



Institute of
African Studies
CARLETON UNIVERSITY

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Welcome to the Institute of African Studies!

Message from Blair Rutherford, Director

The Institute of African Studies is a year old and it has been a very busy start. We have hosted and co-organized a number of conferences and talks, including an intensive two-day workshop in May 2010 called “Sexual Violence and Conflict in Africa” (with Professor Doris Buss being one of the main organizers, please see the article inside), and an excellent workshop in October 2010 entitled, “Remembering Africa and Its Diasporas” (see the profile of Professor Audra Diptee in the Spring newsletter). We also have an article profiling Professor Brian Raftopolous, one of the Zimbabwean participants in an event we co-hosted (along with Oxfam Canada) in August.

We have a number of other events and activities scheduled for the upcoming year. There will be a panel discussion on the events in Sudan. During the Black History Month, there will be an event during which the experience of African Immigrants in Ottawa will be examined, a one-day conference on “The Legacies of Nyerere” with the Honourable Abdul Kinana, former speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly, and a number of talks as part of our Africa Dialogue Series, co-sponsored with the South African High Commission to Canada.

The first talk scheduled as part of the series is called, “Fifty Hearty Cheers for the Habit of Underdevelopment: On the 50th Anniversary Celebrations in Africa” given by our Carleton colleague, Professor Pius Adesanmi. As noted in the article inside profiling him, we were very excited in early September 2010 when he won the inau-

gural Penguin Book prize for African writing in the non-fiction category. We, like many others, eagerly anticipate the publication of his prize-winning manuscript, *You’re Not a Country, Africa*, in 2011.



We are also building on our curriculum in our African Studies B.A. degree. Starting in the Spring semester (May-June) 2011, we will be offering an “African Studies Abroad” course, where a professor will be taking about fifteen students to an African country in which she or he does research, to have an intensive seminar, drawing on experts in that country. In May 2011, Professor Susanne Klausen will be teaching a course at the Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, titled “Health and Health-Care in Post-Apartheid South Africa.”

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Our students are also busy organizing a number of events to encourage discussion and debate concerning Africa. You can read a fine example of this in the profile of Peter Stewart, who has been organizing public events on Canadian mining companies operating in Africa. Although there is no African Studies graduate degree, there are many fascinating graduate research projects on Africa in a wide range of Carleton units. We profile a few of them to give a sense of the type of research on Africa and its diasporas carried out at Carleton.

Once again, we are indebted to the volunteer work of many in the production of this newsletter. I want to warmly thank the excellent work of the School of Journalism students on this

newsletter: Kelsey Parsons, Cameron MacIntosh, Rosella Chibambo, and Mbonisi Zikhali as well as Ebere Ahanihu, for his close copy-editing work.

There is much more to talk about in the coming year, including our new open-access journal, Nokoko. We also hope the year will bring to fruition the emerging work Carleton University is doing with the University of Dar es Salaam and the University of Botswana, and the ongoing work of Rise & Flow (as discussed in the profile of student Jarratt Best in the Spring newsletter).

To find out about these and many other activities, I encourage you to visit our website, join our listserv, and get involved!

Sexual Abuse is Not African

By Rosella Chibambo

How Doris Buss came to be involved in the study of sexual violence “was more happenstance than design.” Perhaps, if not for media reports on rape camps in Yugoslavia, Buss’ trajectory life would have taken a different direction.

Now an associate law professor in Carleton University, Buss began researching sexual violence as a master’s student.

At the time, sexual violence was not an area of much scholarly work, she said.

The idea that sexual violence was a tool of warfare, and not merely incidental to a conflict, was a recent adoption in international humanitarian law.

Until the Balkans conflict and the Rwandan Genocide in the 1990s, sexual violence went unnoticed as a war crime.

However, the situation changed with the two International Criminal Tribunals established to prosecute perpetrators of sexual violence during conflicts.

Most feminist lobbyists and scholars applauded the inclusion of sexual violence among other recognized war crimes, but not all of their concerns were addressed, Buss said.

What was not clear was how effective the tribunals would be in securing justice for victims.

“[E]veryone was talking about rape and war . . . people said, ‘oh, well, there have been some really good decisions from the ad hoc tribunals.’” But there was no discussion of what happened after those cases, she said.

Buss’ work began to focus more on the Rwanda tribunal.

As she analysed the work of the tribunal, she looked at how the genocide was being prosecuted, how causes of genocide were highlighted, who had influence on the tribunal, and how these cases could explain why sexual violence happened on such a large scale.

Buss also looked at how the stories of the women affected by sexual violence in Rwanda were being told.

For her it was not sufficient to simply acknowledge sexual violence as a war crime. She said she wanted to put it into context by looking at social, colonial and economic influences.

“I’m always painfully aware of the ways in which Africa gets

equated with violence,” she said.

“I think there’s a tendency in the international community to see these issues as particularly African – hyper-masculine African men acting out against vulnerable African women. But there is [also] structural violence that is going on around issues of trade, around development work.”

Buss began her research on the Rwandan tribunal by counting decisions. She looked at how often rapes were prosecuted and said the numbers were dismal.

Because political commitment wasn’t consistent, many cases fell through the cracks, Buss said.

Subsequent decisions of the special courts established in Sierra Leone proved equally disappointing, Buss said. Though isolated cases gave

pause for hope, some decisions, particularly those related to forced marriage, were “shockingly bad,” she said.

Although Buss does not often witness the horrors of war firsthand, but the research takes emotional toll, she said.

“It’s really grim reading. I was on sabbatical a few months ago and I spent months in my office reading demands on sexual violence crimes. At some points you just reach the breaking point.”

“There are days when I think I can’t do this,” Buss said.

“And then you realize that if you don’t keep pushing and talking about this stuff it just fades.”

Sometimes the only way to deal with the information is to reduce it to technical issues, Buss said.

Though she has researched some of the most horrific examples of human cruelty, Buss said she still believes every human being has the capacity for tremendous good.

Issues and motivations surrounding sexual violence in conflict are so complex, she said. If there is to be justice for victims, the international legal system must change, and there must be more space for African voices.

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“I’m always painfully aware of the ways in which Africa gets equated with violence”

Doris Buss interview continued...

She remains sceptical as to whether an international criminal legal system, based on western legal standards and a traditionally patriarchal system, can find justice for every victim.

The Western legal tradition does not have all the answers, Buss said.

She would like to focus her future research on legal reform in other African countries – how independent African judiciaries can be established, and how women’s rights will be impacted.

An active advocate for feminist legal causes, Buss also serves as Chair of the Law Program Committee for the Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF). LEAF is a national charity that works to ensure substantive legal equality for Canadian women.



Doris Buss

A Life Changing Moment: Interview with Pius Adesanmi

By Kelsey Parsons

The Penguin Prize for African Writing award ceremony, held in South Africa on September 4, was an event that garnered a lot of media attention. Pius Adesanmi wasn’t expecting the onslaught of attention, but all of that changed the day of the ceremony.

To him, the fact that his manuscript was part of the top six choices was enough, as he got a trip to South Africa out of it and publicity for his soon-to-be published collection of essays. These are the things he says he was thinking about during the ceremony, when suddenly he went blank. Someone kicked him, speaking urgently.

“You’ve got to go on the stage,” he heard.

He did, and received the award for winning the prize for best non-fiction. However, the fact that he won such an international prize didn’t start sinking in until the next morning, when a journalist from the Guardian newspaper in London woke him up in his hotel room in South Africa.

“This is the first day of the rest of your life,” the journalist said. It turns out, he was right.

“I’ve had no life,” said Adesanmi. Constant media attention, pressure from publishers to write a novel, and his job at Carleton University as associate professor at the Department of English Language and Literature have proved to be



quite time consuming, he said.

As a young boy, Adesanmi didn’t expect his career path to take this course, but his longtime love of books shaped his life. “It’s a career that chose me,” he said of becoming an educator like both of his parents.

Growing up in Nigeria, he thought he’d be a pilot or a doctor, but he had “read too many books to waste,” he said. His family library was home to many books about things like history and politics, and by 10 years old, he had already read about a variety of topics.

He had also experienced living at a Catholic mission run by people from France in his youth, sparking his fascination with the French language. Later, all of his university degrees would be in the language.

Eventually, he got his first job as a professor of comparative literature at Penn-

sylvania State University in 2002. Since then, he has traveled extensively as a “cultural scholar,” and has been to 35 of the 53 African countries.

In these travels, he noticed the extensive diversity throughout the continent, and started to notice the contradictions between the kind of Africa that was explained to Western audiences and the cultural mosaic he had experienced in his travels. Eventually, he had several essays about the topic in his possession, and decided to amalgamate them into a collection of essays called “You’re Not a Country, Africa!”.

Watching the BBC one day, Adesanmi noticed a mention of the Penguin prize and didn’t think much of it. Later, he noticed a mention of the same prize in a newspaper from France.

It was then that he submitted his manuscript of the essays. However, when he heard they had received over 350 manuscripts from all over the world, he lost interest. That changed in July when the shortlist was announced. His name was on the top of the list.

He was shocked, and almost immediately started getting calls from the media.

“You would think I had already won the prize,” he said. “That should have prepared me for the fact that it was going to be huge, but even in my wildest dreams I didn’t think it would be as big as it was.”

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A Life Changing Moment

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Adesanmi was no stranger to awards. In 2001, he won the Association of Nigerian Authors Poetry Prize for a collection of poems he had written called *The Wayfarer and Other Poems*. However, it still didn't prepare him for the ways in which his life would change after the Penguin prize. Now he has an agent, who wants him to write a new book of non-fiction as soon as possible. He has just started writing, and this book will look at "the habit of underdevelopment," said Adesanmi. It looks at the statistical, harsh, hardcore language of the social sciences when it comes to un-

derdevelopment, and contrasts that with the patronizing language of Bono, American Idol Gives Back, and more, he said.

"When I travel, I listen. You could call this a biography of underdevelopment."

For now, he struggles to balance the demands of being a professor with his creative writing goals.

Although he admits that anything he could do would be a "drop in the ocean" in terms of changing ideas about Africa, he says that there are several things that need to change about the West's idea of the African continent.

His new book is set in Vancouver, and like all of his writings, draws off personal experiences.

The rest of his life has begun, and there's no end in sight.



African Study Runs in my Blood

By Cameron MacIntosh

Like many at Carleton University Institute of African Studies, Peter Stewart's interest in Africa and its people began since his early childhood. As a co-founder of the Institute's student group, he has continued to develop the interest and share it with others.

Born in Prince Edward Island, Stewart's grew up in a home filled with African art and photographs of the Niger River. His father, a medical doctor, who worked in the West African country of Nigeria, returned to share intriguing stories about the continent with his family.

"Africa was something that was talked about a lot when I was growing up," says Stewart. "My father always told me about the work he'd done there."

At the age of 16, Stewart traveled to Kenya with a youth delegation from Save the Children. He was exposed to the people, the challenges and the geography of Africa.

"The trip took us to the Masai Mara (National Reserve) near the Serengeti," says Stewart. "We taught there at a school for four weeks, built homes in local villages and learned about the country," he says. "I came back from Kenya and thought very highly of the experience."

When choosing his educational direction, Stewart continued to focus on Africa. He started his academic career at Dalhousie, where he enrolled to study International Development. However, he soon lost interest in the program and opted to leave Halifax.

"I really just needed a change of scenery," says Stewart.

He transferred to Carleton University in Fall 2008 when he learned about the Institute of African Studies.

"There was some similar material and courses as what I had been doing before in international development," says Stewart.

"It gave me a few of the pre-requisites so I went ahead with the African studies degree."

His focus was on the role of Canadian mining companies in violent conflicts, and gender violence in the continent. He met fellow students interested in promoting and discussing the issues. Before long, he and the others got the idea to start an African studies student group in 2009.

"Because the Institute of African Studies is so new, I just thought there was an opportunity and a need for some sort of students' organization to help get people involved in things regarding Africa," says Stewart.

In its first year, the group organized a panel on corporate social responsibility in Canadian mining firms, which attracted more students.

While the group is small, Stewart hopes the number will grow with time.

"We're hoping that as more people come to the institute to study, there may be more of an interest in the student group," he says.

In the meantime, Stewart continues to organize events and activities for people interested in learning more about Africa. He says the group will be hosting a film series and a second panel discussion later this year.

For Stewart, the Institute of African Studies has given him the opportunity to develop an interest he has had since childhood. It has also given him the opportunity to examine issues in a more comprehensive way.

"The program is so diverse and draws together so many disciplines," says Stewart. "It's important to have something like this."

Interview with *Professor Brian Raftopoulos*, leading Zimbabwean scholar and activist

Former Associate Professor of Development Studies at the University of Zimbabwe, now the Director of Research Advocacy for Solidarity Peace Trust

By Mbonisi Zikhali

M.Z: *Why 'Becoming Zimbabwe?' [the title of a book Brian co-edited]*

B.R: We saw the process as still unfolding. This has been a long, very complex, very plural process of historical becoming in which many factors have played a part in determining many of the outcomes that we are seeing today in Zimbabwe. The central object of the book was to get away from the narrow, selective narratives that have been plucked by the ruling party in Zimbabwe, where Zimbabwe's history of anti-colonial struggle and liberation have been largely focused on the history of ZANU PF (Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front) and the kind of ZANU 'hero's history' which is encapsulated and the heroes' narrative that is always expostulated around the Heroes Acre, the central role of ZANU PF and largely excluding the broad other players that have been involved in the making of Zimbabwe.

M.Z: *How has that distortion in the narrative defined how Zimbabweans view themselves?*

B.R: It has defined the way the state has viewed Zimbabwe, which is to say that the state is regarded as a party state, belonging to ZANU PF. The history of the country is largely regarded as a ZANU PF history and the result has often been that the state has demarcated people who are considered enemies and outsiders, be it opposition, civic groups, whites, farm workers. It has demarcated as enemies those who have challenged the practice, the ideology, the conception of history that has been ZANU's official history of Zimbabwe.

M.Z: *Do you think there has been a significant shift in pre-independence and post-independence politics; what has been adopted and what has been toxic?*

B.R: Look, there has both been a change and continuity. Obviously, the change has been that you now have a majority rule government that came out of a long anti-colonial struggle, one that, since the 1980s, carried out a lot of social change in education, health and social welfare, Africanized the civil service and changed the ethos of the country substantially. But we have also seen very serious continuity from the colonial state, particularly around repressive legislation, closure of media space, the abuse of the judiciary and the narrowing of the conception of national belonging. During the white colonial regime, national belonging largely related to white citizenship. What we have seen in post-colonial Zimbabwe is the narrowing of citizenship through ideas of belonging which are related to party dominance. So those who are close to the ruling party or are considered as belonging to the ruling party are taken as legitimate citizens of the country. So those are the very disturbing continuities in the history of the country.

M.Z: *What has that done to the bargaining power of the electorate?*

B.R: What it has done is that elections have been very problematic throughout the country's history, and particularly in the last ten years, whereby ZANU PF has had very tight control over the electoral process and has denied Zimbabweans the democratic right to elect those who they wish to be in government. We saw this particularly since 2000, 2002 and 2005 but most dramatically in the 2008 elections where we saw the opposition winning the parliamentary seats and being denied a proper re-run of the presidential election through use of huge amounts of violence. So the outcome of this is that ZANU seems to draw its legitimacy not from the electoral process but its perception of the liberation struggle and that because of its role in the liberation struggle it

feels it has the sole and indefinite right to rule Zimbabwe.

M.Z: *What is your perspective on this new trend of power-sharing governments and what implications does this have on democratization in Africa?*

B.R: It is disturbing in the sense that it is denying people the right to democratically elected representatives. What we have seen in both Zimbabwe and Kenya is that people are elected and then denied the right to take power by those parties that are in control of the state. So it has definitely been a denial of democratic rights. It also shows that there is a real impasse in the ability of opposition parties in these countries to translate their electoral victories into power. That is a very disturbing development. Hopefully it is one that the citizens of these countries can begin to think through very critically so that people can have the right to vote freely and to have their representatives take power in their various settings.

M.Z: *Do you think that civil society in Zimbabwe is stronger compared to previous years?*

B.R: I think the power of civil society has really been weakened and fractured and divided over the last few years. It was certainly stronger in the late 1990s and early 2000s than it is now, as a result of a number of factors. Examples are state repression, loss of leadership in the movement to political parties – particularly the Movement for Democratic Change – and decline in the economy which has affected people's capacity to mobilize. All these factors have affected the civil society's capacity to be effective in this very difficult period.

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M.Z: *What are the possibilities of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) moving the country forward?*

B.R: I think the GPA is a very difficult process because it is about contending parties fighting to change the balance of state power in an interim period and in preparation for a new election. I think at the moment it remains the most viable option to try and find a way through, despite all the challenges that deepen the problems. I think trying to ensure the full implementation of the GPA remains the most practical option for the parties to pursue. I think the alternative is for the MDC to pull out of the GPA, which I think will be disastrous at this stage, or an early election which will, under the current circumstances – where all the problems which gave rise to the electoral impasse in 2008 have not been resolved – lead to another new set of problems. So my sense is that ensuring and fighting for the full implementation of the GPA, even if it takes a little more time, will be the most practical way to move forward.

M.Z: *How has the dynamic between the parties in the GPA played out in the constitutional process?*

B.R: Well, it has delayed the constitutional process substantively. It started later than it should have. There was lots of haggling over control of it, over the funding and logistics. It has also meant that, as we go forward, there is going to be a lot of haggling over the issues in the constitution and a lot of power struggles over what to include. It has been a messy process, but given the polarization in the

country and the tensions in the GPA, it is not a surprising eventuality.

M.Z: *Do you think people understand what the constitutional process is about? Was there proper consultation or education prior to teams being dispatched?*

B.R: I think there wasn't sufficient education, certainly for this process. I think depending on which part of the country you are talking about, people have tried to make the inputs and have been involved in the discussions. There certainly has been violence and obstruction in some parts, and coaching by ZANU-PF of the constituents. But in other parts, like the Matabeleland, there has been quite a lot of involvement and discussion. So at one level it has been very important for people to make their input but it certainly has not been the kind of ideal process that one would have liked, which is a very open, better organized process in which people throughout the country feel free to make their opinions known. Ideally the people should have been much more centrally involved. But given the problems we have had, the tensions and the polarization, we still hope that something of a constitution will still come out of this and will begin to take us forward and prepare us for a new electoral process.

M.Z: *If we come up with a new constitution, given the current situation, do you think that it will put in the right checks and balances?*

B.R: I think that there will be lots of compromises in this constitutional process. I think in the end it will be about try-

ing to find areas where parties will want their own elements in the constitution. There is going to be serious compromises around key issues. The real possibility is that it will be very close to the Kariba Draft. Some people will lobby for more or less from the Kariba Draft. But I believe that given the balance of power there is likely to be a lot of compromises in key areas in this constitutional reform process.

M.Z: *How concerned is the international community about Zimbabwe?*

B.R: I think there is concern but I also think there is paralysis. I do not think they are really sure about how to proceed on the Zimbabwe question. The international community has never been comfortable with the SADC mediation because it was largely taken out of their (international community) control and carried out largely within an African structure. So they have never been comfortable with the structure and with the GPA. I think there is a real dilemma about how to proceed with the GPA because it is not what they wanted and it does not meet what they consider their standards. So there is a real difficulty in deciding when and how to re-engage, which is why there is a lot of uncertainty around how to deal with the question of sanction. My sense is that sanction is more about their issues and how they save face – how they deal with the legality of the sanction in their own countries and less about what is needed in Zimbabwe.

Graduate Student Profiles

David Mastey's dissertation research concerns the production child soldier narratives by African authors and their consumption by North American audiences. He examines the content and form of these texts -- which are published in a variety of formats, including novels, autobiographies, feature films, documentaries, hip hop albums, etc. -- as well as the communications circuit in which they function, from authors to publishers, marketers, distributors, retailers, and finally North American consumers. He argues that child soldier narratives are often popular because they apparent confirm some of the existing perceptions that many North American consumers have about Africa and its inhabitants, but that these stories also contribute to and/or produce them. In other words, he demonstrates the ways in which North American culture constructs and communicates Africanist discourses and how African texts mediate and transform those discourses.



David Mastey,
Carleton University graduate student

Amanda Coffie, PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science

Title: Hidden Resources and the Value of Repatriation for Peace building: A Comparative Study of Liberian Returnees from Ghana and Guinea.

There has been much talk about the impact of refugees on their host communities but relatively little about the impact of these societies on the forced migrants and how these influences potentially affect their contributions towards peace-building processes. Most of the refugees, who return to their country of origin after decades in exile particularly due to war or conflict in home countries, arrive with a variety of resources that their home countries can harness for the peace-building agenda. However, the effects of the host society's refugee policy, socio-economic, political and security conditions are major factors to determine whether returnees would have gained or lost resources in exile and later become assets or challenges for their countries of origin once the source of flight ceases to exist or is reduced substantially. Furthermore, policies and programs of peace-building and the society of return also represent a further opportunity or challenge for the returnee's potential contribution towards rebuilding of their states.

In short, my research examines the potential contribution of returning refugees to peace building through a comparative study of the resource gains and losses of Liberian refugees during asylum in Ghana and Guinea. The study hopes to present a better understanding of how the experience of exile and the treatment of returnees by peace building institutions in the country of origin influence the ability of refugees to contribute to the process of post-conflict reconstruction. I believe that better research in this area could lead to improved support for incorporating the question of refugees into peace building programming by refugee hosting and home countries, humanitarian agencies and the refugees.

Carol Hunsberger, Ph.D. student, Geography and Environmental Studies

International attention to biofuels has focused on discourses of climate change mitigation, energy security and agricultural development. However, the production of crop-based biofuels on a large scale has drawn criticism in all three of these areas. Concern over "food versus fuel" has been particularly strong since the food price crisis of 2008, prompting donors and investors to shift their attention to sources of biofuels that seem unlikely to compete with food production. My PhD research examines the spread of one such plant in Kenya: *Jatropha curcas*, an oilseed shrub with a reputation for growing in very dry areas. Several NGOs encouraged small scale farmers to plant *Jatropha* in Kenya, although early results suggest that claims about the plant's performance were premature. My research asks how *Jatropha* came to be promoted as a development strategy in Kenya and how the experiences of farmers compare with the claims of *Jatropha*'s promoters. My findings include that different players have attached *Jatropha* to very different goals and visions of development, at times allowing competition and institutional interests to trump the interests of the very farmers who are supposed to benefit from growing the crop. Meanwhile, a case study in Mpeketoni, Coast Province suggests that donors, local project coordinators and farmers who approached a *Jatropha* project with different initial priorities may be able to mobilize a single set of resources to approach a variety of goals.



Carol Hunsberger (right), an assistant and an interviewee surrounded by *Jatropha* plants.



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

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