population in ways that engage with the complexities of the African experience. While the inclusion of white (South) Africans in the sample could have created context for a comparative consideration of the similarities and differences in experiences, black Africans stand in stark contrast to white Africans, who have not only a different phenotype and genealogical roots but have also been traditionally welcomed into Australia.

**Participants**

The study's participants consisted of ten females and twenty males between the ages of 22 and 67. The remarkable feature of this group was the diversity of culture, religion, values, language, heritage and national background they represented.[8.] Seventeen of these participants came as

[7] There are various definitions used for SEQ, some including Toowoomba and some not. The Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (2013) includes parts of Toowoomba regional council in its definition of SEQ. However, the ABS (2012) does not include Toowoomba regional council. This study includes Toowoomba in the definition of SEQ.

[8] Participants came from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia in West Africa; Uganda and Tanzania in East Africa; Rwanda and the DRC in Central Africa; Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan in Northeast Africa; and Zimbabwe and Botswana in

refugees through Australia's humanitarian program. Thirteen came as temporary migrants (six as students and seven as skilled migrants). Participants were selected because of their level of education and English proficiency, as well as their substantial knowledge of the topic. Most participants interviewed—both migrants and refugees—held a tertiary qualification. In addition, only participants who had lived in SEQ for three years or more were selected. All these criteria were considered important because it was plausible for new arrivals to feel that they were perceived and treated differently because they had lived in Australia for a shorter time, had poor language skills, and/or fewer years of education and skills to participate in the workforce, and educational and social activities. A majority of participants had acquired Australian citizenship and shared some similarities, notably their black skin colour. While most participants considered themselves black in terms of racial identity (the notion of being black), they were also engaged in the political act of becoming black (racialised identity) as a way to deal with the racism and other forms of marginalisation and exclusion they faced in Australia on the basis of their identity, skin colour, blackness or Africanness (Dei, 1999, cited in Gismondi,,, 1999).

**Data collection and analysis**

In-depth interviews were conducted over a four-month period, from April to July 2014. Interviews were face-to-face, semi-structured and carried out in the English language. Interviews were conducted by the first author—a black African immigrant to Australia who shares some important visible characteristics with the participants. Interviews lasted for not more than one hour, during which interviewees were encouraged to respond in detail to interview questions and provide specific examples from their own experiences. Interview questions centred around the theme of what has been described as "a set of characteristics" or "traits" that make black Africans distinct in the Australian social context (Colic-Peisker, 2009, p. 176). In other words, interview questions explored the role of a particular form of visibility—racialised black skin colour—on black Africans' lived experience, including their personal and socioeconomic well-being and sense of belonging. Participants were asked to talk about their own sense of identity and how they defined their personal and socioeconomic well-being in white majority Australia.

Most interviews took place in participants' homes and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. A thematic approach was adopted to

Southern Africa. The processes of immigration and settlement have created a transnational African identity among them (Udo-Ekpo, 1999).

analyse and interpret the textual interview data. The transcribed interview data were coded using NVivo 11 which helped to identify and produce a concise matrix of key emerging themes. During the coding, we returned often to the research questions and searched for keywords, buzzwords and metaphors to support our analysis and interpretation. Data memos were particularly helpful in the coding process to help note emerging ideas about codes and record thoughts during the coding process. Codes with similar ideas, meanings or purposes were merged to reflect emerging issues or themes. One of these themes involved the mediating effects of racialised skin and constructions of black identity on participants' everyday lives. Many participants said that their life chances were affected by their skin colour. For these participants, the racialised attributes attached to black skin and identity constituted considerable barriers and limitations. For this article, some case examples discussed within interviews are used to establish and make sense of the research findings.

**Findings—participants' experiences**

Skin colour has historically enabled the categorisation of Africans. Even in the early stages of contact between Europeans and Africans, skin colour shaped ideas of Africans as inferior—a discursive construction that still casts a shadow over black people (Fanon, 2008; Olusoga, 2015; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). Many participants indicated that they experienced life at the boundaries of whiteness (see Sullivan, 2006; Ahmed, 2007) and suggested that negative constructions of black Africans in Australia have continued to impact and limit their advancement in different ways. For several participants, skin colour still mattered in their everyday lives. Participants suggested that skin colour was real and constituted a significant factor determining their identification, racialisation and life chances, that is, the opportunities for social advancement to which individuals and social groups have differential access (Sriprakash & Proctor, 2013). Some participants felt they had fewer opportunities and were treated differently on the grounds of skin colour. These participants defined their experiences through discourses of skin colour and used that to talk about and recount their 'disappointments', 'struggles', 'lack of participation', and 'isolation'.

Take Daniel's (pseudonyms have been used to protect interviewees' identities) story, for example. Daniel, from Zimbabwe, immigrated to Australia in 2008 as a skilled migrant. He believed that his skin colour was important in understanding and talking about his experience. He suggested that the stigmatisation of black Africans is still a big issue today, despite efforts made by successive Australian governments (with the introduction of

the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act) to recognise diversity and prohibit discrimination based on race or skin colour. When discussing the relevance of black skin, Daniel talked about the racist experiences of Aboriginal people in Australia. He stated, "when you look at the Aboriginal people and how they are treated and reported, you find that it [skin colour] still matters". For Daniel, Indigenous Australians are still treated as inferior.

At the time of the interview, Daniel was feeling disappointed after being denied a senior position in his workplace. He believed the position was denied to him, not because of a lack of experience and skill, but because of his black identity and existing racialised discourses around blackness which positioned him as less competent. Daniel stressed that skin colour still matters in determining life chances for black Africans because some people in the workplace and in hiring positions hold a very low opinion of black African people and discursively position them as inferior, lazy, incompetent, and lacking in discipline and a strong work ethic. These discourses, although constantly challenged and contested, have a long history, and are still invoked by politicians to scape-goat or place blame on particular groups of people, as documented in the introductory section of this article.

In these discourses, blacks are not associated with goodness. Rather, blacks are constructed as a labouring class and represented as inferior, backwards, barbaric and deviant (see Ahmed, 2007; Yancy, 2008; Miller, 2015; Olusoga, 2015; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). These discourses, which associate blackness with inferiority and equate whiteness with superiority, constitute a real problem and can play a crucial role in the oppression, marginalisation and exclusion of black Africans in contemporary Australia. This is because, as Dianna, one of the young female participants in this study, commented, "people still base their judgement on skin colour". For this reason, Dianna suggested that negative stereotypes of blacks restrict many opportunities for black African people in Australia. Describing his experience of not being white, another participant, Damian, stated: "it takes a while to get into the system. You are not by default accepted. For you to be accepted, you have to prove it … It is discouraging when you get knocked back over and over again".

In the Australian context, existing research has found that black Africans are constructed in opposition to whiteness and portrayed as unwanted migrants (Udo-Ekpo, 1999), a problem group (Windle, 2008), a non-desired other (Ndhlovu, 2013), and trauma infested (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). For Windle (2008) and Ndhlovu (2013), the racialisation of black Africans within Australia's media discourses is implicitly connected to the activation of race as an explanatory category, the negative stereotypical

discourses about Africa, and the history of racism in Australia. Thus, being black continues to have a deleterious impact on many black Africans living in Australia and other countries that privilege whiteness and construct blackness in contradiction to whiteness (Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Fanon, 2008; Yancy, 2008; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017).

The effect of privileging whiteness, and constructing blackness negatively, is the institutionalisation of a normalised way of being. This can make black Africans feel bitter, despairing, uncomfortable, unaccepted, different and not belonging when they take up spaces orientated around whiteness (Ahmed, 2007). For many participants, skin colour (blackness) seemed to be the most salient characteristic around which stereotypes about them coalesced (Jablonski, 2012). For example, Loretta, a former school teacher from Nigeria, believed that racialised black skin colour "does affect what one gets in Australia". Loretta and her family immigrated to Australia in 2000, shortly after the Sydney Olympics, as skilled migrants. Since arriving in Australia, Loretta and her husband have told their children they must always work hard if they wish to succeed in the white world, because of their skin colour. In her own words: "We have always told our children that you need to work hard because with your colour, you stand out more … There are people that still have that notion that blacks are inferior".

There is a suggestion in Loretta's extract that racialised discourses about black skin colour can influence directly, not just indirectly, how black Africans define themselves through the discursive labels applied to blacks. As Appiah (2005) pointed out, "[o]nce labels are applied to people, ideas about people who fit the label come to have social and psychological effects … [i]n particular, these ideas shape the ways people conceive of themselves" (p. 66). Since black Africans often internalise messages about their alleged incompetence, insignificance and inferiority (Sullivan, 2006), it is unsurprising that Loretta suggested that racialised black skin and identity could be sources of disadvantage and discrimination for her, her children and her community. For this reason, she stressed the importance of working hard to her children so that they might negotiate/navigate the problem of institutionalised and everyday racism which discursively categorises and constructs people with 'black skin' as negative and inferior. Loretta's concerns resonate with Appiah's (2005) contention that people never make their lives as individuals beyond identities, but always as gendered and racialised subjects.

Given their racialised blackness, it is more likely that, as black Africans in Australia pursue their dreams and seek upward mobility, many will find that they must always negotiate the complex terrain of race and racialised

black skin and identity as well as confront prejudice, stereotype and discrimination (Udah, 2018). For example, some participants believed that their life chances were slowed down by being black. These participants suggested that they had been denied opportunities for advancement and singled out for discrimination and differential treatment because of their blackness. For one participant, Kevin, to be black in Australia meant to work twice as hard and to struggle to survive. According to Kevin:

> It means to me that you have to work twice as hard. There is this saying that a black man will run for what a white man will walk to. For me as an African to realise my dream here, I believe I should work twice as hard.

When asked to explain what he meant, Kevin stated:

> What they think of us is completely what we are not. You know when you have people think of you as inferior; people think of you as incapable before you even speak, that is a challenge in itself. You have to try and prove otherwise. I think a black man in this country means struggle, continue to struggle.

There is no denying that one's sense of identity, both internalised and externally imposed, is and continues to be strongly mediated by racial, gendered and socio-economic discursive constructions (Canales, 2000). Kevin, a young male participant, was a university student at the time of the interview. He was born in South Sudan and came to Australia in 2005 as a refugee. Kevin believed that blacks in Australia are seen as inferior. This belief was shaped by what he had seen and heard about blacks, including the way others communicated to him as a black person. Kevin's belief corroborates Appiah's (2005) argument that collective identities have scripts that operate to mould someone's identification. Like most participants in this study, Kevin had shaped his identity with reference to the labels used in public discourse to identify his kind of person (Appiah, 2005). Kevin believed that some people in the workplaces and education institutions have low perceptions of black Africans in terms of their capacity to act, and this perception can pose a real problem. As Dunn, Forrest, Pe-Pau, Hynes, and Maeder-Han (2009) pointed out, an environment in which certain groups are denigrated repeatedly through racist talk and other racist incivilities "can fundamentally undermine the sense of citizenship and belonging" (p. 3) of those disparaged groups. This can be seen in the following account of William.

William, one of the older participants in this study, had lived in Australia for more than 38 years. He came to Australia in the mid-1970s to study and chose to stay on permanently in Australia following graduation. It was when he started looking for jobs that he realised that his skin colour could be a barrier to accessing the labour market. He recalled being offered two jobs on paper, and how everything changed when the employers met with him. He thought he had the jobs before the meeting the employers but was denied the jobs after the interviews. As William expressed:

> That's when I realised that sometimes no matter what you know the skin colour does affect how people judge you. I was offered at least two jobs on paper before they saw me and when I went for interview it changes. Right, well, you don't blame people sometimes, you have to survive …. That's happened, possibly because of my colour. Maybe they don't understand and never gave me the opportunity.

William felt his skin colour had dissuaded employers from hiring him. Though the only evidence we have of this incident is his account, other researchers have found that immigrants' racial and cultural identities can influence their opportunities in the labour market (Nguyen, 1993; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018). At times, employers act in discriminatory ways—by hiding behind accent or language (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018) or by having a preconceived idea of the kind of person they are looking for based on national or cultural proximity (Heikkilä, 2005)—to deny jobs to accented (but otherwise qualified) blacks or other non-native immigrant applicants (Nguyen, 1993). Indeed, the incident affected William's perception of Australia, including his sense of citizenship and belonging. Despite his length of stay in Australia, William suggested that there are still some racism issues, particularly, in Australian workplaces. According to William: "even doing business now, you still see some elements of racism. This is home! That's the problem we are having in our second home. So we have to confront it".

William also indicated that being black discouraged him from applying for senior positions. He had a feeling of negation of his worth and believed that if he applied as a black man he would not be given a chance. He felt objectified and constructed as inferior in Australia. This feeling resonates with Fanon's (2003) description of his experience of being black:

> The Jew is disliked from the moment he is tracked down. But in my case, everything takes on a new guise. I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance. I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under White eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those with faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a genius. Why, it's a Negro! (p. 64)

In the above quote, Fanon suggests he was objectified and cast into his blackness by the white gaze, which made him become the categories, the insults and the stereotypes of the racists. Fanon's experience is indicative of the observed 'burden of blackness' or what it is 'to be' or 'live' black in a predominantly white context or racist society in which blackness is inferiorised and constructed in opposition to whiteness (Sithole, 2016; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017).

Born in 1925 to a middle-class family in Martinique, Fanon's childhood was comfortable and relatively unremarkable. Being aware of the horrible narrative myths used to depict black bodies, Fanon (1967, cited in Yancy, 2008) noted that the Negro is "the incarnation of evil" (p. 858), a phobogenic object of suspicion, a stimulus to anxiety, and that which is to be avoided. The racism in Martinique reminded Fanon of his blackness (Sithole, 2016) and permanently marked his identity and consciousness (Zeilig, 2012). For Sithole (2016), to be reminded of one's blackness is "the very fact of reminding blackness of its place in the anti-black world" and that place means being expelled, dehumanised, marginalised, excluded and oppressed (p. 29). Several participants suggested that their experiences of racism cast them, like Fanon, into their blackness, with huge impacts on their consciousness. Fanon (1986, cited in Ahmed, 2007) argued that, for a black man, consciousness of the body is a "third person consciousness" (p. 161) and the feeling is one of negation. To feel negated, according to Ahmed (2007), is "to feel pressure upon your bodily surface … as a restriction in what it can do" (p. 161). Thus, if to be human is to be white in Australia, then to be not-white, to be black, as Ahmed (2007) explained, is "to inhabit the negative: it is to be 'not'. The pressure of this 'not' is another way of describing the social and existential realities of racism" (p. 161).

Given the de facto but persistent normalisation of whiteness in Australia, one participant, Harry from South Sudan, believed that black skin played a significant role in determining the socioeconomic mobility of black Africans in Australia. Before coming to Australia in 2005 as a refugee, Harry taught as a primary school teacher. At the time of the interview, he was contemplating enrolling for his doctoral studies. Harry argued that black Africans in Australia have minimal chances of socioeconomic success because of racism and the way in which people of African descent are constructed. For Harry, black Africans in SEQ are seen as lower-class and positioned as inferior:

> They can see a black person as low class, a person that does not own anything in this country, a parasite. That is how they will look at me. How I will look at them is that they have been here for a long time. They are part of the majority group.

Harry also stated that there are still many "Pauline Hansons around" who perpetuate white supremacy in Australia. Recall that in her maiden speech in Federal Parliament Hanson (1996) said, "[o]f course, I will be called racist, but if I can invite whom I want into my home then I should have a right to have a say on who comes into my country". Despite this statement, Hanson has continued to describe herself as not racist but rather a proud Australian concerned with the cultural changes in Australia brought by immigration. Despite Hanson's claims that she is non-racist, or even anti-racist, her ongoing calls for a Muslim immigration ban and other similar speeches against immigrants of colour continue to give people like Harry the impression that she is a racist and that people like her are still around. Drawing upon CRT ideas and tenets, it can be argued that just because Hanson and people like her say they are not racist, does not mean that they are not. Many racist people deny being racist. Being racist is not something anybody proudly identifies with or owns up to today, because of the legislation in place against racism. While it is not appropriate to be racist, it is important to recognise that race and racialised preferences are still central to people's lives and still shape or structure social relations and the experience of black Africans in Australia.

Harry also stated that his children were bullied and/or experienced racism at school. As Harry commented:

> Our kids are being picked on every time at schools. Kids are kids. If a kid is different, he or she is being teased out by the

> other students. The day she is teased at school, she will come back home crying to get comfort from the parents. It is worst with the kids because they don't know the rules. If kids are picked on, the parents feel it.

Harry uses the phrase 'picked on' more than once when talking about his children's experience of difference at school. While the phrase has many possible associations, it sounded like Harry felt his children were bullied, singled out and treated differently because of their skin colour difference (blackness). To account for this we can think of Harry's children's experience, as Ahmed (2012) would suggest, as the experience of not being white, of being made into a stranger—the one who is recognised as out of place, the one who does not belong in a place he or she now calls home. For, being black skinned and different, it is more likely that the sense of belonging of many black Africans in Australia will be undermined, not only in schools, but also in workplaces, sports and even churches or religious institutions that normalise whiteness and assume certain bodies to be the norm (Ahmed, 2012).

An overwhelming majority of participants (28 out of 30) indicated that negative constructions of black Africans and the association of their skin colour with character stood out as a handicap. While several participants talked about their positive experiences of coming to Australia, many of them felt psychologically weakened by the persistent negative stereotypical portrayals of black Africans. In some cases, black Africans are simply subsumed into the 'refugee' category, because people assume that as black Africans they must be refugees lacking in education, skills, and English language proficiency. As one participant, Thomas, commented:

> They are still putting people in boxes. Like if you are black, without knowing you, they just categorise you: You're definitely a refugee, you've been living in a refugee camp, you didn't have any schooling and you ran out of the village. That's the whole story. They never allow the people to tell their own stories.

While black African refugees fleeing violence or persecution are prominent images of black Africans in Queensland, many black Africans in SEQ do not meet the definition of refugee[9] and have never lived in a refugee

[9] To qualify as a refugee, according to the 1951 United Nations' Refugee Convention, a person must have: A well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the

camp. Most black African migrants are skilled and educated and have come to search for a better life and economic opportunities (Udah, 2018). However, in its representations of black Africans in Australia, the media often offers stereotypical imaginings which can have material effects on how black Africans are understood, positioned and accepted (Ndhlovu, 2013). As Kwansah-Aidoo and Mapedzahama (2015) and Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2017) have shown, Australian media discourses construct black Africans in deficit terms, associating them with inferiority and pathologising and problematising them as lacking in something, as morally suspect and crime-prone or easily falling foul of the law. According to Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2017), such associations and problematisations are not only damaging to black Africans but also manifest as a 'burden' for black Africans in Australia, which the authors describe as:

> A fully embodied and affective experience which is represented by negative experiential and intersubjective processes, and which is negotiated by drawing on a variety of symbolic, material, and discursive resources to live a life that challenges the definitional markers of negativity enshrined in and attached to the word black. The symbolic burden arises out of the abstract pain and difficulty of dealing with the unseen messages and connotations attached to the colour of their skin. (p. 5)

This burden of blackness is "ever present" and "cannot be jettisoned" because the very colour of their skin (blackness) follows them everywhere and causes them to be stereotyped and treated in negative and discomforting ways (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017, p. 5). Some of these stereotypes caused some participants to become dejected, such that they did not want to participate in activities, leave their houses or go anywhere. Bruno, for one, felt disappointed with life in Australia because of these stereotypes. He suggested that he (and other Africans) may not have a future in Australia. As Bruno lamented: "for us, our future is over. Our time is over. I feel like we will be disappointed until we die. Hopefully, our children will be satisfied with the Australian society and way of life".

The overwhelming sense that emerges from Bruno's lamentation is that some black Africans in SEQ are likely to feel that they do not belong in Australia and have no hope or prospect of achieving their dreams or ambitions (Udo-Ekpo, 1999). It also illustrates the significance of racialised

country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country or to return there, for fear of persecution (Article 1A[2]).

blackness and the severity of the black African experience. From Bruno's and other participants' comments, it can be inferred that being at the wrong end of a stereotype-driven judgement affects the lives of black Africans in Australia. It can also be inferred that black skin colour has great significance in determining the social mobility of black Africans. As Madison (2012) argued:

> For many marginalised identities and people of colour, they are known in a particular world through caricature and stereotypes. A major problem is that the stereotypical projection of one's identity by otherworldly constructions of who one is diminishes the complexity and humanity of one's individuality, as well as one's ethnicity or affiliated group (p. 119).

Recall that, in 2007, the Howard government's Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, Kevin Andrews, problematised people of black African descent, especially the Sudanese, as having more problems and challenges settling and adjusting into the Australian way of life, as well as lower levels of education and English proficiency than necessary for settlement. Though Andrews' statements may be considered mere political rhetoric and a crude electioneering ploy, his comments nevertheless reflect a perception/image held by some groups within Australian society about black African people. Such comments by high profile people tend not only to feed existing racial stereotypes and negative ideas about black Africans in Australia, but also to help sustain racism and racist practices. Such comments have the potential to not only diminish the complexity and humanity of black Africans' individuality and ethnicity, but also to marginalise them from engaging in productive ways in work, education and social/leisure activities.

**Discussion and conclusion**

In this article, we have reported on the experiences of first-generation black African migrants and refugees in Queensland, Australia. The accounts presented were chosen because they provide important insights into the everyday lives and realities of black African migrants and refugees living in SEQ. While empirically focused on Australia, this article contributes to the literature in ways that are valuable from both a theoretical perspective and in terms of the comparative contextualisation of racism. More importantly, the perceptions of participants reported here have the significance of illuminating the perceived role and effect of skin colour (blackness) on marginalisation, exclusion and disadvantage.

Significantly, this article sheds light on the lived experience of black Africans in Queensland, while also contributing to debate and analyses on living black in Australia. Consistent with existing Australian research on being or living black (for example, Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2013, 2017), the subjective experiences of the participants interviewed indicate that skin colour still matters in determining life chances for black Africans in Australia. As suggested by participants, black Africans are more likely to be affected by racism on grounds of skin colour (blackness). As a new and emerging community in Australia, they were not only seen as lacking in something, but also constructed negatively as the 'other'—in opposition to whiteness. As Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2017) would argue, this construction constitutes a burden and struggle for black Africans in Australia, which arises out of their experiences of racism and other forms of marginalisation, in conjunction with their deep awareness that they are negatively constructed and positioned as inferior within white-dominated Australia.

Furthermore, the participants' accounts highlight the impact of black skin on black subjects (Yancy, 2008). As a lived reality, the participants' skin colour (blackness) played a role in defining them as inferior, less intelligent and lower-class in Australia and negatively impacted their life chances and opportunities. More than that, their skin colour, which serves as a signifier of negative values, can function as a stipulatory axiom: "[b]lackness is evil, not to be trusted, and guilty as such" (Yancy, 2008, p. 845). This stipulatory axiom, as Yancy (2008) explained, "[f]orms part of a white racist distal narrative that congeals narrative coherence and intelligibility" (p. 845), providing a framework according to which the black body or skin is rendered meaningful. Thus, this article, besides addressing the role of skin colour in the everyday worlds and lived realities of black African migrants and refugees in Australia, also contributes to the discussion of how race and racialised assumptions operate at the level of the embodied through the construction of the black subject qua inferior (Fanon, 2008; Yancy, 2008; Sithole, 2016; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017).

In addition, this article demonstrates the need to rethink whiteness (the white self) vis-à-vis blackness (the black body) and theorise ways Australians might come to terms with the everyday racism that permeates the dominant institutional order and social relations of everyday life in Australia (Stratton, 2006). Essed (1991) argued that "racism is more than structure and ideology … [a]s a process, it is routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices of racism" (p. 2). For Essed (1991), everyday racism connects the structural forces of racism with routine situations in everyday life, links the

ideological dimensions of racism with daily attitudes, and interprets the reproduction of racism in terms of the experience of it in everyday life. On the basis of this explanation, the participants' experiences call for increased engagement in more positive interactions that can challenge the attitudes, taken-for-granted assumptions and understandings of blackness so embedded in Australian institutions and everyday practices (Stratton, 2006), and to claim blackness as a positive racial category or identity marker (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017) such that the black subject can move from the existential condition of dehumanisation to what Fanon calls new humanism (Sithole, 2016).

Clearly, experiences with racism are painful, burdensome, damaging and detrimental (Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). Racism has much potential to impact negatively on black Africans, impeding their economic and social progress, and affecting their behaviour, perceptions and philosophy of life (Feagin & Sikes, 1994). Racism, resulting from unexamined common stereotypes about black Africans, can constitute a significant barrier leading to economic discrimination, marginalisation and decreased opportunity, which, in turn, place them, their families, their children and communities at greater risk of social exclusion. Although this may be hard to establish, it is also clear that prejudices triggered by racialised black skin colour can translate into racism expressed through discrimination in social, political, legal and employment settings (Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Hebbani & Colic-Peisker, 2012). For example, Hebbani and Colic-Peisker (2012) found that initial uncertainty and bias towards black Africans in job interview settings is triggered by skin colour, even before a foreign accent or culturally alien non-verbal clues are displayed. Despite the complexity involved here, if this were to happen repeatedly to black Africans in job interviews, it could be considered an example of prejudice and resulting discrimination in employment. In fact, racism and discrimination, including encounters with negative stereotypes, can have the additional effect of perpetuating black African disadvantage in the context of both Australian society and the labour market (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007).

While there is an increasing diversity in Australia, the question of who is Australian is still defined on grounds of skin colour (whiteness)—Australian white—which marginalises and excludes coloured people or immigrants from backgrounds other than European (white, Anglo-Celtic) (Stratton, 2006; Bastian, 2012). As Bastian (2012) observed, implicit within many Australians' thinking is the association between Australian and white. This association is not only a belief explicitly held by some people, it has also been endorsed historically through policies and institutionalised practices.

The White Australia policy—not fully jettisoned until 1973—made it very clear who "fitted in" to Australia and what kind of Australian was desirable (Bastian, 2012, p. 58). More than that, the image of the true Australian, enshrined in Australia's media discourses is most often that of a white-skinned, Anglo-Celtic person (Stratton, 2006). One way to begin challenging this association of Australian identity with whiteness is to understand how whiteness is normalised in everyday life and the discursive practices in Australia, and how people or immigrants of colour are being made into strangers and recognised as not belonging to Australia. As a nation built on immigration, there is a need to define Australian identity in ways that are not divisive, and which recognise the diversity in modern Australia. The definition needs to be more open, flexible, and inclusive but also deeply meaningful (Bastian, 2012).

The diversity in contemporary Australia, if managed well, could be one of the country's most significant assets. For example, Italian, Greek and Chinese immigrants—once racialised and discriminated against—are now well-integrated socially and making significant contributions to Australian society. While this has been the pattern for many subsequent migrant arrivals, there is a real danger that Africans' skin colour (blackness) will impact their ultimate integration in Australia. Irrespective of their legal and citizenship status, their racialised blackness follows them wherever they go. As dark-skinned people, they are marked and assigned a racial identity as 'blacks'. Being categorised and racialised as black, primarily on grounds of skin colour, means being positioned and labelled as different to the white Australian majority. As Canales (2000) argues, individuals labelled as different to society's prevailing norms are stigmatised as pathological, and perceived as a threat to the existing social or as behaving in ways that contradict society's mores. This stigmatisation then feeds into dominant group members' understandings of black identity. Thus, it is more likely that the communication of stereotypical representations of black Africans (still happening today) as inferior, lower-class, backwards, less intelligent, incompetent or 'the problematic other' will materially constrain their access to opportunities and their full acceptance for social advancement in Australia.

To the extent that being white provides advantage in Australia, recognising blackness as a source of disadvantage for black Africans, who are visibly and culturally different from the Australian white norm, can help develop policies and/or programs to support their inclusion in Australian society. Given the general significance of issues around cultural difference, identity, belonging, diversity and migration, our participants' experiences and perceptions are relevant to the project of building a more inclusive and

cohesive Australia. As Australia develops as a multicultural nation, there is a need to challenge and denounce negative narratives, assumptions and stereotypes of black Africans, as it is through these negative stereotypes, assumptions and narratives that black Africans are constructed, produced and constrained as racialised subjects. As racialised subjects, black Africans are more likely to be marginalised, disengaged, and denied full social acceptance and participation in the imagined multicultural Australia. In an effort to build a more inclusive Australia where all people belong and thrive, it is important to negotiate shared meanings, promote positive stories and portrayals of black Africans, and focus on how black Africans (and other coloured immigrants) in Australia can be made to feel they belong and are valued in Australia's multi-ethnic society. When read in this context, Martin Luther King's dream that his children be judged not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character can be seen as a call to give everyone a 'fair go' in Australia.

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# Making and maintaining racialised ignorance in Australian nursing workplaces: The case of black African migrant nurses

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**Abstract**

In this article we apply a sociological framework of ignorance to explore the experiences of black African migrant nurses working in the Australian healthcare system. We contend that explorations of how ignorance is constructed, maintained and utilised within workplaces are critical for a nuanced understanding of black African skilled migrants' subjective experiences of institutional racism. This article draws on interview data investigating black African migrant nurses workplace experiences. We examine the intersection between the 'native ignorance' (Proctor, 2008) of the migrant (ignorance as deficit or lack of knowledge) and 'active' or 'systemic' ignorance' (ignorance as intentionally or unintentionally constructed within the workplace) and from this analysis make two significant claims. First, that black African migrant nurses' ignorance about their work/place is created, maintained and reproduced through practices such as: failing to provide important and accurate information about the workplace; the non-recognition, undermining and/or devaluing of black migrant nurses' knowledge, skills and experience; organisational secrecy; and racial stereotyping. Second, that the maintenance of systemic ignorance

serves to construct a migrant who is both unknowing and suspect, and therefore incompetent and in need of surveillance. These constructions lead to the underutilisation of black migrant nurses' skills and reproduce institutional racism while also negating the potential economic benefits of migration and undermining the rationales for recruiting black African migrant nurses into Australia's nursing workforce.

> *We live in an age of ignorance, and it is important to understand how this came to be and why... [so as] to explore how ignorance is produced and maintained in diverse settings, through mechanisms such as deliberate or inadvertent neglect, secrecy and suppression, document destruction, unquestioned tradition and myriad forms of inherent (or unavoidable) culturopolitical selectivity. (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008, p. vii)*

**Introduction**

This article is about the concept of ignorance, "the work it does and the impact it has" (Smithson, 2008, p. 209) on social relations involving black African migrant nurses in Australian nursing workplaces. Furthermore, it is about ignorance rooted in racism—racialised ignorance, its "creation and perpetuation" (Gilson, 2011, p. 309)—in the context of the Australian nursing work space. In workplaces hailed as multiculturally inclusive and egalitarian, ignorance is constituted as a deficiency in knowledge, something to be overcome or remedied, not as a construct, something maintained and perpetuated by the system, as well as something to be analysed for its potential in shaping the experiences of those constructed as 'other'. As Stocking (1998) noted:

> Ignorance, like knowledge, is socially constructed – that is, ignorance, like knowledge, is not (simply) a 'given' in people or nature, but it is (at least in part) a construction embedded in diverse social interests and commitments. (p. 168)

Guided by Sullivan and Tuana's (2007) assertion that there is "value [in] applying an epistemology of ignorance to issues of race, racism and white privilege" (p. 1), the premise of this article is that applying a theory of ignorance—in this case to certain ways of not knowing or unknowing black migrants—allows for more nuanced exploration of their workplace experiences. To date, research into the experiences of black continental African migrants in predominantly white, western contexts, and the resulting

racialisation and racial discrimination of these migrants, has not considered "the ways in which such practices [of racialisation]...are linked to conceptions and reproductions of knowledge" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 2). Such a conceptualisation shows how black migrants are positioned disadvantageously within such workplaces, enduring "socially sanctioned forms of ignorance and unknowing" (Whitt, 2016, p. 427) and, consequently, suffering what Farmer (2004) calls "structural violence" (p. 37).

This article aims to address this gap in the research by using "ignorance as an explanatory device" (Nicoll, 2010, p. 137), supported by the concepts of structural violence and faciality, to make sense of skilled black African migrant nurses' accounts of their racialisation and racial discrimination. This approach enables an exploration of, not only how the other is known and how this form of knowledge is maintained and used to sustain white privilege and black disadvantage, but also how the other is constituted as ignorant. More precisely, then, this article discusses specific kinds of ignorance, namely, racialised ignorance (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007) and/or white ignorance (Mills, 2007 & 2008), that is, "the idea of an ignorance, a non-knowing that is not contingent, but in which race – white racism or white racial domination – is central to its origins" (Mills, 2008, p. 233).

Hence our preoccupation here is with the ways in which this ignorance is mobilised, deliberately or otherwise, to constitute social relations of race within nursing workplaces. The contention is that certain practices and ways of *not* knowing are integral to the processes that racialise black African migrant nurses. We will therefore explore "the active production of ignorance and its relation to the production of whiteness" (Swan, 2010, p. 484). As Tuana (2004) noted, "it is important to be aware of how often oppression works through and is shadowed by ignorance" (p. 195). Using a broad conceptualisation of ignorance, this article analyses it various manifestations and interpretations within nursing workplaces, including, perceptions of black African migrants' ignorance (as a deficit in their knowledge of the place they are in); the ascription of ignorance to black migrant nurses by the non-black majority; and, most importantly, (white) ignorance of the dominant non-black group and how this ignorance is maintained and facilitated by the system. If, as Tuana (2004) suggests, ignorance is "a practice with supporting social causes" (p. 195), then "it [ignorance] also has conditions of creation and perpetuation [which] merit close scrutiny" (Gilson, 2011, p. 309).

**The immigration of nurses in the Australian context**

Theories of migration assert that there is an interaction between push and

pull factors that mobilise either the use of the migrant as a source of skills that are scarce in the recipient country or where the attractions of the receiving country are sufficient to bring migrants despite significant skill shortages in the donor country (Kingma, 2007; Buchan, 2002). Such perspectives rely on four, essentially economic, understandings of skilled migration: (i) that skilled workers are global resources which are easily located and mobilised; (ii) that there is equivalence in terms of regulatory bodies' recognition of qualifications in similar industries in recipient countries; (iii) that there are limitations on available training opportunities in recipient countries; and (iv) that there is a time-lag in addressing shortages through filling or increasing within-recipient country training spaces.

In line with this thinking and because Australia, like other developed countries, is experiencing recruitment and retention challenges in its nursing workforce, Australian health care administrators have become increasingly aware that local nursing shortages are coinciding with a "global nursing shortage" (Buchan, 2002, p. 751), compounding the effects of domestic shortages. Administrators have sought to manage the shortfall through active skilled migrant recruitment. For example, in 2008-09 Australia encouraged 2,620 foreign Registered Nurses (RNs) to seek employment in the country by granting an equivalent number of subclass 457 Business (Long Stay) highly skilled migrant visas (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC], 2010). As an indication of the initiative's success, in 2009 RN was the most frequently nominated position for skilled migrants in five Australian states/territories, and the second in another two in 2010 (DIAC, 2010). The rate of migration-related change is also amplified by the active recruitment of RNs through international advertising and home country recruitment initiatives on the part of the public and private health care sectors. The Australian nursing workplace is thus an exemplar of employer-driven migration. The notion of employer-sponsored migration is particularly significant because sponsorship involves (frequently competitive) selection, which indicates an economic investment by the employer. It also requires satisfying the set national criteria for determining what is deemed acceptable "human capital" (Hawthorne, 2002, p. 83) for inclusion in Australia's workforce. As a consequence of the global movement of RNs, the nursing workplace in Australia is also a site of rapid socio-cultural change and increasing cultural diversity.

The direction of current government policy indicates that skilled migration continues to be viewed as an investment in socially required "human capital" (Hawthorne, 2005) and a "fix" for predicted shortages of skilled workers (Bowen, 2008). Consistent with this position, the integration

of highly skilled migrants (those with Bachelor or higher qualifications) into the Australian workforce is perceived as largely unproblematic from a government perspective (Hawthorne, 2001). Yet, current analyses of skilled migrant experiences remain deficit-driven (in terms of their analyses of the skills migrants bring) and preoccupied with issues such as English language competency, transferability of overseas education and labour force integration (see, for example, Omeri & Atkins, 2002; Hawthorne, 2005; Birrell, Hawthorne, & Richardson; Jeon & Chenoweth, 2007; Ho, 2008; Ramsay, Barker, & Shallcross, 2008). Such research reduces the problematisation of migration to individual migrants, situating the migrant as '*the*' problem, and fails to expose or challenge the normative assumptions underpinning longstanding institutional processes, and the impact of such processes in what is now a culturally diverse workplace (Berman & Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission [VEOHRC], 2008).

## Using theories of ignorance with support from structural violence and faciality

> *If we are to enrich our understanding of the production of knowledge in a particular field, then we must also examine the ways in which not knowing is sustained and sometimes even constructed. (Tuana, 2006, p. 3)*

It is not our intention to enter into debates about the "agreed on nomenclature" (Smithson, 2008, p. 209) of ignorance, or to propose a taxonomy of ignorance. Rather, in this article we use the term ignorance in three ways: ignorance as a "native state" (lack of knowledge); ignorance as a "selective choice or passive construct"; and, ignorance as a "strategic ploy or active construct... something that is made and manipulated" (Proctor, 2008, pp. 3-10). What interests us are the social practices that encourage and perpetuate ignorance in a specific workplace. At the core of any discussion of ignorance is the question of 'who is ignorant of what?'. The answer is not as simple as the question might imply.

Moreover, at the core of ignorance as it is mobilised in racialisation are "practices of not knowing that support racism" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 3). For example, in our discussion of the ignorance of the skilled migrant as a "preknowledge state" (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008, p. viii), this article illustrates how this state is perpetuated and maintained systemically through various acts, such as deliberate secrecy (for example, the non-disclosure of important information about conditions/terms of employment such as salary

scales, superannuation and work rights in general). What black migrant nurses do not know is not a passively maintained gap in their knowledge. On the other hand, the ignorance of the white majority in relation to black skilled migrants is a result of *how and what* they 'know' of 'black Africans', for example, as uneducated, unknowing and, in the case of black African migrant nurses, lacking the appropriate skills to practise nursing competently and therefore in need of guidance from benevolent white nurses (see Wallace, 2008). As we have argued elsewhere (see Mapedzahama, Rudge, West, & Perron, 2012), it is not only the apparent differences in phenotypical bodily features—of which skin colour is the most significant—that culminates in prejudice against black African nurses. Rather, it is the fact that these features, in the racial psyche of the dominant group, link them to a specific geographical location, broadly defined as 'Africa' and stereotypically defined as 'backward' and 'underdeveloped' (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2010). In essence, it is the social production of black faces [and bodies] (Benson, 2008a), that results in the prejudice they encounter. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) noted, it "is not the individuality of the face that counts but the efficacy of the ciphering it makes possible" (p. 175).

In this way, ignorance is not about not knowing *per se*, but a wilful construction of certain ways of not knowing and unknowing—that which Gilson (2011) calls the "willful ignorance of vulnerability" (p. 319). According to Gilson (2011), the "willful ignorance of vulnerability" is "a closure to being affected and shaped by others" which is "central to other forms of ignorance and oppression" and functions as the basis upon which other kinds of ignorance are built (p. 319). Gilson's position is that ignorance in such a context is purely about the protection of the self; an attempt to avoid being unsettled through knowing. She argues:

> If the impetus for willful ignorance is an attempt to avoid what might unsettle us, when we ignore we are necessarily avoiding our own vulnerability. We ignore because to know might disturb us and even disempower us, rendering us vulnerable... A denial of vulnerability, then, underlies other types of ignorance, such as the ignorance of one's complicity in racial oppression, because to admit such complicity is to open oneself to features of one's social world and one's way of inhabiting that world that are discomfiting and thus to make oneself vulnerable. To know in this sense is to be vulnerable, to be susceptible to being altered by others, whereas to ignore is to seek invulnerability. Consequently, it is only upon the grounds of invulnerability that ignorance can be constructed. (p. 319)

Our discussion thus complicates the issue of who is ignorant of what by juxtaposing the ignorance of the white 'knowers' with that of the black migrant 'non-knowers'. Such a position is central to Mills' argument as to how ignorance—or ignoring practices—sustains white ignorance of its implication in black oppression. Importantly, the new migrant is unaware of the centrality of white ignorance in the country to which they have migrated. They are coming to a country that (when it comes to race) is 'blind to colour', purposively prior to, and since, its settlement. As Mills (2007) points out, colour-blindness is central to the settler project of denying the rights of indigenous populations. In a 'colour-blind' environment, supported by the silencing of race, the maintenance of white superiority is taken for granted. Hence, migrants (of colour) enter a society already primed in its denial of oppression (Alcoff, 2007). What follows, then, is neither automatic nor determined, but well-rehearsed to the point of inevitability. It is ignorance that is "actively produced in [the] particular social conditions" entered into by migrant nurses and which is "actively functional in preserving those conditions, and resistant to correction" (Whitt, 2016, p. 431). Mills (2007) calls such active forgetting "white ignorance" (p. 13), while Medina (2013) calls it "active ignorance" (p. 39). Whatever the terminology, it qualifies as a kind of social arrangement that systematically allows suffering to occur amongst migrants of colour and, as such, fits the definition of structural violence provided by Farmer (2004), to which we now turn.

The concept of structural violence has been proposed through different notions, including the social course of suffering (Benson, 2008a, 2008b; Kleinman et al., 1995), everyday violence (Scheper-Hughes, 1992), social suffering (Bourdieu et al., 2000; Bourgois, 2003; Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997) and structural violence (Farmer, 2004; Farmer, Nizeye, Stulac, & Keshavjee, 2006; Singer, 2006). At the core of the concept of structural violence as discussed by Farmer (2004), are social arrangements that systematically place subordinated and disadvantaged groups in harm's way and make them liable to various forms of suffering: "[s]tructural violence is embodied as adverse events … the experience of people who live in poverty or are marginalized by racism, gender inequality, or a noxious mix of all of the above" (p. 307).

Irrespective of how it is conceived, the central purpose of the concept of structural violence is to emphasise the "systemic constitution of inequality and suffering" (Benson, 2008a, p. 590). The idea is to purposefully move away from an emphasis on physical violence with individual actors as perpetrators and focus instead on the "societal, institutional, and structural

dimensions of suffering, including the role of corporations, markets, and governments in fostering various kinds of harm in populations" (Benson, 2008a, p. 590). Violence or suffering in this context is linked or can be traced back to political-economic processes, social structures and cultural ideologies (Benson, 2008a). We found the concept of structural violence useful to make sense of our data and to explicate the experiences of black migrant nurses.

Linked to the concept of structural violence is the notion of 'faciality'. According to Benson (2008a), "faciality refers to how power and perception overlap, as well as to how ethical orientations are formed and/or inhibited on the basis of what people see when they look at other people's faces" (p. 596). The term faciality can be traced to the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), who argued that faces are socially produced and perceived within a societal intersection of media images, social typologies and power relations. They emphasised that "the face, the power of the face, engenders and explains social power" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 175). If faces are socially produced, then "the human face becomes a medium through which finite differences are established" (Benson, 2008a, p. 596) and, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) pointed out, how the face looks becomes an important factor in racial schemes, class structures, and other systems or logics of classification. Benson (2008a) proposed that "[f]aciality is crucial to the constitution and perpetuation of structural violence because how people see others can help legitimize patterns of social subordination, economic exploitation, and spatial segregation" (p. 596). In the context of this study, the collective face of black migrant nurses is of ultra-importance, not just in how it is perceived and racialised (socially produced), but also as a site or destination of structural violence. The concepts of faciality and structural violence, as applied here, also help to situate this article within the wider global debate of racism and migrant labour (see, for example, Benson, 2008a).

**The Study**

The overall aim of our original study was to examine how skilled African migrant nurses working in Australia forged social and professional identities within their transnational, cross-cultural existences. The core of the research was formed by sociological analyses of how this group of migrant nurses interpreted their own cross-cultural nursing experiences, negotiating both their professional nursing and diasporic identities, and how such negotiations informed how they constructed themselves as 'black' nurses.

This study involved interviews with 14 RNs (13 females, 1 male) ranging in age from 30 to 47 years old. Participants were initially recruited through the second author's personal networks (see Bourdieu, 1996), as well as through a process of snowballing from students enrolled in a university course. All participants had completed their pre-registration nursing education and obtained their (initial) registration and practice experience in their home countries in Africa prior to migrating. Furthermore, all participants had obtained registration from the New South Wales (NSW) Nurses and Midwives Board. All participants migrated to Australia under the skilled migration stream, as holders of 457 temporary work visas (see Deegan [2008] for a detailed discussion of this visa subclass). Participants worked in a variety of workplace settings, including public and private hospitals, aged-care residential facilities and casually through nursing agencies, all in a large metropolitan city in Australia. They all had more than five years' experience as RNs in their countries of origin, as well as more than one year working in Australia at the time of the study. Many of the nurses had left very senior positions in their country of origin and a few had come to Australia on their own temporarily, leaving husbands and children behind.

Given that the study aimed to centre migrant nurses' own voices about their subjective (migration and post-migration) experiences, unstructured conversational style interviewee-guided interviews were used as the main data gathering method. All interviews commenced with one probe: *Can you please tell me the story of your life as an African nurse (working) in Australia?* This question was designed to initiate unlimited discussion, and participants were encouraged to talk freely for as long as they wished without interruption. As Reinharz (1992) noted, open-ended interview research "explores people's views of reality and allows the researcher to formulate theory" (p. 18) while maximising discovery and description.

In line with ethical practice when conducting qualitative research, each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. These pseudonyms were used to identify participants from the beginning of the data transcription stage. To further ensure anonymity, the names of the African countries nurses migrated from are also not identified. Ethics approval for the study was granted by the University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee.

The data analysis for this research was conducted by the authors, only one of whom was born in Australia. It was useful having a team of researchers from diverse ethnic backgrounds at this stage, as it introduced a diversity of scholarly interpretations and personal perspectives on racism. Further, having researchers not involved in the interviews undertake data analysis

served as an additional layer for in-depth interpretation of the data. Specifically, data analysis was undertaken through an interpretative approach, using thematic manual coding. The initial stages of data analysis commenced simultaneously with data collection, when themes emerging from the interview data were identified and detailed notes created. Specific word labels or short phrases were then allocated to the identified themes. During the next stage of 'data interpretation', core themes central to the research aims were selected from detailed notes and systematically related to other themes to create a "'big picture' story outline" (O'Dwyer, 2004, p. 394). Through this process it became clear that migrant nurses were recruited in ignorance of where they were going and the effect their skin colour would have within their workplace, as well as in ignorance of the dominance of whiteness in the racialised relations of power in the recruiting country.

**White Ignorance**

> *...it is difficult for the white eye to see itself seeing whitely (Miller, 2007, p. 138)*

Nursing workplaces in Australia are contexts in which a racial frame (Feagin, 2010) operates at the core of social relations. The notion of a white racial frame, refers to a broad "theoretical conception that encompasses racialised phenomena [which] includes: racial stereotypes; racial narratives; racial images; racialised emotions; and inclinations to discriminatory actions" (Griffith, 2009, p. 224). It follows, then, that the white racial frame produces certain ways of knowing the black, African 'other'. Of most significance is that white ignorance culminates in racial discrimination (as well as its disavowal), particularly when the other is known in stereotypical, paternalistic and exclusionary ways (Townley, 2006). One participant's quote, below, is illustrative:

> We had problems with [people] ... who were not comfortable with us... they think we came from trees, that we used to live with monkeys, and then we just got off the tree and boarded an aeroplane and came here ... And some of them have a knowledge of today [African country] which is in tatters, you know, so they just think: no standards. They don't know about the former [African country], which is where we came from, and that's where we trained, and all the knowledge that we have and the standards we have are from the former [African

> country]. So, it's sad, in the end we are the victims [of discrimination]. (Taurai)

Taurai's comment reveals that white ignorance encompasses "both false belief and the absence of true belief" (Mills, 2008, p. 232). Nevertheless, black African migrants' experiences of racialisation and racial discrimination are not always a result of intentionality, that is, deliberate acts of discrimination by the white majority. Often they are a consequence of "a vast array of institutional systems supporting white people's obliviousness of the worlds of people of colour" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 3). As one participant expressed:

> We're talking of someone who doesn't know Africa, someone who read it in the newspaper, someone who heard, they heard on the television you know. They just look at you they're looking at Sudan, they're looking at you they're looking at the war in Congo. They don't look at [name of country] as they don't look at those areas. They don't even know that there's a place. They think Africa is ruled by Nelson Mandela and he's the president of Africa. They don't know so you are talking about people who don't even know, who don't even understand. (Mambo)

Mambo's comment reveals perceptions of limitations in the realm of knowledge pertaining to 'Africa', which are maintained by the way Africa is talked about in the west. White ignorance here involves not only what is known (or unknown) about 'Africa', but also how it is known: as homogenous and undifferentiated, and synonymous with backwardness, political/social unrest and economic strife. Africa as a homogenous entity is constructed in opposition to 'westernisation' and all that it entails. While it can be argued that Mambo's comment illustrates how sometimes the discrimination enacted upon black African migrants is a result of the white majority not knowing the migrant enough, and not a deliberate or inherent power play or need to maintain the status quo (white privilege), we nevertheless see it as an example of two types of ignorance. The first—a specific category of ignorance articulated by Tuana (2004) as "we do not even know that we do not know" (p. 6)—is a position constituted by westernised belief systems to support and maintain a wide range of oppressive behaviours (see also Mills, 2007; Alcoff, 2007). The second is what Gilson (2011) calls the "willful ignorance of vulnerability, a closure to being affected and shaped by others" (p. 319), which she describes as a

"constructed attitude and position" (p. 319). In this case, the constructed attitude and position of ignorance is a way of closing oneself to the possibility of being affected in ways that will require making adjustments in one's being: "It is a closure to a certain understanding of the nature of relations with others as well as to features of the self; it is a closure to change that alters the meaning of the self, the interpretations we have formed of ourselves" (Gilson, 2011, p. 319). Thus, ignorance is maintained and/or sustained to avoid disturbance[1] (McHugh, 2007), which then helps the ignorant to reject "the notion that they play any role in maintaining systemic racism" (Applebaum, 2013, p. 23).

An article by Wallace (2008) provided some evidence of how ignorance is sustained: in an interview with the president of the NSW regulatory authority – the NSW Nursing and Midwifery Board - concerns about the adequacy of nurses educated locally were conflated "with students – mostly foreign, and many from developing countries – [who] had obtained degrees [in Australia] despite… [the fact that] some did not have safe levels of English". The president asserted:

> In truth we were caught unawares. We got this influx of people and they were coming from the tiniest institutions... some of them are three people in a garage." (Wallace, 2008)

Such a proclamation makes clear that ignorance about migrant nurses continues, while also reducing the various forms of migration of skilled nurses to 'those who come here to study'.

As mentioned earlier, white ignorance can also be expressed in white colour-blindness. We use colour-blindness here to refer to acting/behaving as if one does not recognise the presence of colour (read: black/a different race) which in fact is an act of wilful ignorance. In the example below, this colour blindness manifests itself in a 'joke' that is insensitive to race:

I'll give you an example of jokes that were said that really affected my self-esteem. Someone thought they were trying to make me comfortable without realising that they're actually hurting me. I

[1] In a study on identity and belonging among skilled African migrants in Australia, one of Kwansah-Aidoo and Mapedzahama's respondents aptly captured the essence of white willful ignorance is when he spoke of his experiences with work colleagues. He noted: "I found out really nobody genuinely wants to know the truth about who you are. Nobody genuinely wants to know because knowing about who you are, commands a proper response. So therefore, it is better [for them] to remain in their own understanding of who you are and where you need to be, than to know what the truth is" (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018, p. 93).

was working a late [shift] and we were finishing at night and someone said 'how are you getting home?' and I said 'I'm walking' and this person said 'are you going to be alright walking?'. I said 'I think where I stay is actually a safe place' and she said to me 'it's alright, you walk in the dark and don't smile and no-one's going to see you because the only thing that they'll notice is your teeth if your smile'. You know when you are new sometimes you can't fight back, make somebody aware that it's rude. I didn't say anything but instead of showing that I was offended, you won't believe it, I actually smiled and she might have thought that it's okay for her to talk to me like that. Because of that I actually started a precedent that anybody thought they could say whatever they want and get away with it. (Tete)

At the core of such racial jokes—tantamount to racial harassment—is white ignorance operating as a by-product of inattention (Proctor, 2008). In this case, the white nurse's attempt to 'joke' about colour fails, succeeding only in disempowering the migrant nurse as the butt of a 'harmless' joke. Such racial jokes are based in oppression and only work for the dominant group. In this instance, the participant's feeling of powerlessness as a new migrant is amplified (*you can't fight back*), culminating in her not reacting to an act of racial harassment, despite her realisation of her part in perpetuating white ignorance.

**The Un/knowing other?**

> *... [Ignorance] is an essential component in social relations, organisations and cultures. People are motivated to create and maintain ignorance, often systematically. (Smithson, 2008, p. 209)*

The question arises: what about the 'ignorance' of the black African migrant nurse? At face value it appears that the migrant is indeed ignorant, particularly where ignorance is conceptualised as an 'absence' or a deficit in knowledge (Smithson, 2008). For example, often these migrants lack knowledge of their new workplace's culture, as indicated in the following comment:

> From the moment I walked into my clinical area, I realised things were different, not different in the sense of the nursing practice but different in the culture within the Australian health

> system. I'll give you an example that some people might think is not significant but that was so important to me and made a lot of impact. Where we come from, we call each other using second names, at the moment you might call me Tete but when I was back home I was called Nurse Amai. There was so much hierarchy that we would observe, if somebody was your NUM [Nurse Unit Manager], you wouldn't just call them by [their] first name, you use their title, then their name, second to the title, the same with doctors, we'll have – consultants will be given the respect that comes with the job that you call them Mr – I guess it's a culture that we all adopted from the English system and I would've thought that when I come to Australia as well, it would be the same system. So, day one, I just realised this system is different and the moment that I realised the system is different the confidence that I walked with when I opened the door just fell to the ground. (Tete)

Of notable significance here is the participant's ignorance of the consequences this seemingly egalitarian workplace culture (Alcoff, 2007) has for each migrant and for their sense of confidence. One could also argue that, even though the participant sees this new workplace culture as different in that it is seemingly egalitarian, she may nevertheless have missed the subtleties of its hierarchy and misapprehended its seeming informality. Yet, even in this situation, these subtleties are not explained/made known to her as it is assumed that everyone 'knows' how the system operates.

When applying a broad conceptualisation of ignorance to the social relations of nursing workplaces, it becomes apparent that the ignorance of black African migrant nurses is "neither a simple nor innocent lack of knowledge" (Logue, 2008, p. 55), but rather an ignorance constructed and maintained in two significant ways which lead to structural violence (Farmer, 2004). First, African migrant nurses are 'made' ignorant through the creation of barriers to knowledge acquisition via deliberate acts of secrecy and neglect on the part of the employers. This includes, for example, deliberate secrecy about salary scales, the payment of superannuation and even lack of an orientation. As one participant commented:

> I was employed by this agency, I used to work for a hospital but not get paid by the hospital, get paid by the agency, and because of that he had a leeway of exploiting me...I must say I was a bit naive. I wasn't even aware that I was being exploited because you don't get to share your payslip with anybody... At

> that time I was getting about an average of $25 an hour when I was meant to be getting $30 an hour. It was only in conversation when some girls were sort of saying 'oh, this African nurse gets paid so much' because I think they'd seen an invoice that was coming from my employer [the nursing agency] where he was sort of invoicing them and I think it was about $70 an hour, so they thought I was getting $70 an hour so they started talking and then when I told management that I wasn't getting paid $70, I was actually getting $25 an hour, that's when I realised that I was being exploited. Even my leave was different to the people that were working for the hospital, I was getting 10 days annual leave a year yet rightfully I'm supposed to be getting six weeks a year. All those things I discovered just through an incident of – you know that invoice coming out. (Tete)

The situation Tete describes is an example of the interplay between the ignorance of white nurses in terms of what they think they know (they have found out that Tete gets paid a lot more, yet it is not true) and the maintenance of the black nurse's ignorance by her employer (the agency). The African migrant nurse's colleagues would rather think badly of her (as the overpaid nurse) than consider her situation as one of exploitation. Moreover, while spreading malicious rumours about the African migrant nurse being overpaid, the white nurses are also unaware of their own ignorance about how nursing agencies bill hospitals to make money for the service of recruiting and sending a nurse to their place of work. Of further concern is how these confidential matters were talked about openly, yet the managers of the facility did nothing to address the underlying ignorance fuelling the discussion. This episode demonstrates layer upon layer of the construction and maintenance of ignorance on both sides, all of which result in racialised responses that pose the greatest challenges for the black nurse.

All participants interviewed for this research shared similar stories of secrecy. The excerpts below exemplify this:

> I came here as a year 4 [RN4] but the EN [Enrolled Nurse] who was working here was getting paid more than what I was getting paid and they were paying me as a year 1 ... It was later after like four years when someone came in and said 'how come you get paid so low?', 'oh this is what we were told', 'what?' but even our super I remember the first year or two years I don't remember our payslip being deducted

> superannuation because you don't know. No-one bothers to tell you about all those things. It's only now that I know what is superannuation. (Mambo)

> If you are a foreign nurse, it's hard ... you don't have the power or the control to make decisions over what happens to you at work, you know ... I wouldn't know what shift I'm working tomorrow, whether I'm going to be doing 8 hours or 16 hours. I would find myself written to doing a morning shift and then my name will be there again to do an afternoon shift which means an afternoon shift finishes at 9, when I started at 7am. I could've said 'no I can't' but I never said no. (Tete)

What is significant about these black African migrant nurses' reflections on their own ignorance is their surprise upon realisation of their employers' acts of secrecy. Indeed, these acts of secrecy can be seen as structural violence because they reflect social/work arrangements that systematically place subordinated and disadvantaged black nurses in harm's way by increasing their susceptibility to future financial difficulty (Farmer, 2004). The notion of faciality is also applicable here, since structural violence has been visited upon these black nurses because of how they are seen. As Benson (2008a) rightly observes, faciality is central to how structural violence is constructed and perpetuated. In this case, if black nurses are being treated differently or exploited, then there is reason to argue that it is because of how they are seen (as different from other [white] nurses) and that this has helped legitimise a pattern of "social subordination, economic exploitation, and spatial segregation" (Benson, 2008a, p. 596) that fits well with the concept of structural violence.

Some participants, though, sought ways of knowing or of filling the gap(s) in their knowledge created for them by their employer. The quote, below, is demonstrative.

> We didn't know about this [salary scales] it took us time to discover ... The good thing was that I had friends and cousins that came to Australia in earlier than I. So, when I was questioning some of the things they would then sit me down and tell me the processes, the loading system, the – how the shifts are supposed to work, how we are supposed to have these off days and such and such a time. *So, we ended up knowing...* (Imbai, emphasis added)

Imbai's comment reveals the role that fellow migrants can play as sources of information. While, when getting their information from third parties (friends and family), there remains a risk in "making mistakes in attempts to know" (Smithson 2008, p. 210), we argue that the participants demonstrate agentic endeavours to re/claim knowledge by actively seeking to know what they do not know.

The second way in which ignorance is constructed and maintained is in the way black African migrant nurses are "ascribe[d] ignorance... ignore[d] or silence[d] on the basis that they know nothing – are ignorant... [which is] the absolutising of [their] ignorance" (Feenan, 2007, p. 510). To achieve this outcome, white nurses mobilise various "techniques of ignoring" (Swan, 2010, p. 478) when interacting with black migrant nurses. These include deliberate acts of ignoring, specifically, ignoring skilled migrants' forms and ways of knowing, thereby constructing black African nurses as unknowing. The participants' narratives revealed their awareness of not only their objectification as 'unknowing' entities, but also the imperative to know only that which has been predetermined and come to be accepted as 'real' knowledge in their new workplaces. The quote below is illustrative:

> They think you just come here from a jungle, they don't even know that you are trained to, do – you are just the same way they were trained but they just they don't trust you, they don't believe you**,** *they don't want to know what you know, they just want you to do what they think should be done and that's it.* (Mambo, emphasis added)

The black nurses' own ways of knowing nursing and how to nurse are ignored, yet the ignorance is ascribed to the nurse. Hence, it is not the 'lack' of knowledge *per se* that is the basis of ascribing ignorance to black African migrant nurses, but the blocking of their knowledge and the over-valuing of technical types of knowledge they are assumed not to possess. Again, we see faciality at play here in the way in which "power and perception overlap" (Benson, 2008a, p. 596) in these nursing workplaces, and how orientations have been "formed and/or inhibited" based on what others (white nurses) see when they look at the faces of black nurses (Benson, 2008a, p. 596). In essence, the way black nurses are seen—how their faces are socially produced (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Benson, 2008a)—results in their ways of knowing being ignored and them being perceived as ignorant: a clear demonstration of power. It is also an example of structural violence in the sense that the black nurses suffer in various (albeit unmentioned) ways as a

result of the twin experiences of being ignored and ascribed ignorance in the workplace.

Furthermore, the presumption that black migrant nurses are ignorant constructs them as incapable of nursing competently and hence in need of surveillance, as demonstrated by the following sample quotes:

> Some [co-workers] had doubts, because we are black. So, some would go round, you know after a shift they'd go around, it's not even in their job description but they'd go around checking your documentation, just to see how you document: is it authentic, do you know what you are talking about, you know? (Taurai)

> At times you would find when you are doing something, someone will be following you like they don't trust what you are doing, or they can even ask you … a question which really annoys like: Can you do blood pressure? Obviously! How could you ask that question? And that person will repeat, keep asking you the same question! You just say: God help me; let me answer it and let it go, and then you move on, that's the hardest part. (Natsai)

A consequence of white ignorance of black migrant nurses' knowledge and competence is that black African migrant nurses are subjected to the 'white gaze' (Yancy, 2008). In his exploration of the subjectivity of black bodies under a "white racist hegemonic gaze" (Alcoff, 2008, p. ix), Yancy (2008) argues that "whites ...[have] the privileged status of being onlookers and gazers, with all the power that this entail[s]...Whites also presume the *a priori* right to nominate black bodies as they [see] fit" (pp. xviii-xix). The white gaze once again raises the issue of faciality and its links with structural violence. In the case of the black nurses, the gaze entails power which is exercised in socially producing the black nurses faces to help legitimise their social subordination. The faces of the black nurses, then, through the white gaze, become "a medium through which finite differences are established" (Benson, 2008a, p. 596) and play an important role in their racialisation and subordination.

Participants revealed that they were often subjected to unnecessary scrutiny, confirming the observation by Mapedzahama et al., (2012) that, within nursing workplaces, the white gaze is a form of "victimisation through critical scrutiny" (p. 160 citing Larsen, 2007, p. 1291). The following quote is illustrative.

> I know when we started working we were all considered as RNs but treated differently, you know. Like, like if you were going to work on the floor, they would say so-and-so go and work on this side, so-and-so go and work on this side, Taurai, go and help to do showering. Your roles have changed; all of a sudden I am being asked to go and work as an AIN [Assistant in Nursing]! Only when you know then you can say: whoa, whoa, whoa, that was not my job description on the contract [pause], you know what I mean? What if we were dumb? We could be doing, working as AINs here. (Taurai)

Moreover, the white gaze and scrutiny yields self-doubt and leads to what Yancy (2008) refers to as "a destructive process of superfluous self-surveillance and self-interrogation" (p. 68). The consequence is that it diminishes confidence in one's own professional competence and can result in mistakes, thereby perpetuating the myth of incompetence. Furthermore, the white gaze upon black migrant nurses has significance for 'trusting' the black migrant nurse. As Townley (2006) notes, "ways of knowing include trust... being trusted is part of being a fully recognised member of a community" (p. 40). In moving into the nursing workforce, the migrant black nurses found themselves considered untrustworthy and placed under the white gaze. As nurses increasingly work in teams, such a situation perpetuates white ignorance and results in the failure to fully use a skilled worker who has been actively recruited to work in Australian health agencies and hospitals.

**Conclusion: The reproduction of white privilege**

This article has examined the intersection between the 'native ignorance' (Proctor, 2008) of the migrant (ignorance as deficit or lack of knowledge) and 'active' or 'systemic' ignorance (ignorance as intentionally or unintentionally constructed through the workplace) in order to show how "oppressive ideals" (Bordo, 1999, p. 50) are perpetuated through an active ignorance which is "socially enforced and socially reinforcing" (Medina, 2013, pp. 57-58). In theorising the social functions of ignorance, Moore and Tumin (1949) noted that its most significant and obvious role lies in "preserving social differentials" by functioning as a "preservative of privileged position" (pp. 788-789). In nursing workplaces, white ignorance operates to maintain the smooth functioning of the system through a failure to challenge how structuring from whiteness and multiculturalist ideologies means that racism cannot be directly confronted (Žižek, 2008). One could

argue, then, that white ignorance not only functions to create (an)other who is unknowing, in need of surveillance and thus subjected to the white gaze, it also creates a workplace that is fraught with racial micro-inequities and in which the faces of black nurses are actively and negatively coded with allegorical signs invested with cultural meaning (Benson, 2008a). This then allows structural violence to occur, while wilful ignorance helps to maintain and sustain a nursing workplace that is racialised and racialising in its functioning and functionality. Whitt (2016), elaborating on Medina's (2013) exposition of active ignorance, captures this scenario perfectly by noting that:

> …active ignorance functions less like a gap in knowledge or a conscious refusal to think, and more like a socially sanctioned and habituated way of being – a mode of actively, if unintentionally, maintaining areas of lucidity and imperception by resisting new knowledge, counter-testimony, and recalcitrant experience. (p. 431)

The participants' comments clearly expose the true whiteness of a nursing workplace that is often presented as a non-raced, "objective [and] neutral space" (Yancy 2008, p. xix). Not surprisingly, black nurses in this context feel a sense of powerlessness. The discussions in this article have not only revealed the existence of white ignorance in nursing workplaces in Australia, but also its manifestation, reproduction and exploitation. Ultimately, the data presented in this article supports our contention that in-depth understanding of the ways in which ignorance plays out in workplaces is integral to producing more nuanced, alternative analyses of skilled migrant' experiences.

A variety of forms of ignorance were used to maintain colour-blindness and the racialisation of black skilled migrant RNs. While there are some elements of native ignorance (Proctor, 2008) in this maintenance of ignorance, other epistemologies of ignorance were at work in maintaining the dominance of whiteness in this space/workplace. The use of secrecy, as well as the overt manipulation and level of surveillance endured by the participants, position ignorance as a useful concept to bring to light how some forms of knowledge are more in evidence in the racialisation of skilled migrants of colour than others. The subtleties and nuances of these varieties of not knowing maintained and perpetuated forms of ignorance and structural violence that played out across the black faces of these migrant nurses.

This article asserts that a singular focus on how the migrant is a problem for nursing in such situations (which emphasises deficits or a lack of knowledge) maintains a systematised ignorance as to how race is central to

these migrants' exploitation and lack of integration into the workplace (see Wallace, 2008). This is rooted in the failure to see that the obvious racialisation located here is systematically and systemically brought to bear on black migrant nurses through the application of epistemologies of ignorance that place an emphasis on the migrants' deficits, rather than those embedded in the structure of the white workplace (Feenan, 2007). It could also be argued that this failure to comprehend the whiteness of the workspace is compounded by Australia's status as a settler colony that ignores/fails to acknowledge the racist framing central to its social relations with its indigenous population and the associated levels of ignorance central to such racial framing (Mills, 2007; Hage, 1998). As Whitt (2016) points out, "knowledge and ignorance are essentially political, insofar as different social positions and power relations tend to encourage or discourage different modes of knowing, ignoring, revealing, and dissembling" (p. 431).

With respect to migrant labour in the Australian healthcare sector, this study has shown that, even though the Australian nursing workplace presents itself as an exemplar of employer-driven nurse migration which supports the active overseas recruitment of nurses and employer-sponsored skilled migration, there are structures and strictures in place that not only result in structural violence being visited upon black nurses but also ensure that the country does not enjoy the full benefit of its skilled migration program, at least where the health sector is concerned. So long as Australian nursing workplaces continue to be places where "white ignorance masquerades as white racial common sense, logic, or good intentions'' (Medina, 2013, p. 22), economic investment in the skilled migration program will not yield maximum returns due to the underutilisation migrant nurses' expertise stemming from the discussed practices of structural violence.

From a research perspective, this article shows that the current deficit-driven analyses of skilled migrant experiences—which reduce the problematisation of migration to the individual migrant, situating the migrant as '*the*' problem, and fail to expose or challenge the normative assumptions underpinning systemic and systematised processes—are totally inadequate. New research is required to look at the impact of structural, systemic and systematised processes in what is now a culturally diverse workplace (Berman & VEOHRC, 2008). Future research will also benefit from applying an intersectionality framework, which, according to May (2015), is a perfect approach for "identifying gaps in conventional logics" (p. 10). An intersectionality approach "rejects single-axis thinking in favor of a matrix worldview that recognizes how multiple and intersecting social identities/locations (e.g., race, sexual identity, religion) at the microlevel

interlock and reflect social inequalities at the social-structural level" (Bowleg et al., 2017, p. 578). Thus, in the nursing workplace, black African nurses must not be viewed simply as nurses or even as migrant nurses; instead, consideration should be given to the intersections of race, gender and history which influence the way/s in which they are seen, constructed/deconstructed, known and un/known. Our analysis has shown that there is an "intersectional epistemological ignorance" (Bowleg et al., 2017, p. 578) at play in these workplaces which influences workplace interactions and relationships and directly affects the way in which black African migrant nurses experience themselves within their white-structured nursing workplaces.

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# The 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD) label: A critique using African migrants as exemplar

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**Abstract**

This article critiques the widely accepted official label 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD), used in Australia to refer mainly to Australia's non-Indigenous ethnic groups other than the English-speaking Anglo-Saxon majority. Our main contention is that it is a racialised and racialising label that perpetuates institutional racism, providing a conceptual excuse for legitimising privilege and altruistic governmentality over minority groups, while inferiorising and projecting these groups as an analogous population who need 'fixing'. The article draws on the sociological construct of labelling, through which we analyse the framing of CALD people in the literature as 'deviants' using Black African Migrants in Australia as exemplars. We propose that CALD labelling is counterproductive because it hinders social integration, divides people into 'us and them', homogenises, blurs particular lived experiences and needs, and ignores intersectional issues.

## Introduction

In Australia, the term 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD) is a widely accepted and institutionalised label that is used in political, government, research and popular discourse to refer to non-English-speaking and non-Anglo-Saxon minority groups (other than indigenous Australians). Adopted in the 1990s to replace an even more problematic label 'non-English Speaking Background (NESB), the CALD label is rarely critiqued but rather, is used un-problematically. In our view, the CALD label, however subtly and inadvertently, frames minority groups in Australia as "deviants".

In this article, we analyse how as a label, CALD others, racially profiles, stereotypes, homogenises and inferiorises minority groups to whom the label is applied. We argue that CALD labelling not only reinforces institutional racism in Australia, but also informs lived experiences of racism. People from CALD communities have been found to be more likely to be victims of racist attacks than Anglo-Australians (see for example: Dunn, Pelleri and Maeder-Han, 2011; Shepherd, 2016). Shepherd's (2016) research found that two of every three persons from a CALD background reported that they had experienced racist behaviour in the twelve months preceding the survey, evidence which confirms the treatment of CALD groups as 'different'.

Using Black African migrants in Australia as exemplars, the article highlights that the CALD label (1) is a racist label that overtly divides people into 'us and them', (2) provides conceptual pretext for legitimising institutional racism against non-English-speaking and non-Anglo-Saxon minority groups, and (3) inferiorises migrant communities, projecting the image of an analogous population—despite being glaringly heterogeneous—who need 'fixing'. Being a racist tag, we argue further that the continued use of the CALD label in Australia has the potential to hinder social integration.

To highlight the shortcomings and racializing nature of the label CALD, the article is informed by the sociological theory of labelling. Labelling theory is traceable to Emil Durkheim, who linked labelling to "deviance" (difference), explaining how social order and stability is maintained in society (Durkheim, 1938). Labelling theory reached its zenith in the 1960s and early 1970s, when its intellectual roots were rejuvenated from 'symbolic interactionism', which focuses on how people construct, interpret and give meaning to their behaviour through their interaction with others. Edwin Lemert examined the concept of 'deviance' in his book *Social Pathology* (1951), and argued that deviance is the product of society's reaction to an act and the attachment of a label to the individual (Lemert, 1951). Lemert stated that deviations are not significant until they are subjectively organised and transformed into active roles and become the social criteria for assigning status.

In his ground-breaking book, *Outsiders*, Becker regarded deviance as a social construct, created through social interaction when certain behaviours or groups of people who violated mainstream laws were labelled as deviant by social institutions such as the police, courts and mental health authorities (Myers, 2002). Labelling theory has been used in several academic fields, for example, in psychiatry as an instrument of social control to constrain the actions of 'difficult' individuals and social groups (Germov, 2014). Becker argued that labelling is perpetrated through rules, which often begin as

abstract values devised as a response to perceived trouble or threat. Once a label is created, it is enforced through 'moral enterprise' and institutionalised through usage and publicity. It is also used to promote hegemonic values and dominance to inferiorise minority groups (Foucault, 1978; Marshall, Douglas, and McDonnell, 2007; Zelinka, 1996).

In this context, applying principles from labelling theory to our analyses in this paper allows us to demonstrate how CALD as a label is also rooted in the concept of 'deviance', i.e. that people can be labelled as being deviant, or culturally different, or unfairly stereotyped as dangerous, because of their skin colour, language or religion. Since deviance is a social construction, it is not the act itself, but the hostile societal reactions that creates serious deviance. Consequently, it can be argued that the institutionalisation of labels, such as CALD, is an endorsement of racist societal reactions towards migrants in Australian society.

**A brief history of institutional racist policies and labelling in Australia**

In order to contextualise the discussions in this article, a brief overview of Australia's history of institutional racism and labelling is necessary (see Bolt, 2001; Henry, Houston and Mooney, 2004). Australia passed the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901,* which ushered in the 'White Australia Policy' (WAP) (see for example, Tavan 2004, p. 111). As an immigration and nationalist policy, the WAP reflected Australia's aspiration to maintain a 'White' British character and create "a homogenised Australian identity" (Babacan, Gopalkrishnan and Babacan, 2009, p.63; see also Tavan, 2004)[1]. While the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* did not cite race specifically, in principle, it sought to outlaw the permanent settlement of Asians, [Black] Africans and other coloured races, in Section 3(a), which stated that:

> The immigration into the Commonwealth of the persons described in any of the following paragraphs of this section (hereinafter called "prohibited immigrants") is prohibited,
> namely (a) Any person who when asked to do so by an officer fails to write out at dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in an European language directed by the officer.

The WAP was progressively relaxed after the Second World War, although the emphasis on European immigration continued until 1966

[1]A recent biennial study, the Barometer,[1] revealed that 57% of Indigenous people and 39% of the general community agree that Australia is an institutionally racist country (Reconciliation Australia. 2016).

(Centre for Dialogue, 2011). While the WAP was abolished officially in 1973, many scholars have argued that it did not eradicate institutional racism against non-English-speaking and non-Anglo-Saxon minority groups (see Bolt, 2001). While the WAP was condemned internationally as racist, two ex-Prime Ministers of Australia respectively hailed the WAP as the "greatest thing we have achieved" (William Morris Hughes 1915–1923), and another claimed that, "This country [Australia] shall remain forever the home of the descendants of those people who came here in peace in order to establish in the South Seas an outpost of the British race" (John Curtin, 1941–1945) (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, n.d.)

The abolition of the WAP was partly influenced by the increasing migration of non-European settlers into Australia between 1966 and 1971, and the eventual migration of several Black Africans into the country (Jupp, 2002; Jakubowicz, 2010; Southphommasane, 2012)[2]. To our knowledge, there is no publically available statistical data on Black African migrants in Australia (BAMIA). This is because Australia does not collect data on 'race' or racial background/identification. However, Australia's 2016 population census revealed that 317,182 people were born in sub-Saharan Africa, representing 5.1% of the population born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). BAMIA form part of the three broad categories of Africans living in Australia, comprising Caucasian Africans—"White Africans" mainly from South Africa and Zimbabwe—and North Africans (see Adusei-Asante, 2018). Within the BAMIA population five subcategories exist: (1) middle class professionals, (2) humanitarian entrants, (3) family reunion entrants, (4) international students, and (5) Australian-born Africans (see Adusei-Asante, 2018; Hugo 2009; Jakubowicz, 2010).

The 'opening' up of immigration to non-white non-European immigrants heralded the era of multiculturalism in Australia in the 1970s. Multiculturalism replaced 'assimilation' and 'integration' policies of the 1940/1950s and 1960s respectively. Assimilation policies required newly arrived migrants-labelled 'New Australians' to remove traces of their former identities and quickly become like other Australians, including learning the English language. The integration schemes of the 1960's encouraged migrants to maintain links to their nationalities and past cultures on condition that they were found to be non-threatening (Henry and Kurzak, 2013; Jupp, 2002; Southphommasane, 2012; Markus, Jupp and McDonald, 2009; Koleth,

[2]The abolition of the WAP was also motivated mainly by Australia's interest in recruiting 'distinguished non-Europeans' or 'highly skilled immigrants', especially for the burgeoning mining industry and in light of the repercussions of the Second World War (see Jakubowicz, 2010).

2010). The promotion of multiculturalism brought about the need for tolerance and respect for other cultures and the importance of recognising difference, inclusive diversity and the necessity of meeting the needs of migrants (Henry and Kurzak, 2013). Multiculturalism in Australia has been given impetus by various landmark events and reports[3], although it also led to the emergence of racist labels such as the tag "Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)".

**The CALD Label: Background and Conceptual Flaws**

The Office of Multicultural Interests describes CALD people as "groups and individuals who differ according to religion, race, language and ethnicity, except those whose ancestry is Anglo Saxon, Anglo Celtic, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (2009, p.1)." The CALD label replaced the label "Non-English Speaking Background" (NESB). The NESB label was introduced in the 1970s, and remained in common use in research, practice and policy discourses until the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (MCMIA) initiated dropping it from official communications in favour of CALD (Markus et al., 2009). Although Marcus et al. (2009) regarded NESB as more sensible than CALD, the MCMIA identified four problems with the NESB label, considering that it had (i) conflicting meanings, (ii) grouped those who were relatively disadvantaged with those who were not disadvantaged, (iii) was unable to separately identify the many cultural and linguistic groups in Australia, and (iv) developed negative connotations. According to Sawrikar and Katz (2009) there was also concerns that NESB became a proxy for the 'non-Anglo Saxon other'.

The MCMIA's preference for CALD was influenced by arguments that the label (i) does not demarcate based on what people are not, as opposed to NESB, which developed negative connotations because it distinguishes based on non-English-speaking heritage; (ii) draws attention to both the linguistic and cultural characteristics of minority ethnic groups, and unconsciously highlights that any barriers or disadvantages they experience relate to these two factors; and (iii) does not have any explicit criterion to define membership, and is therefore, flexible and adaptive to be inclusive of

[3]These include but are not limited to the (1) Galbally Report of 1978 which reviewed post-arrival programs and services for migrants; (2) Hawke Government's National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, which established principles and values underpinning multicultural policy; (3) Launch of the 'The People of Australia' under Prime Minister Julia Gillard, which reaffirmed support for multiculturalism (see Henry and Kurzak, 2013).

any and all ethnic groups. The Queensland Government declared that the label CALD was more inclusive, and reflects the diversity of the entire population (Queensland Government, 2010).

However, some scholars have pointed out weaknesses inherent in the CALD label. Marcus et al. (2009) for example, argued that the label is used exclusively to refer to non-English people, and gives a false impression that people from English-speaking backgrounds are not culturally diverse and monolingual. Arguing within the framework of relational exclusion, Sawrikar and Katz (2009) also pointed out that CALD has conflicting definitions that can lead to a sense of social exclusion (Sawrikar and Katz, 2009). The authors asserted further that the CALD tag highlights the fact that groups may differ from the majority because of linguistic and cultural differences, legitimising the implementation of so-called CALD-specific crime prevention programs, for example, as though they were an analogous collective (Bartels, 2011; Gwukuba, 2018).

In this light, whereas the CALD label "can conveniently include the White majority when describing and celebrating Australia's multicultural milieu, for the most part, it [refers categorically] only to minorities" (Sawrikar and Katz, 2009 p. 5). The consequence of this malleability is an erroneous view that the "Anglo Saxon majority are either considered to not be a cultural or linguistic group, or that their cultural or linguistic diversity is not 'sufficient' to warrant being part of CALD" (Sawrikar and Katz, 2009). The word 'diverse' in the label CALD, has also criticised for the reason that it "carries an emotive valence for people which the factual 'language in country of origin' does not" (Sawrikar and Katz, 2009 p. 5). The authors argued further that:

> CALD's acknowledgment of the uniqueness of different (minority) groups detracts from the fact that in its common use, the label still refers to the same groups as NESB – those who are different from the majority; it is simply less transparent about the fact that there is a majority from which others are seen to differ. (Sawrikar and Katz, 2009, p. 6).

It has also been argued that, while the CALD label provides opportunities for understanding common challenges, the label has the potential to mask the disparity in access to opportunities between ethnic and minority groups (Babacan, 2005; Sawrikar and Katz, 2009). This may stem from the deliberate policy of some organisations to not routinely collect data on instances of racialised disadvantage in access to services and opportunities (Sawrikar and Katz, 2009). The authors argued further that the inclusion of

'culture' in the label CALD is conceptually risky, because it ignores cultural differences in minority groups and may increase the effect of stereotyping. Given the limitations of the CALD and NESB labels, Sawrikar and Katz proposed the alternative label 'Australians Ethnically Diverse and Different from the Majority' (AEDDM), but quickly conceded that the proposed acronym was too long, and had racist tendencies, particularly with the inclusion of the label 'ethnic' (Sawrikar and Katz, 2009).

Notwithstanding the associated conceptual challenges identified above, the CALD label has been institutionalised in Australia. Although rarely used in everyday conversational discourses, CALD is a label of choice used by government departments. It dominates in policy circles, appears in reports and other publications and is used uncritically by professionals working in academia, health and education sectors, law enforcement and criminal justice agencies and community as an 'inclusive' label to categorise Australia's non-Indigenous ethnic groups other than the English-speaking Anglo-Saxon majority (Queensland Government, 2010; Hugo, McDougall, Tan, and Feist, 2014). The label has also enhanced professionalisation of the community sector in Australia, offering employment and the emergence of CALD-experts (AIFS, 2015; Hugo et al., 2014; Queensland Government, 2010).

Furthermore, we acknowledge neoliberalist views that support categorisation of people to meet their needs collectively, as opposed to meeting their individual needs in the face of tight budget constraints (Bartels, 2011). We are also aware of the 'convenience argument' that no label would perfectly suit or encapsulate all groups. Government program for 'CALD people' that have yielded positive outcomes in some cases are also recognised (Hancock, Cooper and Bahn, 2009). However, we provide several instances of the pejorative use of CALD, and argue that the CALD label is doing damage to non-English-speaking Anglo-Saxon minority groups.

**Representation of CALD Communities**

In Australian literature and public discourse, CALD people are in the main, presented in a deficit-focussed framework, i.e. mainly as 'a problem or residents in need'. This characterisation is sometimes conceptually electroplated as altruism and requests for the government to address the identified needs. The issues faced by CALD groups are portrayed as "diverse and complex, including lack of employment, discrimination, prejudice, social isolation and disenfranchisement, lack of understanding of Australian laws and justice system" (Bartels, 2011, p. 2; see also Crawford, 2013; Queensland Government, 2010). While we do not deny the existence of the so-called 'needs' of CALD groups, our contention is against the tendency to frame

them as emanating from having diverse (read as 'problematic') cultures and limited proficiency in speaking, reading and writing the English language (Ben-Porat, 2008; Crawford, 2013). We argue that the emphasis on culture and language provides a conceptual excuse for the depreciatory depiction of CALD groups as (1) 'deviants' — i.e. less intelligent, other, difficult to work with, not proactive, needing support and uncooperative — ostensibly because they "have limited English language abilities" and "non-western cultural practices" (Lorig, Ritter, and Jacquez, 2005; Williams, Manias, Liew, Gock, and Gorelik; 2012); and (2) being unable to assimilate into broader Australian culture (see Bartels, 2011; FECCA, 2010; Hugo et al., 2014).

Other scholars have characterised CALD people as (1) being noticeably different physically in appearance and apparel; having religious and cultural norms that are unique from those of mainstream Australia (Bartels, 2011; FECCA, 2010; Gwukaba, 2018); (2) suffering from undiagnosed trauma, grief for loved ones who died during wars and the anxiety for loved ones displaced by war (see Bartels, 2011; Gwukaba, 2018); and (3) carrying tensions which began from their home countries (Crawford, 2013). Aside from the above mentioned generic scornful and derogatory characterisation of CALD groups, specific exemplars of the othering, deviant-speak, outsider framing, and racial profiling, the homogenisation and vilification of CALD abound in the medical literature, education sector and public discourse on crimes and violence. We discuss these using BAMIA as cases in point.

***Medical literature***

Racial vilification and generalisation of CALD groups in Australia is prevalent in the medical literature. For instance, Williams et al. (2012) cited Lorig et al. (2005) to argue that CALD groups have an increased risk of medication mismanagement and are often excluded from intervention studies. However, analysis of the evidence in Lorig et al. (2005) suggested that the studies were conducted with a cross section of people from Chinese, Italian, Vietnamese, Greek and Spanish backgrounds. Thus, while the CALD label is presented as an inclusive label in official circles, several CALD groups (including African Australians) were not part of this research cohort, but have been vilified by the unfounded generalised statement. Furthermore, although Williams et al. (2012) conceded that the "intervention was translated and interpreters were used, [and that] cultural sensitivity may not have been adequate in this study", the researchers consistently quoted sources that represented CALD people negatively in their publication, referring to them as having "limited health literacy", having "a high risk of medication mismanagement and nonadherence", being ["difficult to work with"] and

implying that CALD people were ignorant and unwilling to give back. Such pathological and deficient representations of CALD patients and nurses is common in the medical literature (see for example, Caperchione, Kolt and Mummery, 2009; Choi et al., 2012; Cioffi, 2003; O'Driscoll, et al. 2014; Rao, Warburton, and Bartlett, 2006).

The above discussion exposes the inherent contradiction of the CALD label. On the one hand it homogenises CALD groups while its practical application excludes certain groups. In our view the CALD label creates association of 'CALDness' with 'sameness' without recourse to 'skin colour' and intersectional issues. For example, while humanitarian settlers from Bosnia (ex-Yugoslavs) and Sudan are effectively 'CALD refugees', as portrayed in Gorman, Brough and Ramirez (2003), it cannot be argued that they have similar experiences in Australia. Several scholars have argued that skin colour matters in Australia and plays a significant role in opportunities or the lack thereof, for Black Africans in particular. Drawing on the experiences of BAMIA in the States of New South Wales and Victoria, Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2017) argued that blackness in Australia is othered not only as 'inferior' but also as 'burdensome'. The authors argued that "Blackness is not merely about skin color, but a social construct persistently conceived of as an opposition to whiteness" (p.1). Thus while El-Gack and Yak's (2016; see also Abur and Spaaij, 2016; Wickramaarachchi and Burns, 2016) study found that Sudanese refugees with Australian higher education qualifications are under and unemployed, Colic-Peisker (2005) argued that, as the preferred humanitarian immigrants because of their "whiteness" and "Europeanness", Bosnian [ex-Yugoslavs] refugees were effectively excluded from the 'burden' associated with blackness in Australia. Colic-Peisker asserted that, deemed to have the "right colour", ex-Yugoslav refugees were regarded by the general Australian public to be a good blend into the "White Australian" population and had greater resettlement-potential (2005). Our contention is that while the label homogenises CALD people, some CALD groups have different experiences based on skin colour. Therefore, some CALD groups are attributed "insider status" (white groups or those who can "racially pass" as white), others and their suburbs are often criminalized (Nolan, Farquharson, Politoff, and Marjoribanks, 2011).

***Criminalisation of CALD people and their suburbs***

Research has shown that the majority of people who identify as Africans in Australia live in low socio-economic status suburbs (see for example: Briddle, 2013). Windle (2008) argued that the suburbs where BAMIA live

are depicted as being besieged by 'outsiders' and are 'cut off from the city'. Further, these suburbs are variously labelled as "no-go zones", (Mitchell, 2007, p. 25); "African, Asian and Polynesian strongholds"; "hotspots" and "hotbeds" for "youth violence and ethnic tensions" (Lloyd-McDonald, 2007, p.3). Such sentiments are highlighted for example, in Carly Crawford's Herald Sun article (2007), where she reports a 75-year-old widow, *'a local'*, as lamenting that before the invasion (by African migrants), "the area used to be 'lovely'" (Crawford, 2007, p.4). Suburbs where BAMIA live, such as Balga, Koondoola, Mirrabooka and Girrawheen in Perth, Blacktown in Sydney, and Melbourne's Dandenong, have gained notoriety via the calumny of the media.

Perceptions of these suburbs have created stereotypical tendencies that associate low socio-economic status with inferiority, affecting the value of real estate and resulting in a constant police presence (Pawson, Hulse and Cheshire, 2015). In their *Submission to the Victorian Police Inquiry*, the Australian Communities and Foundation Australia and Youth Support Advocacy Service reiterated the racial profiling and criminalisation of Africans in the State of Victoria (Australian Communities and Foundation Australia and Youth Support Advocacy Service, 2013). The African advocacy organisation argued that Blackness is associated with criminal behaviour, resulting in police officers unfairly targeting BAMIA (Wickramaarachchi and Burns, 2016).

In our assessment, the need to give the 'no-go zones' 'a new image' in Perth's (Western Australia) northern suburbs influenced the implementation of 'The New North' project in the 1990s, which included renaming some ethnic-stigmatised suburbs, to more Anglo-Saxon sounding ones. An example was the creation of 'Westminster' out of 'Balga'. Regarded by the Government of Western Australia as "one of the largest and most successful urban renewal projects ever undertaken in Australia", this project has seen the application of so-called urban renewal approaches, which have "transformed the suburbs of Balga, Koondoola, Girrawheen and Westminster into strong and vibrant communities offering residents a highly desirable lifestyle in some of Perth's best located suburbs (Government of WA, 2016).

The deviance discourse associated with the CALD label also feeds the distrusts that can often lead to targeting and surveillance and patrol of BAMIA and their suburbs by authorities such as Australian police. African youth have, in particular been the victims of these tendencies, for example when traveling together in groups, either in cars, or on the streets (FECCA, 2010). Seidel and Hopkins (2013) reported that while African young men were underrepresented in the crime statistics, they were about 2.5 times more

likely to be stopped and searched by the police in the Flemington and North Melbourne suburbs. Haile-Michael and Issa (2015) studied the Victoria police and CALD relations and frequent targeting of Black Africans. The authors cited the Victorian Police's 'Operation Molto' which mandated the Police to stop and search African youth in the Flemington suburbs under the pretext of addressing crime violence in the area. Black Africans and Sudanese in Melbourne reported being harassed and assaulted by Victoria Police. The African youth lodged a legal case against Victoria Police citing "140 incidents of police mistreatment, and systemic pattern of racial profiling, which breached the Racial Discrimination Act 1975" (Haile-Michael and Issa, 2015, p. 9). The Victoria Police negotiated an out of court settlement with the Sudanese youth in February 2013, bringing an end to targeted stop and search operations policing in the Flemington area (Haile-Michael and Issa, 2015).

Another example of the negative consequences of institutionalised labelling can be seen in incidents of police brutalities meted out to members of South Sudanese communities in Western Australia (WA) (see: Edwards, 2005). The WA Police reportedly continue to target South Sudanese youth in several instances, leading to clashes between the youths in the Mirrabooka area (Gwukuba, 2018). African youth criticised the police for unfairly targeting them with hefty fines for offences they did not commit, and failing to attend to their matters. Gwukuba (2018) further notes that the relationship between the two parties frosted to the point of being reported in the media as reaching "a time bomb ticking mode". Windle argued that media reports of African youth "reveal the adaptation of pre-existing institutional racism and racialising narrative frames to a new target in Australia", and further that such "xenophobic discourses function as tools of social power [via] the construction of narratives through the selection, ordering and manipulation of perspectives and experiences to produce a particular ideological meaning" (2008, p. 554). Likewise, Pickering (2001) argued that the views promulgated by the Australian government about African refugees relate to "deviancy", 'inclusion' and "exclusion", embedded in the language of common sense reproduced and sustained by the media (see Marshall et al., 2007). Gatt (2011, pp. 210, 213) argued further that the Australian government and the media deliberately construct the narrative about the:

> … increased involvement [of Africans] in crime to justify the government's policy responses…to create public acceptance of such policies, and additionally for political gain…[such as] justify[ing] a 'tough' stance on immigration issues.

Based on unfounded and sometimes isolated cases, Sudanese have been associated with violence in Australia (Nolan et al. 2011; Hanson-Easey, Augoustinos and Moloney, 2014). The Australian government's response to and the media reporting of the tragic death of the 19-year-old Sudanese Liep Gony on 28 September 2007 in Victoria is a case in point. According to Gatt, before this incident, the media across Victoria had been regularly reporting on a Sudanese ethnic crime wave, involving youth gangs (Gatt, 2011). Following the news of Liep's death, the Minister for Immigration at the time, Kevin Andrews, announced that Australia would suspend the intake of refugees from Sudan because they did not seem to have "settled" and "adjusted into the Australian culture" (Gatt, 2011). It was later found that Liep's killers were Caucasian. The minister offered no apology.

The CALD label does not only homogenise various groups of migrants, it does so even more strongly for African migrants and this is a problem because there are law-abiding Sudanese-Australians and non-Sudanese Black Australian residents. In our opinion, ignorance of the differences among BAMIA have tended to lead to the 'Sudanisation' of Black Africans in Australia. Personal experiences of the authors and communication with Australian residents show that Black African people are constantly asked in public spaces, "Are you from Sudan" or "are you a refugee?" The apparent 'Sudanisation' of Black Africans in Australia suggests that (common) knowledge of the African continent (comprising 54 separate [distinctively independent] countries) is either low in Australia or there is a deliberate attempt to inferiorise and deepen the burden of blackness of BAMIA.

***Education sector***

CALD students in educational institutions in Australia have been reported as performing poorly academically. Walker, Batchelor and Shore's (2009) systematic review of the literature on the effects of education and cultural background on a number of intelligence and memory tests found lower performance among CALD groups in Australia, and concluded that the lower performance was attributable to culture (Walker, Batchelor and Shores, 2009). In other words, the measurement of the intelligence of CALD students is based on their (in)ability to relate to Anglo-Saxon culture and language. Walker et al. argued further that "cultural effects" on CALD educational outcomes were greater if cultural background was divergent from English language and Western culture, had fled war and experienced physical and psychological trauma or had limited or no formal education.

Chamberlain (2005) described a variety of ways that culture influences interactions between teachers and students from CALD backgrounds. The

author argued that culture clashes are found in assessment processes, particularly if teachers and educational diagnosticians collect and misinterpret the explanations for their students' learning problems. It has been established that a validated predictor of second language students' achievement in English language is building on the students' native language (see Thomas and Collier, 1997). However, such bilingual programs seem to be non-existent in Australian schools. Chamberlain (2005) argued therefore, that, the misrepresentation of CALD students is partly to blame for their overrepresentation in student support systems; and in our view, their labelling in the education literature as "unintelligent", being "more likely to plagiarise", experiencing "communication and relational challenges", having "difficulty with academic writing and a tendency to achieve lower grades", "needing tailored programs", "falling under the category of English not at all" and having "no hope of learning a new language" (see Abdelkerim and Marty, 2012; Alam, 2004; Boughton, Halliday, and Brown 2010; Crawford and Candlin, 2010).

The depiction of CALD students as low academic achievers presents two points for discussion. First, it underestimates academic achievements of high-achieving CALD students. The "victim blaming" narratives of the low academic achievement of CALD students tends to associate "CALDness" with "stupidity", "dumbness" and "failure" (McKay and Devlin, 2016; Adusei-Asante, 2018), although there is evidence to the contrary (Adusei-Asante, 2018). For example, a recent report released by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development which reviewed educational attainment of migrants shows that students from the Philippines, China and India (part of the CALD cluster) were more likely to demonstrate key knowledge and skills in science, reading and mathematics expected for fifteen year olds than their white Australian counterparts (see OECD, 2018). Similarly, the results of the 2016 National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) – which tests life essential academic skills such as reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy-revealed analogous trends (ACARA, 2016).

Second, negative view of CALD students fails to consider the historical existence in Australia of huge educational gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. In other words, low academic achievement among people from low socio-economic status background is not a CALD problem, but a systemic one, a fact several scholars have acknowledged (see Kenway, 2013; Thomson, De Bortoli and Underwood, 2015; Thomson, Wernert, O'Grady and Rodrigues, 2017).

The collateral impact of the negative portrayal of educational attainment of CALD people on BAMIA is evident in the literature. Burgoyne and Hull (2007) argued that refugees from Sudan who became students had multifaceted, but interrelated, issues that affect their resettlement in Australia. The authors argued further that the students' 'educational challenges and aspirations were inextricably bound up with [an] array of other resettlement issues' (p. 21). Turner and Fozdar (2010) drew comparable conclusions when they studied forty adult Sudanese learners at three different educational centres in Australia. However, the authors did not only blame the students for the poor outcomes, but on the need for teachers to build trusted relationships with BAMIA. Harris and Marlowe (2011) researched the experiences of a group of young Africans from refugee backgrounds who were studying at a South Australian university, and reported that the students had little understanding of the expectations of Australian educational institutions and accessing study materials and studying in another language (see also Adusei-Asante and Doh, 2016; Harry, 2008; Harris and Marlowe, 2011; Wickramaarachchi and Burns, 2016). Gately, Ellis, Britton and Fleming (2017) used a multi-method approach to investigate the experiences of twenty-two Sudanese students at Western Australia's Edith Cowan University. Based on data obtained from the university, Gately et al., 2017, p.121) reported that:

> Of all units undertaken in that period by Sudanese students the failure rate was 47.53% despite completion of assessments for 73% of the units of study involved … Further, Sudanese students discontinued their course[s] primarily for academic issues of which the precise nature is unknown.

Aside from such negative representation, there is evidence that attaining higher education qualifications do not always enhance the employment prospects of some Black African groups in Australia (El-Gack and Yak, 2016; see also Abdelkerim and Grace, 2012).

**Conclusion**

This article drew on the representation of CALD people in the medical literature, public discourse on crimes and the educational sector demonstrating how the "deviant depiction" impacts on BAMIA. It has shown that the CALD label can imply an oversimplification of ill-informed generalisations of diverse people with diverse cultures. For example, the label has been used to appraise the needs of diverse migrant populations in a one-size-fits-all approach, in spite of the existence of a wide range of

situations and solutions in diverse populations and migrant communities. This is done by exaggerating legitimate needs as 'a problem', through the media and by moral entrepreneurs—politicians, teachers, parents and religious leaders—thus generating moral panic. In this context, moral panic is the process of arousing social concerns over differences—rather than diversity—of languages and cultures and, in particular, focusing on 'Australian values'. As such, this label excludes a large number of people as full participants in Australian society.

Despite the Australian government's good intentions, the CALD label divides Australian society into 'us' (Anglo-Saxon majority) and 'them' (non-Anglo minority) (Black Africans, Asians, and others). It is suggested that rather than creating and using labels and rules, emphasis should be on an inclusive policy of integration of migrants. One way of doing so is to educate the media and public, to enhance their understanding of the high values attached to diversity in Australian society, and the need to value and celebrate cultural diversity.

Where to from here? We suggest that if authorities of multicultural affairs are in the firm opinion that an appropriate label can further enhance the social cohesion of multicultural Australia, then we believe that instead of introducing another 'label' by us or by other individual scholars, we should engage in a proper collective research project to discuss and debate different ideas and terminologies in order to come up with a term that unites people, reducing racial tensions, and celebrating diversity within Australian society in real sense. In our view, the CALD label has outlived its usefulness in contemporary Australia.

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# Black bodies in/out of place? Afrocentric perspectives and/on racialised belonging in Australia

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**Abstract**

Global movements of people have produced socio-cultural environments of increasing racial diversity, in which issues of belonging abound. Yet, within research and discussion of how migrants construct a sense of belonging, the role that experiences of racism play in their constructions and feelings of belonging have not been centred or fully explored. Using *Everyday Racism* as a conceptual framework, we draw on data from our study on identity and belonging among skilled Black African migrants in Australia to explore Afrocentric perspectives on belonging, which centre experiences of racism. These Afrocentric perspectives expose the complexity and contested nature of belonging when constructed within narratives of subjective experiences of racism. We propose understanding this as a typology of belonging—*fractured belonging*—with four dimensions: contestation, negotiation, ambivalence and compromise (for spacio-temporal comfort). Ultimately, our article's main purpose is to argue for more nuanced understandings of this *fractured belonging* among Black African migrant in Australia, and its implications for their subjective realities.

## Introduction

The global movement of people across national boundaries has not only created complex identities and mixing, it is also progressively giving rise to issues of who does and who does not belong in certain spaces. More and more, such debates are being framed around issues of boundaries and belonging; they are becoming about who can be counted as part of the community (Simonsen, 2017). Throughout history, many nations have struggled with the issue of belonging and Australia, our focus in this article,

is no exception. As O'Gorman (2014) rightly pointed out, Australia is "a nation with a long history of problematic conceptualisations of belonging [and where] belonging is still mobilised, often in violent acts of exclusion" (p. 284).

There is a significant body of work exploring migrant's experiences of mobility and constructions of belonging (see, for example, Marcu, 2014; Dvorakova, 2016; Roberts, 2013; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011; Gilmartin, 2008). This body of work has explored, for example: how the relationship between mobility and belonging, particularly through the concepts of transnationalism and translocalism and through scales of belonging ranging from citizenship to the home, can be theorised (Gilmartin, 2008); the links between human global mobility and a sense of home and belonging (Marcu, 2014); and, the meanings migrants attach to their mobility and settlement experiences (Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). Notwithstanding the usefulness of these discussions, it is still not clear from the literature what 'shapes' belonging for migrant and racialised/othered groups. Zeleza (2009), for example, captured the complexity of belonging when he noted that:

> [Belonging] entails a culture and consciousness, sometimes diffuse and sometimes concentrated in a 'here' separate from a 'there', a 'here' that is often characterized by a regime of marginalization and a 'there' that is invoked as a rhetoric of self-affirmation, of belonging to 'here' differently. The emotional and experiential investment in 'here' and 'there' and the points in between, indeed in the very configurations and imaginings of 'here' and 'there' and their complex intersections, obviously changes in response to the shifting materialities, mentalities, and moralities of social existence. (p. 32)

A glaring omission in the body of work on belonging, therefore, is critical discussion that explicitly investigates the implications of racialised existence for shaping constructions, experiences and anxieties of belonging for racialised minorities in western, white-dominated contexts. This article aims to address this gap by presenting Afrocentric perspectives of belonging, that is, where African experiences and narratives are at the centre of 'knowing belonging' and 'talking about belonging'. At the core of our discussions in this article is the question: how do Black Africans[1] in Australia express their

[1] The target population for our research was people of African descent who migrated to Australia from Africa. We use 'African' here as an analytic category over other ethno-national markers on the premise that while Africa as a region has great diversity in the

sense of belonging? Afrocentric conceptualisations of belonging are grounded in and intertwined with narratives (and experiences) of racism. Experiences of racism often result in loss of identification with place, and a sense of being a perpetual stranger who does not belong. For us, this re-affirms the contested and complex nature of belonging for Black African migrants in Australia which warrants more nuanced analyses and discussions. Black Africans in Australia are "non-white bodies who do not always conform to dominant social and cultural norms" (Lobo & Ghosh, 2013, p. 412). As a result, they often, unsurprisingly, find themselves "'outside belonging' … in everyday spaces" (Lobo & Ghosh, 2013, p. 411).

This article, therefore, re/presents novel ways of thinking about belonging as it pertains to Black racialised bodies in Australia. Specifically, this study centres racism and racialisation as fundamental to constructions and feelings of identity and belonging. In other words, we focus on belonging as an embodiment and a lived experience influenced by racism or "racist practices" (Essed, 1991, p. viii). Given that we write extensively about the extent to which respondents spoke of the pervasiveness of racism in their daily lives, we adopt Philomena Essed's concept of *Everyday Racism* (1988) as a conceptual framework (see also Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2014; Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018) to foreground our analysis of responses pointing to racism in our data.

Our analysis of the data leads us to discuss four dimensions of Afrocentric perspectives on belonging within this article, namely: contestation, negotiation, ambivalence and compromise (for spacio-temporal comfort). This discussion is organised as follows: first, we clarify how the term 'belonging' is used in this article, considering that there are multiple ways to conceptualise the term. We then provide details of the study, including research methods and data analysis procedures. Following that, we give a brief overview of Philomena Essed's concept of *Everyday Racism* as a conceptual framework for understanding the narratives of race that inform our participants' perceptions of belonging. The penultimate section on Afrocentric perspectives begins by presenting data on participants' narratives of their experiences with racism, to help establish our key proposition that when narratives of race and racism in people's accounts of belonging are acknowledged and centred in understanding belonging, a new typology of belonging emerges. Thereafter, the four dimensions of this new typology—

structure of its population, consisting of numerous people belonging to different ethnic, social and economic groups (see, for example, Ufomata, 2000), it is nevertheless a group with many commonalities of needs, interests and diasporic experiences: enough parallels to justify reference to it as a socio-analytic category.

characterised as fractured belonging—are presented. The final section concludes this article, and notes that the feeling of 'not belonging' fuels a fantasy of return to one's original homeland; a phenomenon that has been referred to elsewhere as "the nativist dream of return" (Chang, 1996, p. 55).

**Clarifying Belonging**

The plethora of research on belonging reveals multiple ways of conceptualising the term (see, for example, Lobo & Ghosh, 2013; Nolan, Farquharson, & Marjoribanks, 2018). While it is beyond the focus of this article to summarise this literature here, we nevertheless wish to clarify our use of the term. This is necessary because, as Simonsen (2017) rightly points out, while "the concept of belonging has grown in popularity in recent scholarship [it] is seldom explicitly defined in the studies where it is used" (p. 120).

In a basic sense, belonging is about being a member of or affiliated with a particular group. It is widely accepted, though, that belonging is more than just an affinity with a particular group, it is about "identifying with and feeling attachment to a social group" (Simonsen, 2017, p. 120) and about "formal and informal membership in society" (Lobo & Ghosh, 2013, p. 411). Inherent in a sense of belonging, therefore, is a strong sense of acceptance and being a valued member of that group. According to Nolan, Farquharson and Marjoribanks (2018), "'belonging' refers to a feeling, or a set of feelings, of being 'at home' … [s]uch feelings bring with them a sense of security and confidence in one's capacity to operate socially, as an accepted member of a given community" (p. 4). Nolan et al. (2018), citing Noble (2005), refer to this as "homely belonging" (p. 4).

More critical sociological definitions of the term, however, acknowledge that belonging connotes something fundamental about how groups are positioned within society, as well as how they are perceived and regarded. It reflects an objective position of power and resources, as well as the intersubjective nature of group-based identities (Powell & Menendian, 2016).

Our use of the term 'belonging' in this paper goes beyond the 'acknowledgement' discussed above to integrate its multi-faceted nature. Following Andreasson (2016), we conceive of belonging as including the following components: an emotional attachment (Yuval-Davis, 2006a); involving being at home (Hage, 1997) and being at ease (May, 2011); feeling safe and being recognised (Ignatieff, 1995); but, also, as being the goal of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 5). For us, conceptualising the term in this way allows for more nuanced analyses and discussions of the various

dimensions of belonging from the perspective of the Black African migrants interviewed for this study. Thus, in tandem with Lobo and Ghosh (2013), we conceive of belonging as a "political, contested and ethical concept that is still relevant today because it is central to the joy of life that we experience through co-presence and intercultural encounter in local places" (p. 411).

In clarifying our concept of belonging, it is also necessary to acknowledge the complexity of discussion about who 'belongs' in the Australian imaginary. We argue that, for example, denial of the existence of 'white privilege' feeds narrow constructions / interpretations of belonging in Australia where, as Hage (1998) argues, "white ethnic power relations remain omnipresent in a multicultural society and [are] reproduced by the very ideologies of cultural pluralism and tolerance that [are] supposed to transcend them" (p. 16).

**The Study**

The specific aim of this study was to investigate and understand the experiences of skilled Black African migrants in Australia. The focus was on first-generation Black continental Africans who immigrated to Australia after the abolition of the White Australia policy in the early 1970s (see, for example, Jones, 2017; Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, n.d) and have "traceable genealogical links to the continent" (Tettey & Puplampu, 2005, p. 13) and how they experience life as individuals and professionals within their communities and workplaces.

Following Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama (2018), it is worth pointing out that our interest in the 'new' African diaspora in Australia has a personal genesis: as African migrants we are part of this group ourselves. Our choice of research and our analytic concerns, therefore, do not arise out of naïve curiosity. We acknowledge that, though rooted in a sociological rationale, our choice of research topic and research methodology is not in itself neutral. Rather, it is rooted in our own experiences as black bodies in the predominantly white Australian space. It is situated in our hybrid identity; our social location as black continental African researchers reading, researching and writing in the west. We bear both similarities and differences to the participants in our research. We have personal relationships with the experiences of blackness and racism our participants talk about and, as such, we declare our "autobiographical investment" (Young, 2010, p. 1) and use our own experiences as black African migrant bodies as part of the tool kit and skillset that helps us to make sense of and interpret the data. Furthermore, like Yancy (2008), we "write out of a personal existential context" which is "a profound source of knowledge connected to [our] raced [bodies]" and we

"theorize from a place of lived embodied experience, a site of exposure" (p. 65). Thus, we claim ourselves as situated, rather than detached, researchers, while arguing that our situatedness is not a liability but rather allows us to bring a certain depth of understanding to the analysis and interpretation process (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2014) that ultimately refines and elucidates (Denzin, 1994) the narratives of our participants.

Interviews were conducted with a total of 24 skilled African migrants in Sydney, Adelaide and Canberra from November to December 2009, and then from October to December 2011. Participants were recruited via both official and personal networks, as well as through use of a snowballing strategy where earlier participants were encouraged to inform other potential participants about the study and to pass on the investigators' contact details. Participants possessed wide-ranging cultural backgrounds, with many holding higher degree qualifications, including PhDs. Respondents' professional backgrounds included academia, medicine, nursing, statistics, engineering, finance, accounting, and information and communication technologies (ICT). The participants came from various countries, including Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria.

The age of participants ranged from 34 to 55 years, and participants were predominantly male, with only three female interviewees. The gender distribution was not deliberate, but rather a consequence of our recruitment strategy. Further, being qualitative, the study did not attempt to seek a gender representative sample. Nevertheless, age and gender distribution did not seem to have any impact on the data collection process or the resultant data.[1]

[1] *A Note on Methodology:* The average length of interviews was approximately one hour, with the longest lasting two hours and the shortest lasting 38 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Given that the core of our study was to understand the personal experiences of continental Africans in Australia, our study was grounded in (qualitative) narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry, according to Mitchell and Egudo (2003), is informed by postmodern debates that knowledge is value-laden, and reality is based on multiple perspectives with truth grounded in everyday life involving social interactions among individuals. We therefore followed the processes of narrative inquiry and thematic analysis, engaging in "an exhaustive examination" (Manning, 1982, p. 280) of data, as suggested by proponents of analytic induction, while at the same time "staying close to the data" (Jankowski & Wester, 1991, p. 67) in accordance with aspects of narrative inquiry. Our thematic analysis process involved several key steps. Stage one involved the process of data reduction, in which key themes were identified and patterns in the data collected (identifying recurring themes and ideas from the transcribed interviews). From these we created detailed thematic notes that provided a second layer of analysis. The next stage involved allocating specific codes (single word labels) to all items on the list. These codes/labels were further sorted and grouped under "broader, higher order categories or 'main themes'" (Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003, p. 221).

The reason, as Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo (2014) argue, is that as skilled Black African migrants ourselves we are 'insiders'; therefore, participants were very comfortable talking to us. Finally, all participants were assigned pseudonyms as part of the data de-identification process.

## Everyday Racism as a conceptual framework

> Everyone talks about 'racism' but no one ever defines it. (Jackson, 1991, p. 1)

To make sense of the (previously unpublished) examples of racism or "racist practices" (Essed, 1991, p. viii) provided in this article—which also serve as a veritable launching pad for the delineation and discussion of the dimensions of belonging derived from our data—we adopt Philomena Essed's (1991) notion of *Everyday Racism* as our conceptual framework. According to Essed (1991), everyday racism involves discriminatory practices that have so permeated everyday life they have become almost invisible and are part of what is considered normal by the dominant group, even in contexts where there is a formal commitment to equality. At the core of Essed's theorising is everyday manifestations of racism and racial prejudice. In simple terms, then, as Henry (2004) explains, *Everyday Racism* is found in the familiar and often small but significant ways in which non-white people encounter racism in the 'normal' ordering of day-to-day interactions with dominant white groups. We find this concept more appropriate because our data analysis showed that participants perceived their experiences of racism as non-blatant, "ambiguous and nebulous" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 272) which, though experienced violently "and persistently [by them], are often difficult to pinpoint" (Essed, 2002, p. 204). Thus, while racism that manifests intemperately and blatantly is easy to identify and acknowledge, everyday racism is disregarded, challenged, easily rejected and, more importantly, undetectable to the person responsible for it and, oftentimes, the one at the receiving end (Sue et al., 2007).

## Afrocentric perspectives on belonging in Australia

Given that the core of our argument is that the quotidian nature of racism in the lives of our respondents influences the way they conceive of and experience their sense of belonging in Australia, it is pertinent that we begin

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The final stage of 'data interpretation' involved selecting core themes that we felt were key to the research and systematically relating them to other themes to create a "'big picture' story outline" (O'Dwyer, 2004, p. 394).

this section on Afrocentric perspectives on belonging by providing examples from our data to buttress this position.

**The data speaks: Manifestations of Everyday Racism**

In line with the conceptual framework of *Everyday Racism*, we provide three examples of racism from the data[2] to establish the basis for our argument and support our contention that racism/racist experiences lie at the core of and affect the ways in which respondents conceptualise and experience belonging in Australia. As indicated earlier, all participants in the study spoke about regular incidents in their lives they perceived as racism.[3] Below are three excerpts which highlight the pervasiveness of racism for our respondents.

*Example one*

> I will give you a typical example. I take the bus to work every day in the city and most of the time most of the seats will be filled before anyone sits next to you. You will not believe it but it happens in Australia up till today. I don't know whether it is coincidence but it has happened so many times for me to conclude that probably it is not coincidence. Because the bus basically has two seats on each side so maybe you get in first and you sit at the farthest seat so there is one seat by you. But people keep coming in and coming and you see all the other seats being filled. And sometimes someone may be heading towards your direction but the moment they lift their eyes and they see you, you see a bit of hesitation and they move on to the next seat. (Kosoko)

In the above excerpt, it could be easy to dismiss Kosoko's claim of racism and put it down to something else, yet we can attest from our own personal experiences and those of a number of respondents who recounted similar incidents, that at the core of such experiences is racism; what Deitch et al. (2003) call subtle discriminatory behaviours such as "avoidance of Blacks"

[2] We have published extensively elsewhere about everyday racism using data from the same study (see Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018). However, the examples/quotes provided here have not been published previously.

[3] After most of the interviews, participants spoke of how beneficial the interview had been for them in providing a space where they could comfortably talk about issues of race and racism. Some of them spoke of the interview as being 'cathartic'.

(p. 1301). This has also been shown to be true in many settings, including in the United States, for example, where in recounting similar experiences Carbardo (2007) noted that: "[t]he seat beside me on the bus was almost always racially available to another black person" (p. 2). Thus, respondents recounted their experiences of racism as occurring in the normal processes of their everyday lives (Young, 1990), as illustrated further in the second excerpt, below.

*Example two*

> I will give you an example. Someone walks into my consulting room and says… "I want a pap smear but I want an Australian [white] doctor to do it for me." Then I'll say, "OK, emm there is one next door so you can go and the one will do it for you". Then the one will say, "I didn't mean to sound rude but that's what I want." Then I say, "that's fine you can go and the one will do it for you," while I'm unhappy about that comment. As a person, I'm unhappy but my approach is not a confrontational approach, ok. And then the one goes and the one is told, "OK, I don't do pap smears. The doctor you saw will be the best person to do it for you." (Osono)

Osono's experience can be likened to what Young (1990) described as "[t]he vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions … the normal processes of everyday life" (p. 41). The patient who, through her words and deeds, indicates to Osono that she prefers a 'white' doctor to him, a 'black' doctor, is engaging in subtle discriminatory behaviour by avoiding Blacks (Deitch et al., 2003), just as in the bus experience narrated by Kosoko. These acts are similar to what other writers have called acts of 'microaggression' by whites against blacks (Pettigrew & Martin, 1987; Deitch et al., 2003; Carbado, 2007). Van Dijk (2000) notes that such acts "appear far removed from the open violence and forceful segregation of the old racism" (p. 34), yet, they may be just as effective in marginalising and excluding minorities, and may be even more hurtful because of the way in which they are normalised and seen as natural by those who engage in them. For Osono's patient, her act of requesting a 'white' doctor over a 'black' one is natural. To justify her position she notes: "I didn't mean to sound rude but that's what I want". The quote from Osono is an apt depiction of van Dijk's point: Osono experiences the woman's marginalising and excluding behaviour as hurtful and does not lose sight of the symbolism

embedded in her rejection of his competence and experience, and his being "judged guilty a priori" (Yancy, 2008, p. 2) and condemned by an ideological frame of reference that reduces him ontologically to the level of incompetence (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018). Ultimately, such hurtful acts of microaggression and discriminatory behaviour on the part of perpetrators engender, in those on the receiving end, feelings of injustice and unfair treatment and result in the sense that one is an 'outsider' who does not belong. This is illustrated in the third example, below.

*Example three*

> After all, the people who are managing in the departments are Australians. You get a bit of that – a sense that you are an outsider. You know what you think is due you, you don't really get that until you prove yourself. For example, publication is a thing now … and you are not going to get anything according to them unless you publish. But then somehow, I got two/three [white] colleagues who actually got what I was looking for without any publication. They were given time, three years to publish but you have to be in here and do exactly the same thing I do and do better. And to worsen it all these people don't have even PhDs which of course I do. … So, there is this … discrimination … it hurts, and like I said I can only call it racism. (Kantanka)

The excerpt above shows how everyday racism is systemic, "embodied in the way we 'normally' conduct ourselves and our business in the everyday life" (Ng, 1992, cited in Leah, 1995, p. 11), just like other forms of discrimination such as sexism. In the quote, Kantanka talks about 'white' colleagues, who are less qualified and have published less than him, being promoted over him despite not even meeting the promotion requirements/criteria. As Herbert et al. (2008) noted, the subtlety and ambiguity in such practices means that they "can produce a racist effect while denying racism was the cause" (p. 105). Indeed, the theme of white employees progressing faster than their black colleagues recurs in the data of this and other studies (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018). Kantanka's quote illustrates how inequality based on race and/or assumptions around race, whether intended or unintended, is manifested and (re)-produced in a systemic manner.

While Kantanka's experience could also be dismissed because of its non-blatant nature, the conceptual framework of everyday racism allows us to

centre his "subjective realm" (Herbert et al., 2008, p. 104), that is, the meanings he attributes to this event, his perceptions of racism and his subsequent feelings and emotions. In this way, we are able to get to the concealed and symbolic exhibitions of contemporary racism (Lee, 2000) as depicted here, and to uncover the "hidden dimensions of racism" (Leah, 1995, p. 100). It also allows us to show "the manner in which subtle racisms are exhibited in the Australian context" (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018, p. 84).

Having provided examples of and established the prevalence of everyday racism in the data, we can now discuss the dimensions of belonging gleaned therefrom. We argue that the perspectives/dimensions of belonging we found in the data are attributable to the fact that respondents' sense of belonging is conceived of and experienced through the lens of quotidian racism or "racist practices" (Essed, 1991, p. viii). Based on our data, our contention is that, when you centre narratives of race in people's accounts of belonging, a typology emerges which we have delineated as follows: belonging as contestation; belonging as negotiation; belonging as ambivalence; and belonging as compromise for spacio-temporal comfort. Each of these types will be addressed in turn in the following sections.

**Dimension 1: Contestation**

Experiences of racism hinder or compromise one's sense of belonging. This is because racism and racialising processes produce the 'other', who is on the receiving end of these behaviours. The notion of 'othering' "provides a clarifying frame that reveals a set of common processes and conditions that propagate group-based inequality and marginality" (Powell & Menendian, 2016, p. 17). For Black African migrants, the process of being othered is enduring and, when 'othered', belonging in that specific context is contested. This was evident in the way our participants spoke:

> It's something to do with the colour of our skin. Generally, people think that: 'well you are someone different, so you don't belong to us.' (Kosoko)

> I don't look like them, I don't speak like them. So where do I belong? I guess internally this is something that I'm trying to deal with. I need to go back to [name of African country of origin]. (Ojam)

Beyond making explicit the connection between racialised difference and feelings of (non)belonging, we would argue, following Garbutt (2011), that

the excerpts above highlight the contestation of what it means to be a 'local' in Australian space. Reflecting on territory and 'being a local', Garbutt (2011) writes:

> Local is a territory of the mind – my mind, here. Local is home territory that is distinguished from territory for travelling through. Of the mind but also a physical location with boundaries. It is real. *I never expect an endless play of difference here […] Being a local is a sort of transparent belonging in this place.* It is the resting point of the subject where the inner most reasonably fits the outer […] the local is a known place: being a local is being at home in this place here, the place where I'm a local. (p. 8, emphasis added)

The idea of being a local here is not simply being an inhabitant of a particular land but rather entails an uncontested "sense of the connection between place and identity as it is lived" (Garbutt, 2011, p. 7). We would argue, therefore, that experiences of racism and racialisation interfere with the processes of 'being local' and the resulting effect is a sense of non-belonging. As Aloma pointed out:

> It's covert [racial discrimination] but I still have at the back of my mind that I don't belong here. And that creates a lot of anxieties in me because all the time I feel like I should go back to my home where I think I can do a lot more or where I believe personally that I would be more relevant than here. (Aloma)

In his articulation of (non)belonging, Aloma raises another issue that is important for our discussion here, that of (racial) anxieties. We would argue that the heightened stress resulting from apprehensions about being the subject or target of racism culminates in racial tension which affects racialised groups' sense of belonging. For those who experience racism, racial anxiety is pervasive, albeit subtle, affecting both micro (interpersonal) and macro (with systems and institutions) interactions.

Furthermore, connected to the idea of 'being a local'—or, rather, not being one when one's belonging is contested—is the notion of being a 'perpetual stranger'. In their narratives of racism, participants spoke about specific and particular expressions of othering, and the feeling of being a perpetual stranger that arises out of their persistently being asked where they are from. We interpret this question as not only dislocating, but also as a contestation of 'local-ness' and a gate-keeping mechanism with profound effects for a sense of belonging. For this reason, we discuss this question in detail in this section.

***Where are you from?***

Several of our participants talked about the implications of being persistently and consistently asked the 'identity' question—'where are you from?'—for their sense of belonging in Australia.

> I've always been asked where are you from? Originally where are you from? And in my mind if I'm making this place home and I get asked this question I get confused. So that means maybe for me I think I belong here but for them I don't. So that is one thing, I don't think I'm really accepted here. (Missi)

> Most of the time the question they ask you is "where is home?" […] Or they ask you "where are you from?" "I live in Canberra." "No, I mean where are you from?" "Oh, OK you mean that one. OK, I'm from [Name of African country of origin]." […] When people approach you and ask you that sort of question you think "OK, well I definitely don't belong here. They don't think I belong here. So, I shouldn't fool myself that I belong here." (Bissi)

In terms of the exclusionary nature of the question 'where are you from?', the issue is that it is:

> …selectively asked only of certain groups of people, in particular, those who are non-white, racialised and constructed as the 'other'. In Australia, the public imaginary of who 'is' an Australian still centres white skin and marginalises our black skin in the imagined Australian nation (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2010, p. 6)

Moreover, the participants' statements exposed for us what Chang (1996, p.57) called "attributions of foreignness" which allow for "symbolic deportation". As Chang (1996) writes:

> [f]oreignness [is] inscribed on [their] bodies in such a way that… [they] carry a figurative border within [them]. This figurative border operates to confirm the belongingness of 'real' [Australians] and marks [what Hage (1998) calls visible ethnic minorities in Australia: 'those who are Third World-looking' visible others from poor third world countries] as unAustralian. (p. 57)

The incessant posing of this question means that Australian space comes to exist for Black African migrants as a paradox: a place where they

simultaneously belong and don't belong. The quote below from Asempa captures this.

> You still feel you're [name/adjective for people of African country of origin]. You still feel that. I think to some extent you talk about Australian identity it's a bit out there. I have an Australian passport, Australian citizenship but you still feel you're [name/adjective for people of African country of origin] in terms of your identity. What actually is ... a bit like you are [name/adjective for people of African country of origin] but just living your life somewhere else. (Asempa)

The constant reminders that they are 'from' somewhere else that is not 'here' affects racialised minorities in at least two ways. First, it makes it difficult for them to be able to consider 'here' as "home, in any comfortable, unproblematic sense" (Ang, 2001, p. 53) and, second, it causes inner dislocation. Fonseca (2010) captures this situation by noting that "to always be from somewhere else means to struggle with the intersections of 'inside' and 'outside' within us" (p. 101).

As has been done elsewhere, we argue that when a person is repeatedly asked 'where are you from?' the question is experienced as denaturalising their status as a co-inhabitant of this country (Ang, 1996; see also Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2010). For our participants, the question symbolically deports them back to the faraway places 'where they are from'. It creates the feeling that their presence here is always defined in terms of their difference, not their sameness. The very act of being asked this question immediately reinforces the barrier of difference between 'us' and 'them', forcing 'them' to inhabit an in-between space where they are neither 'authentic' Australians nor 'authentic foreigners' (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2010). They are not authentic Australians because their visible difference (attributable to their skin colour) impedes their inclusion in the imagined Australian nation. Yet they are not authentic foreigners because, apart from having Australian citizenship, some of them have been here too long to be bona fide foreigners. Thus, while this question may enable the questioner to 're/locate' the questioned to some distant geopolitical location, it also imaginatively dislocates them from 'here' and makes them strangers in a familiar land (Fonseca, 2010). In this sense, what the question does to those of whom it is asked is remove them from and deposit them outside the 'Australian group', causing them to look upon themselves through the eyes of the questioner. In other words, they become 'other' to themselves; what Yancy (2008) refers to as "corporeal malediction" (p. 85)

and Dubois (1903) calls *double-consciousness*. In describing the feelings associated with double-consciousness, Dubois (1903) notes:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness … two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p. 45, cited in Yancy, 2008, p. 83).

Essentially, when asked that question a person undergoes a distinctive phenomenological process that makes them appear different to themselves (Yancy, 2008).

Although sometimes stemming from genuine and innocent curiosity, the question 'where are you from?' reflects "larger political hallmarks of white racism: the audacity and power to relegate nonwhites to the margins, to segregate them, to instill in them the sense of existing outside the space of white normalcy and normativity" (Yancy, 2008, p. 84). Here, Hage's (1998) notion of the 'white nation fantasy' also offers a way of understanding the contested nature of belonging in the Australian space. According to McCormack (1999), the white nation fantasy involves an ideal of a White Australia inhabited by an ideal White self/subject who is an empowered governor of an empowering social space. We argue that it is the power of the 'White Australian' subject (whose centrality or self-perceived centrality is part of the white nation fantasy even if it is, as McCormack (1999, n.p.) argues, "artificial and imaginary" to govern social space that leads to contestations of the belongingness and unbelongingness of the migrant other.

**Dimension 2: Negotiation**

> [H]ome is both a material and a symbolic place of belonging that protects us from difference that is unsettling and confronting but also invites us to reach out to others. In a mobile world where we often inhabit multiple homes as a result of voluntary or forced, temporary or permanent migration, home is both 'here' and 'there'. (Lobo & Ghosh, 2013, p. 411)

Some participants' narratives also revealed a dimension of belonging that exists as a kind of negotiation between/of cultures, specifically, the culture into which they were born and the broader Australian culture, and perhaps an acknowledgement that they (still) identify with the culture into which they

were born. This does not mean abandoning or rejecting Australian culture, but rather negotiating so that both cultures can become a part of how they inhabit space in Australia.

> I'm an Australian citizen. But, culturally I'm a Ghanaian or African. It is like if you look at the Italians or the Greeks, they're Australians but if you delve into culture, they're Italians. *So, I'm an Aussie, Afro-Aussie. Let me put it that way.* Each migrant or each race has brought its own culture so I've brought mine too… It simply means my culture hasn't left me. (Marijata, emphasis added)

Interestingly, when belonging is a negotiation or negotiated, participants tend to claim both worlds—as in the case of Marijata when he claims himself as Afro-Aussie. He doesn't categorise himself in terms of his pre-migration, non-Australian identity, thereby implying an unproblematic sense of self, but rather claims a hyphenated identity and, in so doing, exposes the fact that he "carr[ies] two disparate cultural baggages" (Chen, 2003, p. 22; see also Anzaldua, 1987). The implications of claiming hyphenated identities for feelings of belonging are twofold: first, it makes visible the complexities of belonging and, second, it complicates unproblematised assumptions of the 'other', who belongs in a distance place. This is demonstrated in the following response from Otoyo.

> So, you tend to always refer to [name of African country of origin] as home. It's a something of home. The de facto home is actually here. Because for many of us, and many of us are coming to that realisation, many of us who are actually having children here, well this is the home of the children. And if you want a family that is together, then this is going to be home. Because for our kids, there is no other home. [Name of African country of origin]. is a tourist destination for them. They will go to [name of African country of origin], visit for a few weeks, at the most a month, and they're back here. (Otoyo)

Belonging-as-negotiation recognises the possibility for an individual to become attached to more than one group, ethnicity or place. Most participants acknowledged that they live between two cultures: their everyday reality straddles two worlds, that of the culture into which they were born and raised and the dominant 'Australian' culture in which they now live. So, they occupy, to use Gloria Anzaldua's (1987, p. 79) phrase, "the borderlands"; they are in-between places and cultures. They "juggle cultures [and have]

plural personalit[ies] [and] operate in pluralistic modes" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 79).

**Dimension 3: Ambivalence**

Some of the participants' statements revealed not only negotiation but also ambivalence, expressed as uncertainty about where they belong. Thus, the Afrocentric conceptualisations of belonging emerging from our research also expose how the idea of belonging in Australia for Black African migrants entails a sense of ambivalence. Here we use the word ambivalence in its common-sense meaning of existing in a state of mixed feelings, contradiction or uncertainty about something, as highlighted in the excerpts below.

> The belongingness thing is a big issue. It seems like we don't actually belong anywhere. We're just torn between two places. It may be better for some than others. Some may be more accepting of the new home as where they're going to spend the rest of their lives. But I think others, perhaps like me, believe that, I owe something to the fatherland, I owe some contribution. (Sumanguru)

> Whether I see myself as a [name/adjective for people of African country of origin]]. I don't know. I am not an Australian either. So, I'm between and betwixt. I'm between two worlds. I don't really know where I belong. I find it hard to live in [name of African country of origin]. Like I'm not … when I go to [name of African country of origin] people … I've been to [name of African country of origin], I've been to the shops. They will sell me things three times the price because when I open my mouth I'm not one of them. So, the price is immediately raised three or four times. But when I come back here, I don't look like them, I don't speak like them. So where do I belong? I guess internally this is something that I'm trying to deal with. But I need to go back to [name of African country of origin] because I don't see myself living here. I don't see myself spending the rest of my life here. It's not possible. (Ojam)

> *I find myself in a kind of limbo. You neither belong here nor there.* You feel there are certain things you can never ever do in this country or you can't fit in in certain ways in this country and that's some of the things I talked about: social occasions where alcohol is the main thing, their footy and rugby. They are not just sports; these are actually part of the culture. They have become like cultural

> things and I will never fit in when it comes to those things. At the same time, I mean my experience back home when I visited shows that I probably don't fit in there either because you've developed new perspectives on life. You've developed ways of seeing things that are quite different from the way [name/adjective for people of African country of origin] see things. (Asempa, emphasis added)

The excerpts above clearly show the sense of ambivalence respondents live with. All three respondents—Sumanguru, Ojam and Asempa—use strong expressions to portray the sense of incongruity they live with. To speak of being "torn between two places", "in a kind of limbo" or "between and betwixt" is to express the uncertainty and feeling of mutability that accompanies their thoughts on place and belonging. They are aware of not fitting well into either of the locations they have bonded with over the years. Their ambivalence points to "the ever-shifting nature of the relationship between mobility, identity and place" (Gilmartin, 2008, p. 1838). Such vacillations also raise the need for new articulations of the relationships people have with places, as influenced by mutable identities, connections and extended global networks. They also highlight an uneasy relationship between these multiple nodes of interaction, which calls for more sophisticated and less incongruous ways of defining belonging to capture these relationships. The excerpts discussed here reveal that the 'homeland' (Africa) exists only as an imaginary, and that there is an ambivalence about place that occurs for respondents in both Australia and the countries of their birth.

**Dimension 4: Compromise (for spacio-temporal comfort)**

An insightful finding from our research is that constructing a sense of belonging in Australia for Black African migrants also entails compromise in an effort to remain comfortable about being in Australia spacio-temporally, in the here and now. In other words, for participants to feel both physically and psychologically comfortable in the Australian space, they need to compromise by accepting to live with the harsh realities of racism in their lives. We use the word comfortable here deliberately, to denote ways of experiencing space that go beyond 'simply' identification with that space. We use the word in its psychological and cognitive sense, suggesting 'comfort' as describing or linked to a sense of feeling wellbeing in an inhabited space at a specific time, again whether this space is physical, psychological or emotional. The quote below from Bissi illustrates the point about having to accept the way things are in order to be 'here':

> … the way I deal with it [racism and exclusion], is, I'm here for a time and a purpose and I'll embrace what comes my way while I'm here. But I don't think I'll ever fully belong to the Australian culture or to the way of life … I don't think I'll be completely accepted by the Australians. I feel that you have to do all the giving, you have to do all the adjustments, you have to do all the assimilating, it's not reciprocated. And I feel like, if I continue giving and giving and giving, I would lose myself and that, that would not be true to myself. Yeah so, I'm at the point now where I'm like I can only give so much and I know you can only accept me so much. So, in a way it's like there's a bridge, kind of like wall that's being built around me, I'm building kind of like this protective wall. Yeah just because I feel I'm never going to be fully accepted. (Bissi)

This quote is very poignant in the sense that Bissi acknowledges her need to embrace whatever comes her way if she is to continue living in Australia, while also emphasising her belief that she will never fully belong. She provides reasons why she believes she will never fully belong, including the fact that she can only be "accepted so much". By saying she feels she is never "going to be fully accepted", Bissi acknowledges that she is compromising to be in the Australian space in the here and now. The same kind of sentiments are expressed by Kantanka (albeit differently) in the quote below.

> I don't know whether I mentioned before that, at a stage, I really wanted to leave this country. I wanted to get out so that I will go to Africa where I will be recognised and valued; you know given my due respect. Australians are doing what is best for them. That is what they believe is best for them … So, work-wise, as an adult making a living I don't think Australia is the best place compared to where I come from originally. But generally, it is OK looking at myself as a migrant. Somehow, I have accepted it so that I can continue living here. If I don't accept that, then I would probably die of frustration or something. So, it is not all a bed of roses; it is not the best. (Kantanka)

Our data showed that, while many respondents spoke of not feeling a sense of belonging in Australia because of the racism they encountered, they had also made compromises and adjustments to the way they thought and felt about belonging in order to feel both physically and psychologically comfortable in the Australian space. In both Bissi's and Kantanka's quotes there is a sense in which the participants acknowledge that compromise is

necessary for their emotional and psychological wellbeing. Bissi talks about not "losing" herself and being "true" to herself, while Kantanka says he has to "accept" so that he doesn't die of frustration. These sentiments also portray a certain pain, and we can attest to the palpable sense of pain in the voices of many respondents as they spoke about these issues. Aloma's quote, below, is especially expressive of such pain.

> … to be very honest I have considered this [going back] many many times especially when I feel so low that I feel [like going back] home. Even when nothing is really bothering me. My wife will be worried, "I mean what is wrong with you?" There is really nothing bothering me but everything is just psychological. *The pain of living here* because I just really feel I don't belong here but I belong somewhere else. *I felt I have finished paying my dues here* and it's time for me to go back, you know I have all those kinds of things. (Aloma, emphasis added)

We interpret Aloma's reference to the "pain of living" and his finishing "paying [his] dues here" as indications of the psychological discomfort he experiences living in Australia. While, as discussed, what we mean by comfort is something that is also complex, we still acknowledge our awareness of the fact that 'comfort' has a physical and psychological composition. So, when Aloma talks of 'paying dues', we would argue that this implies not only the common-sense understanding of paying dues as that of earning a given right or position through hard work or long-term experience, but also implies some suffering in the process and in the very act of compromising to achieve spacio-temporal comfort with being in Australia.

**Concluding observations: "Not belonging" and the fantasy of return**

In this article we have argued that to expose the power relations, contestations and complexities inherent in the notion of 'belonging' among Black Africans in Australia, we need to go beyond an understanding of belonging as subjective, personal and emotional adjustments that one has to make to live in a particular location and attachment to particular groups and constructs of 'home' as portrayed in the bulk of the literature on belonging. Such analyses must centre Black Africans' experiences of the persistent and consistent racism that lies at the core of their everyday reality, in order to uncover the more insightful perspectives we have referred to as Afrocentric perspectives. To achieve this end, we first showed, by interpreting our data through the conceptual lens of everyday racism (Essed, 1991), the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in the lives of our participants and how

it affected their sense of being. Following this, we discussed how centering participants' experiences of racism in the data gave rise to a four-point typology that exposes the complexity and contested nature of belonging. We have proposed that this should be understood as a typology of belonging—*fractured belonging*—with four dimensions: contestation, negotiation, ambivalence and compromise (for spacio-temporal comfort). These four dimensions, taken together, expose how experiences of racism construct feelings of 'otherness' which operate as an impediment to a sense of national belonging and result in fractured belonging—a sense of (non)belonging or splintered belonging—influenced by an intersection of factors among which are marginalisation (resulting from experiences of racism) and other prevailing circumstances. This is exemplified in Kente's quote, below.

> We romanticise about where we belong. To an extent, you may not. And whether it's psychological or not, I don't know. But a lot of times you may not, or I do not feel the same sense of belongingness, as I did once up on a time when I was in [name of African country of origin]. Even though I've been here for 20 plus years. I do not feel the same level of belongingness [...] you also find that when you go to [name of African country of origin], when you go to [name of African country of origin] you can see yourself as out of place. You know, where everything happening around you, is not what you expect. (Kente)

Fractured belonging is politicised belonging, fraught with a power play that positions the racialised 'other' as a perpetual stranger who does not belong. This power play restricts and destabilises Black African migrants' sense of belonging. In a world marked by the fluidity of borders and identities within a 'global community', Black African migrants in Australia still carry, as we have noted, a "figurative border with [them]… [which] operates to confirm the belonging-ness of 'real' [Australians] and marks [Black Africans as un-Australian]" (Chang, 1996, p. 57).

One consequence gleaned from our data is that this feeling of fractured belonging or non-belonging among our participants has resulted in a situation where many find themselves harbouring fantasies of return to the 'homeland' they left years ago, as illustrated in the quote below from Aloma:

> I really don't think I do really belong here. I think I belong to Africa. Yes, I think because that is where I think I will have my dignity as an individual. I will be able to rub shoulders with everyone else. And I will be able to become who I really want to become […] I don't think I will have big opportunities here. (Aloma)

Like Aloma, many of our respondents' fantasies of return are influenced by their feelings of dejectedness within Australia which prevent them from fully belonging. In their dejection, they believe that the only way out is for them to go back home, thus making their desire to move back home explicable in terms of "relative opportunity" (Gilmartin, 2008, p. 1838) or through what Dorigo and Tobler (1983) called the difference between dissatisfaction at the origin and expected satisfaction at the destination.

To answer the question 'can we go home again?' in relation to the new African diaspora in the USA, Okpewho (2009) discussed the difficulties involved and the price one had to pay for deciding to separate one's self from their home. Okpewho's (2009) observations were poignant and worth quoting at length because, in many ways, they capture the feelings of many of our respondents:

> Anyone who expects members of the new diaspora, naturalized or not, to feel an unqualified elation about expatriation is being rather uncharitable. There is some trauma involved in the separation that will take some time to heal. ... For a start, we are black people, and however qualified or competent we are in our fields of endeavour, some whites who judge everything in human relations by Manichean principles have not hesitated to put us in the same place they have reserved for African Americans throughout their history. It does not take long for us to be shocked by a rude curtailment of that old-assurance that we could get anywhere we had a mind to. Some of us may eventually attain our goals; the rest are broken in despair. Those who succeed are never entirely spared the feeling that they owe their success to someone else's token nod, not the strength of their own hard work. (p. 11)

Notwithstanding the desires and fantasies of returning to one's homeland discussed above, many of our respondents also found themselves on what Zeleza (2009) eloquently described as "a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning, a navigation of multiple belongings, of networks, of affiliations" (p. 32). To be on such a voyage is, in and of itself, an embodiment of fractured belonging.

Paradoxically, in this world "where increasingly complex migration patterns and technology intersect, a sense of belonging is critical" (Gerrand, 2014, n.p.). Not having a sense of belonging, or having a sense of fractured belonging, has consequences; some of them deeply emotional. Not surprisingly for our participants, one major consequence is that it makes them

cling to the "nativist dream of return" (Chang, 1996, p. 55); a dream that is very real for many of them. This dream of return is not wholly of the nativist's making; it is in part fuelled by, as well as an outcome of, the power play that dislocates them through experiences of racism, through processes that racialise and other them, and through constant reminders that they are not from 'here', as embodied in identity questions such as 'where are you from?'. As Dunn, Forrest, Pe-Pau, Hynes, and Maeder-Han (2009) have rightly pointed out, an environment in which certain identified groups are denigrated repeatedly through racist talk and other racist incivilities "can fundamentally undermine the sense of citizenship and belonging" (p. 3) of the groups that are disparaged.

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# Educational resilience and experiences of African students with a refugee background in Australian tertiary education

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**Abstract**

In Australia, only a handful of refugee background students are able to navigate mainstream secondary education and senior high school (Years 11 and 12). Most refugee background students arrive in Australia as adults and enrol in Vocational Education and Training (VET) colleges as a pathway to university. The institutions and educators that receive these students can struggle with supporting their integration into the Australian education system, and students struggle with learning new content, in a new language, within a new culture. To complete tertiary education in their new home, these students must possess educational resilience, amid language barriers and culture shock. Using three cases (the researcher and two participants) this article presents the narratives of displaced African students, highlighting their educational trajectories and the factors influencing their educational resilience. This article seeks to open space for situated and embodied understandings of the broader resettlement experience for refugee background students. It tries to intervene in and interrupt the 'deficit logics' that have shaped scholarship in this area. Data were obtained by means of life history narratives and self-reflective methodologies. Educational resilience is evident in the students' lived experiences and influences from: family; community; teachers; peers; faith and religion; and self-determination and behavioural factors. The study's findings reveal that the effects of displacement continue beyond people's initial school experiences and into their vocational and/or university education. In other words, the trauma of social breakdown, war and geographic displacement experienced by these students unfolds into major educational and vocational challenges. My personal life story of growing up a refugee, and the struggles I have gone through to acquire tertiary education, resonates with those of my research participants across multiple institutions and locations within and outside Australia. The stories in this study reveal the impact of forced displacement on refugee background students' education pathways.

## Introduction

This article is premised on the concept of resilience and the aspirations demonstrated by refugee background students to stay in school and finish tertiary education. It shows the complex ways in which these students negotiate and navigate the intersections between displacement, resettlement and educational resilience. Humpage and Marlowe (2017) highlighted that the "experiences of displacement, political violence and upheaval are … a powerful and enduring part of the lived experiences of those of refugee background, no matter which immigration pathway was taken" (p. 62). In terms of higher education, international agencies like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have shown that "the chances of a refugee completing secondary school are slim and the chances of reaching university indicate a low probability because of the challenges associated with forced displacement" (Pflanz, 2016, p. 1). Only one in every 100 of the world's refugees goes on to tertiary education (UNHCR, 2016). These students' difficulties in completing tertiary education revolve around experience of being a student which is best understood as the lack of a student identity, among other challenges. For Abur and Spaaij (2016), "there are many challenges faced by people from refugee backgrounds as part of the settlement process, such as learning a new language, finding employment, understanding the health system and the culture of the host country, planning for family reunification, and dealing with discrimination" (p. 108). At the school level, refugee background students might lack the ability to match the skills, knowledge and demands of being a student; "the knowledge of how to 'be a student', and indeed look like one, entails many skills, behaviours, formative experiences and a great deal of knowledge" (Miller, Mitchell, & Brown, 2005, p. 25). As such, it is likely that students with a refugee background:

> …will leave school early, will never participate fully in society or in the decision-making processes of government, and that they will neither enjoy the benefits of good health, nor experience the upward mobility needed as adults to make them full contributors and partners in shaping and participating in the larger society. (Biscoe & Ross, cited in Aragon, 2000, p. 4)

In Australia, refugee background students are exposed to several other challenges, such as placement into classrooms that are age appropriate rather than appropriate to their academic level, social isolation, bullying, stress and academic failure (Ferfolja, Vickers, McCarthy, Naidoo, & Brace, 2011). Yet, despite the many challenges, some refugee background students display

remarkable resilience and capacity to learn, and eventually become accomplished survivors. They go to school every day and they never give up. They work very hard, they value education highly and some progress to university and higher education and build a strong career pathway (Ferfolja et al., 2011).

This article includes examples of three African students with a refugee background who are focused, resilient and looking forward to challenging the assumptions that group them into a single category—for there is no homogeneity in these students' educational experiences. They differ in "colour pigmentation, come from different language, ethnic, tribal and cultural backgrounds and often have not had access to similar educational and economic opportunities" (Dhanji, 2010, p. 157). Homogenising this diverse group is perhaps a result of their defining characteristics that are perhaps obvious like their 'visibility or skin colour', and their vulnerability resulting from their past and present experiences. Further, the word 'African' might "convey a misleading sense of cultural homogeneity" (Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW, 2006, p. 24). It is fallacious to think of Africa and Africans in a homogenous way, given that "Africa is a continent with multiple diversities in terms of culture, language ability and experiences" (Khapoya, 2013, p. 1). That is why this article focuses attention on African students with a refugee background in Australian tertiary institutions: to demystify the assumptions, stereotypes and misconceptions attributed to this cohort. The focus on educational resilience is intended to identify the positive experiences associated with displacement, beyond the deficits and adversities. This article gives voice to participants as they reflect upon their social, cultural and political histories and ascribe meaning to lived experience.

**Why African students with a refugee background?**

In 2007, the Australian media drew attention—in the absence of any evidence—to African refugees as "having difficulties in integrating" into wider Australian society (Dhanji, 2010, p. 152). It is a fact that African students with a refugee background have endured many difficulties resulting from their forced displacement from their home countries and their transit journeys to Australia. Their difficulties are twofold: first they have experienced forced displacement, leading to loss of home and identity; second, during transit, these students have been exposed to further losses, including the loss of loved ones. African students with a refugee background have lived in difficult circumstances within refugee camps and have had to manage traumatic experiences resulting from civil war and conflict.

Historically, African students with a refugee background come from a continent characterised by "inter-state conflicts, anti-colonial wars, ethnic conflicts, non-ethnic conflicts, and flights from authoritarian and revolutionary regimes" (Lischer, 2014, p. 223). Some have come from countries that have experienced protracted civil wars and genocide—for example, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Burundi, among others— and chronic violent conflicts, and which still experience some level of instability (Amnesty International, 2016/17). It is a choice by the host communities whether to concentrate on the visible and evident adversities experienced by these students (and thus define them in terms of deficit) or focus on their resilience and survival strengths in a way that will boost their morale to pursue higher education. For the latter purpose, it is better not to view African students as a homogenous group, but rather view them in the "light of their individual complex histories, not in a way that can re-traumatise the students but by hearing their stories of hope and resilience" (Uptin, Wright, & Harwood, 2016, p. 599).

It is important to emphasise that these students are not responsible for the catastrophes that define their life histories, but rather have found themselves confronted with circumstances not of their own making. In their case study, Naidoo, Wilkinson, Langat, Adoniou, Cunneen and Bolger (2015) highlighted that "many arrivals in Australia from Africa face additional challenges ranging from language, pedagogical difference and cultural orientations" (p. 9). In addition to classroom-level challenges, the education system in Australia is yet to address the challenges associated with how these students are perceived. For instance, Uptin et al. (2016) state that the system "quickly relabel[s] young former refugees with deficit terms rather than opening up a discourse to include the intricate complexities of each refugee experience" (p. 598). In other words, the difficult life experiences emerging from being uprooted from their home countries follow these students to their resettlement countries. By learning about their life experience narratives, host communities, schools and institutions interested in helping African students with a refugee background may be able to address their individual specific educational needs more effectively.

In addition to this deficit-model relabelling, most interventions in support of refugee background students continue to endorse a needs-based approach rather than appreciating and rewarding the resilience these students have brought with them. It should be kept in mind that by the time refugee background students become visible at tertiary education and training institutions in Australia they will have endured many challenges. This calls for a shift in thinking from a deficit model to a strengths-based model,

particularly because students with a refugee background, when given the opportunity, "can contribute to, as well as benefit from, the further development of a high quality socially inclusive university system" (Terry, Naylor, Nguyen, & Rizzo, 2016, p. 7). Current educational researchers reject "the focus on 'deficit' models for refugee background students which do not acknowledge the social and cultural capital that these students carry with them" (Terry et al., 2016, p. 14). Therefore, this article highlights the factors that enable African students with a refugee background to pursue tertiary education amid life challenging circumstances in Australia. To this end, a life history narrative methodology was employed to provide a platform for participants' voices.

**Tertiary education in Australia**

In this article, I discuss and critique the work of scholars who have focused on the lived experiences of students with a refugee background in their transition to tertiary education. In Australia, these students arrive on a humanitarian visa category Subclass 200[1] which grants several rights, including the right to education. However, because of the complexities associated with their past experiences, many do not make it to tertiary education and encounter both academic and non-academic challenges in their endeavour to access and participate in Australian tertiary education. These challenges have been addressed by various scholars (for example, Ben-Moshe, Bertone, & Grossman, 2008; Harris, Marlowe, & Nyuon, 2015; Hatoss, O'Neill, & Eacersall, 2015; Naidoo et al., 2015; Onsando & Billet, 2009; and Terry et al., 2016). Whereas academic challenges are mainly limited to language skills and an unfamiliar curriculum, non-academic challenges arise from the individual student's lived experiences, as well as perceptions, stereotypes and assumptions.

Academic challenges have been pointed out by some scholars using the lens of language proficiency. For instance, a limited ability to speak and write English by refugee background students has often been used as a measure of their inability to access and complete tertiary education. Ben-Moshe et al. (2008), focusing on both refugees and asylum seekers, found that their English skills impeded their progress and asserted that a lack of English skills necessary to pursue training and qualifications was the major obstacle to their

[1] *Refugee visa (Subclass 200)* this visa is for people who are subject to persecution in their home country and are in need of resettlement. The majority of applicants who are considered under this category are identified by the UNHCR and referred to the Australian Government for resettlement consideration. https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Refu/Offs/Refugee-and-Humanitarian-visas

access and participation in tertiary education. Further investigations have been undertaken by Naidoo et al. (2015), who looked at transitions from secondary to tertiary education. The authors found that one of the major barriers was "language proficiency" (p. 36), stating that, over and above the need to communicate, students also needed subject-specific language to access and complete tertiary education. In the same vein, Shakespeare-Finch and Wickham (2010) identify English as a form of acculturation difficulty impacting many aspects of refugee background students' lives. These scholars found that students with a refugee background have high aspirations for educational attainment and a strong desire to succeed academically, but that the English language remains their number one obstacle to accessing and participating in tertiary education.

It is a fact that accessing and completing tertiary education can have a transformative effect on refugee background students' lives. Onsando and Billett (2009) hold the view that access to education and training is a means to developing self-esteem and confidence and, above all, creates opportunities for employment and a better living standard. However, these potential transformative effects can be compromised, and difficulties exacerbated, when refugee background students enter class/lecture rooms where their histories, experiences, background and knowledge are not reflected in the curriculum (Zamudio, Russell, & Rios 2011). In other words, when refugee background students enter schools and tertiary education systems in host communities, the unfamiliar curriculum and pedagogical demands can limit their progress and completion of tertiary education (Naidoo et al., 2015). As a result, refugee background students have a limited opportunity to enjoy the benefits that accrue from quality education, such as employment.

In addition to unfamiliar curricula and pedagogical practices, challenges arise when African students with a refugee background are treated as a single group with the same demands, desires and abilities. The differences in these students' cultures, backgrounds and identities are often ignored, yet there is no homogeneity in their educational experiences. For example, students who arrive in Australia from Francophone countries (countries formerly colonised by France and Belgium) face different challenges to those who come from Anglophone countries colonised by Britain. Accordingly, Ben-Moshe et al. (2008) conclude that, to increase access and participation in tertiary education, "there is need for the adoption of an integrated approach which recognizes the diversity [heterogeneity] of refugees as well as the relationships between the broader needs of refugees" (p. 8). It is in this respect that Terry et al. (2016) asserted the need to "acknowledge the social

and cultural capital that these students carry with them" (p. 14) and recognise their differences. Nevertheless, Onsando and Billett (2009) caution that "the socially derived cultural heritage of many African people comprises subcultures that cannot easily be described or interpreted under a single definition" (p. 82).

In addition to classroom-level difficulties, Australia's tertiary education system is yet to address the challenges associated with how these students are perceived. These non-academic perceptions range from prejudice to stereotypes and assumptions, and mostly result from political debate and hyperbolic media messaging. Harris et al. (2015) have argued that these "media discourses of deficit, dangerous and traumatised people are limiting [these students'] potential" (p. 1227). There is a need, then, for successful tertiary refugee background students to speak back to such reductive notions of failure. The social injustices and prejudices coming from political debate and the media are a source of distress and discomfort for students with a refugee background, which is experienced in addition to existing learning challenges (Onsando & Billett, 2009). Scholars agree that there is a need for the demystification of assumptions and stereotypes around being a refugee and the struggles students with a refugee background encounter in their endeavours to access and participate in Australian tertiary education.

Non-academic challenges also result from each individual student's experiences with displacement, transit, and resettlement in the host country. The cumulative trauma sustained can affect, in both positive and negative ways, the student's access to and participation in tertiary education. For example, Onsando and Billett (2009) highlight that "refugee life experiences impact on students' learning activities and can also help them to reach goals in their education" (p. 81). Scholars agree that the diversity of these lived experiences means that the "experiences of refugee background students cannot be easily subsumed under the term 'refugee' that bundles all communities and individuals into a monolithic group" (Terry et al., 2016, p. 5). These students may also experience racial discrimination, which can act as a deterrent to accessing and participating in tertiary education by engendering "feelings of being isolated and stereotyped as inferior beings" (Onsando & Billett, 2009, p. 84).

A range of studies have made recommendations for addressing these barriers to education access and participation (Ben-Moshe et al., 2008; Naidoo et al., 2014; Terry et al., 2016). Academic challenges could be addressed through both "ESL [English as a Second Language] support from specialised teachers and teaching that is more culturally inclusive" (Terry et al., 2016, p. 7). These scholars emphasise the need for community-based

engagement programs and strategies containing inbuilt capacity building approaches. However, these strategies remain at a general level of response to refugees' needs and desires, which increases the risk of homogenising refugee background students. Ben-Moshe et al. (2008) approach the solution from a different angle, by adding the teaching of employment skills to culturally inclusive teaching and language education. These scholars believe that program success will only be possible through collaborative efforts by educational institutions, community representatives and community-based service providers. Partnerships could also include organisations addressing torture and trauma (Onsando & Billett, 2009) and university-school/TAFE partnerships (Naidoo et al., 2015).

**Educational resilience**

Despite many difficulties, refugee background students often display a remarkable resilience and capacity to learn, finding ways to negotiate their adverse circumstances and "searching for better education, supporting their families and trying to pursue and define a successful career path to expand their vocational options" (Abkhezr, McMahon, & Rossouw, 2015, p. 74). Moreover, Naidoo et al. (2014) observed that "while refugee background students often encounter significant barriers to their educational achievements, many are highly resilient and hold strong aspirations for their future, particularly in terms of their own educational achievements and attainment" (p. 23). Similarly, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, in the UNHCR education report (2016) states that "refugees have skills, ideas, hopes and dreams [and] are also tough, resilient and creative, with the energy and drive to shape their own destinies, given the chance" (p.1). We need to be cautious, therefore, when interpreting deficit discourses around refugee underachievement in school. Recognising that refugee background students are often successful learners who make great strides in their personal and academic growth (Cranitch, 2008) makes it possible to recognise and value the life skills, cultural understandings and potential benefits they might offer Australian communities (Olliff & Couch, 2005). Many students with a refugee background are highly motivated and see education as "the most important aspect of their life as it is a source of hope and future" (Chegwidden & Thompson, 2008, p. 5). In fact, they frequently demonstrate enormous courage and strength (Tiong et al., 2006). For these reasons, Hewson (2006) states that:

> It is important that being a refugee is seen as only one part of a person's identity. Refugee students are more than 'just' refugees. The term, particularly when applied to young people, connotes

> subjects who are perceived as at risk or as 'victims'—understanding that is reinforced through media representation. Such representations fail to recognise the strength, fortitude and resilience of these young people… Refugee students are survivors … they have histories which have brought them to Australia. (p. 46)

Recent studies also provide sound evidence that "under similar socio-economic circumstances immigrants fare much the same in their educational achievements and attainment as any non-immigrant student" (White & Glick, 2009, p. 174). As Hoddinott (2011) argued, "examining the qualities of resilience and resourcefulness that young people bring with them to their schooling, out of often devastating personal experience, reminds us of the importance of the student's hopes and aspirations for the future in the brave endeavour of their education" (p. vii).

Hutchinson and Dorsett (2012) discuss three major enabling factors of resilience: "personal qualities, support and religion" (p. 56). They argue that trauma and trauma counselling have been given attention at the expense of resilience and coping strategies, "which may in fact contribute to or prolong the alienation of refugee people and impede their inclusion into Australian communities" (p. 56). While "refugees hold with them a past involving persecution or fear of persecution … [they] also embody hope for a brighter future. Refugees, perhaps more than any other group, confront the challenges of the present and future in the context of a tumultuous past" (Brough et al., 2003, p. 194). We need to look at refugee background students beyond the label of 'refugee' "because our gaze can be restricted to transitions in lives rather than whole lives, to victims rather than survivors, to illness rather than health" (Brough et al., 2003, p. 195). It is essential, then, that we do not make assumptions about who refugees are and what problems they face, but rather listen to refugees themselves and attempt to understand their issues within their frame of reference. Resilience in this case looks at the whole person and the entirety of their experiences—as well as how they interpret what they have experienced—rather than focusing on what is missing in an individual's life.

Three major resilience enabling factors that have been highlighted by different scholars include: "talking with friends, family, counsellors, medical practitioners and engaging in activities like sports" (Brough et al., 2003, p. 204); "reliance on religious beliefs, cognitive strategies such as reframing the situation, relying on their inner resources, and focusing on future wishes, aspirations and social support" (Khawaja et al., 2008); and, "maintaining

attachments with caring and supportive people, such as family members, mentors, neighbours, and people in the community [that can] help refugee background students cope successfully with loss" (Luster et al., 2009, p. 203). In their study, Shakespeare-Finch and Wickham (2010) show that "support from family, the Sudanese community, and Australian friends … assisted participants in adapting by providing a forum for discussion of problems and a distraction from stressors" (p. 26).

It can be deduced from the above that education resilience in refugee background students is multifaceted and linked to several support systems, such as institutional support, family support, individual support, faith and religion. Irrespective of the source of support, individual life experiences, from the home country, through transit/temporary resettlement, to resettlement in Australia, shapes students with a refugee background and their resilience and aspirations. These students can emerge from the ordeal and whims of life as people able to handle life experiences as they unfold. Important to remember is that, while some prevail, others struggle in the face of simply trying to make ends meet.

**Methodology**

This study uses the life history narrative methodology to produce a holistic trajectory of displacement and education for each research participant and to detail the complexities of their individual experiences. As a research methodology, life history narrative enables analysis at multiple levels and recognises that the individual story is always intertwined with larger stories (Sikes & Goodson, 2017). This study provides a platform for refugee background students' voices to be heard on issues that affect their lives (Delgado, 1989; Zamudio et al., 2011). We need to strengthen the capacity of students with a refugee background "to exercise 'voice', to debate, contest, and oppose vital directions for collective social life as they wish" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 66). This is crucial for African refugee background students because most governments/political leaders in African countries have restricted the voice of the masses, denying them the basic human right of freedom of expression. The life history narrative methodology draws out what Atkinson (2001) suggests is of the most importance to participants and their experiences:

> I have felt that it is important, in trying to understand other persons' experiences in life or their relations to others, to let their voices be heard, to let them speak for and about themselves first. If we want to know the unique perspective of an individual, there is no better way to get this than in that

> person's own voice. I am also interested in having the person tell his or her story from the vantage point that allows the individual to see his or her life as a whole, to see it subjectively across time as it all fits together, or as it seems discontinuous, or both. It is, after all, this subjective perspective that tells us what we are looking for in all our research efforts. (p. 125)

Giving people an opportunity to tell their own stories in life history research mitigates the colonising aspect of having others tell your story and "reduces the research power imbalance because, in life history narrative research, the researcher has less control over the participants while they are narrating their stories" (Goodson, Biesta, Tedder, & Adair, 2010, p. 33). Participants' narratives in this study cover their life experiences during displacement, in transit countries, and within the resettlement country. This is intended to address gaps in the existing literature, which tends to focus on the challenges these students face in resettlement in the context of the deficit model (Brough at al., 2003; Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). Refugee background students' past experiences are, therefore, often not acknowledged, and their future aspirations are crippled by labelling them as victims and traumatised people without agency or history (O'Connor, 2015). In this article, each individual participant including the researcher is given space and a platform to voice their life history, educational experiences and aspirations. The researcher's vignette draws on a self-reflective narrative and auto-ethnographical approach. Auto-ethnographies have the potential to challenge and change power structures through storytelling (Bhattacharya, Chawla, & Atay, 2018; Atay & Chawla, 2018). As a researcher, my experiences of border crossings are juxtaposed with the narratives of my participants, thereby fleshing out the local, national, and global terrains in which life experiences occur.

Sampling/participant recruitment was undertaken via 'snowballing' which, according to Morgan (2008)"uses a small pool of initial informants to nominate other participants who meet the eligibility criteria for a study" (p. 815). In snowball sampling—commonly used within the life history narrative methodology—"the researcher works with a participant who tells him/her of friends or colleagues who might be prepared to participate" (Goodson & Sikes, 2017, p. 77). I met with each participant twice, on average, to build greater rapport and share transcripts of the first session, as well as to ask for further details of events that emerged in the first interview. Participants were given one hour to tell their story in their own way and at their own pace. Before the interview, participants reviewed and signed the consent form.

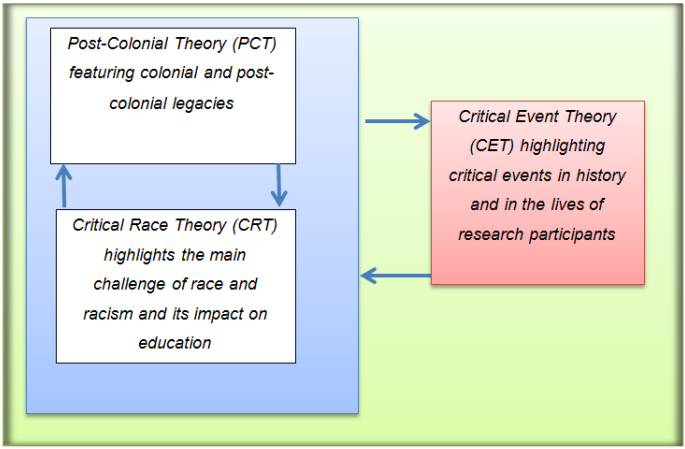
They were also given a copy of the participant information sheet and verbally consented to audio recording. Participants were informed of the research aims and design, the number of interviews expected, confidentiality, recording and transcribing. Participants were then encouraged to ask any questions they may have about the research, as an ice breaker to kick start our discussion. I then shared my personal experience of being a refugee, in an effort to build more trust and a closer relationship with the research participants. Therefore, in this study, both the researcher and research participants shared their experiences of being refugees, and the participants' stories were co-constructed by the researcher and the research participants. This reflects the fact that life history work is often collaborative, with the researcher seeking meanings and explanations together with research participants (Goodson & Sikes, 2017).

Three criteria were used to select research participants for this study, it being required that each participant: was originally from Africa; had come to Australia on a humanitarian visa under the auspices of the UNHCR; and, had participated in the Australian education system since their arrival, progressing to university, college or TAFE (for VET courses). A total of 11 participants were recruited. This paper will give an insider's view of educational resilience, by offering the detailed vignettes of the researcher and two participants from Rwanda and Burundi (countries that share similar geographical and cultural characteristics). These three vignettes offer a good representation of the Great Lakes region of Africa and the refugee crises that have impacted the lives of the masses therein. The theoretical framework is reviewed in the next section.

**Theoretical Framework**

For this study, postcolonial, critical race, and critical event theories have served as an effective tool kit to elaborate the educational disadvantages arising for African students with a refugee background as a result of their displacement and the loss of sovereignty of their respective home countries (see Fig 1). Discourses of postcolonial scholarship—which are historically located (Said, 1993; Bhabha, 1994, 1996; Mohanty, 2003) and positioned within geopolitical legacies of power—provide this study with a framework for exploring the nuances of participants' life history narratives. Postcolonial theory assisted with examining the histories and legacies of colonialism, which have contributed to the refugee crises and displacements in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. Critical race theorists agree that race is a central structure in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Taylor, Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2009).

**Figure 1. The theoretical tool kit**




In this article, inequality in education offers one measure to gauge the persistent and pervasive problem of racial inequality. Critical race theory, which highlights the challenges of race and racism, has been used to consider the educational exclusions experienced by participants. Critical event theory was used to identify turning points in participants' life history narratives. These personal narratives formed a large section of the transcribed data generated during interviews. The works of critical events theorists (Measor, 1985; Webster & Mertova, 2007 Woods, 1993) were used to unpack the impact of critical events in the participants' narratives. A critical event, or episode, is one that has a profound effect on the life of an individual with significant and potentially life-changing effects "Critical Events have significant and potentially life-changing effects on individual/s that are largely unplanned, unanticipated and uncontrolled" (Woods, 1993, p. 357). According to Webster and Mertova (2007), an event is critical if:

> [i]t has impacted on the performance of the storyteller in a professional or work-related role. It may have a traumatic component, attract some excessive interest by the public or the media, or introduce risk in the form of personal exposure: illness, litigious action or other powerful personal consequence (p.74).

Measor (1985) has identified three types of critical events or critical phases: "extrinsic, intrinsic and personal" (p. 61). As elucidated by Webster and Mertova (2007), "extrinsic critical events can be produced by historical and political events, intrinsic critical events occur within the natural

progression of a career and personal critical events can be family events, for example illness" (p. 74). The longer the time that passes between the event and the recall of the event, the more profound the effect of the event has been and the more warranted the label. The participants' vignettes begin with the researcher's self-reflective auto-ethnography.

**The researcher's vignette**

> *I grew up as a child in double jeopardy as a refugee and an orphan. The double jeopardy began when my grandparents and parents were displaced from Rwanda in 1962 becoming refugees in Uganda until 1994. I lost my father before I was born in 1978 to the uncertainties that were prevailing in Uganda and I lost my mother in 1992 to HIV/AIDS. I was born into and spent my childhood and adolescent years as a refugee in Kyangwali refugee camp in Uganda. I have also lived part of my adult life in Uganda in the shadow of Rwandan refugees. My grandparents and parents were among the Rwandans who fled for their lives in 1962 following 'the 1959-1962 revolts in Rwanda which overthrew the last King of Rwanda, King Kigeri V (Jean-Baptiste Ndahindurwa), the younger brother of King Mutara III' (Peter & Kibalama, 2006, p. 15). The king was forced into exile, first to Uganda and later to the United States of America where he died recently in 2016*

**Education profile**

***Primary education***

As a child between the ages of 7 to 12 years I never knew I was a refugee, given the fact that the refugee camp we lived in had become our home. This refugee camp had a population of close to 70,000 people and we had only three primary schools: Kasonga, Kyebitaka and Kinakitaka. I went to Kasonga primary school where I finished primary seven (P.7) in 1991. The education system in Uganda has seven years of primary, divided into lower primary (P.1 to P.3) and upper primary (P.4 to P.7), as well as six years of secondary education also divided into two levels; ordinary secondary (S.1 to S.4) and advanced secondary (S.5 to S.6). At the university level, most degree courses take three to five years.

At our primary school, more than 80 percent of our teachers were Rwandans, people with whom we lived and saw as our elders. There was no stigma nor abusive experiences at school, simply because we shared a common identity. This favourable learning environment, however, might

have been achieved at the expense of quality education, as our teachers were semi-qualified compared to the professionally trained Ugandan teachers.

***Secondary education***

After completing my primary school education, I was among four fortunate children in the refugee camp who passed the Hoima Diocese seminary entrance examinations set by the Board (HDSEB) and I was admitted into the Catholic seminary to train as a future Catholic diocesan priest. This training opened doors for my education. The school I attended for my secondary education, St. John Bosco's seminary, was one of the best in the region and had most of the basic facilities needed for a secondary school. Even at the national level it always emerged among the best schools in terms of academic performance.

For students within Kyangwali refugee camp, getting a chance to enter secondary education was a privilege, not a right, and it raised the hopes and aspirations of family members in terms of improved standards of living. The whole family gave up all they had by selling small animals, seasonal harvest and anything else to keep their children in school. Families with children who had finished at least the lower/ordinary secondary level (S.1 to S.4) were afforded improved standards of living because their children were employed and financially supportive.

Regardless of the chances one had to access secondary education, we were always reminded by local students that we were refugees. I felt the weight of being a refugee when I started secondary education. Notwithstanding the fact that we were training to be priests in a Catholic church, local children always identified us as refugees. No matter how brilliant we were, they always had to bully us and remind us of our status in a demeaning way.

***Tertiary education***

My enrolment in tertiary education was through the Catholic major seminary, doing a degree in social and philosophical studies. I did not complete this degree because of challenges associated with my identity. In the year 2000 (five years after the repatriation of Rwandan refugees in Uganda), I was no longer a refugee yet neither was I a Ugandan. Nevertheless, in 2000, after being denied the chance to continue pursuing my dream of becoming a Catholic priest, the government of Rwanda gave me a scholarship to Makerere University in Uganda where I completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in education. In 2007, I sponsored myself in the same university to pursue a master's degree in public administration and

management and in 2013 I was admitted to Western Sydney University to undertake a higher degree by research—a PhD. My continuing desire to acquire tertiary education was based on my desire to raise my chances of acquiring a better paying job, confidence and self-esteem.

**Francine's vignette**

> *I am originally from Rwanda and I was born in 1983. During the 1994 Rwandan genocide, I lost my father. My mother, my younger sister and I, like many other Rwandans, fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in May 1994. In DRC we were faced with another wave of civil war and we lost our mother through unpredictable circumstances. My sister and I continued the journey with other people to Zambia. This was a long journey that took us about two years from 1998 to 2000. We were finally settled in Meheba refugee camp in Zambia in 2000. In 2010 my sister and I were among the most vulnerable people in Meheba refugee camp, where we had settled for ten years, and through the support of the UNHCR we were selected for resettlement to Australia.*

**Education profile**

***Primary education***

Francine completed her first four years of primary education in Rwanda. She was motivated to be in school at that stage by her father, who was a local leader and an advisor to community members. She admired her father and wanted to be like him. At the same time, she was following the Government of Rwanda's regulations, which required her to be in school at a certain age. When the war and the genocide took place in Rwanda, Francine's education was interrupted as she started her journey to Zambia through the DRC. In the refugee camps, Francine received an informal education facilitated by older people within the camps who would create small study groups among children and teach them cultural values as well as the French language. At this point, Francine cared more for peace and security than education.

***Secondary education***

There were no secondary schools in the refugee camp in Zambia, so Francine had to go to Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia, to start high school. Francine managed to complete high school because of a friend who paid for her tuition fees.

***Tertiary education***

After arriving in Australia, Francine went to TAFE to complete the 510 hours of ESL to which she was entitled. Later, her motivation to continue with tertiary education arose because she wanted to be employed and independent of the financial support provided by Centrelink. After a year of studying English, she enrolled for a Certificate II in Information Technology, which enabled her to use computer programmes like Microsoft Word and Excel. With her Certificate II she was able to get a job in a meat factory as a records keeper. However, she did not want to settle for less than she thought she was capable of and, when her friend advised her to enrol in an aged care course, she completed her Certificate III and IV in Aged Care sponsored by Centrelink.

Francine then developed the motivation to become a Registered Nurse. She enrolled in different institutions of learning, including the University of Wollongong and Career Australia (a private college). Nevertheless, due to several financial challenges, she discontinued her studies in both institutions and opted instead to study for a Nursing diploma with the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE in Queensland as it was offered online. Her motivation to remain in school stemmed from her desire to become a professional in a specific field. In 2015, she enrolled in a Diploma in Business Administration at TAFE which she finished in 2016.

**Anna's vignette**

> *I was born in Tanzania to Burundian parents. We however went back to Burundi, and in 1993 an ethnic civil war broke out in Burundi and we were displaced again into Tanzania. My mother and my siblings were all settled in Kanembwa refugee camp from 1994 to 2005. In 2005, we were transferred to Nduta refugee camp following the insecurity that had cropped up in Kanembwa refugee camp. We lived in Nduta refugee camp from 2005 to 2007. In total we lived in refugee camps for over 14 years (1993 to 2008). In 2008, we were resettled in Australia.*

**Education profile**

***Primary education***

Anna started her primary education in Tanzania. She was following the Tanzanian curriculum where the languages of instructions were English and Swahili. She was later transferred to the refugee camp, where the languages of instruction were French and Kirundi. Anna was bullied by fellow refugee

students because she couldn't speak Kirundi and French. Anna repeated academic years four and five of her primary schooling, which affected her confidence and self-esteem. However, she was able to catch up very well and was promoted to year six. In year six she sat for the national exams and qualified to join year seven (the first year of secondary education). Anna remained in school because it was the way of life in the camp that all children of her age attended school.

***Secondary education***

After her promotion to year eight, Anna's education was interrupted by the UNHCR transferring her family to Nduta refugee camp for their own safety. At Nduta refugee camp the students were different and the environment very friendly. Anna mixed with different students from different camps and their support was important to her pursuit of education. Anna's education was again interrupted in 2007, when her family was transferred to Kanembwa refugee transit centre in preparation for resettlement to Australia. In the transit centre, Anna did not go to school and so lost another year of her education. In 2008, her family was finally resettled in Australia and she was able, together with her three younger sisters, to enrol at Evans High School where they completed ESL studies for one and a half years. In 2010 she attended St. Mary's Senior High School where she completed years 11 and 12.

***Tertiary education***

In 2012, Anna enrolled at Western Sydney University for a degree in social sciences which she did not finish. She dropped out of university in 2013 to marry and start a family. Her education was interrupted from 2013 to 2014, and in 2015 she enrolled for a Certificate IV in Community Services at Nirimba TAFE, which she finished in April 2016. In July 2016, Anna resumed her degree at Western Sydney University but dropped out again a few months later as she was having her third child.

**Discussion of findings**

This section discusses the findings relating to how the research participants exhibited educational resilience despite adversity. The discussion of resilience, below, reveals the ability of students with a refugee background to respond to adversity in productive and life-affirming ways, thus providing answers to the question: What makes students with a refugee background educationally resilient in the face of adversity? Refugee background students' ability to continue their education is a result of their

inner strength in managing adversity, but also the result of support from individuals, organisations and governments. Importantly, this study was not looking for the magic ingredients of resilience, but rather for the kinds of strategies students with a refugee background have employed that have assisted them to remain educationally resilient.

**Family influence on educational resilience**

This study found that the factor of family (nuclear and extended), and specific family members (father and mother figures and siblings), significantly contributed to the development of educational resilience in students with a refugee background. Deveson (2003) argued that:

> (r)esilient children are said to be securely attached children, whose most important need is to grow up with one or more adults who are there for the long haul. These children need people who love and believe in them. They need consistent emotional support and, ideally, parents play this role, but good relationships with other relatives or close family friends can also make a big difference in a child's life. (p. 78)

The life history narratives of research participants revealed the influence of family members in building their educational resilience. Luster et al. (2009) hold the view that "maintaining attachment with caring and supportive people, such as family members, mentors, neighbours and people in the community helps refugee background students to cope successfully" (p. 203). Even when participants had lost immediate family members, their presence remained strong in their minds. Francine recalled the statements of her father encouraging her to always be in school, study hard and finish well. She recalled her father's advice that "if you want to buy shoes for yourself, then you should go to school and study hard" and "if you go to school, you will know how to speak with people, respect them, and above all respect yourself". The institution of the family, therefore, can be a significant influence on these individuals' resilience. Above all else, the educational experiences of family members—that is, parents or relatives who have been in school and acquired education to a tertiary level—act as encouragement to refugee background students. Even in times of failure at school they still believe they can make it, by keeping these people in their minds to inspire them to persist. Anna says that her mother protected and cared for them as children. She was a leader in the refugee camp and always urged them to study hard. Anna failed some classes at school but kept repeating them so as not to disappoint her hard-working mother and consequently made it to

university. Although Anna's university studies have been interrupted more than once by marriage and child-rearing, her intention is to return to university as soon as she is able and to finish her degree in social work.

**Community influences on educational resilience**

The perception of refugees in the west has been negative, and students with a refugee background have been so negatively labelled and stigmatised that many do not want to be identified as being of refugee background, even for legitimate purposes (Mupenzi, 2018; O'Connor, 2015; Olliff & Couch, 2005). These negative perceptions drain refugee background students' natural resilience, ensuring they are always on guard to defend themselves in the event they are discriminated against (Uptin et al., 2016). As a result, refugee background students have been defined by the label of 'refugees' and denied their own identity and these experiences have either hindered or interfered with their education and vocational outcomes (Abkhezr et al., 2015). On the other hand, communities where refugee background students live—be they in transit countries or resettlement countries—influence their resilience. These communities have institutions, like churches, where specific individuals such as pastors, priests and other community leaders play an influential mentoring role for students with a refugee background. For instance, the influence of Francine's pastor in the Zambian refugee camp helped her to remain in school and ultimately finish her primary schooling in Zambia. Individuals and organisational influences have also surfaced in the stories of research participants as factors promoting educational resilience. For instance, when Anna arrived in Australia, she attended a program at school offering migrants extra classes to catch up in English and other subjects, and to help with homework and assessments, which improved both her performance and ability to remain in school.

**Teachers' influence on educational resilience**

Teachers in the school community were identified in this study as promoters of educational resilience among students with a refugee background. For instance, Anna's good relationships with her fellow students and teachers gave her a reason to continue her education in Australia, and one of her teachers remains a good friend. Arguably, schooling in resettlement countries helps these students "cope with … and transcend the negative effects of conflict and disaster" (Mundy & Dryden-Peterson, 2011, p. 102). Moreover, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that refugee background students find meaning and reasons to remain in school/tertiary institutions. Nonetheless, these students have been caught up in the

"complicated process of establishing an identity that is both different from, yet influenced by host communities" (Parsons & Harding, 2011, p. 4) and they occupy what Bhabha (1994) calls "the third space of enunciation" (p. 34). In other words, access and participation in tertiary education for refugee background students also presents other complexities like having to deal with racism, bullying and a curriculum that is alien to them not reflecting realities and experiences from their countries of origin. It is hoped that host countries will reach that level of acknowledgement for the plight of refugees and find a shared understanding of humanity irrespective of their past, present and future. My contribution to knowledge through this study has been in writing about my participants' stories and using this as a platform to offer counter-narratives from students with a refugee background. Schooling puts a huge responsibility on students with a refugee background, as they are required to manage and familiarise themselves with the institution's culture, both the formal and informal curriculum, and develop relevant social networks in an unfamiliar environment (Ferfolja et al., 2011).

**Peer influence on educational resilience**

Peer influence within the communities where refugee background students are resettled also plays a big role. From Anna's story it is evident that a welcoming environment at school, including friendly students, influenced her love for school. Eades (2013) argues in favour of support from other people by asserting that "the self is vulnerable to be affected by violence but resilient to be reconstructed through the help of others" (p. 3). In this sense the emphasis is on the collective strength of individuals within social networks and the importance of social support in the process of recovering from adversity for vulnerable individuals. Maintaining attachments with caring and supportive people, such as mentors, neighbours and people in the community, has been acknowledged by scholars as a way of building resilience among refugee background students (Luster et al., 2009). However, negative influence from peers may sometimes both undermine and promote educational resilience. In Zambia, Francine's detailed narrative described how she was despised by a lady who doubted her capacity to write a report for a women's association meeting. Francine was nominated to be secretary for the meeting and to take minutes for the Great Lakes Region Women Refugees Association (GLWRA). She overheard one of the ladies voicing doubt about her [Francine's] capacity to write a credible report and take minutes for the meeting in her local language: *'ee uriya mu sekuritare wabo se, ndaba ndebe, abantu bafata umu sekuritare utarize bakamushiraho ndaba ndeba ibyo ari bwandike'*, meaning *'oh that secretary*

*of theirs, people who choose a secretary who has never gone to school, I will see which type of report she will write'*. Although Francine ended up writing a good report using the knowledge she had acquired from church meetings, her experience with that lady became a turning point in her life. She developed greater determination and made a resolution to always aim higher in education when a study opportunity was available. Nevertheless, it should be noted that refugee background students often lack both peers with university experience and adult role models, which may impact their educational resilience.

**The influence of faith and religion on resilience**

A common statement found within the research data was, "By God's grace, I was able to …". This supports Gartland's (2009) assertion that religion is a factor that contributes to the development of resilience in refugee background students. Edward (2007) foregrounds the context of religion as giving assurances of hope. Faith and hope become coping mechanisms in times of challenging circumstances, often bringing about a sense of calm and peace of mind. While this belief system is sometimes taken to be mere superstition, belief in God helps people to regain control and meaning in their lives (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). Another study found that faith could be a negative force if refugees gave in to the situation and believed their fate was out of their hands and in God's (Khawaja et al., 2008). Spirituality gave other refugees strength: whether it was a belief in a "higher power, calling on dead relatives or something deep inside, spirituality assisted refugee people to cope through hard times" (Sossou, Craig, Ogren, & Schnak, 2008, p. 378). Thus faith in God can be seen to be one of the factors motivating refugee background students to remain in school.

**Educational resilience in the face of discrimination**

The experience of forced displacement is also highly salient when seeking to understand how students with a refugee background build and maintain educational resilience. A submission by the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) to the Attorney General's Department in Australia made the relevant conclusion that "while laws cannot address what is a historical and social problem in society, they can at least set a very minimum standard of decency that should be bestowed to all members of the public" (RCOA, 2016, p. 7). Refugee background students have endured segregation and unfavourable laws in different countries and have taken risks in order to acquire some education. In the researcher's vignette we read, "regardless of the chances one had to access secondary education, we were always

reminded by local students that we were refugees. I felt the weight of being a refugee when I started secondary education." In Tanzania, Anna had to escape bullying by changing from a state-owned school to a school in the refugee camp where she felt some level of acceptance. Cumulatively, refugee background students take risky decisions in their lives and keep daring to take an extra step. These sets of experiences and dispositions, built from the hardship of forced migration and living in highly dangerous and precarious situations, play out in the educational resilience these students demonstrate when settling in a new safe country. Additional studies have been directed toward understanding the impact of race and racism on refugee background students in both transit and resettlement countries. Taylor et al. (2009) assert that "racial analysis can be used to deepen understanding of the educational barriers for people of colour, as well as exploring how these barriers are resisted and overcome' (p. 9). When it comes to refugee background students, dealing with racism, inequality and isolation is a common experience—as evidenced in their stories—starting from their home countries through to settlement in Australia. Some have been displaced from their home countries simply because of who they are, and others have been rejected and discriminated against without clear reasons.

**Self-determination and behavioural factors**

Resilience in students with a refugee background arises from individual students' goals and dreams and, because they cannot take anything for granted, refugees tend to be highly resourceful and adaptive. Mundy and Dryden-Peterson (2011) attribute this kind of persistence-resilience to the value of schooling in the lives of refugee background students:

> Schooling [in the context of African students with a refugee background] provides children with goals for their lives and tangible ways in which their actions can, they believe, improve their future. By adopting ways to hope for a better future, children are able to cope with and transcend the negative effects of conflict and disaster. (p. 102)

Indeed, refugee background students have been tested through adversity. As a result, some refugee students have developed an inherent resilience and are able to develop strategies to help respond to educational challenges. Participants' lived experiences revealed common motivating factors for their educational resilience and pointed to the importance of intrinsic determination to meet personal goals (Goodson et al., 2010). It was also revealed that some students with a refugee background responded to

adversity in a resilient manner, while others collapsed at some points and rejuvenated at others, leading to the argument that collapse and breakdown are also built-in phases in the development of resilience and necessary for renewal and ongoing growth. Education, for most refugee background students, is their most valued goal. The fact that many refugees have been given a second chance in life makes them determined to convert their visions into realities. Some students with a refugee background have succeeded by seizing every opportunity that comes their way. For example, Francine attended "every free course that was offered and every workshop that was open"—whether relevant to her areas of study or not—in order to catch up on her education.

**The responsibility factor in educational resilience**

Several research participants demonstrated resilience in pursuing their education because of their desire to secure employment that would allow them to meet their various obligations (Mupenzi, 2018). Education and training become a means for developing self-esteem and confidence and increase the opportunities for employment and better standards of living (Ager & Strang, 2008; Onsando & Billett, 2009). A primary need in these students' lives is access to tertiary education, because of its potential transformative effects on their lives (Onsando & Billett, 2009). Education is one of the few resources and the best gift ever these students receive from their host communities. Moreover they value their education because it is a means to employment and access to other social networks. For refugee background students, having a source of income enables them to be responsible for themselves but also provide financial support to both their nuclear and extended families. From the literature reviewed, it is clear that educational resilience is not static but dynamic (Gartland, 2009Therefore, responsibility and determination can build resilience among students with a refugee background who are otherwise totally on their own.

**Conclusion**

I have argued that students with a refugee background are strong, respond dynamically to situations and circumstances, have a high capacity for adaptability and cannot be reduced to their past(s). The stories presented in this article suggest alternative ways of imagining and enacting resilience in students with an African refugee background, which diverge from the focus on constraints related to language, literacy and cultural barriers. These stories also exposed the realities of education in refugee camps in Africa. Participants' lived experiences revealed common motivating factors for their

educational resilience and point to the importance of intrinsic determination to meet personal goals as well as the role of family support. It was also revealed that, while some students with a refugee background have responded to adversity in a resilient manner, others have collapsed at one point and rejuvenated at another. This leads to the argument that collapse and breakdown are also built-in phases in the development of resilience and necessary for renewal and ongoing growth. I have also discussed the enabling and disabling factors influencing access to and retention in tertiary education. I have argued that educational resilience is a concept that needs to be defined in a more multi-dimensional way depending on intrinsic and extrinsic factors: family, peers, teachers, communities, belief systems and above all inner abilities. This approach recognises that the experiences of African students with a refugee background are diverse and complex and cannot be put into one basket or homogenised.

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# ARTICLES

## Africa Focussed Mining Conferences: An Overview and Analysis

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**Introduction**

Despite the African continent having extensive mineral wealth much desired by industrialized nations it is also a region rife with poverty and under-development and there is little evidence that it has benefited from these resources. Beginning in the early the 2000s the price of major minerals, especially copper and gold, rose to new heights (with the exception of the 2008/2009 Global Financial Crisis slump). These price rises created greatly increased global interest in the continent's extensive mineral wealth and enabled many new mining activities in Africa to be initiated. While some corporate mining conferences had been held in earlier years their numbers increased concurrently with the greatly increased level of exploration and mining activities. They included national, regional and international events and also some with mineral specific foci. During the same period civil society-based movements concerned about the negative social impact of mining, and being part of a bigger global movement, also became increasingly active.

The objective of this article is provide an overview and analysis of the different types of conferences which eventuated during this past decade and a half and explore what they indicated about the state of social governance in the African mining sector. The focus will be on illustrating the roles of the key players, their relationships and the issues arising, especially those related to the social impact of the extractive industries (but this could also apply to environmental matters). Part One focusses on the corporate and the 'Alternative' conferences and their relationships and the outcomes of the

[1] Special Acknowledgements: Bill Repard of Paydirt Media, Perth, the staff of the Mining Indaba, Cape Town and the Alternative Mining Indaba organizers (both Cape Town and Zambia) whose resources have helped inform my scholarship, in addition to the references provided.

various interventions, while Part Two examines those held for government ministers, those hosted by regional agencies and, more briefly, other mining related conferences.[2]

## PART ONE: The Corporate and the 'Alternative' Mining Conferences

To illustrate the issues arising at these disparate conferences and their interactions, Part One focusses on the nature of one major corporate mining conference, the '*Mining Indaba*' and on the 'Alternative' mining conference, both of which are held annually in Cape Town.

### Corporate Conferences - The *Mining Indaba*

The *Mining Indaba* (a copyrighted name, and more formally *Investing in African Mining*) has been held in Cape Town since 1996. According to its 2015 website (site now retired) the Indaba is focussed on the "capitalisation and development of mining interests in Africa" and states that "The content for the event has been designed with the sole purpose of identifying the strategies, opportunities and decisions that need to be taken to ensure each company and the industry remains competitive." For typical programme content see *Mining Indaba* (2016a; 2016b).

It is a sophisticated, fast moving, tightly structured and costly event, attended by mining company managers, geo-scientists, lawyers, investors, bankers, stock exchange and international financial institution representatives, as well as mining technology and equipment suppliers and infrastructure experts. Other attendees include mineral council and regional organization representatives and government officials from within and out of Africa, and also diplomats. The media and a few academics are also present. Up to 7,000 people attend the Mining Indaba from about 100 countries across

[2] This paper is the side-product of a study into the socio-economic impact of mining in one southern African country and is based on attendances at various conferences and an analysis of conference programs, reports, media coverage and other readings. This work also formed the basis of a power point presentation 'Examining African focussed mining conferences: clarifying the benefits and the costs of omission' which has been shown twice at Australian National University seminars.

The term 'conferences' will be mainly used and is the equivalent of 'indaba', a Zulu/Xhosa word commonly used in southern Africa for a gathering or meeting to discuss important matters. The term 'Civil Society Organization' (CSO), will also be mostly used as an all-encompassing term for CSOs, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Faith based organizations (FBOs). Their joint conferences are known as 'Alternative' Indaba's, to differentiate from the corporate gatherings.

Africa and the globe. The 2015 *Mining Indaba* reported some forty-five government representatives and over 2,000 companies being present.

The programme is largely devoted to corporate presentations, reports on country mining situations and trade, investment/financial and regional related matters. Government mining ministers from countries in the region hold their joint meetings and present individually to the general audience about their own country's situation. The Indaba also provides educational opportunities to learn about new technologies and approaches. For example, in 2016 the World Bank introduced a new diagnostic tool which measures each country's governance and stability in the mining sector to help guide investors' decisions (World Bank, 2016).

Initially the agenda did not include social and environmental subject matter but this eventually changed, to some extent, as discussed below. The *Mining Indaba* was focussed on the promotion of mining prospects and to link with investors and make transactions. Essentially it is a market place, not very different to ones found in towns all over the African continent with sellers spruiking their wares and buyers inspecting 'the goods'. The atmosphere is up-beat, with enthusiastic sales pitches being made about prospects and their potential to earn investors a large profit. Power point presentations are short and sharp, focussing on technical details, and companies also advertise at the array of booths which line the display halls.

A feeling for this hyped-up atmosphere is clearly conveyed by *Paydirt Media* magazine articles which report on the various sessions with headlines such as the following: 'Candles lit for yellow cake return'(p.72, October, 2014), 'African Lion set to pounce' (p. 37, October, 2010) and 'Spoilt for choice in Mozambique' (p. 24, December/January, 2010). More recently and not just referring to African mining, a headline read 'Resources pumped with adrenaline' (p. 9, March, 2018).

**Other Corporate Conferences**

There are also many other Africa mining focussed conferences and from their start dates it can be seen how many were initiated in response to the increasing levels of mining opportunities on the continent (See Box 1).

**The *Mining Indaba* and Social Issues - and Omissions**

The Cape Town *Mining Indaba* did not address social and environmental issues in its early years and participants did not include those affected by mining i.e. representatives of mining communities, or the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) which advocate on their behalf.

The typical mining minister's country presentations and those of companies were 'glossy'. They largely focussed on the benefits of a particular country's rich geology and mining friendly attributes and the potential of specific deposits, as described somewhat optimistically below by Mining On Top: Africa (MOTA). There was no mention in such presentations that there may be people living and/or farming or grazing on or by a mine site, that a heavy wet season might cause annual floods or alternatively, regular droughts may cause water shortages and competition with local people. Energy sources too are also almost always an issue in African countries but ignored. In addition, there may be security or significant biodiversity or indigenous peoples' issues in the surrounding area. Essential infrastructure (e.g. roads, bridges, ports and electricity and water supplies) may well not exist and consequently a company would have to build them, adding to the cost of its investment and time taken, given that relying on a government to do so in a timely matter was likely to be a pipe dream. But such matters are not mentioned, at least in the initial sales pitch.

Other negatives are unlikely to be mentioned, such as the host government not having sufficient capacity to adequately support and monitor developments, especially if the site is some distance away from the capital which is almost always the case. The high levels of corruption on the continent which influence how business is conducted (and costs) are never mentioned, nor are the challenges created by the inevitable influx of impoverished job seekers to new mining sites. Certainly, the problems which have occurred at many mine sites, as described below, are never mentioned (See Box 2). Consequently, such presentations give an incomplete picture of the potential investment opportunities and mislead investors as to the ease of achieving repayment of loans and eventually, profits.

**Evidence of the Reality:**

As the examples in Box 2 illustrate, social and environmental issues are not isolated incidents but widespread and often very serious (including deaths) and they are often complex and messy and time consuming to handle. Commonly they include violent police involvement in removals, (i.e. state intervention against their own people), influxes of job seekers causing significant social welfare problems and government not effectively and peacefully controlling the situations. In addition, there may be resettlement issues and loss of good farming land and forests and competition for water. Gold and artisanal mining situations are particularly problematic. Given the conditions prevailing in most countries, especially the levels of poverty and the desperate seeking of income, it should be no surprise that problems will

inevitably arise. It would be realistic for a company to mention to investors the possibilities and what a company is planning to do to prevent or ameliorate them. But no corporate presentations mention such possibilities – they concentrate on the technical and non-human aspects.

**BOX 1: Examples of Other Africa Mining Focussed Conferences**

- Africa DownUnder, Perth, Australia 2002+
- West Africa Mining and Power Conference, Accra, 2005+
- West and Central Africa Mining Summit and Expo, Accra, 2008+
- Zambian International Energy and Mining Conference, Lusaka 2011+
- South African Mining Lekgota, Johannesburg, 2012+
- Senegal International Mining Conference, Dakar, 2013+
- Mining On Top: Africa Summit, Geneva, 2013+
- DRC Mining Week, Lubumbashi 2014+
- Junior Indaba, Johannesburg, 2015+.

*Sources: Various mining conference reports. (ECOMOF, Minerals and Petroleum Forum, Abijan, 2016+).*

**BOX 2. Examples of country specific mining related incidents**

**South Africa**: 44 killed and many injured by police, Marikana, 2012, and 2016 murder of activist at Xolobeni
**Uganda**: Forceful eviction of 20,000 artisanal miners, Mubende, 2017
**Kenya:** Unresolved displacement 1,200 households, Kerio valley, early 2000s
**Madagascar**: Bushmeat (ie lemurs) harvesting by hungry influx, 2017
**Cameroon**: Indigenous Baka pygmies' lifestyle being threatened, 2012
**Zimbabwe:** Indigenous food plants threatened by pollution; 200 killed by military takeover, Marange diamond fields, 2008+
**Tanzania**: 69 killed, +police, Nth.Mara, London court case, 2010+
**Nigeria**: Increased infant mortality and new respiratory disease, Okobo, 2016
**Zambia:** Serious pollution, Copperbelt, 1960s+
**Ghana:** Child gold miners exposed to serious health problems and cocoa plantations ruined, Obuasi 2015+
**Cote d'Ivoire**: Degradation of cultivable land etc, Bonikro, 2007++

There is glaring evidence of such problems, including from the regular and widespread community and civil society reports, the presentations at the Alternative Mining Indaba's and church and academic conferences, as well as media coverage. It appears that such graphic, unpleasant and messy stories are too much to stomach in a posh conference venue and would spoil the sales pitches being made by companies. In addition, 'the elephant in the room' may well be the unpleasant question that such problems may be due to government's interventions, or lack there-of.

It is surprising that such situations still prevail despite major global social and environmental developments for more than a decade, including within the mining industry itself, such as the Global Mining Initiative (2000) and the subsequent work of the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) (See Tost *et al*, 2017).

What was being described at the *Mining Indaba* and other financially and technically focussed mining conferences look like window dressing in the face of the harsh realities.

**The Costs of Omission**

Ignoring the possibility of social and environmental risks in corporate discussions and presentations can present significant economic risks to a company, as shown by an Environmental Resource Management study which was described at the 2014 *Mining Indaba*. The 2016 updated results illustrated that 46% of 72 mining projects surveyed missed their delivery date commitments between 2008 and 2016 and that nearly half of them were due to social issues, with environmental issues the second most common cause. The survey also noted that such delays have far reaching consequences, including budget overruns, loss of trust from stakeholders and negative shareholder sentiment (Environmental Resource Management, 2016). In addition, a study by Franks et al (2014) provided data on the causes of conflicts, social aspects being only slightly less common as a leading cause than environmental issues. They also pointed out, and as this author has observed in Zambia, the cost of staff time dealing with such problems is rarely factored in and can be significant. In short, companies cannot afford financially (or reputation-wise) to neglect such issues, and yet some continue to do so.

**Other Points of Particular Interest**

Demonstrating how important African minerals were to Europe was the 2018 'Mining On Top: Africa' (MOTA) advertisement and, which,

somewhat optimistically and yet inaccurately, described the institutional environment as being enabling:

> The African mining industry is gaining momentum with rising investment opportunities in several African countries where investors can benefit from low operational costs, untapped resources and business favourable tax regime (tax deductible costs and losses). … Reforms in mining laws and greater regulatory oversight has also made Africa a stable mining investment destination (MOTA, 2018).

Secondly, just how much investment money, and hence significance, is involved in these conferences is indicated by a *Mining and Money* (2017) publicity information which asked: "Did you know that the Mines and Money London show has confirmed investors with assets under management combining to a staggering $3.6 Trillion and over $1.5 Trillion ready to be invested?" Mining conferences are obviously highly important to investors, and one can assume, encourage companies to describe their prospects in the most positive light possible so as to attract their attention.

Thirdly, it is apparent that the number of conferences which would be appropriate for mining ministers to attend is now very high, including as it does, the regional meetings as well as corporate meetings held both in, and outside the continent. They, or their deputies, are even expected now to make an appearance at the 'Alternative' Indaba's. Such a demand makes one wonder about how they manage to decide which ones are a priority. Perhaps travelling and being wined and dined in (always) posh venues well away from mining sites is preferable to having to deal with organizational and community challenges.

It also appears from the various readings that ministers have a tendency to sit back and let the corporates take the flack from civil society. Rather than act as leaders, standard setters and protectors of their people's rights they seem to perform more as enticers, observers and guests at the corporate meetings. Is it that they enjoy the power of being able to offer up mining sites, winning kudos from their Presidents for attracting investors - but abdicating responsibility for what follows? Or is it because the sector is so wrought with difficult issues that they don't know how to cope or that they simply don't care about their mine communities? As a Mozambique policy maker was quoted by Franks (2015, p. 70) as saying "… it is not always true that the interests of the government are the interests of the people". Certainly there is plenty of other evidence that this is the case more often than not, as described below.

Also, in regard to the role of both companies and governments, a corporate lawyer at the 2014 Africa DownUnder conference, was reported as being "… on a mission to call out politicians and miners for propagating mistruths, and governments for being lazy…" (Blackiston, quoted in Dickinson, 2014, p. 40). He was partly referring to the Australian mining scene but also to the African situation, stating that companies should be more honest about their claims to investors and governments, such as to the extent of profits which will accrue. In regard to the laziness claim he said that governments should go ahead and develop their own infrastructure and not just wait for the companies to do so. He also pointed out that they should not leave it up to the companies to implement those aspects of social responsibilities which were a government's responsibility.

**Other Corporate Conferences**

Not held on the African continent but reflecting the extent of the Australian mining industry's interest in African mining, is the Africa DownUnder (ADU) conference held annually in Perth, Australia. Its organizers also report extensively on the Cape Town *Mining Indaba* and their own sessions in their Paydirt Media magazine. ADU has maintained its focus on technical and financial aspects of mining prospects, as have most of the other corporate conferences, seemingly immune to 'the wind of change' and the hard evidence of the risks of not taking social aspects into account. Any efforts made in this direction tend to be token.

There are also other conferences which include African mining as part of a global picture, such as the Mining and Money financial conferences which are held in London and other major capitals and the major Canadian events such as the Prospectors and Development Association of Canada in Toronto and the Vancouver located Mining and Communities Solutions conferences, both of which seriously address social matters.

**The 'Alternative' Mining Indaba's**

Given the many issues mentioned above it was not at all surprising that a significant social movement eventually arose to challenge what appeared to be the continuing blindness of the industry about the negative impact of their activities and the lack of government action to protect their own people. Underlining the movement was the point that the African people ought to be benefiting much more from the mining boom (if indeed they agreed to go ahead with it), not suffering because of it.

It was in response to such issues that the first Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) on the African continent was held in Cape Town in 2010, purposefully

at the same time and city as the corporate *Mining Indaba*. The spotlight then moved across town away from the International Convention Centre where the thousands of conservative (mainly) men (in dark grey suits) were meeting in salubrious surroundings. Gathered in a more down-market location were hundreds of very vocal T-shirted, (or dog collar'ed) sneaker wearing, gender balanced participants discussing the other, darker side of the proverbial glittering coin

The Alternative Indaba concept was initiated, originally in Tanzania, by members of church organizations because they were concerned that many mining communities around the region were experiencing very serious social welfare (and environmental) problems. They were aware that such matters were not being addressed – let alone discussed across town at where the corporates were meeting and those immediately affected by mines were being excluded.

According to the conference report (Masango, 2010) the First AMI was attended by fifty-six participants from twenty Churches/ NGOs/CSOs, media and communities (including from South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe). Its objectives (paraphrased) were: To provide a forum for testimonies from those affected; to involve the media; show government and companies that the CSOs are watching and holding them accountable; to monitor and advocate for policy changes and to give alternative (i.e. to the company/government ones) messages that tells the truth and explains the reality of mining impact.

Masango quoted Archbishop Ndungane, former head of the Anglican Diocese of Cape Town, as saying: "people should be put first before profit margins" and "civil society needs to be vigilant in making sure that human rights are respected". He also concluded his statement by saying that "We will and we shall succeed, we did with colonialism, we did with Apartheid." (Masango, 2010, p.5).

And, recognizing the difficult 'David and Goliath' nature of the challenges at hand regarding the status quo the Archbishop added: "If we are going to take on the African elites, we need to have stamina and patience. It's up to you and me. It's little drops of water that chip the rock away." [3]

[3] Particularly notable was the reference to 'African elites', given that it is usually foreign companies which are the target for such remarks. This statement recognized the role of their own leaders in the problems which were going on – and correlates with one made by a Tanzanian priest and regional representative, Father Jude at the 2014 Zambian Alternative Indaba who noted that 'the enemy is within' (*author's notes*, 2014).

Highlighting the severity of the issues Dr Kasalla from Tanzania was reported as saying that he had found his tour of the country's northern mines in October 2009 an over-whelming experience. He particularly noted that: "What hurts is these things are permitted by the very people we elected" and that "The unfortunate thing is that the communities don't have anyone to tell and they cannot get the right answers to their problems." He was also reported as questioning the professionalism of mining companies, asking: "What kind of values do people who do business have? Effectiveness, efficiency and productivity are over-riding human rights ...". (quoted in Masango, 2010, p.11)

This initial Indaba reportedly created much solidarity amongst the participants and recognized the urgency of the need to speak out for those so badly affected, and for the need to engage all stakeholders, including companies, governments and communities.

The Alternative Indaba has continued to be the major CSO event for the continent, being held annually since 2010, with representatives from an increasing number of other countries attending, including 600 attending in 2018 from forty-three countries (AMI, 2018). This continuation, and indeed expansion, clearly indicated strong regional solidarity about the need to speak out about issues which had continued to plague the region's mining communities. As the Economic Justice Network Concept note on the history of the AMI stated, the Indaba "… was conceptualized initially as a movement-building initiative and awareness raising platform … has fast grown into a successful advocacy and lobbying entry point in several countries in southern Africa" (Economic Justice Network, 2014, p. 5).

The AMI also spawned national Indaba's, Tanzania holding its first one in 2011 with Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique following in 2012. Others, including Malawi, Angola, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Botswana, Swaziland and South Africa followed on in later years. Five countries also began to hold provincial Indaba's and Zimbabwe even held three district level Indaba's. The movement grew fast and spread strong roots, as the AMI 2015 report stated, although some required support to function (AMI, 2015). The latest development has been the holding of local level indaba's for mining affected communities, as has happened in Zambia.

Participants at the Cape Town AMI include representatives of mining communities, local, regional and international CSO representatives, public interest lawyers, trade unionists and academics, the media, supporting donor agency representatives, and regional organizations. Even government and corporate representatives have put in appearances in recent years.

Financial supporters have included the Economic Justice Network, the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa, Oxfam USA, Open Society Foundation, South Africa, Norwegian Church Aid, Ford Foundation, Trust Africa, Zimbabwean Environmental Lawyers Association, Bread for the World and individual participants, with a number of other organizations, including Benchmarks, Southern Africa Resource Watch and Diakonia providing various forms of support. The Ford Foundation provided support in 2018, illustrating a necessary broadening of the support base.

Although not referring specifically to the Alternative Mining Indaba, Hinefellaar and Achberger (2017) in their paper on Zambian resource extraction picked up on the irony of the donor funding, pointing out that it was "… an ambiguous situation, where [donor] governments are funding their own activist organizations to fight the consequences of the dominance of mining capital, while at the same time protecting the interests of their own mining companies." Thompson, a Kairos representative from Canada, also noted in 2013 the reliance on (erratic) donor funding (Thompson, 2013), while the Chairman commented in the 2018 AMI report that fund raising was a constant issue for the organizers (AMI, 2018). But then who else is to fund them? Certainly not the mining industry. It is very disappointing to see that a major mining country such as Australia, is missing from the donor list. This is despite the fact that, as reported by Paydirt Media (2017), Australian companies had 769 mining related activities (mostly not actual mines) on the continent in 2015, and it is keenly interested in the corporate Indaba. South African Bishop Seoka (2015) also noted the need for an independent fund to be used to "even the playing field and give communities access to expertise to negotiate more equitably…" (p. 4).

With the advent of AMIs someone was at last listening to the communities, or their representatives, taking their issues seriously and trying to do something to advocate for them to be publicly recognized and dealt with, including those which were national level matters.

**Alternative Mining Indaba Content**

The programme has become increasingly more sophisticated over the years since its modest beginnings in 2010, as can be best read in the annual reports and the various commentaries available on line. The content became wide-ranging and included: taxation and illicit financial flows; transparency and accountability; environmental rights and community monitoring; access to remedy: litigation and mining; artisanal mining; women and extractives and mining health and labour. Bishop Seoka (2015) also raised the issues of "sham consultations and agreements with un-mandated elites [including

Chiefs] circumventing full participation of the communities in determining whether mining should take place or not".

The 2018 program also showed an array of educational side events, including training on international norms on business and human rights and a session on studies such as 'The Impact of Extractives on Water in Southern Africa'. Some key points can be noted from the programs and reports over the past decade:

- The Indaba has attracted increasing involvement from many countries, clearly indicating the continuing and widespread nature of mining related issues, thereby confirming that it serves an important purpose.
- A church-aligned representative from Canada (Thomson, 2013) said that he "… was struck by some of the commonalities between their different national struggles and also by the unique characteristics of each one."
- It was inevitable with such a disparate group that there would be some internal tensions which needed to be resolved. As stated in the Chairman's summary in the AMI (2018) report, a major challenge over the years was managing the diversity of stakeholders and striking a balance between their needs.
- As with many conferences (of all sorts) there were also questions about the focus and depth of discussions, the need to be more results oriented and for specific follow-up, including stronger engagement with governments and the corporates, and also with the regional bodies which were regarded to be the lacking political will to enforce declarations (see Ginindza, 2015).
- In the early years, South African issues tended to over-whelm the discussions because their participants formed the numerical majority, and were the most vocal. This was somewhat understandable given that they also had extreme and immediate issues (e.g. Marikana in 2012) and so tended to distract somewhat from those of other countries. This issue was largely resolved when national and sub-national Indaba's commenced, including South Africa organizing its own in Johannesburg.

Over the years there were also some criticisms from various commentators: for example, Bond (2015) noted with disbelief that they had failed to "connect the dots" with climate change, failing to raise the issue of

the industry's heavy use of electricity and production of gas emissions. Noting the lack of challenges to the 'mining as development' paradigm Maguwu and Terreblanche (2016) also pointedly wrote: "Sadly, the AMI's narrative can hardly be distinguished from the official big boys' Indaba …" Such commentary may have offended – or inspired participants to tighten up their debates and strategies.

A particularly sensitive issue was that the Indaba was charged with being 'NGO centric' i.e. NGOs were playing the leading role, and more numerous than members of mining affected communities. There were also charges of other forms of 'elite capture', including by the clerics. Rutledge (2016) discussed the issues and Cape and Lorgat (2016) of Benchmarks responded.

But it wasn't all doom and gloom in the community stories being shared - as Fourie (2015) noted about how activists at the 2015 AMI were:

> … emboldened by recent success stories of communities exercising their rights in court: a mining company director given a prison sentence for environmental violations and the [South African] Supreme Court of Appeal's decision compelling AcelorMittal South Africa to hand over long-hidden environmental records.

The 2018 AMI report (AMI, 2018) provided a summary of what the organizers felt were achievements to-date, including engagement with regional agencies, about the African Mining Vision and with the Inter-Governmental Forum, as well as maintaining relationships with the corporate Indaba and the ICMM. National level developments were also described, including success in advocating for reviews of mining legislation and establishment of stakeholder forums with government. Communities wer reported being more visible in the regional and national Indaba's. There were also plans to evaluate the current strategic plan and develop a new one and strengthen advocacy efforts.

It was apparent that the AMI was expanding its agenda from the local to higher level issues, indicating a maturing of its objectives, and illustrating recognition that to be effective advocacy needs to be undertaken at the highest levels in order to make a difference. However, such an approach will require different capacities and more funding if care is not taken, also risks diverting attention from immediately helping the affected communities.

**The History of the Relationship with the Corporate *Mining Indaba***

Although both Indaba's were being held in Cape Town there was a physical separation between them which was symbolic of the very different

worlds the participants inhabited. TMG Digital (2017) aptly reported the organizers describing the corporate's *Mining Indaba* as being "A gathering of the rich and unaffected" while the Alternatives were "A gathering of the poor and affected". Boyle (2016) described the AMI as being where the NGOs "… will explore life on the wrong side of mining's self-congratulatory corporate looking glass".

Fourie (2015) noted that these disparate groups "… speak such different languages that a common understanding seems impossible". This situation was also symbolic of the yawning communication gap which so often occurs between a mining company and the local community, despite their physical proximity.

It became an annual tradition to march in typically vibrant South African style across town to the International Conference Centre to present the AMI's declaration to the corporates. The marches were attention grabbing, including the waving of big banners and placards, 'toyi toyi'ing' (dancing along chanting) and singing protest songs through loud hailers from a double decker bus. A few, such as church representatives, progressed rather more sedately and got their points across with signs, peaceful sit-in's and mini-drama's when they arrived at the Centre.

These classic activist tactics do attract media attention, are fun and increase feelings of solidarity which are worthwhile short-term aims in themselves. They also provide an opportunity to let off steam, including for the more vocal participants to clearly illustrate the extent of anger and frustration being felt because of the lack of corporate response to their many very serious and genuine concerns.

But not surprisingly the reception of noisy, sign-bearing protesters at the International Conference Centre in the early years was hostile, with their arrival proving to be an embarrassment to the corporate Indaba organizers. Davis (2013) reported activist Habede as complaining that:

> Nobody would accept responsibility for our petition … Not the Chamber of Mines, not a government representative. We were forceful and refused to leave, and eventually they brought one of the logistics organisers of the Indaba to receive the petition.

The Kairos Canada representative added that "They had been stopped by police and security guards and only Bishop Seoka had been allowed to go in, accompanied by shouts of 'Go Bishop!', but not even he was received and he had to retreat outside five minutes later" (Thomson, 2013).

Such an approach was very off-putting to the mainstream corporate world and made it easy for them to dismiss the 'Alternative' claims as 'rabble

rousing'. Consequently, such marches, at least initially, could be seen as being detrimental to the cause being promoted. Speaking to their declaration in a formal meeting with the corporates would be a more objective way of expressing the issues – and more acceptable to that type of audience. But such an approach would probably be less impactful and far less likely to attract media attention – or to get across the depth of outrage of having their claims ignored for so long.

Also, the target was not necessarily the correct one, for often it was governments which had failed to play an appropriate role in maintaining and protecting the rights of its citizens, as will be discussed further in Part 2 below.

But the protests became increasingly difficult to ignore each year as media coverage was high. The T-shirted activists were shining a different light on those glossy corporate presentations - and the 'men in dark grey suits' could not deny the issues. The media attention was annoying – and embarrassing for the corporate Indaba organizers. It was not positive public relations and risked affecting the confidence of investors (who were present inside the Convention Centre). By 2014 the corporates needed to be seen to be responsive.

This was an exciting turn-around and illustrates how well-organized campaigns of community activism can be effective in changing opinions, or at least getting a process of communication underway, and highlighting the significant role of the media in achieving such an end. By 2015 the situation was more positive, with the development of warmer relations between the organizers. Even a small drama featuring polluted water was permitted to take place at the entrance of the corporate venue and the declaration was spoken to and handed over at a formal meeting. The ICMM Chief Executive Officer was being seen to be responsive to the Alternatives and what were referred to as 'Sustainability' issues were gradually introduced onto their corporate indaba agenda.

Helping to bring about the changes was a 'peace maker' – human rights advocate and former first lady of both South Africa and Mozambique, Graça Machel. Acceptable to both the Alternatives and the corporates, Machel, along with the Bishops, provided one of the cross-over points between the Alternative and the Corporate Indaba's. During the latter's 2015 'Sustainable Development' event, she "… diplomatically and deftly addressed the two very different audiences in appropriately different ways", according to Kark (2016) an Australian government participant.

While being very supportive to the Alternatives' cause she was also firm with them, recognizing that they weren't always accurate in their approaches.

The 2015 AMI report stated that she "… challenged and … urged delegates [to ensure] that the impact of advocacy programmes is measurable and that their advocacy efforts are smarter and more strategic, based on hard facts and data" (AMI, 2015). There were good reasons for such remarks for communities haven't always been honest with developers, CSOs haven't always used factual information and there were examples where communities had tried to take advantage of situations.

Across town at the corporate Indaba, Graça Machel also challenged the corporates. She gave a keynote address on harnessing the transformative power of the mining industry on the African continent. She was reported by Senkhane (2015) as telling mining delegates that conducting business as usual "… can produce growth, but it doesn't always produce development, let alone sustainability. More importantly, it doesn't bring equity." The Alternative Mining Indaba report also noted that she spoke strongly that "… governments and companies needed to know that it was no longer 'business as usual'" and that "We have to change the landscape of the mining industry on our continent" (AMI, 2015).

Bello of the South African Institute of International Affairs, expounded on this sentiment in his commentary on the two 2015 meetings when he stated that a 'new normal' in extractive governance was needed and that it:

> … ultimately makes better commercial sense: For the mining industry this 'new normal' requires a profound shift in the mindset beyond the piecemeal transformations of recent years. Corporate leaders must be in the forefront of championing this change, consciously re-writing sustainability into the DNA of the industry (Bello, 2015).

Expressed by people they respected these well-founded sentiments contributed in 2015 to helping stir the corporates out of their traditional mindset, as did the following speaker.

Participating on the Mining Indaba panel held on the trust deficit faced by the mining industry Corporate social practitioner, Pillay of AshantiGold spoke out strongly that "… environment and engagement with our host societies is core business, not the aspiration of activists" *(Republic of Mining*, 2015).

Subsequently there was increasing movement between the two sites in 2015 with Australian government officer Moffat (2016) noting that quite a few corporate Indaba attendees did go across town to the Alternative Indaba. But this was reportedly nowhere near the extent of the reverse interactions that came about, thanks to the invitation of the corporates to the

'Alternatives.' So, from 2015 onwards, there was indeed some cross-pollination, both formal and informal, and possibly some opening of minds. The 2018 Alternative Mining Indaba report (AMI, 2018) describes a range of further developments which occurred. Further evidence comes from a (rough) analysis of the corporate indaba agenda: 2016 about 7% (12 sessions) of all sessions addressed social and environmental issues and in 2018 the percentage had increased slightly to about 9% (22 sessions). 'Sustainability' was the umbrella term liberally being used and such sessions became a regular part of the programme. Hence Alternative Indaba input and voices were finding their way into at least some of the corporate Indaba discussions, even if some of the sessions could have been described as being somewhat superficial.

Some have also questioned how genuine this 'entente cordiale' was and whether corporate efforts were tokenistic and driven by fear of not being seen as good global citizens and thus of losing investors, and not by real commitment. Bond (2015, p. 5) asked whether it was a "snuggle-not-struggle relationship" and noted (p. 5) that "In some cases, civil society degenerates from watchdog to lapdog." Rutledge (2016) of Action Aid, also thought that there was a need for taking care, caustically pointing out that "We are asked to ignore the long history corporations have of assimilating the liberal language of NGOs, while fastidiously bulldozing communities off their land". Given the events still happening at mining sites around the continent that last comment well may well have some truth in it. The very recent situation at Xolobeni comes close to illustrating this latter point (Reynolds, 2018).

One repeated demand from the Alternatives' has been that corporate conferences change their focus on technical and financial matters to attend to social issues and that the 'Alternatives' be permitted to attend and participate. However, it would be unrealistic to expect such a complete change, beyond the Sustainability sessions, because the corporate indaba's serve the legitimate purpose of providing technical and financial information and connecting-up with investors – hardly areas which the Alternatives have expertise in. Also, it is hardly relevant that technologists such as geologists and mining engineers spend time on social matters. What is needed is that senior management (and also investors) get to understand social aspects and what the political, ethical and financial risks are if they are not addressed appropriately. Hence the need for special sessions for this key audience, and, as described, this is happening - to some extent. However, such sessions were reported not to be widely attended, nor held in major venues.

**National and Sub-National AMIs**

There is no space to go into all of the issues discussed at the now numerous national and sub-national AMIs and how there has been a gradual increase in the number of governments which have begun to take the Alternative movement seriously, some even acting on their recommendations. The Chair's Reflections in the 2018 AMI report gives examples from various countries e.g., in Zambia a quarterly forum is now set up to meet with Ministry of Mines to discuss extractive industry issues and a multi-stakeholder's platform set-up with companies, government, communities and CSOs. In Tanzania, the President has met with delegates and is said to been responsive to their appeals, while in Zimbabwe a visit to Marange and Zvishavane communities and the Chinese companies reportedly resulted in rehabilitation of the pits (AMI, 2018).

The subject and roles of the national and sub-national Indaba's is an area that needs to be documented in more detail as they develop their capacities. But the fact they exist, are increasing in number and are also actively trying to change the status quo, illustrates that they are playing an important role. It is apparent that they are using lessons learnt from the Cape Town Indaba, and that their efforts complement those directed at regional levels. However, there is still a long way to go to resolving the many local issues.

**Other Evidence of Increasing CSO/NGO/Community Clout**

Franks (2015) also shows, contrary to common belief, that vulnerable and marginalized people can have huge economic clout. His research described that the cost of delays for big companies was about $20 million a week. The experiences of the Niger delta communities also provide an extreme example of companies not attending in a timely fashion to community issues, especially when they resort, in desperation, to militancy. *Celovic and Iden* (2017) reported militants blew up an underwater section of an oil pipeline which took seven months to get operational again, causing Shell Nigeria to lose $3 billion during this time that. Two days later it was bombed it again.

International agencies which monitor performance can also exert influence. Morrison (2018), Chief Executive, International Human Rights Board, commented on a survey which reported on which companies were serious about human rights in their businesses, a rating which puts public pressure on companies to shape up. He highlighted the key factors which companies needed to address – and which the corporate *Mining Indaba* delegates need to demonstrate. As he said "Knowing and showing an understanding of salient human rights risks, preventing and mitigating

potential and actual negative impacts, and providing effective remedies are what matters."

But there is evidence for increasing awareness in some corporate quarters as illustrated by entries in Annual Information Forms (AIF). One mining company, First Quantum Minerals Ltd. (FQML) used information in its 2016 AIF which weren't included a decade earlier, for they had learnt the hard way (as had their communities). The following inclusions illustrated a maturation in their thinking about the value of following what Morrison was highlighting:

> Failure to manage relationships with local communities, governments and non-government organizations may harm the Company's reputation as well as its ability to bring development projects into production. … [and] Adverse publicity generated by such NGOs or others related to extractive industries generally, or the Company's operations specifically, could have an adverse effect on the Company's reputation and financial condition and may impact the relationship with the communities in which the Company operates (p. 106).

The same company also picked up on the point noted earlier by Graça Machel which recognized that not all complaints made by communities are accurate, and there are potential costs of even those inaccuracies for a company's reputation.

> They [NGOs] may also file complaints with regulators in respect of the … regulatory filings, either in respect of the Company ... Such complaints, regardless of whether they have any substance or basis in fact or law, may have the effect of undermining the confidence of the public or a regulator in the Company … and may adversely affect the price of the Company's securities or the Company's prospects (p. 107).

That is not to under-estimate the seriousness of the many real issues but there was a need for CSOs/NGOs to improve their capacity to accurately document, monitor and report on situations.

FQML also recognized the changing context:

> The international standards on social responsibility, community relations and sustainability against which the Company benchmarks its operations are becoming increasingly stringent and extensive over time, and adherence to them is increasingly scrutinized by regulatory authorities, citizens groups and

> environmental groups, as well as by investors and financial institutions (p.106).

**Understanding**

As Bello (2015) says, there is a need for each side to understand each other much better. "Communities for their part must acknowledge that extractive industries form the bedrock of many African economies". They, and CSOs, also need to recognize that they too use and rely heavily on minerals in their lives e.g. technology and transport, and that they should not just damn mining companies out of sight, which some have done. It is fatuous to stand on one's high horse while using a mobile phone. A more nuanced approach is required.

By the same token the Alternatives have been sorely disappointed, and remain rightly angry that the corporates haven't responded much faster to their demands. From the clear evidence of continuing and fresh cases of serious community issues e.g. Marikana and Xolobeni, it is apparent that, despite nearly a decade of Alternative Mining Indaba's many companies are still not converted to what Bello (2015) called "the new normal in extractive governance". Another indicator of slow responses was that while the corporate Indaba formally received the Alternative's declaration from 2015 onwards, it was reported by John via the *International Mining* (2018) website blog, that it took until 2017 for the South African Chamber of Mines to do so. This reticence appeared to be a reflection on their deep-set resistance to any change and inability to respect and value their own people's situations. It is possible that South Africa is an extreme example, but perhaps not.

It is important to have some understanding about why this situation exists. There appears to be a corporate fear of relinquishing control and perhaps because of the unknown and a lack of understanding of how to manage social matters. Related to that, companies, especially small ones, do not have the capacity and experience to address these far less easily managed matters, unlike the usual technical areas at which they are so adept. Because social aspects are difficult to quantify and cost, and are uncertain, companies may be afraid too that the financial calculations being presented to investors will be shaky, which would be worrying. There may also be a fear of increasing costs. FQML recognized this factor in its 2016 AIF:

> … the costs and management time required to comply with standards of social responsibility, community relations and sustainability … have increased substantially and are expected to further increase over time (FQML, 2017, p. 106).

For example, it was important for companies to recognize, and accept, that just as there was a (sometimes massive) cost to ignoring or under estimating social and environmental matters, there is also a cost to investing (including in staff) in appropriately addressing them. Either way, clutching the investment/company purse too close would not be productive.

One very serious constraint to dealing more effectively with social matters is that of time – a precious commodity in the world of high finance and corporate deadlines and when the need to recoup a very large investment as fast as possible is the over-whelming priority. In contrast, working with communities, developing rapport and understanding of local situations and maintaining close contact for the life time of a mine requires a commitment to the opposite – constituting a major clash in cultures. Here-in lies another cost for the corporates, and the need for a significant change in mindset which will not be easy to achieve.

It is possible too, that the corporates mentally allocate community matters to governments who could be expected to understand local issues - and take responsibility for them. But un-fortunately this is rarely the case, as discussed further in Part Two. The deep-set level of resistance is therefore understandable, to some extent - but no excuse to continue to ride rough-shod over human rights.

**Summary of Part One**

There has been a significant turn-around over the past decade and a half, thanks to the pressures exerted by the 'Alternatives' and their supporters. Despite a ground-swell of efforts to improve the mind-set and capacity of the corporates to take social (and environmental) issues seriously and address them more effectively, the industry, despite much rhetoric, shows few signs of having done so in practice. Reports from countries all over the continent show that there are still many serious human rights and environmental abuses. Such evidence suggests while admirable that the subject is now on the agenda, that the adoption of 'Sustainable' related sessions at the corporate Indaba, may be superficial window dressing. Other mining conferences are even further behind, still turning a blind eye to the social and environmental aspects of mining and continuing to ignore the increasing evidence that there is likely to be an economic cost for their omission. If the human rights and 'social licence' arguments weren't convincing enough, the financial costs should surely motivate companies and thereby ensure the key stated objective of the *Mining Indaba*, that 'the industry remains competitive'.

The 'Alternatives' were a diverse group with diverse interests and capacities and it wasn't always easy to reach common ground with so many

serious issues which ranged from the very local and immediate to national ones. There was also divergence in views about what strategies to use to resolve these issues, in their ability to understand the bigger picture and their capacity to undertake strategic actions.

Consequently, it is something of a miracle that the movement flourished and expanded as it did but its survival clearly demonstrates how important and just their causes were, and still are. It is apparent that the 'Alternatives' are now better armed to deal with the corporates and have become a force to be reckoned with. They have clearly been empowered by education and the existence of social media and by being effectively linked up with public interest lawyers and the media, as well as being supported by some funding agencies. An outstanding issue is how donors can be helped to recognize the importance of their roles and for them to be reliably financially supported to play their important role, if a contribution from government or industry is not forthcoming.

One can question how much expanding the Alternative Mining Indaba agenda (and that of other mining conferences) has helped to educate and overcome corporate resistance. That can only be a starting point – and perhaps part of a public moral pressure for the industry to at least be seen to trying to take the subject seriously, and to change their mind set. Turning a massive 'aircraft carrier' around takes time but given the severity of human rights abuses occurring the industry needs to learn how to take short-cuts to doing so, if not for earning a genuine social licence then for economic reasons.

But the corporates and 'Alternatives' are not the only elements in this story for it is, as Kilcullen (2013) said in another context "it is …a multi-player political eco- system …". The situation is also an indictment on governments and the regional agencies which are meant to be standard bearers and which have failed dismally to help prevent and address the multiple issues. Part Two of this article below will discuss their roles.

The bottom line is that it was shameful that it had to take an Alternative movement to force change — and shameful that the corporate responses have been so slow and defensive in their responses. Their behaviour has demonstrated a blatant lack of respect and valuing of the lives of other human beings in the name of corporate profit, as if we were in a past century. And as Davis (2015) said, the Alternative Indaba's have shown that "The failure of African governments to protect the interests of the people is also cast into stark relief".

History tells us that it has always taken considerable time for social movements to challenge powerful positions and create positive change and

the examples of the Indaba's and the mining communities clearly illustrates this unfortunate fact of life. But history also tells us that such change is possible when people come together as the Alternatives have done.

**PART TWO: African Regional Mining Meetings and Others**

In parallel with the large increase in the number of corporate and 'alternative' mining conferences, there has been a plethora of meetings hosted by regional organizations. Attended by both government and non-government participants some conferences have even been initiated by church bodies (due to space limitations this latter aspect will be discussed only briefly). The regional conferences have also been focussed on exploring the issues arising from the large increase in mining on the continent and how to implement the AMV.

Part Two here describes and provides a commentary on the activities of regional agencies, and others, and how they relate to those of the corporate and 'alternative' conferences described above in Part One.

**Africa Mining Vision**

Underpinning the various regional meetings has been the African Mining Vision (AMV) which was developed under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Union (AU). The document, which was approved in 2009, was informed by a plethora of sub-regional, continental and global initiatives, including the Africa Mining Partnership's Sustainable Development Charter and Mining Policy Framework and the International Study Group (ISG) Report to Review Africa's Mining Regimes (see UNECA, 2011). In short, the aim of the AMV was to support 'Transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources to under-pin broad based sustainable growth and socio-economic development' (UNECA, 2018a). Its Action Plan was approved in 2011.

There were varying views about the value of the AMV. A Backgrounder prepared by the Africa Canada Forum (2013) for the Canadian government's attendance at the 2013 Cape Town *Mining Indaba* provides a useful overview and critical analysis of the AMV in relation to Canadian approaches to the extractive industry on the continent in which they are heavily involved. Paraphrasing, the article noted the AMV's innovative nature, in the way it established how mining can better contribute to sustainable local, national and regional development by using minerals to catalyse broad based development and foster economic diversification.

Makore (2014), the Zimbabwean Coordinator of Publish What You Pay campaign, was enthusiastic about the Vision, saying that "It represented the highest political affirmation that there was a need for a paradigm shift in terms of Africa's current mineral regime". But it was also pointed out in the Lusaka 2014 five years review meeting Concept Note (SARW, 2014) that "These developments notwithstanding, it is fair to say that there is not yet a single country where mobilization and organization around the reform agenda of the AMV is an overtly dominant political influence" (SARW, 2014). Later Kabemba (2017) was sceptical about how meaningful agreements such as the AMV were, noting in an article for the *Daily Maverick* that "Previous plans such as the Abuja treaty and the Lagos Plan of Action did not get traction." Some CSOs representatives at the Alternative Indaba's have also been critical of the AMV because it did not recognize the need to promote non-mining options for economic development, nor the right for communities to say no to mining or to address the impact of large-scale mining on the environment. Action Aid's 2017 report on the AMV was much more critical (Action Aid, 2017).

Thompson (2013) who was present at the 2013 Alternative Indaba also noted the views of participants about the AMV, saying that some felt that its existence was a major achievement while others felt that it was 'full of nice words' but feared "… that governments cannot muster the political will to pursue and implement it." Others anticipated that it would be implemented only very selectively, with most emphasis being put on collecting more revenue for central government coffers.

***Other Mining Related Regional Mechanisms, Agreements and Plans***

The International Study Group (ISG) on Africa's Mineral Regimes report (UNECA, 2011) provides an overview of related mechanisms and declarations which have tended to focus on the harmonization of policies, laws, information systems, human resource development, occupational health and safety, programmes and strategies. The mechanisms include the eight African regional economic communities, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Peer Review Mechanism of 2003 and the African Mining Partnership of 2004. The AU based in Addis Ababa is the over-seeing body. The continent has a multiplicity of agreements and plans which at least partially address mining related issues, including African (Banjul) Charter on Human and People's Rights of 1981, the Durban Declaration of 1997 emphasizing harmonization of policies and collaboration in the minerals (and energy) sector; the NEPAD's mining objectives of 2000; the African Development Bank's (AfDB) 2007 Natural

Resources Report, the AfDB's African Natural Resources Centre Strategy of 2015 and the African Mineral Governance Monitoring Framework (2017).

***Regional Agencies Supporting Improvements in the Natural Resource Sector***

Two regional agencies have been created to help support implementation of the AMV and have held conferences and skill building workshops. Others already existed and are also contributing to regional capacity building.

*African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC):* A regional body established in December 2013 to help implementation of the AMV, AMDC is based in Addis Ababa, with staff in five regional offices (central, northern, eastern, southern and western). Paraphrased, its mission is to work with member states and their national and regional organisations to promote the transformative role of mineral resources in the development of the continent through increased economic and social linkages. It provides guidance, standards and technical assistance for AMV-compliant strategies. It also acts as a focal point for best practice and a continental forum for countries, stakeholders and donors to discuss innovative ways to increase mining's contribution to sustainable development and poverty reduction in Africa.

*African Natural Resources Center* (ANRC): According to its website (ANRC, nd), the ANRC, which is based in Abidjan, was established in 2014 under the auspices of the African Development Bank with its role being to build capacity of member countries to manage natural resources, fisheries and forestry, lands and water i.e. is not just focussed on mining. The organization provides capacity development, policy advice and advocacy and works directly with governments, CSOs, the private sector, development partners and African regional economic blocks. It also provides technical input to the AMDC steering committee. Part of its responsibilities are to advise on the effective use of the financial resource wealth generated from oil, gas and minerals, including development of value chains and integrated use of infrastructure. ANRC interacts with the Alternative Indaba.

*UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA):* In 2007, about the time when the AMV was being developed), ECA hosted 'The Big Table' According to the meeting report 'Managing Africa's Natural Resources for Growth and Poverty Reduction' (UNECA, 2007) the gathering sought to advance discussions on the challenges of effectively managing Africa's natural resources for growth and poverty reduction on the continent and discussed an agenda for future action. Attending were Ministers and senior officials from eleven African countries and high-level representatives from four Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries,

and regional and international organizations. Representatives of research centres, the private sector, and NGOs also attended. ECA has more recently provided capacity building for senior policy makers and other stakeholders, including in contract negotiation.

*UNECA African Centre for Gender:* Another regional body with an interest in mining is the African Centre for Gender (ACG) which, according to its website "… provides technical support to member states to address gender inequality and women's empowerment through developing tools and providing evidence for policy formulation and effective implementation. It also facilitates the tracking and monitoring of the implementation of the agreed commitments and declarations." (UNECA, 2018b) The work of the Centre includes initiatives such as time-use studies, gender and macro-economic modelling, and gender statistics. An example of its involvement in the mining sector was a session on 'Shedding light on women in artisanal and small-scale mining' at the 2016 *Mining Indaba* in Cape Town.

*ACP/EU/UNDP*: The African, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) Group of States, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched 'A Development Minerals Programme' to support the low-value minerals and materials sector in the ACP. The sector includes the mining of construction materials, dimension stones, industrial minerals and low-grade metals and precious stones. It recognizes that these areas have close links with local economies and have the potential to generate more local jobs, and can, therefore, have a greater impact on reducing poverty. African countries are a major focus for its capacity building work (UNDP, 2015).

*Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI):* Although an international rather than a regional organization the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) also plays an African regional role. Paraphrased from its website, (NRGI, 2014) the organization is an independent, non-profit organization which provides policy advice and advocacy infused with lessons learned in the field and with insights developed through rigorous research. It grew out of a merger between the Revenue Watch Institute (founded in 2002) as a programme of the Open Society Institute and the Natural Resource Charter in 2014. It shares knowledge and experience freely with policymakers, accountability actors, and the global campaign for improved international norms. Fifteen African countries are of a focus for its work and the organization works with community-level civil society groups, media, the private sector, governments and the leaders of global institutions. It has Africa Anglophone and Francophone hubs.

**Regional Meetings**

The regional meetings held have involved both government officials and those focussed on empowering civil society to assist implementation of the AMV, and include the following:

***Inter-Governmental Fora***

*Annual Ministerial Level Meetings*: The region's ministers with responsibilities for mining have a number of coordinating mechanisms, the main one being the annual ministers' conferences, the first one being held in 1996 before the rate of mining accelerated. The UNECA report (2000) on one such meeting provides an outline of the type of subjects discussed.

*Extraordinary Ministerial Meetings:* On occasions special meetings are also held at the ministerial level such as the Extraordinary Conference of African Ministers of Mineral Resources held at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, organized by the African Union Commission (AUC) in 2014. According to the report of the meeting (AUC, 2014) the objective was to discuss and ensure ownership by African countries of the newly created AMDC. Experts were also gathered there to develop an institutional and sustainable framework for the establishment of the new agency. The meeting was attended by representatives of AU member states, the Regional Economic Communities, UNECA, UNDP and other African Union key partners.

One speech quoted in the report reinforced the message being related by CSOs and which was unusually frank and sounded more like something they would have said, than coming from government. The Zimbabwe Minister for Mines described Africa's mineral wealth, then:

> … deplored the fact that in spite of this rich mineralization, African people are still in poverty. Based on this flawed framework, most of the mining deals and activities on the continent have been opaque and detrimental to Africans. Corruption by both Public and Private sector players has compounded the malaise. Secondly, mining in Africa has been largely extractive without beneficiation or value addition. This has led to African countries exporting cheaply priced raw commodities, while importing expensive refined products.

*Inter-Sectoral Ministerial Meetings*: Ministers responsible for other sectors related to mining also meet e.g. the first meeting of Ministers for Health and the Environment formulated the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa, on 29 August 2008. It was attended by 300 people, including twenty-two ministers for the environment and twenty-six

health ministers. The bulletin published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (2008) noted that the meeting aimed to obtain commitment for reducing environmental threats to health and sustainable development. The bulletin also listed the many and varied issues, declarations and agencies involved, which again emphasise the complexity of sustainability issues, many of which are related to mining. The Libreville Declaration prepared by WHO/UNEP (2008) itself notes "… the emergence of new environmental risks (climate change, industrial expansion, and new technologies) presents new threats to public health."

*African Mining Partnership Inter-Governmental Forum* (AMPIGF): Another annual forum for mining ministries is the Inter-Governmental Forum which arose out of the partnership of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. As described by Bourassa (no date) the Forum was initiated in 2004 through the Global Dialogue promoted by South Africa and Canada as a contribution to achieving sustainable development and meets annually. Participants include government mining ministry experts as well as stakeholders, including from the industry. Globally membership includes sixty countries, many being African. The Partnership's role is voluntary, advisory and consultative, it collaborates closely with UN agencies and it provides an opportunity for sharing of experiences and makes recommendations on best practices regarding social, environmental and economic issues. The programme for the 2017 meeting can be found at AMPIGF (2017).

*Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Meetings*: Mining ministers and government technical staff are also involved in ACP meetings, including through the ACP-EU Development Minerals Programme which was initiated in 2012. The UNDP Inception Report (2015) provides an overview of its activities.

*European Union (EU)/Commission/African Union*: An EU/AU (2014) press item describes another example of technical cooperation on natural resources including discussions on minerals, infrastructure and investment. The activities are part of the Joint Africa/EU Strategy.

**Regional Conferences Supporting Civil Society**

A number of conferences have also been hosted by regional agencies since 2012 specifically to support the involvement of civil society in the implementation of the AMV. The meetings included the following, with some of the key points raised highlighted:

*African Mining: From Boom and Dislocation to Boom and Transformation, The Economic Commission for Africa Consultative*

*Meeting, June 2012, Accra:* According to the UNECA press release (UNECA, 2012) it was attended by CSO participants from twelve countries, as well as representatives of regional and UN technical agencies. Organized by the African Initiative on Mining, Environment and Society (AIMES) and the Africa section of the International Trade Union Confederation, it had financial and technical support from AusAID and ECA. The meeting sought to strengthen the understanding of the AMV and its action plan among CSOs and provided a platform for them to strategize on their advocacy work from a more knowledgeable position on the AMV and its processes.

*14th AIMES Review and Strategy Meeting, The Africa Mining Vision: From Promise to Realization, August 2013, Accra:* According to the Third World Network Africa news item (TWNA, 2013) it was hosted by AIMES and attended by forty representatives of CSO's and key social constituencies from across Africa in order to develop a common perspectives on the challenges of realizing the African Mining Vision. The objective of the conference was to: increase members' knowledge of the content and processes around ongoing mining reform agenda at various levels; define an advocacy agenda and strategy for the network and agree on ways of strengthening AIMES and enhancing its outreach to other networks and constituencies.

*Building Constituency for the Realisation of the African Mining Vision (AMV), May 2014, Johannesburg*: The conference was organised by the Third World Network Africa (TWNA), the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and SARW. According to the organizer's report (see TWNA, 2014) thirty-five CSO activists, trade unionists and journalists participated. The meeting had a similar goal to that of the Accra meeting. Discussions focussed on various aspects of the AMV, namely its context and key features; tax regimes and illicit financial flows; community concerns; gender aspects; mining sector linkages and clusters; labour issues and collaboration among trade unions, CSOs and journalists.

Some points were made which are worth mentioning: the speaker of the first session, Graham, "… offered a cautionary analysis about the stop-start reform efforts of the past few years and what that says about the political will of governments" (TWNA, 2014, p.2). The second speaker from UNECA listed the following amongst the key factors required for success of the AMV, including: conducive policy space, political will, state capacity and the development of requisite alliances (TWNA, 2014,p. 2). It was noted in the session on tax that it was a complicated area; that if steps outlined in the AMV were followed the reports of financial mismanagement would be

solved; that unfavourable contracts should be re-negotiated and that corruption was a major issue (TWNA, 2014, pp. 5 and 6).

Kabemba was reported as noting (quoted in TWNA, 2014, p.6) "… that mining has not fulfilled its promised poverty reduction role…". He also pointed out (p.7) that some desirable initiatives to advance the interests of communities, such as the allocation of part of mining revenue through, for example, Sovereign Funds and Trusts, suffered from lack of, or poor, implementation.

Hargreaves (cited in TWNA, 2014, pp.7-10) was reported to have provided a more academically oriented description of 'extractivism', including how it had generated considerable resistance e.g. the platinum workers strike and the Marikina massacre, because of the nexus between ruling party, state and corporates. It was stated that the AMV contained significant advances to hold corporates accountable and increase revenue for public services and a national development agenda but that the 'extractivist' model remained largely un-transformed. The speaker also made a very important point that was not raised elsewhere i.e. that if proper cost benefit analysis was done [ie including the cost to the environment and community] most projects would not provide the necessary returns on investment and would not proceed to implementation. It was also noted that the AMV does not demand an end to mining but that it be conducted on very different terms. It was also said to lack a gender analysis and attention to climate change, although it was also indicated by another participant that these issues were partly dealt within the 2011 Action Plan (TWNA, 2014, pp.7-10).

The discussions were reported to be wide ranging and that participants learnt a lot about the AMV and the challenges and complexities of implementing its plan, and that they were inspired to think about how they could contribute to that process.

*Five Years of the Africa Mining Vision: Strengthening Networking of CSOs and Social Constituencies for More Effective Policy Influence, November 2014, Lusaka*: According to SARW's report (2014) it was organized by the Third World Network-Africa (the secretariat of AIMES.) Attendees included UNECA, AMDC, UN Conference on Trade and Development, Mapungubwe Institute, TWNA, SARW and Citizens for a Better Environment. Thirty-five activists and trade unionists attended. It was purposefully held immediately before the Extraordinary Conference of African Ministers of Mineral Resources held at Victoria Falls (although it was not stated how the findings were fed into the Ministerial event).

SARW reported that the meeting aimed to evaluate the progress in implementing the AMV and to discuss ways of strengthening networking

among Pan-African networks and organizations in order to contribute to the realization of the Vision. The Concept Note made an important point - that "The AMV and its Action Plan embody key reform demands that CSOs and various social constituencies had been making in respect of the mining regimes prevailing across Africa …". This wasn't entirely true and a question also to be answered was how far had implementation gone for what had been included?

The programme for the meeting included: official perspectives on the record of AMV implementation; the role of the AMDC; regional activities, progress and challenges; perspectives on implementation; implications of global mineral trends for the AMV agenda; competing mineral governance frameworks and fragmented African responses; funding; what needs to be done and moving towards an agenda for citizens' activism and policy engagement on the AMV

The description of the AMV was reported to be particularly appreciated by participants and set the scene for the wide-ranging discussion. Kabemba (2014) of SARW, in concluding Session Three underlined "… that the AMV and its Action Plan are progressive and people centred and give civil society a legal instrument on which to base its demands." But he added that "The problem with Africa however, was said to be the disjuncture between policy and implementation." The conclusions appeared to be similar to those of other conferences – and not very hopeful that matters were improving.

*The Pan-African Conference for Civil Society Organisations to promote public participation in natural resources policy, November 2015, Johannesburg*: The African Development Bank Group news item (2015) reported that funding was provided by the Graça Machel Trust and that forty-five CSO representatives from thirty African countries were brought together to "… to discuss ways to foster inclusive and sustainable development through public participation in natural resources policy formulation." According to the report prepared after the event by ANRC (2015b) the conference provided a platform to discuss key challenges and opportunities for consultative dialogue between CSOs, governments and investors. The discussions focused on physical and social environmental protection, land and resources development, accountability and gender equity. It was also expected to "… explore modalities for the provision of support and working with CSOs …". According to the news item, both Machel and Khama (the latter the ANRC Director) were reported as noting that NGOs were the voice of the people and had a duty to represent them and broker trust between them and government and investors i.e. they were legitimizing the role of CSOs

(and tactfully not pointing out that they were picking up the slack left by governments).

Dr Moyo of the Mandela Institute for Development Studies raised a challenging point. Commenting about the funding of CSOs, he point out that they "had to be seen as legitimate by local governments and should therefore be very careful in sourcing the bulk of the funding from outside the continent … because many governments are of the view that international funders have their own negative, foreign driven agenda in funding African CSOs." Consequently, he felt that the matter "of raising funds locally had to be addressed as a matter of urgency." But it was not described in the short news report where such local resources might be available.

The full meeting report (ANRC, 2015) concluded that the event had been a useful first step but that the program focus required more thought, especially since working trans-continentally was expensive and required a very strategic approach in order to cater efficiently for diverse constituents and needs. It was decided that information dissemination was an important first step, with the creation of "a data base of case studies, knowledge tools, laws, policy reviews and related pieces of practical information." It was thought that such information could usefully be the foundation for constructive dialogue between CSOs, constituents and policy makers. The second step was to identify potential partners at the regional and country level and also collective initiatives which could capacitate CSOs in specific environments. The need for transparency and accountability amongst CSOs was also mentioned, as was the need for CSOs to be knowledgeable about national policies and laws governing natural resources and land tenure.

**Other Organizations/Churches**

During this intensive period other organizations also provided support to countries to improve their management of natural resources, including bilateral donors such as Australia and the EU, and international organizations such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and World Bank. Members of the Churches too, as part of the CSO movement, were also active in raising issues, both on the ground with the help of local priests and through groups such as Caritas, as well as through the support and advocacy interventions of Bishops. In addition, concerned about global problems associated with mining, a major ecumenical conference on mining was held in Toronto in 2011 (Primate's World Relief Fund, 2011). The following year the Zambian Council of Churches held a one-day Mining Stakeholders' meeting in Lusaka. The Vatican also became involved in 2015, hosting a three-day meeting and releasing a Papal encyclical entitled *Laudato Si*, or 'On Care for

Our Common Home' (Vatican, 2015). This document, although it was not just Africa nor entirely mining focused, highlighted the Church's concerns about the need to protect the rights of communities and the environment.

**Discussion**

The above description only provides part of the picture of post-AMV activities but they did raise a number of key points. This discussion is limited by space to a few key aspects:

*Coordination*: It is also apparent from the above descriptions that there is an 'alphabet soup' of organizations, both government and non-government, involved at the regional level, making for a very crowded scene. Consequently, a major issue is how to ensure effective coordination and cooperation between these organizations and prevent overlap and duplication of effort – and also to ensure understanding of each other's situations and contributions. This need does not just apply to the mining focussed sector but also to sectors which are closely related to it e.g. health, continental trade, environmental protection, industrialization, energy and transport corridors and regional infrastructure. These complex factors present considerable obstacles to smooth implementation.

*The African Mining Vision*: As admirable as the AMV objectives and implementation attempts have been, progress is reported to have been slow, un-even or even non-existent in some areas. This was despite the plethora of agreements and conferences which have taken place over the past decade or so and the various country-specific follow-up activities which would have taken place. This situation is clearly evidenced, at least partly, by the continuation of so many serious problems reported by many communities in many countries, as described above in Part 1. The situation is also recognized by governments and regional organizations themselves, as expressively described by the Zimbabwe Minister at the 2014 Victoria Falls meeting, as described above. Kabemba noted at the 2014 Building Constituency meeting (TWNA, 2014) that the AMDC was fully donor funded, illustrating the lack of commitment by African countries to this important focal point for action (but this is not unusual for AU subsidiaries).

*Accountability*: An astute participant at the 2015 Johannesburg Pan African 'Realization' meeting asked what would happen if a country chooses not to comply with the AMV? (ADBG, 2015, p. 6). No response was provided but the answer presumably is, nothing, as there is no official form of sanction for failing to follow the requirements. Ginindza (2015) cited Open Society Foundation's Grey-Johnson as also raising an important point about the role of regional bodies in ensuring maintenance of standards, He

even went as far as saying that "… the most culpable organisation exploiting mining communities was the AU, which had not implemented the conventions and principles that it had ratified." and that "There is lack of political will which leaves these principles merely on paper and it makes it easy for external forces such as companies to exploit and do as they please" (p. 3). It seems to be left up to the CSOs, yet again, with the help of the media, to shame governments into action.

*Political Will and corruption*: It is also apparent from the experiences of many countries that the lack of political will to ensure active follow-up and the widespread presence of corruption at many levels have contributed to the slow rate of progress. The ISG Report (UNECA, 2011) failed to mention that while African countries as a whole, by and large, have not benefitted significantly from their minerals, this was not true for local elites. Members of this group has done very well from their involvement in the multiple regional organizations, mine boards, mine shares, government management, contracts for goods and services, either directly mine related, or indirect, and some (at various levels) from corrupt practices within the industry. Such an elite may well prefer maintenance of the status quo and be in no hurry for reform and may even actively undermine such processes.

Also, little sense of preserving benefits for the long term appears to exist - rather, there is a desperate focus by country leadership on 'making hay while the sun shines', and that mining money is easy money to be grabbed regardless of the cost to local communities and the environment.

*No Mining Option*: The point raised by CSOs about the AMV failing to recognize the need to also consider non-mining options for economic development was important. In the lust for short-term financial gains there appears to be a presumption that mining will be approved, as if all inevitable issues will somehow magically be resolved by the company. For example, some geographical areas for environmental reasons should probably never be mined e.g. fragile (and indigenous) territories such as Namibia and places with extra-ordinary flora and fauna like Madagascar. These are places where other far less damaging alternative economic opportunities ought to be strongly supported even though they might be slower and more difficult to implement. There also appears to be little recognition of the right of communities to say no to mining for cultural and other related reasons, such as those at Xoboleni in South Africa, where most community members have been trying to refuse sand mining. In Zambia the President has the right to over-rule any such local opposition 'in the national interest.'

*Climate Change*: Bond (2015) has also pointed out the significance of mining's high energy (and one could add water) usage, often in places where

they are already in short supply, and the industry's contribution to climate change, an issue which he felt the CSOs in Cape Town were being remiss in not picking up on. These aspects need to be raised much more frequently - and not get lost in the enthusiasm for the 'mining is worth the cost' mantra which currently prevails. There is also an associated issue where governments provide companies with subsidised electricity but does not do so for its own poor people.

*Increased National Benefits*: One of the major issues raised at conferences was the need to increase national benefits from mining. Kabemba (2017) discusses the issues and what needs to be done. Such steps mean, among others, increasing transparency of contracts and allocations of a fair share of benefits (whatever the definition of a fair share is), but also improving reliability of legislation to ensure investor confidence. The latter has been a constant problem in some countries over the past decade.

An important question is why African countries have not been obtaining a larger share of the of mining royalties. Zambian journalist Mbulo reported *Africa Confidential* editor Patrick Smith as recommending that people read UNECA's (2015) report on illicit financial flows, (also known as the Mbeki Report), to see the extent to which the continent was ripping itself off by not obtaining a greater share of profits. Going further, Mbulo quoted Smith as saying "Why is that done? It's done because of corruption," Smith adding that "Corruption is a facilitation payment for a bigger crime which is under-selling the resources of Africa, therefore undermining economies." (Smith, cited in Mbulo, 2016)

But the view that an increased share will be beneficial for a country's people needs to come with a warning. Simply increasing government's share and reducing the outflow will not necessarily ensure a better deal for communities for there is a high risk that the vested interests of the elite may determine that they are diverted elsewhere. An example comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo's successful efforts to out-manoeuvre the mining corporates in 2016/18 to improve the national share - which sounds like a positive development. In 2018 Paydirt reported the story with the headlines 'How Congo faced down world's biggest miners' and 'Congo caught out by Kabila stance' (*Paydirt Media*, 2018). However, Kabemba and Kambale (2018) suggest that this success was achieved in a way which will ensure that the returns "will remain in a few select hands…", as they have done in the past. Evidence that all may not be well with new agreements to increase government's share comes from an even more recent example where Congolese Mining Minister Kabwelulu, speaking at a Kolwezi mining conference, was quoted by Casey (2018) (if accurately reported) as very

firmly saying that: "It is not the place of any participating party, whether civil society, mining companies or even the government to try to call into question the text governing the mining sector …".

While one can admire a Minister for standing up to the corporates, the statement that not even government (let alone civil society) can question the new legislation is worrying, to say the least. The other likelihood, as seen in a number of countries, including Zambia, Zimbabwe and Kenya, is that mining income is an easily controllable source of income for helping a ruling party to retain power. The diversion of such income (away from social and other sectors) readily enables the building up – and buying off, of the armed services and police, thereby allowing them to use intimidation and force to pervert democratic processes.

Also, in regard to another problematic aspect of mineral wealth Berman *et al* (2017) reported that "We find a strongly significant and quantitatively large impact of mining activities on the likelihood of conflict incidences." Their findings also suggest that "… the historical rise in mineral prices (commodity super-cycle) might explain up to one-fourth of the average level of violence across African countries over the period [1997-2010]". This is another reason why one shouldn't presume that increased mining wealth will be good for a country.

*Multiplicity of Constraints*: The reality is that the issues involved are complex and multi-sectoral and consequently cannot be solved over-night. For example, any revision of national legislation or policy development is, by its very nature, a tedious and lengthy process. Another issue is that the human resource capacity of governments necessary to improve its governance of natural resources is often weak and made worse by the extent of the African 'brain drain'. This movement includes not just loss of the best-educated to overseas countries but also losses of staff from government to mining companies, especially given that they offer much higher salaries. The issues run across sectors and all levels of government and communities and they are not just national but also regional, which complicates matters even further.

*Achievements:* By the same token there have been some achievements. Supporting policies and infrastructure have been put in place, with the establishment of the AMDC and the ANRC and some substantive technical support provided to countries. However, they are probably a drop in the ocean given the extent of the need. It is also wondered how much conference participants, including ministers, have actively followed-up when they returned home, and if resources were available for them to do so.

Another achievement has been an increasing number of countries signing up to the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), which has been strongly supported by donors. According to its *Progress Report* (2018) there has been a gradually increasing membership and improvements in financial openness. However, not all countries have maintained their EITI compliancy status or membership and still only about half of African countries have signed up. Further research into country specific outcomes, such as the amount of improved legislation and policies might reveal some progress, although how many are just on paper and not in practice is another matter.

In some respects too there has also been some positive progress regarding social matters which have received much more recognition. This included public recognition of the importance of the role of CSOs, with the AMV, the AfDB Strategy and by both Machel and Khama. UNECA (2011) also noted in its report on Minerals and Africa's Development, how their role was now recognized and that CSOs were "… filling gaps in enterprises and state organizations …". Even government officials were being seen to be taking note of what CSOs were saying, albeit somewhat grudgingly, as were the corporates.

Evidence is also provided by the regional agencies holding various conferences devoted to strengthening CSO capacity, including helping to address what Graça Machel mentioned in Cape Town about them needing to be more factual and strategic in their advocacy work.

*Continuing issues:* But as Bishop Seoka pointed out at the 2015 Alternative Indaba in Cape Town, there were still many very serious problems occurring, as there were reported to be in subsequent years:

> Although we have raised these matters for some years, we continue to learn of the continued impoverishment of mining communities, and labour sending communities. These stand in stark contrast to the massive profits of the share-holders and chief executive officers.
>
> Communities continue to cry out against the new rush for mining and extractives profits, which defy all norms of fair play, consultations and negotiations with communities. We have observed a blatant disregard for human rights and a continued externalisation of mining costs (Seoka, 2015).

In hindsight one could also add that despite the fact that the CSO campaigns have revved up considerably since 2011, and they have been involved in various regional conferences the above conclusion largely remains current in 2018 – and one could well ask why.

It was also observed that the current situation of increased collaboration with governments posed a dilemma for CSOs, as described in the Concept Note for the 2014 Five Years review meeting in Lusaka:

> This convergence of the new official direction with demands from society has delegitimized the hostility with which official circles in many African countries tend to respond to reform demands from society. [but] This objective fact has however not improved the stance of key state institutions in many countries towards advocacy pressure from CSOs and unions. Thus … struggles continue…. (SARW, 2014a).

On the other hand, there are examples of communities, with legal support, flexing their muscles as Bruce et al (2017) discuss in their paper about how three South African community networks have taken the government to court over weaknesses in its content and lack of consultation about the new Mining Charter.

**Conclusions on Agreements and Regional Conferences**

The approval of the AMV and its Action Plan, and the establishment of the AMDC and the ANRC, the various related agreements and the plethora of regional meetings, illustrate that the right sentiments are being expressed by the AU and African leadership. Also, support has been given to CSOs and government technocrats to improve their capacity to address mining issues. The technical support meetings presumably have had concrete outcomes, but it is not clear if the same can be said for the ministerial level meetings.

However, it could be said that these efforts have been too little and too late, for while the mining boom started in the early 2000s (and there was much going on before that) the African Mining Vision only came into place in 2009 and its Action Plan in 2011. The AMDC was put in place only in 2012 and is still not fully functional, while the AfDB unit ANRC was only established in 2014. Despite the many pressing needs and the many conferences that have been held, progress has been slow, almost 'glacial'!

It is also apparent that implementation is far from being comprehensively, effectively and urgently carried out, as reports from the Alternative Indaba's and the media show, and about which the Zimbabwean Mining Minister at least, was well aware. In some respects this situation was understandable, given the challenges and complexities involved. In other respects it was inexcusable that government leaders haven't been sufficiently active in providing the political will needed given that people's livelihoods and well-

being are affected and that there is so much poverty to alleviate, especially amongst mining communities.

"Much ado about responsible mining in Africa yields few results", as Malcolm Damon (2017) of the Economic Justice Network wrote about the 2017 Alternative Mining Indaba after listening to stories from mining communities such as Marikana. As he said, "Africa is still burdened and not blessed by its natural resources."

**Conclusions Regarding All Mining Conferences**

What is particularly striking from this overview of the past decade and a half of the conference scene is just how many are now being held each year, of all types, and how many different types of players are involved. Especially impressive has been the increase in the number and locations of Alternative indaba's, including much involvement of the churches. They have had significant impact on at least some of the corporate conferences and governments. It is also notable how regional subsidiaries were created to provide technical support to AU member countries and their recognition of the important role of CSOs.

The increase in the number of conferences being held has clearly enabled a significant continent-wide public airing of the issues surrounding mining and the need, and urgency, to improve the situation, both for countries and their mining communities. Also, African conferences have contributed to the global movement to improve the social and environmental aspects of mining.

Thanks to the persistence of the 'Alternatives' (regrettably not governments) since 2010 it is apparent the corporates can no longer ignore the social aspects of mining or the role of CSOs – which many had been doing despite developments promoted by ICMM and others. As an *InfoMine* (2015) commentator said about a forthcoming corporate conference "Societal expectations are becoming more exacting … but it is right and proper that the mining industry rises to the challenge". While this was rather magnanimously stated, it does illustrate the extent of pressure being exerted on the corporates by civil society by 2015, and their recognition of the risks to their projects if they do not do cooperate. However, the response of corporates to the issues raised could be interpreted as being more due to fear of negative publicity, and of financial losses and delays than to any genuine changes in mind-set. This is likely to be due to the inherent clash of cultures, as mining developments need to move fast while social aspects are invariably complex and slow-moving and few mining companies (at least in the past) had the appropriate social skills and knowledge amongst their skill sets.

Many smaller ones still do not. Consequently, it is apparent there is still much more work to be done with, and by, corporates.

The developments do indicate that there has been a slight change in the balance of power. However, there is still a very long way to go as evidenced by the continuing reports of significant problems occurring. Also, with the many efforts to coordinate diverse players and develop regional and country plans there appears to be a risk that the immediate needs of those downstream may be neglected for example, those communities whose lives are currently being negatively affected by mining. There is obviously a need to exert a careful balance of attention between the different levels.

While the AU has the major responsibility for overseeing many of these developments it has a complex set of (unruly?) players to orchestrate, and as has been pointed out, it lacks the teeth to enforce action. Consequently, the only real pressure on governments to implement AMV objectives comes from the CSOs, not from the AU. The independent media has also played an important role, especially in amplifying the CSO/community issues and has been an effective tool for making the corporates, and government, take notice. Social media too, is increasingly helping CSOs with their work while an independent judiciary will be important in following up effectively on cases brought to justice.

It became clear from this review that the partner primarily responsible for making significant changes to the mining sector were governments and how little effort they seemed to be making to proactively be doing so at the country level. They appeared to have largely abdicated responsibility for ensuring action, with ministers largely being enticers and guests at conferences, not initiators of corrective actions, nor being honest about the realities pertaining to their country's situation. As journalist Davis (2015) observed from the 2015 AMI "The failure of African governments to protect the interests of their people is … cast into stark relief."

Good (2018) also reminds of government officials and military leaders who sometimes have very close (and personal) links to mining companies, such as in Botswana with DeBeers, Nigeria with Shell, Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF with the Marange fields and South Africa's Ramphosa with Lonmin. In such situations, a government is hardly likely to support community interests over their own, and they remind us of the point made earlier about the prevalence of corruption in such highly profitable enterprises. But a different aspect related to governments' involvement is that of sectoral priorities and which ones are favoured. An example from South Africa illustrates – and yet again the focus is on easy, immediate gains and the damning of the future:

> An official at water affairs says the department struggles to get other departments to respect the need to protect water sources. "There is a real disconnect. We're this incredibly water-scarce country but, whenever we try to ensure our water is preserved, we get told that there are other realities at play (Kings, 2015).

It is also obvious that supporting mining, with the corporates doing most of the work, is a relatively easy way to increase national revenue and it is only too easy for them to ignore the real costs, especially when other income generating alternatives are far less remunerative and require much more work. Being able to attend the many and invariably costly conferences, where fancy hotels, jolly group photos and trips to the Falls and Table Mountain are enjoyable and attractive - and make it easy to ignore and forget the harsh realities being experienced by so many mining communities around the continent. It is much easier to talk and develop policies and declarations than to 'walk the talk'. As Kabemba was quoted as saying there is a "… disjuncture between policy and implementation" (TWNA, 2014, p. 7).

However, the situation is gradually improving with laws and policies becoming more appropriate and social aspects increasingly being taken into account, at least in some countries, and to varying extents. Civil Society, even though uneven in its capacities, has every right to be proud of its efforts over the past decade or so. But it still has strong grounds for complaining bitterly along with the affected communities.

The harsh reality is that reforming the mining arena is a complex and time-consuming set of tasks and not easy to address, even in the best of circumstances. Given the complexities it would be naïve to expect a full transformation, even within a decade. However, that is not to excuse nefarious, neglectful, obstructive and damaging behaviour by elites – which must be a priority to address and requires keeping 'the heat' on to turn that part of the system around.

To conclude in the words of South African activist, Percy Makombe of the Economic Justice Network : "These communities seek justice, not to be rich. Surely that is not too much to ask?" (quoted in Masango, 2010, p.9).

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# Africa and the Rhetoric of Good Governance

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**Abstract**

Judging by their public statements everyone in Africa is in favour of good governance: governments, public servants, business people, civil society, donors and other international organizations. There are two problems with this positive view. Firstly, there are as many different definitions of good governance as there are organisations, with the multiple verbal differences reflecting real variations in how organizations and individuals wish to see their worlds shaped. Secondly, for all of these players there are vast gaps between the rhetoric and the reality, depending on the political context, struggles over access to power and opportunities for illicit material gains. In the public shadow play, African Union (AU) and donor treaties and charters and national plans, programmes and laws rule the world. In the lived reality, daily faced by the masses, it is every one for them self and the leaders with the most followers beholden to them and the biggest Swiss bank accounts win. The cases of governance in Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Uganda are examined to explore the gap between rhetoric and reality, keeping in mind the real consequences for the forgotten villagers and slum dwellers of Africa who have never heard of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance adopted by the AU in 2007.

## Introduction

Bad governance equals assassinations, sacking of villages, violence, poverty and famine. Good governance results in prosperous cities, cultivated lands and general prosperity. These accounts are not from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) describing the Congo or North Eastern Nigeria. They are from a series of murals of Sienna, Italy painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti back in 1338-9 commissioned by the Council of Nine as propaganda for a 'wise ruler'. It would appear that nothing much has changed over the centuries.

It was a great relief to diplomats and aid officials when 'governance' became a term in common usage in the 1980s. Sitting across from a government minister and telling him (very rarely her) that his personal corruption and his government's turpitude had reached unacceptable levels had tended to appear impolite, crass and even physically dangerous. Conversations about good governance, however, are much easier to negotiate, with both sides agreeing on the importance of having a goal to attain a certain level of good governance upon which the continuing flow of development assistance or international concessional loans will depend. As will be demonstrated below, both sides of the conversation may attribute very different meanings to the term and recipients of international grants and loans may be willing to commit to theoretical definitions which they have no intention of observing in practice. As in Mozambique and Uganda, the standards applied when handling donor money can even be much higher than those observed in dealing more broadly with general government funds or the revenues of parastatal businesses. Donors can cut off funds, the African public cannot.

What is included within the scope of the term 'governance' has varied in recent decades. In 1989, the World Bank argued that 'a crisis of governance' was the cause of the 'litany of Africa's development problems' (World Bank, 1989: 60-61). Because of its restricted mandate which is supposed to exclude political considerations, at that point, before the close of the Cold War, democracy was not included as a requirement of good governance. In 1998 the then United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan summed up a decade of donor rhetoric, claiming that "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development" (UN, 1998: NB# Only a consummate career bureaucrat could have inserted a 'perhaps' into that sentence). By the turn of the century, it was barely necessary to insert 'good' in front of governance.

In a recent text-book on the AU (Makinda, Okumu and Mickler, 2016: 72-74) after discussing governance at different levels from the village to the global system, the authors list various types of governance as "bad governance, cooperative governance, corporate governance, global governance and good governance, among others". They argue that, although the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (the International Financial Institutions or IFIs) had begun to talk about good governance in the 1980s, it was not until 1999 that the IFIs broadened the definition to include accountability, increased popular participation in the policy making process, and the building of democratic structures. According to these authors, the IFI's –

> version of good governance has also had undesirable features that have caused considerable pain to the African people and diminished the internal legitimacy of African governments. Their model of good governance has raised serious ethical questions. For example, is it morally acceptable for African policy makers to give export crops priority over food crops? Is it ethical for poor African states to spend large portions of their income on debt repayments while their own people are starving? Why should the new generations of Africans meet the cost of debts attributable to borrowers and lenders from earlier periods? There are no simple answers to these questions but democracy empowers the African people to raise them (Makinda, Okumu and Mickler, 2016: pp.73-74).

Whilst these are certainly valid questions, raising them as issues of governance, rather than of economic policy tends to confuse the issue as to what constitutes governance. Why not ask: 'Is it ethical for rulers to fund swollen overseas bank accounts? Is it ethical for governments to rack up vast debts importing military hardware from overseas?' (Japan privately asks the latter question during its bilateral aid negotiations). The final reference to democracy is also confusing, so long as Africans have free speech and a free press they can indeed raise such questions, as was evident in Mugabe's Zimbabwe. Indeed, in the age of social media it is difficult to stop anyone from asking questions and *Afrobarometer* data shows that in countries such as Nigeria and Gabon almost half or more of the population has access to the Internet (see Afrobarometer, 2013).

Much of the discussion which follows is principally devoted to the consideration of corruption as the most visible and most commonly agreed element of bad governance. In 2002 the bureaucracy of the AU told their members that they estimated that 25% of the GDP of African states amounting to US $148 billion is lost to corruption every year (OECD, 2014). It is also said that the money sent overseas by corrupt leaders amounts to half of foreign debt and exceeds the amount of foreign aid to Africa (Lawal, 2007). No politician or dictator ever rejoices in being called corrupt. Clearly there are linkages between the form of government and the level of corruption and other undesirable features of poor governance. However, the evidence that democracy delivers more effective or more honest government is much less clear cut than many of the proponents of democracy have argued. This is demonstrated by the contrasting cases of China and India, or

the natural experiment of Nigeria under different military and democratic regimes. Often African voters only get to choose between very corrupt party A and even more corrupt coalition B (Ayitty, 2011).

Thinking of developing regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, there can be three main reasons for a lack of good governance. Firstly, both politicians and government officials can be enmeshed in a whole system of corruption where a proportion of each petty bribe passes up the scale to the point where applicants are regularly prepared to purchase supervisory positions for cash on the black market. Secondly, corruption and poor governance may flourish as much out of ignorance as out of greed. Whilst the practical value of governance training would appear to have been greatly over emphasised by Western donors, there may still be a need for training in basic accountancy skills so that people can see where the money has disappeared. In an interesting precedent, parts of Indonesia used to display in white paint on a green board outside the village secretariat just how much public money had been received for the school, the clinic and other public services and what the expenditure paid out had been for and to whom. Thirdly, politicians and officials may be quite honest but the government and the country are just too poor to provide even minimal basic services. Is it corruption to ask for unavailable petrol money before the ambulance can set off to the village to pick up a woman in obstructed labour? Is it corruption for the Police Band to ask to be fed before playing for National Day Ceremonies at foreign embassies? Is it corrupt for a school teacher who has not been paid for three months to ask parents for a donation before teaching her class?

The question also arises whether in the case of governance the pursuit of the ideal is not sometimes the enemy of the pursuit of the good. Merilee Grindle (2007) has argued very effectively that the aim should be to secure 'good enough governance'. In a more literary style Wole Soyinka has argued:

> African dreams of peace and prosperity have been shattered by the greedy, corrupt and unscrupulous rule of African strongmen. One would be content with just a modest cleaning up of the environment, development of opportunities. health service, education, and eradication of poverty. But unfortunately even these modest goals are thwarted by a power crazed and rapacious leadership who can only obtain their egotistical goals by oppressing the rest of us (Soyinka, quoted in Calderisi, 2006, p.77).

**Definitional Issues**

Gisselquist (2012) has provided an invaluable review of the usage of the term 'good governance' in which she identifies seven core components used in working definitions: democracy and representation; human rights; the rule of law; efficient and effective public management; transparency and accountability; development as an objective and a varying range of economic and political policies, programmes and institutions (see also Thomas 2010). The OECD (2009) found 17 distinct definitions of good governance. Any critical reader will soon find that major multilateral organizations such as the World Bank or the UN agencies adopt a broad range of definitions of governance from time to time and from author to author. World Bank definitions range from "the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs" (World Bank 1989: 61) to the "traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised" (Kaufmann et al. 2009:5). The World Bank's (2009) publication of *Worldwide Governance Indicators*, which has been cited 9,333 times, presents six aggregate indicators: voice and accountability; political stability and the absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; the rule of law and the control of corruption. It should be noted that the indicator for political stability and the absence of violence makes the relationship between peace and good governance tautological, you can't have one without the other. There have been many criticisms of the World Bank Governance Indicators some of which have been summarized by Carmen Apaza (2009). A somewhat biased defence has been provided by Kauffman, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2010). It needs to be understood that the indicators are based on perceptions obtained from surveys of firms and individuals, the assessments of commercial risk rating agencies, non-government organizations and multilateral aid agencies. The data cover more than 300 variables with information provided by more than 30 organisations. With respect to the specific measurement of corruption, no distinction is made between administrative corruption usually entailing small bribes demanded by government officials as encountered on a daily basis by the general public, and political corruption carried out on a mass scale by high ranking leaders and politicians, stealing millions to deposit in Swiss Banks and/or taking over public enterprises as their own.

Osborne's (2004) paper on 'Measuring bad governance' adopts a quite different view of what constitutes good governance since it is actually devoted to discussing the impact of allegedly 'bad/good' economic policies, clearly an area where views vary across a wide spectrum as to what bad policy actually is. He demonstrated that the radical reformers of the 1980-84 period were all in Africa and countries who would later be seen as economic

success stories: Botswana, Mauritius and Uganda. Niskanen (1997, p.464) had approached the issue from the opposite direction, asking what form of governance will produce the optimal form of economic policy in terms of maximizing average incomes. He demonstrated that an autocracy or 'stationary bandit' "on any other basis than the interests of the autocrat" will produce the worst economic policy. However, acting in the opposite direction to autocracies, democracies produce better policies the longer their time horizons.

**Giving the People a Voice: *Afrobarometer***

Transparency International (2016) using *Afrobarometer* data from 43,143 interviews across 28 countries estimates that nearly seventy-five million people in Sub-Saharan Africa paid bribes in 2015. The *Afrobarometer* online data analysis facility provides a fantastic range of data on issues relating to governance from its national surveys. In 2016-18 these covered Benin, Botswana, Burkina, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In some cases people are being asked for their perceptions as in 'has corruption been rising or declining ?'; but in most cases they are being asked for their personal experiences as in 'how often do you get your news from the Internet?' as 47% do in Mauritius but only 7% in Uganda. In the area of corruption there are a vast range of questions from 'what proportions of parliamentarians and traditional leaders do you think are corrupt?' to 'have you provided a bribe to a policeman (a) to pass through or (b) to settle a legal problem'. Intriguing questions arise as to just what the answers mean. Why do Tanzanians and those from Cape Verde consider they have the least corrupt parliamentarians? Why does Kenya have more active members of civic organisations than any other country, whilst Gabon has one of the lowest rates? Why did Zimbabwe, still under Mugabe, have the lowest proportion strongly favouring choosing leaders by elections versus other methods? Why would Cote d'Ivoire have the highest proportion favouring democracy? How far is the fact that 21% of Nigerians with no schooling and 44% of those with post-secondary schooling have considered emigrating - a vote of no confidence in a government, which 74% praised for its efforts to address the problem of armed extremism. Finally, do African governments, whether notionally democratic or not, take any notice of such polls?

Opinions differ as to the credibility of international corruption indexes. One has to wonder when the Heritage Foundation classifies corruption as "dishonesty and decay" (Miller & Kim 2016, p.62) . Ko and Samajdar (2010)

present a good overall review which is generally positive in its conclusions. However, they argue for more information as to specific forms of corruption, as is certainly provided by the *Afrobarometer* data. They also note that generally the rich are more affronted by corruption than the poor. Trapnell and Recanatini (2017) discuss the conflict between precision and politics in constructing measures and argue the need for addressing both within particular geographical and institutional contexts. Razafindrakoto and Roubaud (2010) had access to data on individual experiences of petty bureaucratic corruption from 35,500 adults from seven francophone West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo) and Madagascar. Most unusually, they also had data from a 'mirror' expert opinion survey (70% male) on the same subjects in the same countries which included information on the experts' economic views, which made it possible to infer their political views. What the comparison demonstrated was that overall the experts significantly over-estimated levels of petty corruption and that in general the more they favoured free markets, the more they over estimated corruption. The experts also significantly underestimated the extent to which the local people object to corruption. In no country did more than 11% of the local participants consider taking a bribe to be acceptable. The average was 4.5%. Yet the experts said that they believed that close to a third (32%) would find petty bribery acceptable. Perhaps the most disturbing was the high proportion of experts who though that 'their' under-served country had too many public servants (even experts tend not to recognise teachers and nurses as public servants) (Data from Razafindrako & Roubaud 2010).

Theoretically representing views across the continent, in 1999 the African Development Bank issued a Policy on Good Governance which defines governance as "a process referring to the manner in which power is exercised in the management of the affairs of a nation", and, unusually adds "and its relations with other nations" (African Development Bank, 1999, p.7). The Policy lists the key elements of good governance as: accountability; transparency; participation; combatting corruption and the promotion of an enabling legal and judicial framework. Although participation, a suitably vague term, is listed, there is no specific mention of democracy.

**Criticisms of the Concept of Good Governance**

The most engaged critics of the concept of 'good governance' are to be found in developing countries, especially those which are heavily dependent upon aid and therefore upon the judgements of aid donors. Many argue that judging aid allocations by these criteria results in aid conditionalities based

on political criteria and imposes Western liberal models of democracy (Nanda 2006; NEPAD 2007: 3-4). As the case of Rwanda, discussed below, shows, this is certainly not always the case. As Andrews (2008: 380 cited by Gisselquist 2012: 1) argues, some donors appear to be using the term to back up a platitude 'like telling developing countries that the way to develop is to become developed' since their requirements of 'good governance' are only achieved by highly developed high income countries. The term has value as a catchy shorthand reference but it is very poorly specified. In some cases the lack of definition is deliberate since it allows each side of the aid bargain to use their own definition. Sometimes aid donors wish for political reasons to continue to assist governments with highly dubious governance credentials, so vagueness is helpful. Any country emerging from internal warfare or even transitioning from dictatorship to democracy is most unlikely to be able to demonstrate good governance credentials and so needs to be allowed a certain amount of leeway.

The Marxist and retired Tanzanian law professor Issa Shivji (2003) has argued that governance "is constructed primarily on the terrain of power" whereas much of the Western discourse eschews the discussion of power, instead presenting 'good governance', (as seen by Lorenzetti in fourteenth century Italy, discussed above), as a "moral paradigm, distinguishing between the good, the bad and the evil". Thus, aid conditionality by donors, which is held to be based on ill-defined good governance criteria, has become "a flexible tool in the hands of global hegemonies to undermine the sovereignty of African nations and the struggle for democracy of the African people" so that "the people are no longer the agency for change but rather the victims of 'bad governance' to be delivered or redeemed by the erstwhile donor community" (Shivji, 2003,p.3). It is clear whom Shivji holds to blame, but the implication that donors have not pushed democracy in Africa relies on a specific definition of democracy as a change which can only come from the people at the bottom:

> the land based producer classes and the urban poor together with lower middle classes would constitute the 'masses'. This is where, to use Lenin's phrase 'serious politics begin' – 'not where there are thousands, but where there are millions' (Shivji, 2003, p.9).

For Shivji the neo-liberal rhetoric of the donors which ignores the people and the "popular perceptions, customs, culture and consciousness … a living tradition of struggles where the old and the new, the progressive and the

reactionary, jostle and struggle to attain hegemony" further "So long as neo-liberal politics and economics are incapable of addressing the real life conditions of the African people, they have little legitimacy. The 'good governance' discourse thus turns out to be profoundly a discourse of domination rather than of liberation and democracy " (Shivji, 2003, pp.9-10).

**The African Peer Review Mechanism**

It is often difficult to judge how far African regional mechanisms, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, dealing with issues of governance reflect 'African solutions to African problems' or the views of the donors who are their major funders. This is especially the case where the political leaders of the regional organisations are themselves outstanding examples of 'bad governance'. A specialized agency of the AU, physically based in MidRand, South Africa, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was established in 2003 within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The APRM, according to its web-site, is a tool for sharing experiences, reinforcing best practices, identifying deficiencies, and assessing capacity building needs to foster policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration. Member countries undertake self-monitoring in all aspects of their governance and socio-economic development. African Union stakeholders participate in the self-assessment of all branches of government – executive, legislative and judicial as well as the private sector, civil society and the media (see the 2016-2020 APRM Strategic Plan - APRM 2016)). The APRM has four types of country reviews: a base review upon joining; a periodic review every four years; a review requested by the country outside the four year rotation and a review commissioned by APR heads of state when there are early signs of pending political and economic crises. Only 38 members of the AU are members of APRM, so this early warning system is not applicable to all AU member states. APRM has four focus areas: democracy and political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance and broad-based sustainable socio-economic development. APRM national reports are eventually made public. The current APR Forum Chairperson is Idriss Deby Itno, President of Chad. Former Chairpersons were, going backwards in time, Uhuru Kenyatta (Kenya), Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia), two prime ministers of Ethiopia and Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria). This list of leaders is enough in itself to demonstrate the difficulties likely to be associated with any national self-review of governance.

**African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**

On the sidelines of the AU Extraordinary Summit in Kigali in March 2018, newly elevated Zimbabwean President Emerson Mnangagwa signed the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). This move was welcomed by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (ZHR NGO Forum, 2018) but it would be interesting to know just how many Zimbabweans had any idea of what ACDEG might be or what the President was committing himself to:

> By signing this Charter, State parties pledge to develop the necessary legislative and policy frameworks to establish and strengthen a culture of democracy and peace. States parties also pledge to establish public institutions, which promote democracy and constitutional order (ZHR Forum 2018).

The Forum retained some concerns noting that under the Zimbabwean Constitution (Section 327), treaties are only binding after the Parliament approves them and their provisions have been incorporated into local law by means of an Act of Parliament. Now that Mnangagwa has been elected to office he should be constantly reminded of his obligations under ACDEG.

**Donor Requirements: The European Union and the Security, Governance and Development Triangle**

In Africa the European Union (EU), which is the most generous donor, uses a security, governance and development model. How this model is operationalized often appears to depend more upon European national interests and the internal politics of the labyrinthine EU bureaucracy than upon any African needs or wants (Bayoyoko & Gibert 2009). The EU approach is informed by the assumption that conflict and underdevelopment stem from state failure and so, in order to prevent future crises, state weakness must be addressed through significant institutional reforms which will allow the state to re-establish its authority through capacity-building. The European Commission (*no date*) defines areas associated with the root causes of violent conflict as: lack of legitimacy of the state; failure to enforce the rule of law; lack of respect for human rights; restraints on civil society and the media; lack of effective dispute resolving mechanisms in and between communities; ineffective economic management; social and regional inequalities and the geopolitical situation. The Cotonou Agreement signed in 2000 clearly links good governance and development so that human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law are defined as ‘essential

elements'. A violation of any of these three elements may lead to a suspension of EU assistance and trade cooperation. Evidently donors' security, governance and development agendas do not always agree or move in the same direction. Military assistance was given to Guinea when it was attacked in 2000-1 without any requirement for transparency in Guinea's security system, and Rwanda and Uganda both continued to receive development assistance whilst their troops were openly supporting rebel troops in the Congo (Chataigner, 2001).

The EU Council had wanted to add 'good governance' to the list of essential elements, but the African, Carribean and Pacific (ACP) countries argued that the three elements covered enough ground and that 'good governance' was vague enough to allow arbitrary decisions by the EU. Thus, 'good governance' is a 'fundamental element' so that, with the exception of serious cases of corruption, a state with governance issues will be offered support and advice rather than threatened with suspension. Article 9.3 of the Cotonou Agreement defines good governance quite narrowly as "the transparent and accountable management of human, natural, economic and financial resources for the purposes of equitable and sustainable development" (Council of the European Union, 2000). A review of the Cotonou Agreement in 2008 suggested that "the question of governance is now much more of an active issue in CP-EU relations than at the time the CPA was drafted" (ECDPM 2008). It recommended a revision of the definition to promote ownership by ACP countries.

> The experience of the EC's 'governance initiative' over the past couple of years had also been somewhat negative as it had been perceived as too much of an EC-imposed exercise and not always well adapted to local circumstances and insufficiently based in dialogue with the ACP …. The EU is seen as increasingly directive and unilateral in its actions and in some quarters there is the view that there is hardly any partnership to speak of on the ground any longer (ECDPM 2008).

'Ownership' appears to require that Africans own what the EU has proposed, rather than any acceptance of 'African solutions to African problems'. The best way of understanding the differences between the rhetoric of 'good governance' and what actually happens on the ground is to look at individual country situations.

**The Rwandan Case**

Currently Rwanda provides the classic case of a country which has long attained 'good governance' as a solely bureaucratic achievement, but is still a country which is far from achieving 'good governance' if democracy and the observance of human rights are seen as required elements of the definition. If Rwanda had trains, Kagame would be the autocratic ruler who made the trains run on time. In other words, Rwanda ranks high on the World Bank's governance scale but very low according to most international NGOs. It is difficult to know what criteria the citizens of Rwanda themselves would apply as they live under a government where any criticism of the regime is most unwise unless the critic is ready to flee the country. *Afrobarometer* has reported that in Rwanda freedom of speech is so constrained that the pan-African nonpartisan research network cannot run a valid survey (Logan & Nyimah-Boadi, 2016). The government's national consultations allegedly revealed that a mere ten (very brave) souls publicly opposed the extension of the President's term in office (Vidal 2016). The President maintains that there is no need for opinion polls since he represents the voice of the people (Reyntjens 2016). In contrast, in neighbouring Burundi, even with the threat of civil violence in the offing, 62% of respondents were prepared to tell *Afrobarometer* (nd. - Burundi) that they supported term limits on their president who is equally autocratic but less efficient in persecution.

**The pursuit of worthy goals**

As the case of Rwanda demonstrates, it is sadly possible for a government to be effective and efficient but to have most undesirable goals. The IFIs require governments not only to be able to enforce their economic policies, say concerning tax revenues or the size of the public service, but also to have the goals these institutions deem appropriate before they are classified as having good governance. Swidler (2006) provides a fascinating contrast between Zambia with its poor governance but good AIDS hospice provision, and Botswana with its excellent governance - ranking higher than Italy and Greece on the Control of Corruption Index (see *GlobalEconomy.com*, 2016), but an insuperable barrier to providing hospices. Zambia had no provisions regulating hospices, whereas Botswana had a highly efficient regulatory system, which allowed local doctors to block anyone below the rank of licensed medical practitioner from taking blood samples, thus making hospices impracticable. In this case, it was better to have a free for all with no rules, rather than a well-regulated system which allowed the Motswana elite to enforce their own monopoly over service provision. Swidler (2006) quotes another example from Kenya, where the government had been

efficient enough to be able to deny the provision of AIDS education materials to schools in areas which had voted for the opposition. Sometimes it may be better to have a governance system which is not effective in pursuing its goals, than to have one which is too effective in pursuing malign goals. Rwanda would have been much better off with a much weaker governance system.

**The Liberian Case**

Liberia has long been a country so corrupt that police routinely arrest street vendors, steal their goods and then demand bribes to release them from custody. In turn police have to pay bribes to their supervisors to get promotions or to avoid being appointed to the nether regions. Abuse of public office for profit is still not illegal in Liberia. In 2001 and 2002 President Charles Taylor personally controlled some US$200 million in annual business revenues, or between two and three times the entire budget of the government. He could do this because under the Strategic Commodities Act 2000 (Appendix 1), he had reserved to himself the "sole power to execute, negotiate and conclude all commercial contracts or agreements with any foreign or domestic investor for the exploitation of the strategic commodities of the Republic of Liberia". Corruption at the top was matched with lesser corruption down the scale and many of Taylor's associates were able to survive in office even after Taylor went into exile in Nigeria. Just one example was George Dweh, who had been a leader of the misnamed armed group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) who became Speaker of the National Assembly. When accused of embezzling $92,000, he took to the floor of the House and held members hostage till UNMIL soldiers intervened (Toweh 2014). Nationally, timber concessions awarded by successive governments covered 2.5 times the total area of timbered land in the whole country (Shearman 2010).

William Reno's (2008) historical review of corruption in Liberia asks: "Anti-corruption efforts in Liberia: Are they aimed at the right targets?" but what he argues is that: "Liberia's corruption problem is so intractable and so damaging to broader public interests because so many who are responsible for these problems also hold high positions in the state" (Reno 2008 p.390). Liberia illustrates 'criminalization of the state', where officials use public resources for private benefit by means of "existing moral and political codes of behaviour, especially those of ethnicity, kinship and even religion, and of cultural representations, notably of the invisible, of trickery as a social value, or prestigious styles of life, an aesthetic, whose capacity to legitimize certain types of behaviour is considerable" (Bayart, Ellis & Hibou 1997 p.15. In

Reno's view "there seem to be a critical mass of Liberians who see corruption as appropriate, or at least tolerable, not simply an exigency of poverty or disorder" (Reno 2008, p.404) with this attitude extending from the elite to the masses who benefit in some small way. Reno further argues that Liberia needs what Cameroonian scholar Axelle Kabou (1991) calls a 'cultural readjustment' to work to combat " the entrenched parochialism of social networks, the claustrophobic world of local solidarities, the grasping claims of family against any member who begins to become prosperous and the mistrust of people outside their own narrow networks" (Reno 2008 p.395).

Liberia was the site for a very unusual experiment to study corruption at the village level. The researchers worked in advance with an NGO which was distributing agricultural inputs to 'town chiefs' for distribution to village households (Beekman, Bulte & Nellesen, 2014). They were able to measure which chiefs stole what and found that just under half of the 44 chiefs in their study diverted seeds or agricultural tools for their own use. In Kpelle traditional culture stealing rice is considered to be especially abhorrent and the chiefs did not steal rice because they observed that taboo. Another form of corruption open to chiefs is to use the commandeered communal labour of villagers on projects for their own benefit, this was also common. It is often argued that such forms of behaviour, although defined as corrupt by Westerners, are part of African culture but in that case, why are at least the majority of chiefs honest? Indeed, the controversial author William De Maria (2005) wrote a paper "Does African 'Corruption' Exist?" reviewing African authors who see anti-corruption campaigns as a form of neo-colonialism reflecting a concept that is not applicable to Africa.

Liberia is certainly not unique in its attitude to corruption. Reno, (2008) discusses East Asian examples, but recognises that they are very different to Africa in part because much Asian corruption was at least associated with productive activities, such as those of the Korean Chobols, whilst African elite corruption so often represents no more than blood-sucking rent seeking. America has had great impact on Liberian culture in many spheres. In the USA Medicare and Medicaid estimate that 5-10% of their annual budget is wasted because of corruption (OECD, 2014).

The Republic of Liberia Governance Commission was the creation of the 2003 Accra Peace Accord as part of the efforts to attend to Liberia's problems following the fourteen year civil war which had led to the complete breakdown of democratic government. During the war "rebel factions took over government functionaries, appointed senior government officials and on many occasions brought in their own 'civil servants'. There are even political parties today that are offshoots of rebel factions" (Governance Commission,

nd. *Overview*). The Commission was to formulate implementation strategies necessary to establish an inclusive, participatory, just and accountable system of government: a system based on meritocracy that promotes and adheres to the rule of law, manages the people's resources effectively and is capable of delivering basic services in a transparent manner. It also aimed at requiring "the honourable discharge of public duties without any expectations of personal reward over and beyond that to which a public servant is lawfully entitled". The Liberian Governance Commission's website (nd. *Overview*) declares that "poor governance had occasioned poverty, conflicts, corruption, and underdevelopment which led to instability … a circle of violence. Good governance prevents government breakdown which, if not avoided results in violent conflicts". Whilst it is difficult to establish how far such statements reflect significant donor inputs, it is still remarkable to see such clear statements set before the public at large. The donor-inspired government rhetoric is splendid, the performance in the market place much less so. The current Chair of the Liberian Governance Commission is Dr Amos Sawyer a controversial Liberian political science professor who headed up the interim Liberian government when peace was being re-established. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was Chair before becoming President of Liberia. The Commission published its annual review of government performance from 2013 concentrating on the delivery of education and health services so as to be able to monitor and evaluate actual government performance. This is clearly a less politically threatening area than looking at corruption in the government's business dealings.

Certainly the Commission is not without its critics. A group based in Atlanta, Georgia, USA has called for the disbandment of the Commission which they allege is staffed by "thieves and bloodsucking conspirators masquerading as leaders … gravy seekers, pseudo-progressives" (Jardia, 2016 p.1). Interestingly, although they strongly oppose the politics of the Commission staff, they still fully accept its diagnosis of the problems at issue and the need for checks and balances to keep the system honest (albeit whilst quoting Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Yeats's *Second Coming*) (Jardia 2016).

International praise for former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf presents a prime example of the donors' desperate need to have some African winners, especially female ones. A repeat nepotist, when challenged with appointing three of her sons to senior public positions, she replied that she did not know anyone else honest enough to appoint (Tran 2012).

**Who is reporting the truth ? Donors as hostages**

> *Elite corruption in Uganda constitutes an essential means of consolidating the present government in power. Political leaders have therefore shown little commitment to act to curb practices that could affect their political support. Instead, anti-corruption institutions have been influenced and controlled whenever they threatened to expose the corrupt ways of Uganda's state elites. Donors have also for many years been reluctant to use their substantial economic assistance to press the government to confront wrongdoing by state elites. They have not wanted to undermine a government which they have held up as one of the most successful in Africa in carrying out donor-sponsored economic reforms. But by giving large amounts of aid to a corrupt and quasi-authoritarian government, as well as being reticent in their public criticism of abuse of power and corruption, donors have abetted the actions of Uganda's leaders in weakening those bodies that could hold them responsible for abusing their public positions (Tangri & Mwenda, 2006 p. 101).*

The abstract above by Roger Tangri and Andrew Mwenda (2006), although franker than many, is typical of a growing literature debating the relationships between donors and corrupt senior politicians and officials in a range of political contexts (see the bibliographies in Reinikka & Svensson, 2004; Le Billon, 2008; and Reno, 2008). There are few outstanding economic successes in Africa and donors are very reluctant to bad-mouth the few plausible candidates that they can find.

The statistics show that, whilst donors rail against corruption, they actually give more money to corrupt governments (Alesina & Weder, 1999). This is not because of a desire to reward corruption, but because they believe that they have to support some governments for crucial foreign policy reasons, however corrupt they may be. Mozambique presents an interesting case in point (Hanlon 2004). In the 1970s socialist Mozambique was known for general integrity in public life, yet by 2002, the head of the Cape Town South African Institute of Security Studies reported that their studies showed that "Mozambique is very close to becoming a criminalised state" (Gastrow & Mosse, 2002 cited by Hanlon, 2004, note 4). The legal system was in a state of near collapse with court rulings available to the highest bidder. Money laundering and international drug dealings were rife. In two major

bank scandals at least $400 million had been syphoned off in part by senior figures in Frelimo, the government party. Two people investigating the bank frauds, newspaper editor Carlos Cardoso (machine gunned) and the government's head of banking supervision, Siba-Siba Macuacua (thrown down the Bank stairs) were both assassinated in public and investigations of the murders were blocked from on high "to hide the class of untouchables" as Judge Carlos Caetano was reported as saying by the Government's own press agency (AIM, 29 September 2003).

Meanwhile just two months after the Macuacua murder, at a donor Consultative Group Meeting, Mozambique asked for US$600 million in aid and was given US$722 million, with the extra essentially being given to make up part of the bank losses (Man 2001). For the donors the problem was that they needed Mozambique with its growth rate of 8.4%, to figure alongside Uganda and Botswana as rare examples of economic successes in Africa. Hanlon (2004, 753) reports that he was told privately that, on instructions from Washington, USAID officials intensely lobbied the originally recalcitrant Nordic donor officials to accept that debt relief through the world Bank's Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC), which Uganda was the only African country to have received at that point, was more important than fighting corruption. The Mozambican public did not get to have any say in this decision.

For leading honest civil society Mozambicans, fighting high level corruption, their problem was that they were opposed to the rapid transit to capitalism with the associated privatizations and structural adjustment programs being required by the international financial institutions and the majority of donors. Thus, they were regarded as unreliable and excluded from the charmed circle of Mozambicans having regular dealings with the donors. For Mozambique it is very difficult to be able to accurately gauge the level of corruption and misgovernment. At a time when a senior Belgian aid official was writing that: "corruption, though not non-existent, is not institutionalised and the possibility for controlling funds earmarked for Mozambique is easy and transparent" (Guido van Hecken, quoted in Hanlon, 2004,748); Mia Couto, a local literary icon, was saying: "we live in a kingdom where those who lead us are gangsters" at the head are an elite using power "in order to enrich itself. They don't think of Mozambique, they think of themselves" (quoted in Hanlon, 2004, 748).

The tragedy was that big scale corruption was not endemic to Mozambique. Back in 1980 military leader Fransisco Langa committed suicide out of shame when caught embezzling funds meant for refugees. High level corruption had begun to grow as war leaders were being paid to accept

the advantages of peace and it had built up further in the transition from socialism to capitalism. Petty corruption amongst teachers and nurses demanding small illicit fees for services rendered in government employment (for example, the equivalent of US$2 per birth for midwives) proliferated as their wages fell to just one third of 1991 levels by 1996 (USAID 2005).

**The natural resources sector poses unique governance challenges**

Corruption does not only vary by country and geographic region, it also often varies between sectors with natural resources being especially vulnerable.

> Natural resources are the biggest source of domestic public revenue in Africa: resource taxes averaged 40% of tax collected in 2008-2011. In Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Libya and Nigeria, resource taxes were the equivalent of more than 20% of GDP (Economic Commission for Africa 2018 p. 46).

There is widespread agreement that Africa's resource tax regimes are suboptimal and favour foreign investors. With corruption, as with the *Tango*, it takes two sides to move - as in the payer and the recipient. In the mineral and hydrocarbon sectors it is particularly easy for foreign companies to exploit African countries due to knowledge gaps and asymmetries, inadequate technical skills and institutional deficiencies in a context of market volatility. Here is one area where disinterested advice from international experts can be exceptionally valuable. For example, the Commonwealth Secretariat used to provide specialist lawyers to advise small countries in such negotiations.

African authorities recognise that: "Many resource-rich African countries are struggling to establish the institutions needed for sustainably managing natural resources and to ensure transparency, participation and accountability" (ECA 2018: 73). The Resource Governance Index (*Resource Governance Institute*, 2017) which monitors the oil, gas and minerals sectors of 81 countries including 33 African states finds that poor quality of governance is one of the explanatory reasons why resource-rich countries have grown more slowly than non-resource rich ones. Only 20% of relevant African countries have carried out audits of their extractive industries. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which attacks corruption through asking companies what they have paid to governments and national entities, has 23 African members out of a total of 51 (including

Australia). In Guinea it led to the rescue of US$11 million missing dollars with US$9 million going to local communities for development activities. In Nigeria the missing amount was close to US $10 billion with US$2 billion being recovered for the Federal Government through EITI efforts (EITI, 2017). Whilst the EITI is an excellent initiative, it often relies on local civil society groups or the political opposition to be able to put pressure on governments to chase up missing funds. In Liberia, a plan to tell local communities how much revenue came from activities in their home districts encountered fierce resistance from 'town chiefs' who did not want their own corruption to become public knowledge. An in-depth evaluation of the impact of the implementation of EITI in Zambia found that it provoked a significant decrease in corruption but that the impact grew less over time, partly because there is no independent legal authority in Zambia which can enforce compliance at the company level (EITI 2017).

The Economic Commission for Africa's fifth governance report was launched in May 2018 under the title of: *Natural Resource Governance and Domestic Revenue Mobilization for Structural Transformation*. The press release announcing the launch bore the headline "Managing Africa's resources: Time to stop the 'dig and export' model, improve governance, create linkages" and reported that "a highly charged debate" had characterized the launch (*Tralac*, 2018). Unfortunately the press release only recounts the positive comments made on the Report, not the negative ones. The Report itself represents a wonderful mixture of sage, if ambitious, advice and obligatory incorporation of government propaganda (drafting the references to social and environmental impact assessments under Libya's new Vision 2020 petroleum law must have been particularly challenging for those with a sense of irony). In itself, the Report thus provides an excellent example of the conflict between rhetoric and reality in African governance which is particularly acute for regional organizations which are ultimately beholden to national governments.

**Towards a conclusion**

This article does not aim at coming to a conclusion on a topic as vast as the relationship between the rhetoric and the reality of governance in Africa. Rather, it is intended to point to a number of questions which anyone examining governance in Africa needs to consider. These begin with how governance is being defined and what areas of governance are under consideration. Specifically there is a division between discourses and studies where governance is essentially being used as a synonym for the control of corruption; and those where the usage of the term extends from the economic

area to the political arena and thus, almost certainly, includes a requirement for a democratic government as a condition for good governance. The significance of this expansion to require democracy and even 'correct' IFI approved economic policies has been little examined, especially in the African context. Another issue is, whose views of governance are to be taken into account and whether the views of international experts are being given too much weight as compared with the views of African citizens, especially at the grass-roots. There is also a vital need to consider the local context. Too many studies of African governance pretend that it is possible to discuss these concerns without taking a political stance. Yet, as the cases of Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda discussed above demonstrate only too well, everyone cannot be telling the truth. Accepting the views of one side, usually the government, who are defending the system, as opposed to those, usually in the opposition, pointing to multiple flaws, inevitably becomes a political choice. Each country, indeed each village (Beekman, Bulte & Nillesen, 2014) has its own governance reality. One approach would be to hypothesize a model of African governance, possibly based on AU pronouncements, and then examine how far individual cases match or diverge from the model. Finally, there are few areas where it is more important or more difficult to be able distinguish reality from rhetoric. As the equivocally placed former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf herself has stressed, people should be judged by what they do, not what they say. Signing up to international conventions means little (AU, 2007). Impartially trying leaders from both the opposition and the government's own political party for syphoning off government assets, or inviting the people to vote on the extension of presidential term limits - these are the true indicators of good governance.

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# Togoland's lingering legacy: the case of the demarcation of the Volta Region in Ghana and the revival of competing nationalisms

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**Abstract**

Since independence in 1957, the Volta Region of Ghana has endured ethnic-riddled internal torment and has been used as a pawn in national and international political struggles. The looming decision by the Ghanaian government to demarcate the Volta Region, to create the new Oti Region, has revived nationalistic sentiments that stem from the 1880's German protectorate of Togoland which encompassed the region. Drawing upon theories of nationalism, this article reflects upon the turbulent history of the area and situates the three competing nationalisms of Ewe, Voltarian and Western Togoland, amidst the current political and social debate. This article suggests that these nationalisms are precariously balanced as the proposed Oti Region threatens to redefine the future of each and give rise to a dominant Voltarian identity.

## Introduction

On the 12th of October 2017, the President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, utilised his constitutional power and appointed a Commission of Inquiry to examine the prospect of creating new regions within the country (Government of Ghana, 2017). This decision was prompted by petitions presented by chiefs, individuals and advocacy groups in some regions of Ghana, and the findings of the Commission of Inquiry have identified four regions as having a need and demand for demarcation to create six new regions (Government of Ghana 2018). The process is being administratively

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managed by the 2017-created Ministry of Regional Reorganisation and Special Projects headed by the Honourable Dan Botwe, the Commission of Inquiry, and by the Electoral Commission who will manage the referendum slated for December 2018 in the affected districts that comprise the newly proposed regions.

The Volta Region is one of these four regions which have been earmarked for demarcation to create the Oti Region out of its northern half, leaving the southern half to remain as the Volta Region. Support for the Oti Region is split on an almost perfect parallel to that where the regional line is proposed. Various groups and leaders from the north of the Volta Region welcome the proposal as they have long felt marginalised and claim national development has failed to improve their standard of living (Krachi Youth Association, 2017; Nettey, 2017). Yet on the other end of the debate, the southern end, many prominent figureheads and activist groups claim the proposal is ill-conceived and that it is a thinly veiled attempt at unconstitutional ethnic appeasement and a further affront to the traditional inhabitants of this region – the Ewe people (Association of Volta Youth USA, 2018; Dzigbodi-Adjimah, 2017).

The Oti Region proposal has rekindled a larger historical debate that has its roots in the scramble for Africa. In the 1880's, the majority of the Ewe people found themselves belonging to the German protectorate of Togoland (Amenumey, 1989). After World War I the western third of Togoland became British (Western) Togoland and the eastern two-thirds French Togoland, later mandated by the League of Nations and then the United Nations (Amenumey, 1989). The future of Western Togoland was decided in a 1956 plebiscite which saw a union with the neighbouring British colony of the Gold Coast, to then form the new nation-state of Ghana (Buah, 1980). The Ewes of Western Togoland decried the outcome which relegated them to an ethnic minority within Ghana and drew them further away from the Ewe in French Togoland (Nugent, 2002). The Oti Region proposal symbolises a further territorial attack to not just the Ewe people, but to those irredentists that desire Western Togoland to reclaim independence from Ghana, and to those disaffected Ghanaians who wish to see the Volta Region remain whole but with greater national integration.

The objective of this research is to critically analyse the impact the proposed Oti Region has on these competing nationalisms in the Volta Region. Theoretical views on nations and nationalism from Plamenatz (1970), Gellner (1983) and Kingsbury (2007) will be contextualised to this setting and placed alongside Ewe and Western Togoland scholarly work by Brown (1980; 1983), Amenumey (1989), Nugent (2002) and Skinner (2007;

2010; 2015). The first chapter will analyse the similarities between the geographical split in support of the Oti Region and the 1956 Western Togoland plebiscite that created the union to form Ghana. These parallels past and present provide a framework for considering the impact the Oti Region will have on each nationalism. This will be followed by a reflection of the 1970's Western Togoland Liberation Movement commonly known as Tolimo. It was Tolimo who posed the most recent threat to Ghanaian sovereignty and their demise is critical in positioning the current movements strengths and weaknesses. Finally, a reconstruction of the challenges and opportunities facing each nationalism will take place in order to provide a path forward to survive and thrive within the current political machinations.

This research is significant as the Oti Region proposal has reignited Western Togoland nationalism and the Ewe unification debate from a near dormant state, and brought it firmly into the sights of local, regional and national leaders. The rise of a Volta Region identity has added another level of intricacy to the debate. Colonial borders have long divided nations but rarely have they engendered such long-lasting nationalistic affinity. This research is important for placing this struggle into scholarly and political consciousness as history is being written and the future of many groups of people is being decided.

The author claims no political affiliations, is a non-national who does not belong to any ethnic or diaspora groups from the region, and whose analysis is based purely on research and not influenced by external factors. The author's connection to the region began in 2009 through a two-year volunteer program and continues by being the founder and director of a Volta Region based non-government community development organisation which provides educational opportunities for young people; health outreaches to rural communities; and skills training for women.

**A brief history of nations and nationalism in Togoland, British Togoland and the Volta Region**

The Ewe people have long been divided by colonial and national borders, beginning with the Germans declaring three-quarters of Ewe territory as belonging to the German protectorate of Togoland in 1884 (Amenumey, 1989). Following World War I, the British and French shared in the spoils of victory over the Germans and dissected Togoland vertically into British (Western) Togoland, while the larger eastern portion became French Togoland (Skinner, 2007). This partition stirred the first rumblings of Ewe reunification within British Togoland as previously independent Ewe states sought interdependence to strengthen (Amenumey, 1989). From the depths

of former German rule grew a competing wave of nationalistic sentiment in Western Togoland which centred around those groups of people, not just the Ewe, who first encountered education and development through the German tradition (Skinner, 2007). Western Togoland became a playground for those seeking to influence the future of the territory.

It was the 1956 Western Togoland plebiscite where three competing nationalisms came to a head as the future of Western Togoland was determined. The first pursued a united Eweland; the second an independent Western Togoland with a view to complete Togoland reunification; while the third offered a vision of integration with the British colony of the Gold Coast which was destined to become the nation-state of Ghana (Nugent, 2002). Two paths were presented for voting in the plebiscite: union with the Gold Coast or remain separate. The union vote was victorious in a plebiscite riddled with ethnic divisions and political manoeuvring (Amenumey, 1989). The northern, union-favouring part of Western Togoland became the Northern Region of Ghana, while the southern, majority separatists and Ewe merged with a small Ewe territory in the southern Gold Cost to form the Volta Region. Despite protests to the United Nations that the votes should be considered separately and the south should retain its autonomy as Western Togoland, it fell on deaf ears and the breath had seemingly been taken from the unification movements sails.

When French Togoland attained independence in 1960 and the nation-state of Togo was born, there was hope of rekindling a unified Togoland and an Ewe homeland under Togolese leader, Sylvanus Olympio. This was soon dashed when the Ghanaian pan-African President, Kwame Nkrumah, enforced the Preventive Detention Act to quell Ewe and Western Togoland unrest. This forced 5,700 Togoland reunificationists to flee to Togo by 1961 to avoid imprisonment (Skinner, 2015). The assassination of Olympio in 1963, followed by the successful coup against Nkrumah in 1966, created a period of instability which led to a resurgence in Western Togoland sentiment and Ewe nationalism (Skinner, 2015). In the mid-70's these activists in exile, under the banner of Tolimo, gained widespread attention as they first sought special status for Western Togoland, then fully-fledged Togoland reunification (Brown, 1983). When a 1977 assassination attempt on the irredentist Togolese President Gnassingbe Eyadema failed, Eyadema withdrew his unification position and financial support, and Tolimo and Western Togoland nationalism seemingly quietly folded, once again, into the pages of the history books (Brown, 1980; Nugent, 2002).

The Oti Region proposal has given rise to the latest manifestations of nationalism within the Volta Region. As a response to further territorial

incursions threatened by the Oti Region, a wave of movements are drumming up fervour for Ewe and Western Togoland nationalism. However, it is the newly emerging affinity to the Volta Region, that of being a Voltarian, that has grown post-independence and threatens the legitimacy of Ewe and Western Togoland nationalism claims.

**A literature review of the competing nationalisms**

The real-time deliberations of the Commission of Inquiry means that there is currently no academic literature on the topic. There are however detailed historical scholarly perspectives on the rise and fall of Western Togoland nationalism and Ewe reunification that will ground this papers analysis of the Oti Region proposal. Perhaps the fullest account of the birth and growth of Ewe unification from 1914-1960 comes from Ghanaian Professor, D. E. K. Amenumey (1989), in his chronicle *The Ewe Unification Movement: A Political History*. In the early 1980's, David Brown (1980; 1983) contributed many important pieces of work on the political struggle of the Ewe and Tolimo against the central Ghanaian government. This was followed by Paul Nugent's (2002) study of border communities and an assessment that hopes of Ewe unification and/or Western Togoland secession are all but extinguished as a Volta Region identity amongst Ghanaian citizenship has emerged trump. Dr Kate Skinner is the heir apparent in this regional nationalism discussion, with her 2015 book, *The Fruits of Freedom in British Togoland*, providing the most recent assessment of nationalism. In this seminal work, Skinner (2015) challenges the notion of dead Ewe and Western Togoland movements and relocates their history within literacy and politics frameworks.

Gellner (1983, p. 1) contends that nationalism is "a theory of political legitimacy", while Kingsbury (2007) provides multiple constructions of how nationalism may develop to ultimately deliver this political legitimacy. *Constructed nationalism* suggests a somewhat artificial, human-decided development rather than an organic nationalistic growth (Kingsbury, 2007). It is commonly agreed upon by Amenumey (1989), Nugent (2002) and Skinner (2007), that Ewe nationalism began as a constructed nationalism, with all pointing to the lack of a singular political entity amongst the Ewe states pre-German colonisation. Yet they all differ on the pivotal factor that unpinned the emergence and adoption of Ewe nationalism. Amenumey (1989) cites German Christian missionaries' development of the Ewe Presbyterian Church and the standardisation of the Ewe language as the birth point of Ewe nationalism. Nugent (2002) cautions against this and instead cites ongoing cross-border trade during colonial times as the impetus, while

Skinner (2007; 2015) believes the catalyst came from mass education in Western Togoland. A common thread amongst these scholars is that *unity through communication* - a construction whereby nationalism develops through the ability to communicate (Kingsbury, 2007) - was fostered by a common language which led to the creation of an intertwined Ewe and Western Togoland high culture. Nugent (2002) furthers this by claiming after Ghanaian independence, Western Togoland nationalism lost appeal as an educated class grew from the Ghanaian institutions of mass education. This group of people had no direct involvement in the previous political struggle and thus found themselves affiliating with national ideals. Skinner (2007) does not take such a fatalistic viewpoint, but does acknowledge that a gap grew between the educated and non-educated Ghanaian Western Togolanders in the decades after independence.

*Ethno-nationalism* is premised on a common identity inherent in groups of ethnically homogenous people (Kingsbury, 2007). Ethno-nationalism helped spark the original Ewe unification movement against British and French demarcation (Amenumey, 1989). Yet the dilution of ethnic-Ewe prominence in Togoland, which led to 'Ewe' including those non-ethnic Ewes who could speak the language, limited the appeal of ethno-nationalists (Brown, 1980; Nugent, 2002; Skinner, 2007). Amenumey (1989) argues that ethno-nationalism lost prominence amongst the Ewe in Western Togoland due to the rise of *territorial nationalism.* This powerful form of nationalism is a primeval mechanism that bonds people and communities through "physical proximity, shared resources and common threats" (Kingsbury, 2007, p. 53).

Western Togoland territorial nationalism fell out of favour in the 1970's as Tolimo failed to gain support through this form of nationalism (Skinner, 2015). Brown (1980) concludes that government repression effectively destroyed grassroots Tolimo support, while Nugent (2002) argues that Ghanaian identity had greater attraction than the territorial nationalism offered by Tolimo. What is clear is that territory imbued nationalism has played a defining role in the rise of these nationalisms.

Strong Ewe ethno-nationalism exists in the diaspora, however, it struggles to maintain relevance to overseas-born generations in the USA (Kothor, 2012). Skinner (2010) shares in the importance of diaspora voices in countering the pure local history approach, and credits the UK diaspora with keeping Ewe unification and Western Togoland nationalism alive into the 21st century. It is somewhat unexpected then that a strong vocal voice has arisen within the Volta Region since the turn of the millennium. Skinner (2015) finishes her book with the writings of Kosi Kedem - a former Volta

Region parliamentarian whose stance is that Western Togolanders were robbed of their nationality. She concludes that despite Nugent's (2002) claims some 13 years earlier, the demise of Ewe reunification hopes and Western Togoland nationalism is not complete and there remains a local and diasporic network of educated individuals and groups who have taken charge of upholding this vision. It is here that this research paper enters the debate.

**Oti Region: recreating the 1956 plebiscite divisions**

The 1956 plebiscite to determine the future of Western Togoland was conducted by the United Nations in the six District Council areas that made up the British mandated territory (Nugent, 2002). The vote was either for integration with a soon-to-be independent Gold Coast, or to remain separate and have its future decided thereafter (Amenumey, 1989). The integration vote emerged triumphant with 58% of the vote, however, there were clear differences evident between voting patterns in the north and south council areas (Nugent, 2002). Despite attempts to have the two considered separately, the United Nations set in motion actions to integrate the entirety of Western Togoland into the Gold Coast to form the newly independent nation-state of Ghana (Nugent, 2002). The three northern districts who voted overwhelmingly for integration, Mamprusi, Dagomba and Gonja, joined the Northern Region of Ghana, while the three southern districts became the Volta Region. Of the three southern districts, the majority of voters in the northernmost Buem-Krachi District sought integration, while the southernmost districts of Kpandu and Ho proved to be the hotbed of separation, voting overwhelmingly against integration (Nugent, 2002). There were now clear divisions within the newly formed Volta Region. The curse of the African nation-state, which Davidson (1992) attributes to the adoption of western political models, struck Western Togoland through this foreign populace majority voting system that birthed the Volta Region.

The Oti Region proposal is stirring the same divisions that were experienced at independence. What was the Buem-Krachi District of Western Togoland will basically become the Oti Region, so it is therefore no surprise that support for the proposal is once again split along those lines. During the 2016 presidential campaign, 57 chiefs in the northern Volta Region declared their support for then presidential candidate Nana Akufo-Addo and his pledge to create the Oti Region (New Patriotic Party, 2016). The chief of the Krachi Traditional Area, who purports to be behind the petition to the President to create the Oti Region, claims he has 400 chiefs supporting the proposal (Nettey, 2017). While the exact number of chiefs in support was not made explicit by President Akufo-Addo, he did confirm that

a petition was received which prompted the appointment of the Commission of Inquiry (Government of Ghana, 2017). The strong evidence of support coming from the northern Volta Region is in contrast to the views of those in the south.

The Commission of Inquiry has drawn scorn from the Association of Volta Youth (2018) – who argue against the demarcation - for holding four of the five community consultations in districts that will form the Oti Region. Individuals, Church leaders and councils of chiefs are further enraged by the fact that only those within the boundary of the proposed new region will have a vote in the referendum that will decide the matter (Asogli State Council, 2018; Dzigbodi-Adjimah, 2017; Kanyi & Sowah, 2018). The discontent accorded to the political processes are not dissimilar to those shared by the southerners who condemned the 1956 plebiscite results for being considered as one.

In the early 1970's John Plamenatz (1973) wrote of an Eastern type of nationalism that existed in the Balkan region of Europe. This form of nationalism was said to seek to assert itself over "a chaotic ethnographic map of many dialects, with ambiguous historical or linguo-genetic allegiances, and containing populations which had only just begun to identify with these emergent national high-cultures" (Gellner, 1983, p. 100). This could very well have described Western Togoland in the decade leading up to the 1956 plebiscite. Two months before the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry, Professor Dzigbodi-Adjimah (2017) penned an opinion piece aptly titled: *Oti Region: The First Step Towards the Balkanisation of Volta Region.* In it he warns again ethnic appeasement, viewed as the underlying driver of the Oti Region proposal, and foresees an eventual disintegration of the Volta Region into small regions, each dominated by differing ethnic groups as what occurred in the Balkans. Whilst this aligns with the eventuality described by Plamenatz's Eastern nationalism, the Ewe and Western Togoland voices of the 21st century position themselves to avoid this collapse on the grounds of territorial nationalism and a united Volta Region voice. This is in direct contrast the plebiscite era when campaigners wanted the south to be considered separately. Davidson (1992) surmises that the Asante of the Gold Coast were on their way to a nation-state until colonialism arrived, and, given the chance, Western Togolanders and Ewe nationalists now believe they can achieve this with their territory intact. The newly emerging Voltarian nationalism transcends ethnic groupings and positions itself to avoid any demarcation along claims of territorial nationalism, yet does not harbour the same vision of nation-statehood (Concerned Citizens of Volta Region, 2017).

Nugent's (2002) detailed analysis of voting patterns of communities in the 1956 plebiscite indicate that ethnicity played a smaller role than previously thought. Contrastingly, the Oti Region proposal appears to have incited political manoeuvring of local Chiefdoms and traditional areas along ethnic lines. Leaders from the Kpandai District in Northern Region are petitioning to be included in the Oti Region – citing that their expulsion to the Northern Region at the time of independence, rather than inclusion in the Volta Region, separates them from their fellow Guan (Nankwe, 2018). The Krachi Youth Association (2017) supports the Oti Region as a way of giving the Guan and Akan in the north separation from the majority Ewe in south. Ethno-nationalism is on the rise as it has strong attraction for groups that are on the peripheries of national thought (Kingsbury, 2007). The Oti Region proposal has emboldened not only the Ewe and Western Togolanders, but those ethnic groups that felt sidelined within the already marginalised Volta Region. The Guans are leading the Oti Region movement but the Ghanaian government cannot be seen to be bowing to the pressures of ethnic appeasement. The official line is that the creation of the Oti Region will promote regional development and allow the government to be closer to the people (Government of Ghana 2017). However, questions of territorial boundaries arising from ethno-nationalism, whether they be national or regional boundaries, will no doubt linger long after any demarcation - just as the conjecture around the 1956 plebiscite invoked boundaries has remained. These divisions of the past lay the groundwork for understanding how the failure of Tolimo is linked with the current day debate.

**A comparison to Tolimo**

Many scholars thought that the unravelling of Tolimo in the late 1970's was the death of Ewe unification and Western Togoland secession hopes (Asamoah, 2014; Brown, 1980; Nugent, 2002). Few would have predicted the rise and spotlight given to groups seeking a radical agenda, such as the Homeland Study Group Foundation (HSGF) who demand Western Togoland secession from Ghana. In flashbacks to the days of violent crackdowns against Tolimo supporters, Ghanaian authorities arrested the leaders of the HSGF prior to a 2017 declaration of independence (Ibrahim, 2017). The ensuing trials and media attention have placed the divisive HSGF at the forefront of the Oti Region debate. Like the Tolimo days, there are strong undercurrents from competing movements who seek different agendas. The Volta Youth Association (VYA) of the 1970's actively condemned Tolimo and instead sought greater national benefits for the Volta Region (Asamoah, 2014). Today, a group called the Concerned Citizens of Volta Region

(CCVR) are offering a similar viewpoint and are calling on unity in the region (Concerned Citizens of Volta Region, 2017). They too, just like the VYA in the 1970's, are rejecting the radical agenda and ideologies of Western Togoland secession groups. Amongst this is the flame of Ewe unification held aloft by diaspora collectives in the US and UK (Kothor, 2012; Skinner, 2010). Surprisingly, a coalition of sorts has been formed by eight different groups, including secessionists, pro-Volta Region and Ewe diaspora groups, to condemn the partitioning of the Volta Region (The Coalition of Volta Region Groups, 2018).

Tolimo's downfall was said to be partly attributed to its weak support within the Volta Region and the inability to connect with the ordinary citizen (Brown, 1983). Tolimo was led by exiles in Togo and sought international publicity to strengthen its cause. Fights against the Oti Region proposal are led by the aforementioned Coalition, which of its eight members, only two are based domestically. A shared challenge between Tolimo and the Coalition is that Tolimo faced internal cleavages brought upon by differing goals – much like Coalition members seeking different outcomes as Western Togolanders, Ewes, or Voltarians. Yet the Coalitions joint fight to block the demarcation of the Volta Region signifies a lightbulb moment. The VYA and Tolimo were unable to bridge their differences in 1970's, and even before that, Ewe unificationists could not win the support of the non-Ewe in the 1956 plebiscite, even though they had a similar anti-union position. One could almost describe the Coalition, for all their competing nationalisms, as a patriot of the Volta Region. Plamenatz (1973, p. 24) defines patriotism as "a devotion to the community one belongs to", while Gellner (1983, p. 138) clearly distinguishes nationalism as "a very distinctive species of patriotism". If it is devotion they are showing to the Volta Region community, even as a pawn in a larger game, then the Coalition has evolved from the primordial heart-on-the-sleeve, anti-high culture nationalism that Tolimo represented. They are therefore better poised to connect with the ordinary citizen by appealing to the sense of loyalty of Volta Region citizens, and in doing so, achieve their shared goal of keeping the Volta Region whole.

**Nationalisms awoken: the past, present and future**

Gellner (1983) and Kingsbury (2007) both theorise that individuals must display a shared commitment to a nation in order for it to exist. This shared commitment often manifests into a quest for political legitimacy, and thus a rise in nationalism (Kingsbury, 2007). It seems Tolimo was on this quest without the requisite shared commitment. The nationalisms that have been awoken by the Oti Region proposal are competing against each other for

validation and commitment amongst individuals of the Volta Region. The fight rather than flight response exhibited by these movements compliments Plamenatz's (1973) assertion that nationalism arises in a preservation response to a direct threat on a national or cultural identity. But what chance do they have when the people they pursue a shared commitment with are an overlapping target market for all the groups? The following section evaluates the three competing nationalisms and suggests a final resting point for each of them within the current state of affairs.

**Ewe nationalism**

Ewe nationalism was constructed during the Togoland era and calls for Ewe emancipation came rapidly after the creation of Western and French Togoland (Amenumey, 1989; Nugent, 2002; Skinner, 2007). However, Amenumey (1989) tracks the origins of Ewe unification to pre-WWI when the Anlo Ewes, who existed in a small corner of the Gold Coast, called for Ewe unification under the British administration. What drives Ewe nationalists is this persistent and intrusive division of their people for over 130 years, continuing today with the Ewes still divided between anglophone Ghana and francophone Togo. The Oti Region proposal represents an attack on their territorial rights and a diminishment of their ability to be a unified ethnic group.

Ewe nationalism is perhaps the purest form of nationalism evident in the Volta Region. Surprisingly, it appears to have the smallest voice amidst the current debate. Anti-Oti Region statements have largely been released by a range of Ewe diaspora groups aligning themselves with the larger Coalition (The Coalition of Volta Region Groups, 2018). There is little evidence to suggest that Ewe nationalism is compelling Ewe people in Ghana to oppose the Oti Region. This places today's situation in a similar position as Tolimo who ultimately failed to gain grassroots support for their ideals (Brown, 1983). One explanation could be a romanticised history and myth in the diaspora of what an Ewe homeland was like as Togoland. The glorified history may not match the reality on the ground where people have successfully transitioned into being an Ewe within Ghana. Unless there is purposeful provocation or something akin to ethnic cleansing, Ewe nationalism may remain hidden behind layers of other competing nationalisms.

To bring Ewe nationalism to the fore, Ewe movements that seek unification would be better off allowing the Oti Region to come to fruition. Oti Region proponents the Krachi Youth Association (2017), point to the fact that the majority of the northern Volta Region inhabitants are Guan, not Ewe,

and have long held oppositional views to the majority Ewe of the south. In the 1956 plebiscite the Buem-Krachi District, which is the rough territory of the proposed Oti Region, sought integration with the Gold Coast rather than separation (Nugent, 2002). Allowing the Guans and Akans to have their own region could contribute to more coherent regional politics and potentially give rise to greater Ewe ownership of the Volta Region and a stronger territorial and political claim.

**Western Togoland nationalism**

The 1956 plebiscite result dealt a hammer blow to hopes of a Western Togoland nation-state in the post-colonial era. The failure to gain the support of the northerners, who viewed the separation vote as a kowtow to Ewe dominance, is well documented by Amenumey (1989), Nugent (2002) and Skinner (2015). In the 1970's Tolimo sought special status for what was Western Togoland, but after this was rejected by the Ghanaian government, they demanded total reunification with Togo (Brown, 1980; 1983). Tolimo was viewed by the government as an Ewe secessionist movement despite having strong non-Ewe leaders, and was seen by the majority of the people as an irrelevant ideal from disgruntled exiles in Togo (Brown, 1980; 1983; Nugent, 200). The Western Togoland movements circling on the Oti Region proposal, such as the HSGF, face a number of these same challenges: they are being rejected by regional groups who seek greater outcomes for the Volta Region within the nation-state of Ghana (Concerned Citizens of Volta Region, 2017); and governments are cracking down on their radical secessionist agenda (Ibrahim, 2017).

The most vocal Western Togoland voice in the decade before the Oti Region proposal came to light was Kosi Kedem - a then parliamentarian in the Volta Region who believed that Western Togolanders had been denied their nationality (Skinner, 2010; 2015). Instead of a secessionist rhetoric, Kedem sought greater integration of the former Western Togoland territory into Ghana, claiming the Volta Region in particular had been neglected by successive governments (Skinner, 2010; 2015). Western Togoland nationalism does exist in small pockets, however, it may be time for the HSGF to drop their radical agenda and instead align themselves with Kedem's integration approach. Yet this approach is riddled with challenges as they would struggle to push better political representation and economic development concurrently across the Northern, Oti and Volta Regions that comprised Western Togoland territory. Any focus on the Volta Region, the ideological and physical home of the movement, would further marginalise them from the rest of the regions they purport to serve.

The quest for a Western Togoland nation-state has always been hindered by the lack of cultural homogeneity amongst those in the claimed territory (Skinner, 2015). The Guans who pursue the Oti Region are just the latest ethnic group to assert their own territorial claims. Gellner (1983) suggests that nationalism arises as a result of homogeneity, but Western Togoland can never have been said to be a culturally or linguistically homogenous entity. Adding to this challenge is that creation of the Oti Region would see Western Togoland territory primarily divided amongst the Northern Region, Oti Region and Volta Region, with small enclaves also existing in the Eastern Region and Upper East Region. The clear divisions in the 1956 plebiscite voting patterns and the current support of the Oti Region proposal show a fractured region. Competing nationalisms are still present and just like Tolimo was in the late 1970's, Western Togoland secession can be best viewed as an outdated concept with no real practicality. The rise of ethno-nationalism situated within a national Ghanaian consciousness must be considered detrimental to their pipe dream of secession as Western Togoland nationalism once again fails to garner serious grassroots attention.

**Voltarian nationalism**

Voltarian nationalism is perhaps the hardest of all to lock down. Nugent (2002) notes that the first generation of highly educated scholars hailing from the Volta Region realised that their region was developmentally trailing behind the others. They sought greater equity for the region through political means, but remained firmly committed to the new nation-state of Ghana that had provided them with educational opportunities. Without explicitly referencing Voltarian nationalism, Nugent's (2002) documentation of this period shows a typology of nationalism that was birthed through the uniting factor of standardised education and language (English), and one which transcended ethnic boundaries.

The dominant view of the proliferation of pro-Volta groups is that of opposition to the Oti Region proposal. They reject government claims that the Oti Region will boost regional development, pointing to numerous yet to be realised infrastructure projects in the south, and warn equally against creating regions based on ethnic delineations (Coalition of Volta Youths, 2018; Ohene-Sefadzi, 2017). The arousal of Voltarian nationalism has occurred due to the proposed territorial incursions of the region. Kingsbury (2007) warns that territorial nationalism paired with the need for a common defence is a primeval form of nationalism that can create strong community bonds. The rise in people speaking with their feet and attending rallies points to the growth of these bonds. Due care must be given by these groups that

their demands and actions do not morph into a breakaway mentality and they retain their desire for regional development through ongoing engagement with the sitting national government. The breakaway path that Tolimo took eventually led to their downfall.

Voltarian nationalism has largely lay dormant until the provocation that is the Oti Region. Plamenatz (1973) bases his writings of nationalism on the simple truth that people who recognize their separation from those around them, and react to this, are displaying trace levels of nationalism. The present moment in time may just be the first reaction that cements Voltarian nationalism in the consciousness of many. It is now not just the educated who are recognizing the perceived underdevelopment of the region, but those across all levels of society. This grassroots connection is what all nationalistic movements that have come and gone have lacked. It is now in the hands of the many Volta groups to deliver a unified message that ties these people to a regional outlook and strengthens the bond of Voltarian nationalism.

**Conclusion**

There is little doubt that the Oti Region will soon become a reality and the Volta Region will be split along old ethnic and political lines. This article has critically analysed the impact of the Oti Region proposal and highlighted the differing nationalisms competing to take hold amongst dissatisfied people of the Volta Region. The historical perspective demonstrates that many of these nationalistic groups are making the same mistakes as their predecessors did during equally important times. The reconstruction of the challenges and opportunities available shows the lack of grassroots support is significant, particularly with Western Togoland nationalists who are continuing to claim territory that has overwhelmingly and consistently rejected their claims. Ewe nationalists have the purest claim to a brand of territorial and ethno-infused nationalism, but are failing to project a compelling history and myth worth Ghanaian Ewes unifying for. Perhaps the closest nationalism to the people is that of being a Voltarian, however ironic as Voltarian nationalism has not been explicitly branded by the groups that are demonstrating this form of nationalism. It appears that the Oti Region proposal has triggered the unconscious rise of Voltarian nationalism and it is simply awaiting a nationalistic leader to explicate the importance and ideals of being a Voltarian.

More than thirty years ago Gellner (1983, p. 83) remarked on the "stability of the ethnic-defying frontiers that had been arbitrarily drawn up by the colonists" in Africa. South Sudan is the only example of a redraw of

these colonial borders in more than 60 years since Ghana was the first to achieve independence. The curse of the nation-state continues to haunt those people who seek to adjust these borders through Western Togoland reinstatement or Ewe unification. They appear trapped within these borders. Yet the Oti Region proposal that cuts across their claimed territory is providing some political legitimacy to their nationalistic claims. No matter the outcome, nationalistic sentiment other than the dominant Ghanaian high culture is alive in this corner of the globe. As boldly as Nugent (2002) proclaimed the death of Ewe reunification hopes at the end of the 1970's, the end of the road must be nigh for Western Togoland nationalists and hopes for a reunified Eweland. The emerging Voltarian identity appears to provide the most realistic path forward to promote greater integration of the region within Ghana and time will only tell whether this can be seized upon. The Oti Region may just prove to be the hump that broke the camel's back for Ewe and Western Togolanders, and the start of a more powerful Volta Region identity.

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# The African Philosophy of Forgiveness and Abrahamic Traditions of Vengeance

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**Abstract**

This papyrus suggests that penal abolitionism without forgiveness of the unforgiveable may be a license for self-help or vengeance. The papyrus offers a radical deconstruction of the essay, 'On Forgiveness', by Jacques Derrida, to reveal that contrary to popular misinterpretations, Derrida was demonstrating that forgiveness is more common in African traditions than in Abrahamic traditions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This papyrus goes beyond Derrida's examples from the recent history of South Africa and delves back to classical African civilization to demonstrate that the forgiveness of the unforgivable is indeed a long-running African tradition as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, among others, suggested. The papyrus ends with a call for people of African descent to apply this philosophy of forgiveness to one another and demand that the principle be integrated into public policy along with policies for reparations of historic wrongs.

## Introduction

> *The alleged killer could have never anticipated the way the families of the fallen would respond when they saw him in court -- in the midst of unspeakable grief, with words of forgiveness. He couldn't imagine that. (Applause.) …It would be a refutation of the forgiveness expressed by those families if we merely slipped into old habits, whereby those who disagree with us are not merely wrong but bad; where we shout instead of listen; where we barricade ourselves behind preconceived notions or well-practiced cynicism (President Barrack Obama, 2015).*
>
> *The prevalent testimony of forgiveness is indicative of the grace and faith with which we have been blessed (Council of Bishops, 2015).*

It is remarkable that I, a descendant of some of the African ancestors who survived the slave raids in Africa, am privileged to speak with the African descendants of those ancestors who survived the genocidal middle passage and the unforgivable plantations, as one survivor speaking with fellow survivors of the African holocaust, sharing about the ancient African tradition of the forgiveness of the unforgivable that continues to endure against incredible odds. It is a miracle because, as James Baldwin told Chinua Achebe the only time that they met in 1980, when they marched our ancestors in chains through what they wished were 'doors of no return', they never intended that we should survive to meet again (Achebe, 2002). For as Bob Marley sang in the eponymous album, 'Survival', we are survivors (Marley, 1980).

It was daunting to be asked to speak with the great African Methodist Episcopal congregation[1] that emerged from the Free Africa Society in 1816 in the city of brotherly love, Philadelphia, as the first congregation that developed out of a sociological critique of the segregationist practices by white-supremacist church members during slavery rather than from the more common theological and doctrinal disagreements of Protestants. In humility, I chose not to lecture to the congregation but started by sharing a testimony about the forgiveness of the unforgivable from my African background where I was raised in Catholicism as well as in African spirituality. As a child, I survived the Biafra war in which three million people, mostly Igbo, died in Nigeria. What is remarkable about the survival of the Igbo is that they did not obsess about seeking revenge but appear to devote their energy to the rebuilding of their communities in record time with little or no external aid (Ekwe-Ekwe, 2011). Yet, throughout Nigeria, the cycles of killings of mostly Igbo residents within and outside their South East enclave (or what Ekwe-Ekwe calls phase four of the Igbo Genocide) continue periodically but the Igbo have resisted the temptation to retaliate by trying to kill fellow citizens from other parts of the country who reside among them in South East Nigeria. Amnesty International documented in 2016 that hundreds of Igbo suffered extra judicial killing for peacefully demanding a referendum on Biafra and for honoring their loved ones who were killed in the Biafra genocide.

[1] I was invited to give a talk on African Culture and the History of Christianity by St. Paul AME Church in Blacksburg, Virginia, on February 9, 2014 as part of Black History Month. I chose to focus the talk on Forgiveness as an African Tradition. This papyrus is an expansion of the talk. I thank the congregation for the opportunity to engage with the community that led to this papyrus.

The genocidal crimes in Africa (from slavery to colonialism and neocolonialism) were almost always committed by adherents of Abrahamic traditions even though the Bible commands, Thou Shall Not Kill; and the Quran commands that if you destroy one of the children of Allah, you destroy all of the children of Allah. Surprisingly, none of the hyper-religious African genocidists (in Biafra, Rwanda, Sudan, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, for instance) has ever prayed for forgiveness for killing millions of God's children. And even more surprising is the willingness of the survivors to forgive their oppressors to the extent that they do not clamor for punitive justice but tend to seek reparative justice with rare exceptions of the jailing of Charles Taylor, the indictment of the President of Sudan by the International Criminal Court, and the jailing of some of the leaders of the Rwanda genocide while most were forgiven in Rwanda and none was prosecuted in the case of Biafra. Whereas almost all those who have suffered historic wrongs (Jews who survived the holocaust, Japanese Americans who were interned during World War II, and Indigenous peoples who were granted land rights, for example) have been offered some form of reparations, people of African descent remain the only group that have not been offered any reparative justice (in the case of descendants of enslaved Africans in the Diaspora and Africans who survived slave raids in Africa, the case of the survivors of apartheid, the case of survivors of colonial violence in Africa, and the survivors of the postcolonial genocides in Africa) and yet we are not running about seeking revenge, but we are late-comers to the demand for reparations given the recent demands from Caribbean nations for slavery reparations and the demand for land reclamations in Southern Africa (Agozino, 2004). I wish that people of African descent will extend this legendary spirit of forgiveness to their fellow poor African brothers and sisters at home and in the Diaspora for no matter who is right or wrong, 'we want peace in Liberia', according to Alpha Blondy who sang this while Liberian women rose to 'Pray the Devil Back to Hell' (Leticker, 2009).

I admire the fact that the founding Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, named the congregation 'African' at a time that such a name was synonymous with barbarism and dehumanization. In 1837, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania was started in the same city of Philadelphia but the initial name of Institute for the Training of African Youth was quickly discarded in preference for 'Colored Youth' (Williams, et al, 2004). The retention of 'African' in the AME church and in the name of its university in Liberia, remains a prophetic choice of name by people of African descent who wandered through the wilderness of America in search of a more appropriate name and stumbled through derisory labels such as

Nigger, Negro, Black, Colored, and Afro only to finally settle for the original 'African' that the AME church bore with honor, but with no hatred towards those who tried to render the name pejorative to keep the people in bondage.

No other group of people have endured and survived the chattel slavery peculiar experience of people of African descent in modern history. Yet rather than be consumed by hatred, people of African descent and other Indigenous peoples, have demonstrated their forgiveness by using their conscious human agency to name their children after the very people who enslaved their ancestors and committed genocide against them; by seeking to affiliate with religious congregations founded and dominated by people who despise them; by sending their children to be educated by institutions and teachers that denigrate the rich contributions of Africans and Indigenous peoples to civilization; by seeking to work for employers who openly discriminate against them; by shopping in stores where they are routinely profiled in racially degrading manners; by yearning to sleep with and marry their own enemies; by dressing in the styles of their oppressors; stretching their hair to look like the style of the oppressors; and lightening their skin to pass for someone who could be mistaken for one of the oppressors. Is this forgiveness or the meekness that weakness breeds? I think that it is forgiveness all right and not just the weakness of the oppressed.

**Deconstructing Abrahamic Traditions**

An Africa-born philosopher, Jacques Derrida, argued that the only thing worth forgiving is the unforgivable because forgiving what is forgivable is no big deal. However, according to him, forgiveness is conceived as a language that came to modernity from Abrahamic traditions, or what he called religions of the book: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He set out to deconstruct this belief that forgiveness is rooted in Abrahamism but paradoxically revealed that the tradition of forgiving the unforgivable is more common in African culture than in the religions of the book (Derrida, 2001). Derrida is probably right here in the sense that Judaism celebrates the annual ritual of atonement during the closing of the New Year celebrations, Yom Kippur, with the prayer for forgiveness that also indicated that some exceptional wrongs remain unforgivable (Cook, 2010).

As a Jew he was born in Algeria, Derrida was stripped of his French citizenship at the age of 10 and expelled from school for looking too dark and a little Jewish under the Vichy regime during the Nazi occupation of France in World War II. He consistently argued that the shock of that identity crisis at such a young age remained the source of all his philosophical quests to deconstruct Western philosophy by radically exposing the will to power

that is hidden behind every claim to truth and every claim to white supremacy. He obviously forgave that violence against his person for he subsequently accepted French citizenship and travelled on a French passport with his French name (perhaps to conceal his Jewishness from anti-Semitics, as his parents advised him) throughout his life, but without denying his African origin and his Jewish background in his writings, though he could have easily adopted another nationality as a global scholar (Agozino, 2011).

With this background biographical information that is not always explicit in his work, readers of his essay, 'On forgiveness' (Derrida, 2001), will more easily grasp his radical conclusion that forgiveness is not rooted in the Abrahamic tradition, contrary to preconceptions, but more in African tradition. In that essay, Derrida reviews the opinion of Jewish philosophers (such as Jankelevitch (1971) in '*L'Imprescriptible*' and Arendt (1958) in '*The Human Condition'*) who suggest that the Shoah or the Holocaust is unforgivable and that the perpetrators should be hunted down and brought to justice as part of the efforts to make sure that such a huge crime against humanity never again takes place.

Derrida used the example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa to illustrate his argument that a crime against humanity such as apartheid is not only forgivable but should be forgiven unconditionally. He was critical of Archbishop Desmond Tutu for trying to infuse the theology of his Anglican congregation into the proceedings of the TRC by insisting that the condition for forgiveness is a confession from the offender who must appear before the Tribunal to ask for forgiveness. Even when the Prime Minister of Japan asked for forgiveness from Koreans and Chinese for the war atrocities committed by Japanese troops, as Derrida indicated, there is no guarantee that he spoke for all Japanese, including those who still worship at the shrine for the war heroes, nor is there a guarantee that every Chinese and every Korean was ready to forgive without reparations (Coicaud, 2009; Dominello and Pereyra, 2016).

Derrida radicalized the concept of forgiveness by demonstrating that even when the state is ready to forgive the offender, the radical individual victim may insist that what was done to her beloved was unforgivable and that she was not ready to forgive, as one widow did (Derrida, 2001). The reverse is also true because the state may insist on punishing the offender despite the fact that the victim may have offered to forgive the harm. Without explicitly stating so, Derrida was suggesting that South Africans appeared to have forgiven unforgivable wrongs even when some of the offenders refused to appear before the TRC to ask for forgiveness. Karenga reminds us that the deep concern for social justice or *Maat* among people of African descent is a

continuation from classical African civilization as documented in ancient Kemet (ancient Egypt). He uses *The Book of Khunanpu*, commonly known as 'The Story of the Eloquent Peasant', to illustrate the fact that, as far back as 1800 BC, a poor farmer who was dispossessed and tortured by a rich man was able to pursue justice and win non-violently through the application of intellectual and moral persuasion (Karenga, 2004).

Mandela led by example because he personally forgave those who unjustly deprived him of his liberty for 27 years. He could have launched a race war against the white minority rulers or an ethnic war against the Zulu-led Inkatha Freedom Party that resisted the rise of the African National Conference to power during the period of 'Black on Black violence' (Mandela, 1995). If Mandela had tried to push the white South Africans into exile many around the world would have said that it served them right because some of the white minority thugs actually formed an Afrikaner Brotherhood to use armed violence to intimidate the majority and carve out what they wanted to declare as an exclusive white homeland in South Africa. Mandela forgave the provocation and delicately led the nation towards reconciliation and a non-racial democracy that is rooted in African traditions of tolerance rather than in the vindictive traditions of apartheid, common in Abarahamism, as this papyrus argues.

Bill Clinton stated in his autobiography that he challenged Madiba Mandela to admit that he is a normal human being and that he must have had even a tiny bit of hatred towards the people who did such unforgivable things to him. On the contrary, Mandela told him that his ability to love all of God's children is part of what makes him human and that if he allowed anyone to deny him of that ability, he would be allowing the person to deny his basic humanity and he would never do that. He told Clinton that neither should he fail to love all, and Clinton said that his jaw dropped (Clinton, 2004).

Followers of the Abrahamic traditions will be surprised to learn that the very first time that the word 'forgive' was used in the Bible, was in Chapter 50 of Genesis with reference to the exercise of power and authority in Africa by Joseph over his brothers who sold him into slavery. It was not until the New Testament that Jesus brought the gospel of forgiveness back from his upbringing in Egypt where he was taken as a baby to escape the mass infanticide by King Herod. He preached about the virtues of forgiveness and mercy repeatedly, especially during the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus fled to Egypt before returning to the place of his birth, Moses fled from Egypt before returning as a leader, Joseph was sold to Egypt where he became a leader and sent for the rest of his family, and Jacob fled from Esau before returning prosperous. Ancient Egyptians had a similar story of Sinuhe who fled from

Egypt in 2000 BC and joined the ruling elite in a foreign land before praying in his old age to be allowed to return to the 'eternal city' and he was allowed to return without penalty (Parkinson, 1999). The ancient Egyptians believed that Humankind was one family under the theology of monotheism as the AME church motto proclaims whereas other nationalities tended to believe that they had their own national deities. They demonstrated this belief with the power of the sun to shine for all, not just for whites, nor for just the rich, nor just for men, but for all – Jews, Gentiles, friends, foes, immigrants, citizens, animals, and plants – without discrimination. The book, *A Tribute to African Civilization*, reports that the Prince of Damascus once led an uprising against the rule of Pharaoh but rather than wage war to suppress the rebellion, the Prince was invited to Egypt where he was feted and told to go and tell his people that they were free to rule themselves (Kamara, 2005).

**Malcolm, Martin, Mandela and Me:**

The papyrus now turns to the teachings of both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. on the theme of forgiveness. Brother Malcolm stated in his autobiography that when he learned that his revered leader, Elijah Mohamed, was messing with some of the ladies in the Nation of Islam, he nearly lost his faith because he thought that such a moral weakness was unforgivable in a leader (Malcolm X, 1965). However, one of the sons of Mr. Mohamed sat Malcolm down and they studied the Bible and the Quran together. From the study, Malcolm came to the realization that all the great men in the Bible did something that was seriously naughty but that they were honored for the good things that they did. Recent revelations about clergy abuse in the Catholic church and in other Christian denominations, go to show that even religious leaders are not free from blame of the sexual abuse of children that is widespread across the world.

Also, the Quran (42:40) commands the faithful to be merciful to those who offend against them so that Allah will also be merciful to them on judgment day, for Allah is the most merciful. Thus Muslims believe that; 'The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong' (Holy Quran, 42:40). However, the Quran also teaches that; 'Allah forgives what is past: for repetition Allah will exact from him the penalty. For Allah is Exalted, and Lord of Retribution' (Holy Quran, 5:95). This is similar to the Bible book of Revelation that predicts that when Jesus comes again, he will not be coming as a lamb to be slaughtered or as the Prince of Peace but as a conqueror and destroyer of the wicked (Holy Bible, Revelations). Malcolm therefore rededicated himself to

following his flawed leader and submitted to his authority fully even when he was grounded for speaking out after the assassination of President Kennedy. Eventually, he was forced to break away to form his own Muslim Mosque, Inc., after realizing that all white people were not devils and after deciding to tie African American Unity with African Unity. Unfortunately, he was assassinated by suspected members of the Nation of Islam, according to Manning Marable (2011), showing that the message of measured retaliation as justifiable in Abrahamic traditions, when forgiveness is not possible, may be encouraging the faithful to commit acts of violence against even their fellow believers. Christians have wage crusades against fellow Christians, Muslims wage jihad against Muslims, Semites fight against Semites, Asians against Asians, Europeans against Europeans, they do not spare out-groups either. But Africans tend to fight against only fellow Africans while being more willing to forgive wrongs done by non Africans.

In the collection of his speeches, *Where Do We Go From Here: Community or Chaos?*, Martin Luther King Jr. included three speeches on the concept of the 'World House' (King Jr., 2010). He said that a famous writer had a draft for a novel about a World House that was inherited by the descendants of the owner of the house and that their task was to figure out how to live in that house amicably as one Humankind family, as the African Methodist Episcopal Church proclaimed when the last part of the motto was changed from 'Man my Brother', to 'Humankind my Family' in 2008, to make it more gender-neutral. The first speech was given by brother Martin, regarding the struggle for Civil Rights in America, to urge all Americans not to see one another as their enemies but as members of their family who should be won over with love and not with humiliation or retaliation even in the face of provocation. The second speech urged Americans to see Vietnamese as brothers and sisters rather than as enemies to be annihilated with cluster bombing and napalm. The third speech on the theme of the World House referred to South Africa to urge the residents to treat one another as members of the same family who must learn to live together or destroy one another.

In support of the idea of a World House advocated by King above, Africans have similar beliefs in tolerance and love for all. Chinua Achebe used the Igbo communal sculpture, *Mbari*, to capture this spirit of tolerance as an African tradition that is at risk of being wiped out by the genocidal state that European domination imposed on Africans (Achebe, 2012). Here, Achebe was wondering why the rest of Nigeria decimated their Igbo brothers and sisters with the aid of foreign backers when all Nigerians could share the shelter of the *Mbari* irrespective of differences in language; or let the Igbo

go and construct a new *Mbari* if they were not wanted in the federation. Desmond Tutu uses the concept of Ubuntu to talk about the same African belief, that we are a bundle of humanity and so the oppression of some will result in suffering for all (Tutu and Tutu, 2015). In the judgment on the case of African National Congress Youth Leader, Julius Malema, Judge Colin Lamont applied the principles of Ubuntu to say that restorative justice is favored over retributive justice (Afri-Forum and Another vs. Malema and others, 2011).

Earlier at the beginning of his ministry, brother Martin preached sermons repeatedly on 'The Meaning of Forgiveness' (King, Jr., 1948-1954). The Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project documented this sermon note dated from 1948 to 1954 on the theme that became the foundation for the non-violent strategy of resistance to the unforgivable wrongs of the Jim Crow system of racial segregation. He started the sermon with the story of the prodigal son from Luke 15:20 and highlighted how much the father kissed and celebrated the prodigal son when he returned and asked for forgiveness after blowing his inheritance; whereas the obedient brother was never celebrated. He concluded the sermon by stating as follows:

> 'Here then is the Christian weapon against social evil. We are to go out with the spirit of forgiveness, heal the hurts, right the wrongs and change society with forgiveness. Of course we don't think this is practical...This is the solution of the race problem' (King, Jr., 1954)

Here Martin is suggesting that forgiveness is not enough because hurts will also need to be healed and wrongs righted in order to change society with forgiveness. He called this forgiveness a Christian Weapon even though the people in the Ku Klux Klan saw themselves as Christians out to kill those they hated and despite the fact that the last book in the Bible, Revelations, never mentioned forgiveness even once. Where did brother Martin get this philosophy of forgiveness which he admitted that his Christian congregation did not think was practical? The answer lies that Martin borrowed the philosophy from Mahatma Gandhi, according to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial exhibitions in Atlanta, Georgia. But Gandhi himself learned this lesson from the Zulu in South Africa, according to his autobiography (Gandhi, 1990).

Of course, brother Martin did not have to give credit for the African philosophy of non-violence and forgiveness to Gandhi. He could have referred to the fact that Robert Allen, founder of AME, forgave the injustice against people of African descent and rather organized volunteers to treat the

infected and bury the dead during the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia, irrespective of race or class and without prejudice against congregations that had discriminated against Africans up to 1807. Rather than seek to kill people in revenge, he went to court and won the right to organize an independent congregation of African Methodist Episcopal Baptist church that St. Paul's represents today. Although the Church is named African, it remained open to all of Humankind who wanted to fellowship with the congregation. That is forgiveness in action as Allen himself observed (Allen, 1831).

This Africana forgiveness that Allen spoke about was not extended to Denmark Vassey, the enslaved African who bought his freedom with a lottery winning but could not afford to buy his wife's freedom too and who became a teenage minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He was hanged with his followers just because they preached the gospel according to Prophet Jonah as a warning to America to end the evil of slavery or face the wrath of God. They were accused of plotting a rebellion, they burnt down his church and hanged him (Johnson, 2001). Instead of repenting like the people of Nineveh, the hearts of Americans were hardened until the prediction of punishment for wickedness came to pass in the American Civil War with about 600,000 Americans killed, most of them poor whites. All those lives could have been spared if the Confederates did not launch a pro-slavery rebellion aimed at spreading slavery to other states as state right.

**Conclusion - We Need to Make Changes:**

This papyrus ends with a message of peace and love, not just for those who wronged us and to whom we have more or less forgiven the unforgivable, but also for one another as people of African descent and as Indigenous peoples, and as members of the family of Humankind. Let us extend the love that Jesus commanded us to show to our enemies to our own brothers and sisters and bring the inner-city gang warfare, domestic violence in our homes, ethnic and religious wars in Africa and bloody resources conflicts to an end, by recovering our African traditions of forgiveness, or what the Rasta call *One Love*, that an unforgiving Eurocentric system of oppression and exploitation for selfish gains have tried to beat out of humanity. The people of Columbia recently voted against a peace plan to end the decades old civil war because they insisted that the rebels must be punished for their atrocities but their President won a Nobel Peace Prize for insisting on forgiveness (Newman, 2016).

Obviously I am not advocating that Africa is superior to Europe because Africa, like the rest of the world, has been Europeanized to a great extent. What Afrocentricity presumes is that when we put Africa at the center of our

critical and activist search for knowledge, we are more likely to discover original principles and technologies that white-supremacy may have been trying to suppress to the disadvantage of humanity (Asante, 2011). The genocidal wars that are fought with European weapons of mass destruction across Africa are among the legacies of the relative loss of agency in non-violent indigenous African knowledge systems, and the Africa-centered perspective in Africana Studies challenges us to rediscover the originality of our people to help to make the world a better place for all.

Let us also aim to inform abolitionist praxis with this African spirit of forgiveness especially towards those who committed non-violent and or victimless crimes. Forgiveness is not just for the benefit of those who wronged us but also for our own benefit given evidence that 'resentment is like drinking poison and hoping that it will kill your enemy', according to Nelson Mandela (2013). However, we must still demand that the hurt against people of African descent should be healed, as King insisted, in order for the forgiveness to work. The historic wrongs done against the people of African descent still cry out for reparations in order to make the forgiveness of the unforgivable real for the benefit of all of God's children. We all should support the efforts to end the war on drugs which has unfairly targeted poor youth and resulted in the escalation of violence in the inner cities and internationally. We can always use teaching and healing to reduce the harm of drugs in the community. We all should support the payment of reparations for slavery. We all should support efforts to peacefully unite all Africans in the 'Federal Republic of Africa'.

Maybe we should add one more principle to the annual Kwanzaa celebrations (the annual celebration of African culture by African Americans, celebrated around the world from 26 – 31 December): the principle of *Mgbaghalu* (to run past an offense) or forgiveness in my native Igbo language, a language that has no equivalent for the English word, unforgivable. The healing *huna* that Native Hawaiians call *Ho'oponopono* (Dupree, 2012) also captures this spirit of forgiveness that President Barack Obama brought to his administration by deliberately including his rivals in his administration, culminating in the normalization of diplomatic relations with Cuba and the legalization of marijuana by voters in some states. Jacques Derrida was right that we can find more examples of forgiveness of the unforgivable in the traditions of colonized people than in the Abrahamic traditions which have themselves been violently transformed by the logic of capitalism and by imperialist reason which seek to repress poor innocent immigrants as if they were all violent criminals.

It could be countered that what this papyrus has been analyzing as forgiveness could be dismissed as the meekness that goes with weakness. It could be said that in all the examples where weaker people 'forgive' their oppressors, it is a survival strategy because doing otherwise would be disastrous for them. However, the forgiveness of white minority rulers in Zimbabwe and in South Africa after the African majority won power, and the examples from powerful classical African civilizations, go to show that this tradition of forgiveness is not exercised solely from a disadvantaged position of weakness, but from an admirable moral strength that should be emulated by all, strong and weak, for their own benefit and for the benefit of the entire world. Dismissing the practice of forgiveness as a sign of weakness would be meaningless to those who believe in divine mercy and in the unconditional forgiveness of flawed human beings by the God of the Abrahamic traditions. Forgiveness is not just for the weak, it is for everyone (Tutu and Tutu, 2015). Penal abolitionism would be incomplete without the practice of forgiveness by the victimized.

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