

Africa in/and the World

Tanya Lyons - ARAS Editor
Flinders University

Back in 2000 Gavin Kitching sparked a major debate about giving up African Studies, in these very pages of ARAS,¹ which soon spread to online journals from the USA, and eventually made its way to the mainstream media in Australia.² His main argument was that African studies had become depressing, because the leaders he had supported during anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles had become the tyrants, keeping their countries and peoples subjugated and in poverty. His departure from the field of African studies flowed on the tide of Australian academics moving toward more mainstream fields of study including Asian studies, keeping job prospects open rather than closed. A rational choice in the face of an irrational Africa!

Since then, there has been a dearth of African studies and research in Australia. However, with the demise of the Howard years and a shift in international strategy from the Rudd Labor Government, a focus on Africa has been acknowledged as 'necessary' for a number of reasons, but mostly because of big business opportunities in the mining sector, and the possibility of securing support from African nations for Australia to get a seat on the UN Security Council. Indeed the Minister for Foreign Affairs has only just recently on 21 October 2009, called an "*Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*," and given organizations (such as AFSAAP) and individuals until 11 December 2009 to make a submission.³ However, while this remains a fairly short and narrow focus in Canberra and in the boardrooms of the multinational miners, it is interesting that at least this Parliamentary Committee is planning to "consider both the current situation and opportunities for the future."⁴ Senator Michael Forshaw, the Chair of this committee stated that, "The last major Committee inquiry into Australia's relationship with Southern Africa was back in 1996. It is timely that the Committee now

¹ Gavin Kitching, "Why I have up African Studies", *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 22:6, (June 2000): 21-26; also see Gavin Kitching, "Why I gave up African Studies," *Mots Pluriels*, 16 (December 2000), <http://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP1600gk.html> (accessed 28 October 2009); and Danny Postel, "Out of Africa: A pioneer of African studies explains why he left the field, and provokes a firestorm of debate within it," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 28 March 2003, <http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i29/29a01601.htm>; and see Marc Epprecht, "Africanists and Responsibility: Some Reflections", *African Studies Quarterly*, 7:2 & 3 (2003):3 http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i2a11.htm#_edn2, (accessed 20 October 2009).

² See Danny Postel, "Out of Africa and into Contention", *The Australian*, (Higher Education Supplement, 9 April 2003); Tanya Lyons, "African studies not off the hook," *The Australian*, Wednesday 16 April 2003.

³ Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, "*Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with the Countries of Africa*," <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfact/africa%2009/index.htm> (accessed 1 November 2009).

⁴ Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.

undertake this broad ranging inquiry given the significance that Africa and issues affecting the continent have in international affairs.”⁵ It would be unsurprising if the impact of African issues upon ‘international affairs’ had something to do with the consolidated surge of interest in African studies in Australia. However, this interest appears to be not on and in Africa, but on Africans in Australia. Prior to this foreign affairs inquiry, the current government also commissioned “African Australians: A Report on Human Rights and Social Inclusion Issues,”⁶ having released a discussion paper on 16 March 2009, with the aim to gain feedback from the community about these issues. Consultations ended on 30 June 2009. It is hoped that a final report will be available for critical review before the next issue of ARAS in June 2010.

If the number of papers presented at the recent AFSAAP Annual Conference on the issue of African migration and settlement issues in Australia, can be the gauge of anything, then it does suggest that Australian scholars are more able to focus on the problems facing Africans once they get here, rather than being mobile and active researchers across the Indian Ocean, researching Africa.⁷ Despite the perceived lack of focus on Africa in Africa, this current issue of the *Australasian Review of African Studies* nonetheless demonstrates that there is a keen local talent for African Studies. In particular this edition focuses on a range of themes arising from the colonisation of Africa, through to the impact of colonisation in the post-colonial period, which includes the flow of migrants out of Africa, either forced as refugees or voluntarily as part of the skilled ‘brain-drain’. The difficulties facing Africans relocating to Australia, another country and culture, are also explored in this issue, hence the theme of ‘Africa in/and the world’. The first contribution below is by the historian Roger Scott. He provides a detailed account of the Governor of Uganda, Sir William Gowers. This is a unique and personal story of a coloniser in Africa. The colonisers are more often than not, those blamed for everything bad in Africa today, so it is timely to assess their personal experience and role in the colonies from the vantage point of today. Scott’s archival research has ‘rescued’ Gowers from historical anonymity. Matthew Doherty also takes us on an historical journey through the violent colonial experience in central Africa, with his analysis of 19th century daily life in the Lopori-Maringa basin. ‘Subsistence amid turmoil’ captures the resilience and resistance of the

⁵ Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. Media Release, 30 October 2009, “Australia’s Relations with Africa,” <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/africa%2009/media.htm> (accessed 1 November 2009)

⁶ The Australian Human Rights Commission, “African Australians: A Report on Human Rights and Social Inclusion Issues,” http://www.hreoc.gov.au/partnerships/projects/african_australian.html (accessed 1 June 2009)

⁷ Although, it is a noteworthy exception that the recent past-president of AFSAAP David Lucas was conducting research in Morocco, while the Treasurer of AFSAAP Graeme Counsel was conducting research in Guinea- although dramatically cut short due to recent civil conflict - and the recent past postgraduate representative of AFSAAP Sam Balanton-Chrimes was conducting research in Kenya, all at the time of the 2009 AFSAAP Conference.

population in the face of colonisation and violent resource extraction from the region. Basil Ekot's contribution from Nigeria provides an important analysis of the difficulties with 'Conflict, Religion and Ethnicity in the Post-Colonial Nigerian State'. He examines the implications of the legacy of colonial rule in Nigeria where religious conflict has been encouraged by ethnicity and the politics of identity. Then, Tanya Lyons brings the discussion of colonisation into the post-colonial discourse of globalisation and argues that 'globo-nialism' occurs when pharmaceutical companies trial new drugs in weak states in Africa, without ethical consideration for participants. Thus continuing the processes of colonisation in Africa to ensure resource extraction, in this case of human bio-data.

Reaching across the Indian Ocean, Temesgen Kifle's research article on Eritreans in Australia analyses the impact of remittances sent back to Eritrea from Australia, and the conditions for Eritreans in Australia making it possible to do so. He argues that the Eritrean government needs to allow "domestic private foreign exchange bureaus to operate in money exchange activities" in order to provide security for these transactions and to assist in subsistence and development in Eritrea. Jackbeth Mapulanga-Hulston then provides a timely article on the impact of skilled human resource extraction from the African continent to developed countries. Her research focuses on "The Migration of Health Professionals in Sub-Saharan African Countries and the Impact on People's Right to Health," arguing that serious attention is required to public and health policies in order to curtail this brain drain from Africa.

Continuing with this theme of the flow of people from the African continent Ignacio Correa-Velez and Gerald Onsando's contribution to this edition examines the "Educational and Occupational Outcomes Amongst African Men From Refugee Backgrounds Living in Urban and Regional Southeast Queensland." Their research among this cohort of refugees from Africa now living in Australia provides important data for government and service providers for migrants on education and employment issues in relation to integration. Importantly, Jay Marlowe's article provides a theoretical analysis for understanding refugee experience in settlement in Australia, in particular focusing on the issue of trauma. "Conceptualising Refugee Resettlement in Contested Landscapes" focuses on the experiences of Sudanese men in South Australia and should also be considered an important study for service providers and government departments interested in African migrant settlement issues in Australia. Finally, Surjeet Dhanji provides a timely analysis of the major issues facing former refugees from Africa in settling in Australia, in particular through a discussion of the media debates about so-called 'integration issues,' combined with interviews with former refugees from the Horn of Africa region. In her article "Welcome or Unwelcome? Integration Issues and the Resettlement of Former Refugees from the Horn of Africa and Sudan in Metropolitan Melbourne" Dhanji demonstrates the failures of

resettlement programs and highlights the concerns for integration among this vulnerable cohort of humanitarian entrants to Australia.

Kifle's, Correa-Velez and Onsando's, Marlowe's and Dhanji's research here all demonstrates the 'tip of the ice-berg' in relation to the current research being conducted on Africans in Australia, in particular on those from refugee backgrounds. It is noteworthy that much research has been done in this area previously, and caution is warranted to researchers in this field, not to work on isolated projects and to 're-invent the wheel.' While researchers may be working in different fields and disciplines, from different perspectives - the subjects are the same - Africans in Australia. Liz Dimock has published an extensive bibliography in these pages of *ARAS* on Africans in Australia,⁸ and in the same edition Kirk Zwangobani's article on African-Australian youth in Canberra is also published.⁹ Furthermore, Temesgen Kifle and Parvinder Kler contributed an article on the "Financial Satisfaction of African Immigrants in Australia,"¹⁰ and an article on Ethiopian-Australian secondary School students was also published.¹¹ Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe, who is profiled below, has also contributed a number of articles on Africans in Australia that should be considered,¹² not to mention the various contributions from David Lucas in the form of statistical profiles of Africans in Australia.¹³

A decade has passed since Kitching's 'depressing' announcement, and if only for the sake of assisting in the resettlement of former African refugees and African migrants in Australia, we need to engage with Africa and in particular conduct research and analysis of African issues in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and conditions in Africa today.

⁸ Liz Dimock, "Africans in Australia," *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 29:1&2 (2008):133-154.

⁹ Kirk Zwangobani, "From Diaspora to Multiculture: in Search of a Youthful Pan-African Identity," *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 29: 1&2 (2008): 51-65.

¹⁰ Temesgen Kifle and Parvinder Kler, "Financial Satisfaction of African Immigrants in Australia," *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 29: 1&2 (2008):66-77

¹¹ Gemet Bitew, Peter Ferguson and Mary Dixon, "Ethiopian-Australian Students' Experience of Secondary Schooling in the Australian Education System in the State of Victoria", *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 29: 1&2 (2008): 78-91

¹² Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe, "A Note on tensions in African-Australian Families and the Australian Family Court," *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 28 (2006/7):97-110.

¹³ For example see David Lucas, "Demographic Trends in Humanitarian Arrivals," *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 28 (2006/7):153-167; and David Lucas, "Africans in the Australian Census," *Australasian Review of African Studies*, 29: 1&2 (2008):110-112

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