



The African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific

Habari kwa ufupi - AFSAAP newsletter

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AFSAAP Post-Graduate Prize Winners 2013

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newsletter, please
contact
newsletter@afsaap.org.au

AFSAAP received many entries to the 2013 Annual AFSAAP Post-graduate Prize, which is awarded to the best paper presented at the annual AFSAAP Conference or Post-graduate workshop. The judges enjoyed reading the diversity of papers and quality of postgraduate research in African Studies in Australia.

The AFSAAP Executive are pleased to announce that the winner of the 2013 Monash/AFSAAP Prize – to the value of \$3000, which includes a trip to Monash University's South Africa Campus, and aims to encourage fieldwork in Africa towards the student's studies – goes to Ms. **Christina Kenny** from the *Australian National University*, for her paper entitled - "The 'liberatory value of indigenous institutions?': Cultural practice as resistance in the British Colony of Kenya."

We are also very pleased to announce that Mr. **Solomon Peter Gbanie** from the University of New South Wales at Australian Defence Force Academy, has won the AFSAAP Postgraduate Prize of \$500, for his paper entitled " 'The diamond of Western Area is land': Narratives of land use and land cover change in post-war Sierra Leone."

Both students are clearly the in-coming generation of African Studies experts and their research is at a high level of distinction. We wish them all of the best for their future studies and academic or other careers. We would like to thank the other entrants to the prize and encourage them to keep researching and writing and start their paper for the 2014 AFSAAP/Monash Post-Graduate prize.

Conference 2013

The 36th AFSAAP Annual Conference - **African Renaissance and Australia** - was held at Murdoch University in late November 2013. Combining with the celebration of 50 years of the formation of the Organisation of African Unity, (subsequently transformed into the African Union), our annual Conference was a great success. Many scholars from Africa participated, as well as many academics and students of African Studies from Australia, the African Community and service providers working with the African community, NGOs, government agencies, foreign embassies and high commissions, and debated and discussed where Africa is situated politically, economically, socially, environmentally and historically. Keynote speakers Dr. Patrick

Mangeni wa'Ndeda from Makerere University in Uganda, gave a passionate talk about the role of theatre and drama in contemporary African social and political culture, while Ms Yewande Sadiku, the executive producer of the soon to be released film, Half a Yellow Sun, (release date March 2014 in Australia by leap Frog Films) gave a brilliant account of her role in financing and producing this film for a global audience - made in Africa! A preview of the film sponsored by Leap Frog films was a bonus for conference participants.

There were many excellent papers and presentations and as usual lots of networking and friendships established and maintained. Please send in your photos from the event - to secretary@afsaap.org.au

Thankyou to the 2013 AFSAAP Conference Organisers - David Doepel and Peter Wakholi. Without you it would not have happened. A great success! Congratulations to you all for keeping African Studies alive in Australia.

AFSAAP AGM 2013

AFSAAP held its AGM at the 2013 conference in Perth and a new executive was elected. Welcome to Jean Burke as Treasurer and Christina Kenny as Secretary, and Stephen Okello and Aime Saba as the Postgraduate Representatives. Tanya Lyons remains on as president for one more year, and Alec Thornton remains as Vice-president. We thank all outgoing executives for the hard work and dedication (Samantha Balaton-Chrimes and Graeme Counsel).

In Honour of Nelson Mandela

AFSAAP member Margaret O'Callaghan attended the Canberra Memorial service for the late, great, Nelson Mandela. It was held in the great music hall at the University, and as she stated she was "feeling very emotional". There was an ongoing slide show playing in the background, hosted on behalf of the South African High Commission. Among other speakers, past Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke, spoke about his personal experiences with Nelson Mandela. In Margaret's words ...

"Curiously enough, as I waited for the theatre doors to open I sat in the lounge area and glanced up at the nearby wall which was covered with autographs of various orchestras and pianists etc who have played there - and I suddenly noticed that Nelson Mandela had been there too, in September 2000! His first overseas trip was to Australia, where he received an honorary doctorate. Ang San Su Ky from Burma had signed her name directly underneath his - she came here last month. I was carrying a red rose from my garden to give to the South African High Commissioner Koleka Mqulwana, who recently returned to South Africa upon the news of her own father's passing, so instead I put the rose near Mandela's signature to honour the people of South Africa - then everybody came up to have their photo taken with the autograph - and the rose was the perfect touch!"

There have been many memorial services held around Australia for Nelson Mandela. AFSAAP members would have been among those thousands of people paying their respects to the life and times and achievements of Mandela. For many past and present AFSAAP members, it was the anti-apartheid struggle which inspired their commitment to African Studies in the first place. When Nelson Mandela walked free,

and became the first democratically elected President of the new South Africa, there was much celebration in Australia as indeed in the rest of the world. AFSAAP's ongoing commitment to African Studies continues in Mandela's honour and with great respect to the many who have fought for their freedom against oppression and colonisation.

ARAS Coup complete - new referencing style to appease in texters!"

Since taking on the role of Editor of ARAS in 2008, the only complaints I have received about the journal were about the Chicago style footnoting system. 5 years of defending the footnote reference has finally worn me down. Indeed, co-editors Jay Marlowe and Anne Harris also instigated a survey of ARAS readers and authors, and the results of that clearly showed a preference for the **APA 6th edition**. And so, at the last ARAS Editors' Meeting Marlowe and Harris convinced Lyons to finally let go of the footnote and agree to move to in-text citations. So for the next 5 years we will be using in-text references for all publications in ARAS. It will be interesting to see how it goes.

ARAS – Guidelines for Book Reviews

The *Australasian Review of African Studies* (ARAS) aims to publish relevant and timely reviews of books dealing with various African Studies issues. However, in submitting book reviews it is important for reviewers to be aware of not only the journal's style of citations, but also its style guidelines for the writing of book reviews.

While some journals aim for publishing largely descriptive reviews which serve to inform the reader about the content of the book and its main ideas, ARAS does not.

Therefore, what we are looking is:

- An intellectual engagement with the text which should be primarily reflective and critical, rather than a wholly descriptive book review, and
- A critical assessment of the ideas and hypotheses presented in the book

Publishing critical and inquisitive book reviews is an intellectually rewarding endeavour, and more importantly the state of academic inquiry and knowledge in general progresses through the process of discussion and argument, and not regurgitation. The journal welcomes unsolicited reviews, and for all book review related queries please contact Nikola Pijovic on bookreviews@afsaap.org.au.

African Studies seminars at the IPCS

As in 2013, the AFSAAP is seeking to collaborate with the Institute of Postcolonial Studies (IPCS) in North Melbourne to produce seminars on African Studies by academics, specialists and members of the community. Throughout the last year the collaboration generated eight seminars on a diverse range of topics, and was well received.

We are currently seeking input from people willing to present at these seminars for the first semester program. Anyone interested should contact convener Sam Wilkins at samdouglaswilkins@gmail.com by February 10.

Sam Balaton-Chrimes' new research project in Kenya

Former AFSAAP Secretary Samantha Balaton-Chrimes will be embarking on a new research project in Kenya in 2014. Sam's project, funded by Deakin University, will be drawing lessons from the UN Habitat and Government of Kenya Slum Upgrading project regarding free, prior and informed consent in urban land acquisition and tenure. Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is increasingly accepted as a norm in mass land acquisition processes for indigenous people, however it is not seen as applicable for people who are non-indigenous, yet similarly vulnerable; and the idea is typically operationalized in a compliance-based way, rather than as a democratic process. This project will entail a qualitative case study of land acquisition in the Kenya Slum Upgrading Project to evaluate the barriers to and possibilities for more robust, democratic free, prior and informed consent processes. Samantha was a previous recipient of the AFSAAP / Monash Postgraduate Prize.

Tony Binns presentation audio

On Tuesday 22nd October 2013, Prof. Tony Binns presented on the topic "Africa Rising" at Flinders University in South Australia. The audio of his talk can be accessed here: http://www.geography.otago.ac.nz/people/academic/tony_binns

Celebrating African Australians Awards 2014-01-03

I am pleased to inform you that we have received massive support for our prestigious African Australian National Awards 2014. The event aims to honour [distinguished](#) African Australians and [organisations](#) supporting the African communities in Australia. (See attached pictures)

Click [here](#) to watch our 2012 Awards at the Sydney Opera House as reported by SBS World News Australia. Click on "[Picture Album - Awards 2013](#)" to download the picture album of our Awards at the Parliament House Canberra. Attendees include powerful men and women from across Australia and diaspora.

2014 Awards will be bigger and better. The Awards will take place in all states and territories of Australia including VIC, SA, NSW, TAS, QLD, ACT, WA, and NT. States and Territories' Caretaker Committees are being appointed. I will keep you posted on progress.

The Australia-Africa Dialogue

"The Australia-Africa Dialogue held in Perth in July 2013 has released its first report. It certainly offers a new approach to Australian relations with Africa, building upon the 'new-engagement' espoused by the former Labor government. The Foreword by Julie Bishop is a must read, and the background papers fascinating."

Call for Proposals: (American) African Studies Association conference

57th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association (ASA): November 20-23, 2014, JW Marriott Indianapolis Hotel, Indianapolis, IN. Deadline for proposal submission: March 15, 2014

Established in 1957, the African Studies Association is the largest organization in the world devoted to enhancing the exchange of information about Africa. The ASA is soliciting proposals for papers, panels, and roundtables. Presentations may focus on the theme of **"Rethinking Violence, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation"** or on broader social science, humanities, and applied themes relating to Africa. The submission of formed panels is strongly encouraged. You can find more information on the [theme](#) and the [guidelines](#) for proposals at the ASA website. [Instructions](#) for submitting proposals can also be found online. If your proposal is accepted, the conference pre-registration fee must be paid by May 1, 2014 by all participants. Payment of the pre-registration fee will result in a final acceptance. Failure to pay the pre-registration fee by May 1, 2014, will result in an automatic rejection.

For general questions regarding the meeting and/or registration please contact members@africanstudies.org. For questions regarding the submission process, guidelines, or program theme please contact asameeting2014@gmail.com.

Conference on African Indigenous knowledge

The Department of Science and Technology / National Research Foundation Indigenous Knowledge Systems Centre of Excellence with its hub at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa is organising an International Conference on African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Environmental Ethics 12th - 14th June 2014, Durban, South Africa.

The main objective of the conference is to contribute to the consolidation of an emerging orientation towards African environmental ethics and effective environmental management which takes into consideration the cultural diversity of the continent and the world at large.

Obituary: Kofi Awoonor 1935-2013

The tragic events at the Westgate mall in Nairobi on September 21st shocked the world. The thugs of the so-called Islamist group Al-Shabaab killed over 61 civilians, and wounded over 200 people as a so-called retribution for the Kenyan deployment in Somalia between 2011 and 2012. Like all such attacks the group made no mention of the fact that their vicious attack killed not only innocent Kenyan civilians but also people from many parts of the world, including 18 non-Kenyans of different nationalities. Amongst these was the renowned Ghanaian poet, novelist, essayist and diplomat Kofi Awoonor. Awoonor's son, also wounded in the massacre, was fortunately one of the survivors.

Born in the colony of the Gold Coast in 1935 Kofi Awoonor published his first poems under the mission given name of George Awoonor-Williams. Educated at the world-

famous Achimoto School in the suburbs of Accra he studied at the University of Ghana where he published his first book of poetry *Rediscovery* in 1964. Later he studied at the University of London before teaching literature at SUNY Stonybrook on Long Island, New York and later at Cape Coast University. I was fortunate enough to meet Kofi Awoonor for the first time when I helped organize a three-week long festival of African and Afro-Caribbean writing at the University of Missouri in Kansas City in 1973. To meet him was to be swept up by a personality that was both exuberant and challenging. Never one to let an issue go without taking a strong position he was also always at the heart of any activity, whether disputing political and literary positions or trying to get a group of conference goers to participate in an impromptu drumming session. As an Ewe, a people renowned even in Ghana for their drumming skills, this was no light challenge. Awoonor's own poetry and fiction was always imbued with the influence of the oral and performance traditions of his people, yet he was never one to confuse identity with exclusivity, or pride with pomposity as he made clear in his first novel *This Earth My Brother* published while he was in the US in 1971. For Awoonor recovery did not mean using the past to disguise the problems of the present, as he makes clear in his sarcastic reference in this groundbreaking novel -

"...He drove past the Institute of Arts and Culture where a crazy group of drummers and artists and their leaders were reviving African culture with a vengeance every day. On his left were the temporary buildings of the National Lottery..."

On his return to Ghana in 1975 Awoonor spoke out against the military government of General Acheampong for which he was imprisoned. On his release he wrote *The House by the Sea*, which dealt with his time in prison and followed it up with many essays on the condition of modern Africa, many of which were collected in 2006 in his book *The African Predicament*. As well as his writing he became active in his country's diplomatic and political life serving as ambassador to Brazil, to Cuba and as its representative at the UN. He also served as Chairman of the Ghanaian Council of State. Throughout his active public life he continued to write poetry that will be collected in the now posthumous collection *The Promise of Hope: New and Selected Poems* (to be published in 2014). He was in Kenya this year to take a poetry master-class at the Storymoja Hay Festival, and tragically he was to read his latest poetry on the evening of the day when he was gunned down.

Awoonor's life and writings testify to the real struggle by Africans since independence, to battles fought not with guns and bombs, nor with the death of innocents but with real personal sacrifice and courage, courage which demands that violence and brutality be met with the human truths that Awoonor's work spoke of so powerfully. I last met with Kofi Awoonor in 2007 when on a visit to the University of Ghana at Legon, where he was then an Emeritus Professor. Characteristically, our discussion on Zimbabwe and on Mugabe was vigorous and his fire was undimmed.

It will take more than a handful of violent extremists to put out the kind of light that people like Kofi Awoonor represent, the true light of a modern and proud Africa that embraces all its peoples and fights for its truth with the power of the word and not of the gun. I mourn him and I am proud that I had the privilege of knowing him. He was always one who refused to sit outside, engaging with the full complexity and activity of his day. As he said in one of his early poems from the poetry sequence *Songs of Sorrow* -

Returning is not possible

And going forward is a great difficulty
The affairs of this world are like the chameleon faeces
Into which I have stepped
When I clean I cannot go.

I am on the world's extreme corner
I am not sitting in the row with the eminent
But those who are lucky
Sit in the middle and forget
I am on the world's extreme corner
I can only go beyond and forget.

He was buried in Ghana and the whole country mourned. His colleague and fellow Ewe Kofi Anyidoho helped coordinate this act of national mourning. Kofi Awoonor has gone beyond but he will not be forgotten.

Gareth Griffiths, Perth October 2013.