Professor Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian Nobel Prize laureate, at the African Studies Centre before delivering the Annual Lecture at the Sheldonian Theatre.
Welcome to the African Studies Newsletter 2013-2014

The last academic year was an exciting one for the African Studies Centre. One of the highlights was our hugely insightful run of talks and seminars. Beginning in October 2013, we co-hosted a “policy meets the academy” workshop on the impact of extractive industries in Africa with OXFAM. Speakers included Winnie Byanyima, the International Executive Director of OXFAM International, Morgan Tsvangirai, the former Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, and Sam Kutesa, the Ugandan Foreign Minister. Many of our MSc students have now completed doctorates and are going on to strength, and this year we had a record number of applications. Our MSc students are the lifeblood of the Centre and this year’s cohort contributed a great deal to the University during their short time here. As well as organizing a wider range of fascinating social and academic events, MSc students were at the forefront of the Oxford Africa Society (AfriSoc), which with the Said Business School organized the 2014 “Oxford Africa Conference: African Transformations” one of the world’s leading student-led Africa conferences. As in previous years, the event drew a range leading policy-makers, business leaders and academics.

We are proud of the academic success of our MSc students. A number of MSc dissertations have gone on to be published in leading journals, and many former MSc students have now completed doctorates and are beginning their own academic careers. We are equally glad to hear about former students that are enjoying careers in the policy world, or working as journalists, or who have entered the private sector. So check out the alumni updates featured in this newsletter to see what a varied and interesting set of trajectories our students have followed after graduating. Please make sure that you all keep in touch with us and send us all of your news!

Looking ahead, the Centre remains committed to sustaining and creating new opportunities to bring students from around the world to Oxford. Having made Kenya my second home for the past eight years, I am particularly pleased that St Anthony’s College and the Oxford and Cambridge Society of Kenya have recently announced a scholarship for a student ordinarily resident in Kenya to study a one-year Masters degree at St Anthony’s College. As ever, we rely on our alumni to help us spread the word about these opportunities.

Wole Soyinka and Nic Cheesman
he revisited the site of his 2002 book, Midlands, which investigated the murder of the son of a white farmer in 1999. You can read the article here http://www.granta.com/Archive/126/The-Defeated.

The African Studies MSc continues to go from strength to strength, and this year we had a record number of applications. Our MSc students are the lifeblood of the Centre and this year’s cohort contributed a great deal to the University during their short time here. As well as organizing a wider range of fascinating social and academic events, MSc students were at the forefront of the Oxford Africa Society (AfriSoc), which with the Said Business School organized the 2014 “Oxford Africa Conference: African Transformations” one of the world’s leading student-led Africa conferences. As in previous years, the event drew a range leading policy-makers, business leaders and academics.

We are also delighted to announce the launch of two new research prizes this year. The Royal Air Maroc Africa Oxford Awards will provide three Oxford students a year with free air travel to Africa. The Winhin Jimide Series Research Prize for Women in African Government and Politics will provide research grants of £3,000 to two graduate students conducting research on gender and politics in Africa. We are very grateful to Royal Air Maroc and the Winhin Jimide Series for their support.

This year, the Centre welcomed two excellent administrators, Annella Hutchinson and Siobhan Coote. It was their energy and dedication that made it possible to organize such a vibrant set of events while ensuring that the Centre ran smoothly. At the end of the year, Siobhan left the Centre to pursue a career in accountability and I would like to thank her for all her efforts over the past twelve months: she made the African Studies Centre a more efficient and more enjoyable place to be.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that Andrea Purdekova has agreed to extend her contract with us for another year and so will stay as an Administrative Assistant and Oslo and Norway for all her efforts over the past twelve months: she made the African Studies Centre a more efficient and more enjoyable place to be.

Dr Nic Cheeseman
Director, African Studies Centre
Visitors

Dr Emmanuel Akpabio (JSPS Postdoctoral Fellow, Kyoto University, Japan), visited the Centre in July 2014 and developed his research on healthcare access among the Nigerian diaspora in the UK.

Dr Laurent Gabail (Fyssen Postdoctoral Fellow affiliated to the African Studies Centre), is a member of the research team TIP (Traitement Informatique de la Parenté/Kinship and Computing), which develops analytical tools and methods for the study of empirical kinship networks. During his time at the Centre in 2014, he pursued his post-doctoral research agenda, which explores the links between certain modalities of initiatory organisation and the recurrence of distinctive choreographic forms. Laurent also co-organized and presented at a workshop on “Technologies of Transformation: African Perspectives” with David Pratten and Ramon Sarró.

Professor Karl von Holdt (Director of the SWOP programme at the University of the Witwatersrand), visited the Centre during Trinity term on an Oppenheimer fellowship. He participated in the conference on ‘20 Years of Democracy in South Africa’ and gave a number of valuable presentations at the South African discussion group and elsewhere. Professor von Holdt’s major focus was on contemporary social issues in South Africa: mining, strikes, the changing position of workers, popular protest and violence.

Øystein H. Rolandsen (Senior Researcher, Peace Research Institute Oslo), spent most of the first half of 2014 at the Centre, working with a team of research assistants on violence, conflict and state survival. Øystein also organized a major workshop on “Violence, legitimacy and governance in the Greater Horn”. The presence of speakers such as Professors David Anderson (Warwick), Christopher Clapham (Cambridge), and William Reno (Northwestern) – in addition to Øystein himself – ensured that it was one of the highlights of the year.

Dr Mats Utas (Head of the research cluster on Conflict, security and democratic transformation at the Nordic Africa Institute), visited the Centre during Michaelmas and Hilary Terms 2013-14. The purpose of his fellowship was to write and conduct library studies on two projects with focus on West Africa: ‘The Informal Realities of Peacebuilding - Military Networks and Former Mid-Level Commanders in Post-War Liberia’, and ‘Between Big Man Politics and Democratisation: Local Perceptions and Individual Agency’.

Wole Soyinka visit

Lighting the African Canon: Wole Soyinka discusses politics and literature with Oxford students

In addition to giving the annual African Studies lecture, Wole Soyinka, the Nobel prize–winning playwright, author, and political activist, met students for lunch.

Prior to the lunch, Tiziana Morosetti and Dan Hodgkinson led the workshop that explored the work of one of the most prominent twentieth-century African writers and political activists who, along with Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, established a world respected African literary canon. The group discussed how Soyinka addressed issues of ‘tradition’ and cultural interpretation, colonial and post-colonial education, his experience of prison, and the ways in which he, as playwright, used obfuscatory language as a mode of political engagement.

There was no such obfuscation during lunch. Soyinka spoke directly about the current state of Nigeria and reflected on his history of involvement in the country’s politics. Boko Haram’s violent Islamist insurgency in the north of the country, he said, had become a military situation requiring a military answer and humanitarian aid. The government – many of whom, he suggested, were ‘incapable of walking and chewing gum at the same time’ – had failed to act and been unwilling to uphold secular institutions, highlighted by the institution of sharia law in nine of Nigeria’s northern states. Asked if the artist had a role in politics, he responded that by reading poetry, people are able to restore their minds and so contribute in meaningful ways. He also recalled the ideologically charged days of his student activism in the 1950s as a ‘criss-crossing period of ideas’, in which the rise of apartheid in South Africa was ‘a burden that had to be exorcised’ and one ‘had to work hard to not just parrot the slogans of others’. Asked what he would do differently if he had his time again, he mentioned he would ‘drink more wine, listen to more music, do more hunting.’

The group’s discussion was based upon three of his works: the play, Death and the King’s Horseman; the novel, The Interpreters; and his collection of poems written during his time in prison during the Biafra war, The Shuttle in the Crypt.
The annual Bram Fischer Memorial Lecture was given by Professor Denis Goldberg, who spoke on Bram Fischer: Lawyer, activist, Freedom fighter. The memorial lecture is in honour of Bram Fischer QC (Rhodes scholar, Orange Free State & New College 1931), who defended Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the liberation movement when on trial for their lives, and who himself died in imprisonment in 1975. Before the Bram Fischer lecture started, Stephen Clingman, the biographer of Bram Fischer, set the scene by speaking on the theme of Bram Fischer and the Democratic Transition in South Africa.

Goldberg’s talk was wide ranging, deeply personal and very moving. He recounted his early years with Bram Fischer, and his memories from the Rivonia Trial and later as a fellow prisoner for nine years until Bram Fischer’s death from cancer. Goldberg spoke about Bram Fischer’s life of great contradictions and of strong personal convictions, describing a man who suppressed his emotions but who had a ‘twinkly sense of fun’.

Denis Goldberg aimed to describe the whole man, focusing both on his political activism, but also his love of classical and formal jazz music. He recounted memories such as Fischer’s reading from Alice in Wonderland during one Christmas in prison. It was an account of captivity and a fight for freedom; not for individual freedom but the freedom found within social justice.

The Warden of Rhodes House, Charles Conn (Rhodes scholar, Massachusetts & Balliol 1983), commented: “It was a remarkable speech and I found the reflections on their shared time in prison very evocative. The historical context of the time was brought to life and it was an honour to hear Professor Goldberg’s memories and insights.”

Denis Goldberg grew up in Cape Town and took part in forming the Congress of Democrats, of which he became leader. This in turn allied itself with the African National Congress (ANC) and other congresses and in 1961 when the underground armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe was founded, Goldberg became a technical officer. In 1963 he was arrested at their Rivonia headquarters. He was sentenced in 1964 at the end of the famous Rivonia Trial to four terms of life imprisonment. In 1985, after 22 years in prison, he was released and moved to London where he resumed his work in the ANC in its London office from 1985 to 1994. He was a spokesperson for the ANC and also represented it at the Anti-Apartheid Committee of the United Nations. A large group of US organisations presented Professor Goldberg with the Albert Luthuli Peace Prize in recognition of his work against apartheid.

This year’s Bram Fischer Lecture also supported the work of the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk, and was dedicated to the memory of Wanyama Wanyonyi, a lawyer in Kenya who was assassinated in September 2013.

We are delighted to announce that the Bram Fischer Lecture 2015 will be given by Edwin Cameron, the respected human rights lawyer, activist, and justice of South Africa’s Constitutional Court. The Lecture will be held at Rhodes House on Tuesday 16 June 2015 at 17:00.

Denis Goldberg gives the Bram Fischer Memorial Lecture
2014

Nic Cheeseman

Professor Goldberg

In January 1995, when civil war came to Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, two-thirds of the city’s population fled. Among them was eight-year-old Asad Abdullahi. His mother murdered by a militia, his father somewhere in hiding, he was swept alone into the great wartime migration that scattered the Somali people throughout sub-Saharan Africa and the world.

I’ve just completed a book on Abdullahi’s life story. It is called A Man of Good Hope and will be published by Jonathan Cape in January 2015. Serially betrayed by the people who promised to care for him, Abdullahi lived his childhood at a sceptical remove from the adult world, his relation to others wary and tactical. He lived in a bewildering number of places, from the cosmopolitan streets of inner-city Nairobi to the desert towns deep in the Ethiopian hinterland.

By the time he reached the cusp of adulthood, Abdullahi had honed an array of wily talents. At the age of seventeen, in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, he made good as a street hustler, brokering relationships between hardnosed businessmen and bewildered Somali refugees. He also counted the famously beautiful Foisya, and, to the astonishment of his peers, seduced and married her.

Buoyed by success in work and in love, Abdullahi put $1000 in his pocket and made his way down the length of the African continent to Johannesburg, South Africa, where he was caught up in the xenophobic violence that gripped that country in April 2008.

Through Abdullahi’s life history, A Man of Good Hope examines a host of African questions: state collapse in Somalia, the mercurial place of clan loyalties in everyday Somali life, statelessness and undocumented international travel, nationalism and xenophobia.

Above all, it is an exploration of the meaning of a human life shorn of foundations.

African Studies
Prizes 2012–13

Kirk-Greene Prize for Best Overall Performance: Alexandra Letcher

Terence Ranger Prize for the Best Dissertation Performance: Amelia Kuch

African Studies Prize for the Most Innovative Dissertation: Bennett Collins
African Local Knowledge and Livestock Health: Diseases and Treatments in South Africa

William Beinart and Karen Brown

So we decided to embark on interviews. It has been a fascinating experience for both of us and our research required a particularly steep learning curve because we had to gain greater familiarity with veterinary science as well as local knowledge.

The interviews certainly confirmed that animal health was a major sphere of African local knowledge and that livestock remain economically and culturally significant for hundreds of thousands of smallholder owners in South Africa. Understanding local knowledge in this sphere is all the more important because after 1994, the ANC government curtailed national veterinary provision. It is anomalous that the state has partially withdrawn just as African people have the opportunity to expand livestock holdings.

Many perceived there to be a crisis in livestock health, particularly in the control of ticks. Richard Missiwa, in his sixties, recalled “when I was a boy herding you seldom saw ticks in the veld. If you saw a tick you would get excited and call the other herdboys over. Now if you walk through grass your trousers become black with ticks.”

Karen worked largely in North Western Province with Barbara Kgar, who proved to be a wonderful research assistant. William interviewed in Mpondoland on the east coast, where he had researched on rural history and resistance in earlier years. Sowabile Mkhanya provided invaluable assistance. With our collaborators, we interviewed over 200 people. Exploring local or indigenous knowledge has been at the heart of African Studies for a generation, particularly as part of the critique of centralised, top-down development. We hope that our book will be a significant contribution to this general field. We found that there was no overwhelming shift towards a biomedical understanding of animal diseases, even in areas colonised for well over a century. Our research suggests that natural, environmental and nutritional understandings of disease are still very significant, mirrored by the use of plant medicines. Treatments were more hybrid; many also used biomedical treatments, at least when they could afford them.

Respondents did not generally attribute diseases to witchcraft. We heard more frequent reference to what we have called the “ambient supernatural”, often associated with words for footprints - the concepts of umuhlo and umkhondo respectively. Neither of these appears in the older ethnographies and we see them as hybrid supernatural concepts drawing both on older ideas of witchcraft and pollution, as well as newer ideas of infection. Mhofelo was associated with menstruating women and widows – an informant talked of “cross infection” between women and cattle. Umkhondo was often associated with the deposition of disease in the dew to which animals would succumb if they crossed infected traces.

Our research determinedly sought a wide range of local knowledge but also points to its limits, as well as local uncertainty about how to deal with many scourges of livestock. We conclude the book with recommendations (see the Outreach Report and summary under our names at africanstudies.ox.ac.uk). We don’t pretend to be veterinary experts and these are not directive. We propose that more effective strategies might emerge from a dialogue between scientific and local knowledge, between state and livestock owners.

Reports of conferences and specialist networks

The African Studies Centre meets Oxfam

Nic Cheeseman

On 24 October 2013, the African Studies Centre held its first major joint event with Oxfam, the pioneering organization that has campaigned for social justice in Africa since 1942. The idea for the event emerged when Winnie Byanyima, the recently appointed Executive Director of Oxfam, approached me and suggested that there might be interesting and important ways in which the African Studies Centre and Oxfam could work together. I quickly agreed although Oxfam was founded in Oxford (the name is a shortened version of “The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief”) and its international headquarters are still located here, there has not been as much contact between the Centre and the charity as you might expect.

The opportunity to hold a “the academy meets policy event” was too good to miss. It soon became clear that our shared interests converged on the question of extractive industries and how the proceeds from natural resources such as oil, coal, gas, gold can be used to reduce poverty and improve public service delivery in Africa. On the first panel, Heather Stewart, the Economics Editor of The Guardian moderated a discussion between Kevin Fox, the Exploration Director of Rio Tinto and a number of other panellists including Dereje Alemayehu, Chair of the Global Alliance for Tax Justice, about how Africa’s natural resources can best be managed – and who should take responsibility for doing so.

In the second, Rupert Younger, the Director of Oxford’s Centre for Corporate Reputation managed an engaging debate over how to promote transparency in the boardrooms of multinationals and the cabinet meetings of African governments. Only when we know more about the deals that are being signed will it be possible to tell how far they are, and how much they actually benefit ordinary citizens. Speakers weighing in on this important topic included Chris Austin from the UK Cabinet Office and our very own pair of experts, Ricardo Soares de Oliveira and Tony Venable. While opinions differed over exactly how to promote transparency, all speakers agreed that it would be a good thing if the policy community could work with companies and governments in order to increase the quality of information about resource extraction contracts that reaches the public domain.

Although both of these panels were lively and well attended, for many MSC students the highlight of the day came when Winnie Byanyima, the Executive director of Oxford, presided over a roundtable discussion that included Hon. Morgan Richard Tsvangirai, Former Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, and Hon. Sam Kutesa, Ugandan Minister of Foreign Affairs. The sight of senior African leaders debating the rights and wrongs of natural resource policy with each other, the representatives of multinational companies, academic experts, and influential NGOs, was one of the highlights of the year.

I was particularly pleased that we were able to host such a vibrant and vital debate in Oxford. The collaboration gave the African Studies Centre an opportunity to showcase the significant contributions that faculty in African studies make to policy debates around the world – something that often occurs out of the public eye to little fanfare. The opportunity to work with Oxfam made me realise just how much we can learn from them, and how much they are interested in learning from us. We hope to further strengthen our collaboration with further events on a range of different topics in the coming years.
South African opposition leader visits Oxford

William Attwell (MSc 2009 now Africa Analyst at Oxford Analytica Ltd.)

Former South African opposition leader, Lindiwe Mazibuko, visited Oxford on June 16 to address a special session of the South African Discussion Group. Mazibuko had recently stepped down from her position as leader of the Democratic Alliance, in the National Assembly and was en route to take up a Mason Fellowship at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government.

Her address to the packed seminar covered a wide range of topics, including her reflections on the results of SA’s national elections in May, President Jacob Zuma’s leadership, the oversight role of Parliament and her own future plans.

Students and faculty members were then invited to engage with Mazibuko during a Q&A. Many questions focused on voting patterns following the May elections, and specifically the Democratic Alliance’s efforts to attract black voters, in a country where many people feel a strong affinity for the ruling ANC. Mazibuko also answered questions about difficulties facing the implementation of the National Development Plan - the country’s broadly centrist economic policy - given the factions and ideological differences within the ruling alliance.

On her own plans, Mazibuko spoke about her desire to ‘take a step back’ in order to develop her own expertise in public policy. She said she specifically wants to learn about how other countries have dealt with economic empowerment, redress and land reform-related issues and whether these present lessons for South Africa. Mazibuko strongly encouraged African students studying at Oxford to hone their skills and use them to contribute to the development of their home countries, whether in the fields of politics, government, civil society or business.

Mazibuko was the fourth youngest woman to lead the official opposition benches. She has been touted as a possible successor to DA party leader Helen Zille. In 2012, Mazibuko was named South Africa’s ‘most influential woman’ and, in 2013, was listed as one of Africa’s top 20 ‘young power women’ by Forbes and by CNN’s Christiane Amanpour as one of the world’s ‘bravest women’ for her campaigns against rape and domestic abuse.

1994–2014: 20 Years of South African Democracy

Jason Robinson

Coinciding with the 20 anniversary of South Africa’s first democratic elections, 1994–2014: 20 years of South African Democracy proved an opportunity to analyse the transition in the 1990s, the subsequent consolidation of democracy and the nature of political authority in South Africa.

Taking place at St. Antony’s College between 24-26th April 2014, the Conference consisted of over thirty-two academic panels, a day-long roundtable session on Provincial Government (hosted in conjunction with the Gauteng Legislature Core Business Division) and a performance of Matthew Hahn’s The Robben Island Bible (sponsored by Brand South Africa). The Conference also was host to a number of book launches (including texts by current and former members and visitors of the Centre, such as Colin Bundy, Tim Gibbs, Adam Habib and Hugh Macmillan) as well as two very special sessions on the opening day of the Conference. The Centre was proud to host the then-Deputy President of South Africa Kgalema Motlanthe who delivered the keynote address, Building a Democratic and Inclusive Society: the journey of 20 years of Freedom. Professors Anthony Butler, Ruth Hall and Xolela Mangcu acted as respondents, putting hard-hitting questions to the Deputy President on the content of his address and ANC rule in South Africa since 1994, what followed was a fascinating engagement between the speaker and the respondents (one which was covered in pieces in Business Day, The Financial Mail and The Times).

Later that evening, a plenary session chaired by Dr. Jonny Steinberg saw a lively debate between Adam Habib, Tony Leon and Xolela Mangcu. The final session of the Conference saw Professor William Beinart chair a session on the ‘ANC, Capital and Labour’ involving Colin Coleman, Adam Habib and Jeremy Seekings.

The Conference proved a truly engaging affair with fascinating interactions and dialogue between participants from South Africa, the UK and further afield. A number of publications are planned to reflect debates and discussions that emerged during the three days of the Conference.

The Conference would not have been possible without the help of Professor William Beinart, as well as the Conference Steering Committee and the conference assistants who helped on the days itself. Thanks also to those from outside the university who supported the Conference: The Journal of Southern African Studies, African Studies Association UK (ASAUK), Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI), Sumaridge Estate Wines, The Africa Report, Brand South Africa, the Gauteng Provincial Legislature (GPL), Wits University Press, Ohio University Press and James Currey.
The OUCAN conference on African Development, The China Model and the Politics of Industrialisation, which was jointly organised with Fudan University, was attended by scholars, graduate students, NGO representatives, media professionals, diplomats as well as the Ambassadors of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Through social media, conference participants also brought highlights of the key note speech and the panel discussions to cyberspace, continuing the debates there.

A first emerging lesson of the conference was that Chinese diplomats and business elites still lack the confidence and the political will to actively promote or export a “China Model”. Moreover, the contradictions between Western approaches to the global political economy and Chinese economic policies overseas should not be overstated - there is more continuity and similarity than change and difference. Whether in Africa or elsewhere, China is increasingly seen not as a radically unique partner or threat, but as a normal great power involved in the multifarious, complex and often ambiguous activities and practices that characterise states of its systemic importance.

Put differently, most conference participants showed themselves rather sceptical about the existence of a coherent, clearly identifiable China model that holds unambiguous, specific lessons for others states. For the most part, the “China model” is more continuity and similarity than change and difference. Whether in Africa or elsewhere, China is more continuity and similarity than change and difference.

We wish to thank all those who co-organized some of these events, and – last but certainly not least – everyone who attended and participated in them.
Horn of Africa seminar

Jason Mosley

During 2013-14, the Horn of Africa seminar brought together academics, post-graduates and policymakers/practitioners with an interest in the region. Our presentations covered the range of the region’s countries – including Somalia, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Kenya – and encompassed a variety of disciplinary approaches, as well as both policy and academic research.

Speakers on the seminar covered a wide range of topics, including state-building through business and infrastructure, business practice in the health care sector, the evolution of guerrilla movements into professional armies, the experiences of diaspora returnees in development, the hydropolitics of the Nile, the intellectual history of reform, the practice of the ‘protection of civilians’ framework, links between piracy and local political economy, changes in framing of friend and foe, and refugee perceptions of home country political developments.

In addition to our seminar presentations, the series hosted three significant events during the year.

In October, we launched the seminar with a panel discussion, Remittances – Somalia and beyond. The speakers – including Abdi Abdullahi (SOMSA), Edwina Thompson (Beechwood International), Laura Hammond (Beechwood International), Anna Lindley (SOAS) and Sally Healy (Rift Valley Institute). The panel discussed the December outbreak of violence in South Sudan, to put events in historical context and assess the outlook. The roundtable was organised in cooperation with the African Studies Seminar.

In May, the series hosted a half-day conference, Revisiting the politics of state survival: Violence, legitimacy and governance in the Greater Horn of Africa. The conference included presentations from Jason Mosley (Oxford), Amanda Poole (Indiana University of Pennsylvania), Øystein H. Rolandsen (PRIO), William Reno (Northwestern University), David Anderson (Warwick), and Sandrine Perrot (Sciences Po) with responses by Christopher Clapham (Cambridge), John Markakis (SOAS) and Sally Healy (Rift Valley Institute). Presentations covered Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda. The conference was held in conjunction with the African Studies Seminar.

The seminar was convened by Jason Mosley, research associate at the African Studies Centre, Ton Weiss, doctoral candidate in Politics, Julianne Wees, doctoral candidate in the History of Medicine, Emma Lochery, doctoral candidate in Politics, Alpha Abebe, doctoral candidate in Development Studies and Grant Brooke, doctoral candidate in Theology and Religious Studies.

Teaching at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa

Andrea Grant

In August 2013, Micah Reddy and I headed to East London, South Africa, to teach at the Fort Hare Institute of Economic and Social Research (FHSER). For the past five years, the African Studies Center has partnered with FHSER to bring two or three students from Oxford to work with postgraduates at Fort Hare. Their students come from a variety of different African countries and are mostly enrolled on the MA in African Studies.

In January, the seminar hosted a South Sudan Crisis Roundtable including Douglas Johnson (Independent), Annette Weber (SWP, Berlin), Peter Bar Arik (Cambridge), and Ahmed Al-Shahi (Oxford). The panel discussed the December outbreak of violence in South Sudan, to put events in historical context and assess the outlook. The roundtable was organised in cooperation with the African Studies seminar.

Working closely with FHSER senior researchers Dr Livuyo Mbombara and Dr Teresa Cannor, we helped to teach a research methods course that was modelled loosely on the research methodology core course taught on the MSc in African Studies here at Oxford. Drawing on our own academic experience – Micah had recently completed the MSc in African Studies and I was a DPhil candidate in Social Anthropology – we focused on discussing ethnography, quantitative and qualitative research methods, archives, and oral history. We offered guidance on students’ research projects, suggesting relevant literature and possible research methodologies, and held regular office hours where they could come in and chat.

In addition to teaching, both Micah and I presented papers at FHSER’s 2013 Round Table Seminar Series. We received excellent feedback and were challenged to consider our respective projects in new ways.

Under the leadership of Professor Leslie Bank, FHSER is a dynamic, creative, and lively research centre. We were impressed by the enthusiasm and engagement of Fort Hare students – many of whom were studying while holding down full-time or part-time jobs – and our lectures prompted energetic debates about positionality, research ethics, and local history. We could not have asked for a warmer welcome, not only from the students but also from FHSER staff who welcomed us into their homes, sharing their lives and braais with us. We were even able to accompany Dr Mbombara on a research outing for his own work on male initiation and identity in the Eastern Cape, which gave us a fascinating insight into the local research context.

In February, Micah and I presented our research together in a public event. The evening was packed with colleagues from diverse fields including anthropology, history, human rights, and peace and conflict studies. The public panel was joined by Dr Mbombara and Dr Cannor, whom we also taught during our seminar. We finished the evening with a great braai! It was a fantastic networking opportunity and gave us a good sense of the different communities of research and teaching in South Africa.
Anne Heffernan published an article in the Journal of African Studies. She is doing a doctorate and recently finished her doctorate at the University of Witwatersrand, where she is a doctoral representative. He has been used to constitute personal relationships with his lecturers more. I value my relationships with my lecturers more. What matters is that I use all the resources that my Cambridge colleagues have been able to provide. My greatest fear after graduating from the University of Oxford was how many choices I had. It has been six years since I left my home off Wellington Square. Since I left the falafel sandwiches from Green’s Café on St. Giles Street and the zing chips with mustard and ketchup from the kiosk vans, six years since I gave my steel red bus to a Kenyan student who was about to embark on the crazy journey, that is being part of the University of Oxford community.

A digital home system, specifically looking at investment opportunities in early stage growth companies. The market is most developed in East Africa, where electrification rates are extremely low—places like Uganda and Tanzania are around 40%. The biggest success story in Bangladesh, where almost 33% of households have installed a solar home system in the last few years.

Leanne Johansson is currently writing up her DPhil Anthropology thesis on place-making in Balakass, on the Nigeria-Cameroon border. She also works part-time as a Communications and Fundraising officer for a Camerounian education NGO (COB) and as a consultant for an ecotourism NGO (Food Basket For Africa) in South Africa. I recently moved to Harvard in African and African American Studies and will be advised by Professors Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff. This year, which coincides with Kenya’s 50 years of independence from colonial rule, I am also focused on another art project that looks at Kenya identity and what it all means to the Kenyans.titles. The project titled “Who I Am, Who We Are” has to do through the Silent Film, collected over 600 voices answering questions on “Kenyaness.” Through a bodymapping exercise, my partner on this project Xavier Verheest and I are visually writing Kenya at 50 with all its representations of the past, present and future. We are asking “What makes a Kenyan, Kenyan?”

Qhelile Nyathi: I’ll be with the World Bank starting January 2014, working with the Agricultural Insurance Development Program which aims to engage the public and private sector in developing countries to create sustainable insurance programs that mitigate risk and improve financial resilience of small holder farmers.

Katy Bruce-Lockhart: I am currently finishing their DPhils at Oxford. One of the things I hated about graduating from Oxford was how many choices I had. There were several directions I could have gone in but only one me who could travel in those directions.

One month ago I finally collected my degree certificate, which I had vowed I would never collect. I was angry when I graduated from the University of Oxford. I was one of the many people who throughout history have fought against the life change that is schooling at Oxford. I fought against Oxford because I could not see how it was linked to the person I thought I was. It was time to collect my certificate.

My greatest fear after graduating from the University of Oxford was failing to become the great things that I believed were expected of me. I embarked on becoming great, not sure at the time where I would need to place the greatness, just that I had to prove that I was every inch worth having gone to the University of Oxford.

In the time that I have been away from Oxford, I worked in public relations, telling the stories of an international organization that was changing the lives of small-scale farmers in the developing world. For a technology firm in Kenya, I undertook research on how a mobile application was linking families separated by war. I built the research protocol for a social media monitoring tool that analyses hate speech online. I had and I am raising two lovely children and I got divorced. Life happened to me in all its cycles of joy, love, sadness and loss. At different times these cycles drove me from and to art, something that I love. I am now a full-time artist. Last year, I held my first installation here in Kenya on the subject that interests me most: African History. Through a conceptual installation, #hararebele, I explored Pan Africanism and how the Mau Mau War fits into a global narrative of wars that were fueld by the need for equal rights for all, regardless of race. #hararebele also traveled to South Africa in 2014.

One of the things I loved about graduating from Oxford was how many choices I had. I was angry when I graduated from the University of Oxford. I was one of the many people who throughout history have fought against the life change that is schooling at Oxford. I fought against Oxford because I could not see how it was linked to the person I thought I was. It was time to collect my certificate.

My greatest fear after graduating from the University of Oxford was failing to become the great things that I believed were expected of me. I embarked on becoming great, not sure at the time where I would need to place the greatness, just that I had to prove that I was every inch worth having gone to the University of Oxford.

In the time that I have been away from Oxford, I worked in public relations, telling the stories of an international organization that was changing the lives of small-scale farmers in the developing world. For a technology firm in Kenya, I undertook research on how a mobile application was linking families separated by war. I built the research protocol for a social media monitoring tool that analyses hate speech online. I had and I am raising two lovely children and I got divorced. Life happened to me in all its cycles of joy, love, sadness and loss. At different times these cycles drove me from and to art, something that I love. I am now a full-time artist. Last year, I held my first installation here in Kenya on the subject that interests me most: African History. Through a conceptual installation, #hararebele, I explored Pan Africanism and how the Mau Mau War fits into a global narrative of wars that were fueld by the need for equal rights for all, regardless of race. #hararebele also traveled to South Africa in 2014, and was shown at the University of Wits. I have plans to have it travel to other parts of the world, which between 1948 and 1963 were part of the struggle against the oppression of black and Coloured people. http://wambukamiru.wordpress.com/category/hararebele/
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