



Institute of
African Studies
CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Issue 2
Spring
2010

Message from Blair Rutherford, Director

As we approach the end of the academic term at Carleton University, let me briefly reflect on the first year and some of our activities coming up in the near future.

Our students in the B.A. program are very active. Even though most are in their first year as we are a new Institute, we have had some students enter into our program at a higher level. Some of these students have been doing placements with organizations that work on African issues, including the African Bureau of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, POWER (Progress & Opportunities for Women's Equality Rights out of the University of Ottawa's Law Faculty), and CUSO-VSO. In these placement courses, the students spend equivalent of one day a week at these organizations for the term, carrying out activities that have academic utility for both the organization and the student. This opportunity enables the students to gain experience with organizations in Ottawa that work on African issues, while also showing them some possible employment opportunities after university. We are also developing a course to provide a similar experiential learning opportunity in Africa. Called Africa Studies Abroad, this course will enable students to go to an African country with one of our professors during the month of May to have an intensive learning experience on a relevant topic in African Studies. We plan to start this course in 2011. Please read the profile of one of our students, Jarratt Best, who not only played an important role in helping to establish our Institute at Carleton but he also has been very active in providing learning opportunities for youth in Ottawa who come from disadvantaged situations. He's someone from whom many of us can learn.

Although we do not have a graduate program, a number of graduate students working on African topics in the varied Master and Doctoral programs at Carleton are involved with our Institute. Once again, we profile some of them in the newsletter. A few of them, along with professors and Africanists outside of Carleton, have revamped an open-source journal which one of our senior colleagues, Professor Daniel Osabu-Kle, started a few years ago. He donated it to the Institute of African Studies and it is now called *Nokoko*. It provides a journal and a magazine for young scholars of Africa and the African diaspora (see <http://www2.carleton.ca/africanstudies/research/nokoko/> for more details).

We are also working with some of the many groups with expertise on Africa to put on public events, including the South African High Commission to Canada, the Nigerian Diaspora Organization of Canada, and with Somali-Canadian groups that brought the renowned Somali author Nuruddin

Farah to Carleton (see the article about that exciting event).

The Institute is working with the national Canadian Association of African Studies in organizing its annual meeting on May 5-7, 2010 (for more details, please see <http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~caas>

en/2010conference.htm). For the first two days of this event, we are also holding a concurrent workshop on Sexual Violence and Conflict in Africa, with support from the United Nations University along with support from Peacebuild, POWER, and others.

Many thanks again to the Journalism students for all their help with this issue: Harmeet Singh, Kelsey Parsons and Cameron MacIntosh. And thank you for reading this.



INSIDE:

Student Activism	2
Faculty Profile	3
Media in Africa	4
Somali Writer presents in Ottawa	5
Graduate Research	6. 7
More information	8

Carleton student gives back to his community

The town of Malvern is a quaint resort town in Western England. It rests against the Malvern Hills a landscape recently designated an "Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" by the English Countryside Agency. Malvern is home to over 70 natural springs, wells and fountains, said to have curative properties. In the 19th century, the advent of the water cure turned the sleepy civil parish into a vacation hub for overworked Victorians. They flooded into spas at St. Ann's Well, Beauchamp Fountain and Hayslad spring.

Malvern, Ontario –named after the town in England– is a very different place.

Malvern, a neighbourhood in the community of Scarborough, has been a destination for immigrant families and ethnic minorities since the early 1970s. It is a place associated with gangs, drugs and violence. Malvern, Ontario is home to more than 60 cultural groups and the highest concentration of young people in Canada. It is a place where crime is widespread and a university education is rare.

This is where Jarratt Best was born and raised.

"When you live in Malvern, you see reality. There's drugs, there's violence," Best says.

Best is one of the few members of his community to go to university. He is 22, in his fourth year of a psychology and African studies degree at Carleton University. Best is one of the first students to pass through the newly established Institute of African Studies. For Best, community has always been central to his outlook. From a young age he saw his parents strength as they struggled daily to provide for their children.

Best's parents pushed him to focus on school and stay out of trouble. Best says there was never much doubt where his priorities lay. He ultimately focused on one goal: giving back to his community. "Though I did some stupid stuff when I was young, what I wanted to do and wanted to be was a good person bringing back to the community."

After arriving at Carleton, Best funnelled his energies to creating a sense of belonging and inclusion for people from situations and backgrounds similar to his own.

He co-founded Black Affinity, a group that seeks to foster brotherhood and belonging among members of Carleton University's African and Caribbean-Canadian community. Later he co-founded Rise and Flow, an organization that exposes inner city youth to making music.

"I try to offer the kids a way to express themselves and interact with society," says Best.

Best's upbringing in Malvern gave him the desire to reach out to people in the same circumstances.

"It gave me a good perspective to be able to relate to other youth in that situation," says Best.

At Carleton, Best found a place where he could work alongside people with the same drive. He also got involved with the Institute of African Studies.

For Best, the institute offers an extension of the community outreach that he has built into the organizations he has founded. The institute studies the roots and shared heritage of communities like Malvern, Ontario and individuals like Best.

"My interest is to engage youth," says Best. "If I can engage youth and direct them towards development and understanding and knowledge we can teach them to use that knowledge to make things better."

Best understands the difficulties that confront young people in many communities around Canada and wants to help them avoid the temptations that may lead them astray.

"I want to be able to go back to these people and now offer them the opportunity to choose a different path."

Best's work started in the streets of Malvern.

"Without growing up there I would not have had the same understanding of community," says Best. "Where I come from, it helped mould me."

The Malvern of Best's youth may never produce healing spas or resorts but may produce future leaders and community builders. This is the belief that propels Best forward.

Best's involvement with the Institute of African Studies is guided by the belief that education is the first step in moving out and up in life. Beyond Best's work there are other signs of growth in Malvern.

In 2004, the Toronto Metro Police cracked down on the Malvern Crew, a gang operating in Best's neighbourhood. Sixty-five leading members of the gang were arrested and Malvern has seen a significant and steady decline in crime since.

But as Best see it real growth in a community comes when its members are given opportunities to succeed and develop where they live. That can only come from within these neighbourhoods and so Best's work and the work of Malvern, continues. — *Written by Cameron MacIntosh*



Faculty Profile: Audra Diptee, History

Audra Diptee is a professor of history at Carleton University, and she says students need to become more aware about how Africa is represented and seen by various entities.

"One thing I try to make my students aware of is that they have to be careful not to use western standards to judge Africa," says Diptee.

"They have to be really mindful that what we think of as normal in the West doesn't apply in the African context. If we do use that view, everything else seems backward."

In order to make people more mindful of these issues, Diptee is involved in an upcoming conference at Carleton called "Remembering Africa-Memory, Public History & Representations of the Past: Africa and Its Diasporas."

The collaborative effort between Carleton and York University will take place from October 7-9 of this year and will be held at Carleton University.

The aim of this conference is to analyze the ways that we think of Africa and the ways it is represented by the media, by historians, in music, on the internet, in images and more, says Diptee.

"We want to bring in people from different disciplines and help people to be aware of certain biases in representations of Africa," says Diptee.

The conference is free and open to everyone, but graduate students are especially welcome and encouraged to present their work.

"We're also hoping to organize a small mini film fest," adds Diptee, as several of the people involved in the conference are also involved in films

about Africa. The goal is to have filmmakers show their films and then discuss them with the audience.

These types of conferences and forums are especially important today, as conflicts in Africa are often

"Her own interest stemmed from good professors who opened her mind to understanding Africa and its diasporas."

wrongly attributed to things like tribal and ethnic rivalries in the media and beyond, says Diptee.

"We have to understand that a lot of the chaos we see when we look at the continent now, good and bad, is grounded in historical phenomena like colonialism and slavery," says Diptee. Looking beyond the past hundred years is important in identifying the true causes of these current issues, she adds.

Getting people involved in African studies is something that is important to Diptee, especially since she says that her own interest in the subject stemmed from good professors who opened her mind to understanding Africa and its diasporas through studying history.

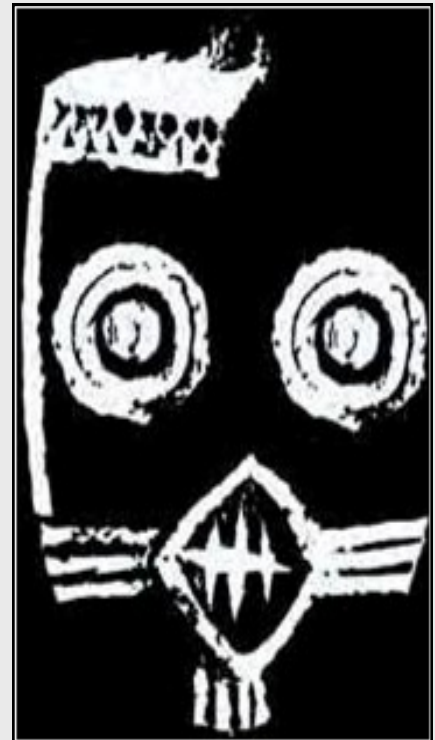
Her interest began when she was an undergraduate at York University, and continued into her graduate studies at the University of Toronto where she studied African and Caribbean history.

Diptee was born in Trinidad and Tobago, and her research interests cover both Africa and the African Diaspora. Issues involving children in

these areas, like education and child slavery, are of particular interest to her.

She currently teaches a fourth year history course called "Understanding a Continent: The Scramble for Africa and Its Aftermath," which deals with the motivations for and consequences of the European colonializing efforts in Africa.

—Written by Kelsey Parsons



Centre for Media and Transitional Societies

For decades, Carleton University has been a world leader in journalism education. But there have been few formal efforts to project Carleton's expertise abroad, or to promote research on the role of the media in governance, devel-



opment or conflict prevention and resolution.

But despite the lack of coordinated efforts, many individuals at Carleton have been involved in important research, teaching and project work that relates to an examination of the role of the media in transitional societies.

One of these individuals has been Allan Thompson, a journalism professor at Carleton, and the mind behind the new Centre for Media and Transitional Societies.

Since 2006, the School of Journalism and Communication has been involved in a burgeoning partnership with its counterpart at the National University of Rwanda, in Butare through a project called the Rwanda Initiative.

The primary focus of the Rwanda Initiative has been the establishment and operation of a visiting lecturer program that serves to build the capacity of the National University of Rwanda to teach journalism and also supports efforts to train working journalists at the Great Lakes Media Centre, in Kigali. The project also includes an internship program that has allowed Carleton journalism students to work as interns with media organizations in Rwanda during the summer months. To date, more than 75 Canadians have visited Rwanda through the project, to teach journalism or to work as media interns.

Last summer four students from Kroeger College took part in an expanded internship program

engage with the developing world.

At the heart of the new Centre for Media and Transitional Societies is the notion that Carleton could be doing so much more to cultivate this Canadian expertise and to build the capacity of the media abroad, particularly in so-called "transitional societies" where there is a window of opportunity to use the media to advance development and build the institutions of governance and civil society.

Some of this work involves research and the creation of knowledge in Canada and abroad about the role of media in transitional societies.

This year's interns will be working across Africa, from Senegal to

Kenya in radio stations and other news outlets.

For more information, please visit www.cmts-cmst.org.

There is a seemingly endless appetite of many Canadian students to engage with the developing world.

and several Rwandan journalists have come to Canada to study and train.

By definition, its activities had been limited to Rwanda. That said, the success of the Rwanda Initiative project demonstrates clearly Carleton's capacity to project its expertise abroad. The project has also brought to light the seemingly endless appetite of many Canadian students to use their time in university to



Living in Exile: Nuruddin Farah

An ad hoc committee of Canadian-Somalis in Ottawa informally requested the world renowned Somali writer, Nuruddin Farah, to come and deliver a lecture in Ottawa. The committee members were merely motivated by their admiration of Farah's work and had no expectation that their invitation would be accepted, Farah, has not only accepted the invitation, but has gracefully waived his normal fees, which was a tremendous relief to the organizers who at that point did not have any sponsors.

In an attempt to focus and capitalize on the opportunity of engaging with Nuruddin Farah, the committee decided to make the event relevant to Somali life in the Diaspora. The committee combed through Nuruddin's body of work, reflecting particularly on "Yesterday, Tomorrow Voices from the Somali Diaspora" (2000), Nuruddin's only non-fiction book and countless inter-views he has given over the years. The committee decided that what would be beneficial is to have a session where participants, through the exchange of views and ideas, share and learn from Nuruddin's wealth of experience, and hear him talk about how he came to find his creative talent in exile. The organizers found an earlier interview where Nuruddin, in an article titled "In Praise of Exile" had succinctly articulated life in exile:

"One of the pleasures of living away from home is that you become the master of your destiny, you avoid the constraints and limitations of your past and if need be create an alternative life for yourself. That way everybody becomes the other and you are the centre of the universe. You are a community when you are away from home – the communal mind remembering. Memory is active when you are in exile."

In contrast to the above quote, the organizers pondered on the fact that for many Somalis in the Diaspora exile has not been liberating. To the contrary, it is often-times painful, uncertain, and memory is a burden for many – remembering is heavy and often leads to unrealistic or over idealized past which makes the present less enjoyable and many look forward to a return of the golden past rather than moving forward. Hence, in this case memory is active to the extent it blocks creativity and living in the present.

To set the overall theme for an evening of learning, the organizers sent Nuruddin the above written quote from him, juxtaposing it with the hard reality of exile for many Somalis. He accepted this theme for the Ottawa evening, which was set for Saturday December, 12, 2009,

and the preparation wheels were set in motion.

With support from Carleton University's Institute of African Studies, which hosted the event, other Ottawa community organizations, and CBC's own Adrian Harewood as the MC, the Ottawa community came out, on a frigid winter evening, in large numbers and listened to

For many Somalis in the Diaspora, exile has not been liberating. To the contrary, memory is a burden for many.

what has proven to be a fascinating literary event. The organizing committee, and all those who came, Somalis and non-Somalis, were blown away at the richness of the lecture and the questions and answers session that followed. True to all the accolades he has received over the years, Nuruddin Farah has delivered a classic lecture full of wisdom rooted in his exceptionally very rich life experience, laced with few light-hearted self deprecating jokes, and an overall amazing delivery style, eloquent and articulate presentation.

In his presentation, Nuruddin touched upon numerous dimension of life in exile, rejecting victimhood, he spoke about the human being's innate ability to survive hardships and continue to thrive and recreate lives in foreign lands, where one can choose to self actualize and live up to his/her potential. Nuruddin shared his experiences of utilizing memories of Somalia combined with his gifted imagination, and writing to keep Somalia alive within him in exile. He underlined the notion of memory as critical ingredient of creative thinking, and when combined with imagination, how it can lead to creativity. Creativity in this sense does not just mean in terms of artistic expression but it also means the creativity to live meaningful and productive life in exile.

The take-away message from Nuruddin's Ottawa lecture, (there are more than one key message here), for the diasporic Somalis is this: if we want our children to thrive, then we owe it to them, and to ourselves, to plant roots in our adapted homelands. We should not waste the opportunity to recreate our lives by getting stuck and dwelling on what we have lost; rather we should focus on what we have gained, even if life in exile does not perfectly match our ideal aspirations of what should have been.

—This article was published originally at <http://www.wardheernews.com/Organizations/>

Graduate Research

Highlights from different faculties

Franklin Oduro, fourth-year PhD Political Science



The discourse on transitional justice of which the truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) approach has dominated is of greater importance to global politics today. Yet, far too little research addresses the poli-

tics of TRC policy formulation, theoretically or empirically, in domestic politics. In particular, what factors determine the policy establishment of TRCs in domestic politics, shape their mandate, and condition their success or failure; and what explains the pre-eminence of the South African TRC as a point of reference for TRCs in recent transitional societies? Adopting a method of comparative inquiry into three cases- South

Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana- the study addresses these two critical questions by interrogating the policy formulation processes of recent TRCs in African societies. Departing from existing explanatory frameworks- jurisprudence of human rights, transitology discourse, and elite pact-for understanding how transitional justice policy approaches, including TRCs, are formulated, I employ the constructivist lens to understand the policy formulation of TRCs in these three countries. I suggest that the constructivism framework is helpful in explaining how TRC policy formulation unfolds in domestic politics, in addition, to its replication across borders in Africa. The research contributes to transitional justice scholarship by exploring new ways of understanding the current wave of attraction to the TRC approach as a transitional justice policy.

May Chazan, Ph.D. candidate, Geography and Environmental Studies

While much attention has been paid to the symbolics, politics and geographies of cross-border social movements, little is known about how North-South solidarity networks intersect with the everyday lives of those at their core. As a window into this intersection, my dissertation examines the “international grandmothers’ movement” – a growing network of African and Canadian women launched as the Grandmothers-to-Grandmothers Campaign in 2006 by the Canadian Stephen Lewis Foundation. It is grounded in research that I carried out between 2006 and 2009, both with women from four South African communities affiliated with the international Campaign, and with the Stephen Lewis Foundation and Canadian grandmothers’ groups. Starting with an examination of the South African womens’ daily lives, asso-

ciations and their struggles for survival, I explore the various linkages between these women, the Stephen Lewis Foundation and the Canadian grandmothers. In so doing, I highlight how the South African women’s lives and the ways in which they are mobilizing are being affected by the international grandmothers’ movement, as well as certain dissonances between their everyday realities and assumptions made by various actors within the network. Based in critical feminist theorizing, this research affords a window, more broadly, into how women organize amidst tragedy and hardship; how North-South networks operate and what encounters across distance and difference look like in practice; and how knowledge production and mobilization can become linked in ways that complicate and unsettle research relationships.

Morgan Faulkner, MA in French Literature


There is a curious relationship between language and literature in Scholastique Mukasonga's second book, *La femme aux pieds nus* (2008). The book, a homage to Mukasonga's mother who was killed during the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, is marked by a preoccupation with language. The author is constantly reevaluating her use of language and the capacity of words to bear the weight of genocide. This preoccupation is revealed largely through the writer's use of both French – the language of Rwanda's Belgian colonisers and of the French *milieu* where Mukasonga lives today – and Kinyarwanda – the predominant language spoken in Rwanda.

Language tensions are central themes of the two literary traditions to which Mukasonga's book belongs: African and genocide literature. Plurilingualism, for example, is commonly used by African writers to

demonstrate some of the post-colonial struggles between African countries and European imperial powers. However, Mukasonga's use of Kinyarwanda in a French-language book is not only a response to the traditional language question of European versus African languages, this strategy is also linked to challenges that befall the writer of genocide literature, those of "writing the unspeakable" and the "*devoir de mémoire*". For example, the Kinyarwanda word *inyenzi* or cockroach illustrates the systematic dehumanization of Tutsis by the *génocidaires*. Other words in Kinyarwanda, however, combat the dehumanization by focusing on life, fertility and richness. In my MA thesis, I am exploring how plurilingualism contributes to the literary project of giving dignity to a people who were dehumanized almost to the point of annihilation.

Amatoritsero Ede, Fellow and Doctoral Candidate, Department of English

My PhD dissertation project, "The Global Literary Canon and Minor African Literatures" is a cultural-materialist examination of the 'glocal' processes of the production, dissemination and canonization of African writing, with an emphasis on representative contemporary Nigerian works. It focuses on the ideological and institutionalized trans/national factors responsible for the circulation of such writing within a "world republic of letters" or their exclusion from it. He is also the Publisher & Managing editor of *The Maple Tree Literary Supplement*, an online literary journal.




Institute of African Studies
CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Africa Matters:

Celebrating 40 years of the Canadian Association of African Studies
Carleton University - Ottawa, Canada | May 5 - 7, 2010

In celebration of its 40th anniversary, the Canadian Association of African Studies (CAAS) extends a special welcome to scholars working on all aspects of African studies at its next annual conference in Ottawa on May 5-7, 2010. The Institute of African Studies at Carleton University is hosting the conference with support from the African Studies Research Laboratory at the University of Ottawa.

For more information, go to:
Pour plus d'information, voyez:
www.arts.ualberta.ca/~caas/en/2010conference.htm
or contact:
ou contactez:
caas2010carleton@gmail.com or/ou caas@ualberta.ca



L'Afrique compte:

Une célébration des 40 ans de l'Association canadienne des études africaines
Université Carleton - Ottawa, Canada | 5-7 mai 2010

À l'occasion de son 40e anniversaire, l'Association canadienne des études africaines (ACEA) lance une invitation toute spéciale aux chercheurs travaillant sur les différents aspects des études africaines, pour sa prochaine conférence annuelle à Ottawa qui se tiendra du 5 au 7 mai 2010. L'Institut of African Studies de l'Université Carleton accueillera cette conférence avec le soutien du Laboratoire d'études et de recherches sur l'Afrique (LERA) de l'Université d'Ottawa.

For more information:



Institute of
African Studies
CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Carleton University
228 Paterson Hall
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON
Canada, K1S 5B6
Tel: (613) 520-2600 x 2220
Fax: (613) 520-2363
Email: african_studies@carleton.ca
Web: www.carleton.ca/africanstudies

All this information and more can be found at our website (carleton.ca/africanstudies) and is sent out along with information about other public events on Africa in the Ottawa-Gatineau region on our listserve (please send us an email at African_studies@carleton.ca to be listed on it).

Special Thanks:

Jarratt Best
Prof. Audra Diptee
Prof. Allan Thompson
Franklin Oduro
May Chazan
Morgan Faulkner
Amatoritsero Ede