

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Structural Racism, Whiteness, and the *African Studies Review*

Like many people over the past months, we have spent time reflecting on our own racism and the racist structures which we inhabit and recreate. In the wake of the horrific public murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers, the murder of Breonna Taylor by police in Louisville, Kentucky, the startling videoed lynching of Ahmaud Arbery in Atlanta by white suburbanites, the death of Adama Traoré in police custody in Paris, and the impunity following these and countless other killings of Black Americans, Diasporic Africans, and African migrants almost too numerous to list, there has been an outpouring of grief and anger. We stand in solidarity with Black communities around the world. Black Lives Matter. As a premier journal of African Studies, we also must make it our motto: Black Voices Matter.

Almost two years have passed since the then-president of the African Studies Association (ASA) Jean Allman delivered a damning account of the history of institutional racism within the structural apparatuses of the ASA [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSb_N2Ly8VY&t]. Allman's research revealed how, since its very foundation, African-American members were first marginalized, then displaced from the ASA; how African participation was discounted and dismissed; and how specific institutions, such as the hallowed prizes, routinely overlooked or ignored the contributions of people of color, while simultaneously honoring egregious perpetrators of racist exclusivity. Allman invited former members who quit the ASA in the 1970s to hear and respond to her reevaluation. The print version [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.40>] of Allman's keynote is one of our most read and cited articles in recent years. It is a poignant reminder that, even today, the ASA and its institutions can be for many scholars of color an unfriendly and unwelcoming space. There is indeed much "unfinished business," from 1968, from earlier, and certainly from the present. It also reminds us that it is very difficult to break free from the structures that produce us. We are well situated to

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acknowledge the pervasiveness of racism and white supremacy in our societies, in academia, and in the publishing world.

In its various iterations, the ASR has been hosted by a number of institutions, beginning at Northwestern University, then moving to the University of California, Berkeley, and the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, then Boston University, Michigan State University, the University of Florida, the University of Southern California, and more recently, the Five Colleges. The ASR has a long history of privileging white and predominantly male anglophone voices. Since its foundation as the *Bulletin of the ASA* in 1958 by Melville Herskovits, the journal has had fourteen editors, all white Americans. The sole exception was the Ghanaian anthropologist Maxwell Owusu, who served as Associate Editor for two years in the early 1970s. It was not until 1972 that scholars from African institutions appeared on the Editorial Board. For three years, S. A. Aluko at the University of Ife and Taye Gulilat at Haile Selassie I University served on the Editorial Board. Between 1975 and 1998, however, no African scholar was part of the team, and the Editorial Board was subsequently disbanded. When it was reconstituted in the new millennium, an African and Africa-based presence was restored to the journal supervision.

Insofar as the ASR is one of the key ASA institutions, a reevaluation of the racial dynamics of the journal's operations is long overdue. As we look back at the emergence of the ASR as a key voice in African Studies, we recognize errors, erasures, and racism as consubstantial to the history of ASR. And we take responsibility for the ways that the journal is part of the deep-seated problem of whiteness and anti-Black racism occupying African studies. For almost sixty years, it has been led almost exclusively by white voices. Informed by this current climate of personal and national reckoning, the ASR will be instituting a number of new initiatives and reforms to our operations over the next few months.

The Editorial Collective will appoint a taskforce of prominent African Studies scholars to investigate institutional racial bias in the ASR and its predecessor publications, and specifically to document the participation and exclusion of African American and African voices in the production of scholarly knowledge, while developing strategies and actions to combat racism, institutional bias, and other inequalities of access to power and visibility within African Studies. Particular attention will be paid to the deeply racist undertones of disciplinary methodologies in any projects of democratization of knowledge production. This taskforce will operate autonomously to document the scope of voices of people of African descent within the journal.

From an affirmative perspective, 2020 will mark the first year of two new prizes, celebrating African studies anthologies/edited volumes and doctoral dissertations completed at African institutions. Starting in January 2021, we will have a new position, that of Deputy Editor, the latest installment in a set of initiatives to decenter the power of single individuals that began three years ago with the creation of the Editorial Collective [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2018.13>]. In the immediate term, the incoming Deputy Editor will

supervise the day-to-day operations of the article review process, tasked with identifying which articles to subject to external peer review, creating assignments for the eight Associate Editors, and overseeing internal communications and management of the editorial team. Over the medium term, the Deputy Editor role will serve as the training ground for the future Editor-in-Chief, to ensure a seamless transition. With these innovations, we think the long-term future of the ASR is bright.

When the editorship transitioned in 2017, the ASR was struggling, because universities, both public and private, were no longer willing to subsidize the costs of production. No university provides financial support to the journal or its operations any longer. The older model is dead. The proposal offered to the ASA Board was one that entailed a team of scholars, large enough to provide diversity and representation, but also able to permit individual scholars to continue with our own scholarship and not to become completely consumed with journal activities. The proposal embodied a hope that a new model could also generate changes in the types of articles, broaden the types of scholars submitting, and deepen the journal's engagement with scholars on the African continent. The current Editor-in-Chief position runs until 2022, at which time we look forward to seeing the journal led for the first time by a scholar of African descent. By 2022, we hope to see half the team comprising scholars based on the continent. Before the next transition, it is our goal to ensure that the composition of the Editorial Review Board, the team of Associate Editors, and the teams of Book Review and Film Review Editors more accurately reflect the demographic composition of the ASA membership and its deep investment in the future of African Studies.

Editors of the *African Studies Review* and African Editorial Involvement

- 1958–1963: Melville Herskovits (Northwestern University), editor of the *Bulletin of the ASA* with Margaret Bates (Goddard College) for *ASA News & Notes*.
- 1964–1966: David Brokensha (UC Berkeley) & Peter Duignan (Hoover Institution) with “Overseas Correspondents” Bulletin of ASA.
- 1967–1969: Norman Bennett (at Boston University) with an all-white, mostly male Editorial Board, renamed *African Studies Bulletin*.
- 1970–1974: John P. Henderson (Michigan State University), editor of *African Studies Review* with two Associate Editors, James Hooker and Daniel G. Matthews; Maxwell Owusu joined in 1971; first Africa-based appointments to “Advisory Editorial Board” in 1972, S. A. Aluko at Univ. of Ife, and Taye Gulilat at Haile Sallassie I University.
- 1975–1980: Alan K. Smith (Syracuse University), Editor, with Evelyn Jones Rich and Hans Panofsky as Associate Editors; no African institutions represented on “Editorial Board.”
- 1981–1988: R. Hunt Davis, Jr., (University of Florida), Editor, with Melvin Page as Associate Editor; Editorial Board all based in U.S., including African scholars; mid-1980s, when Frank Salamone replaced Page as Associate Editor
- 1988–1991: Carole B. Thompson (University of Southern California), Editor, with Mark DeLancey as Associate Editor; no African institutions on Editorial Board.

- 1991–1997: Mark DeLancey (University of Southern California), with Susan Dicklich as Assistant Editor; Editorial Board disbanded.
- 1997–2006: Ralph Faulkingham (University of Massachusetts) and Mitzi Goheen (Amherst College) as Editors; first Film Review Editor, Samba Gadjigo (1998–2001).
- 2007–2010: Ralph Faulkingham, Editor, and Mitzi Goheen as Co-Editor, Film Review Editor, Patrick Mensah; Recreated editorial board included African scholars.
- 2011: Ralph Faulkingham and Mitzi Goheen, Sean Redding (Amherst College) and Elliot Fratkin (Smith College).
- 2011–2013: Mitzi Goheen, Sean Redding, and Elliot Fratkin.
- 2014–2017: Sean Redding and Elliot Fratkin; Cajetan Iheka (University of Alabama) joined as Film Review Editor.

African Studies Review Editorial Collective

The September 2020 issue of the *African Studies Review* showcases splendid new research from across the continent, with particular attention to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. We are pleased to offer engaging disciplinary and interdisciplinary scholarship, from history, anthropology, linguistics, political science, museum studies, geography, and food security studies, and the collected contributions involve a global assemblage of contributors from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Germany, South Africa, Belgium, Canada, and the United States.

We are very pleased to offer a specially commissioned commentary on the COVID-19 pandemic and its relationship to food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2020.72>], along with a forum exploring refugee history and African Studies [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2020.76>]. This sequence of five articles examines historical and contemporary refugee trajectories across the continent and beyond. We are also gratified to bring you a number of thoughtful reviews of new books and films. As always, we deeply appreciate the anonymous reviewers of the articles appearing in this issue, along with the many scholars who have volunteered their time authoring book and film reviews.

We open this issue with a timely commentary. In “The Vulnerability and Resilience of African Food Systems, Food Security and Nutrition in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2020.72>], Editorial Review Board member Bill Moseley and his South African colleague Jane Battersby examine the consequences of the current crisis for well-being and sustainability in sub-Saharan Africa. Food insecurity is an enduring concern among African scholars, and the availability, access, utilization, and stability of food systems speaks to the broader impact of disease and disease-response.

We begin the scholarly articles with a pair of essays reflecting on indigeneous expression of culture and meaning. The first article, by Coleman Donaldson, reexamines the Ajami writing and N’ko in West Africa. In “The Role of Islam, Ajami writings, and educational reform in Sulemaana Kantè’s

N'ko" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.59>], Donaldson identifies the renewed attention to Ajami to be part of an intellectual move beyond colonial archives. He brings Ajami—African languages written in Arabic script—into conversation with Kantè's Manding-language publications using the N'ko script, a vehicle for Afro-Muslim vernacular thought.

The second article in our volume was awarded the ASA Graduate Student Paper Prize in 2019. Victoria Gorham's "Displaying the Nation: Museums and Nation-Building in Tanzania and Kenya" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2020.54>] explores the construction of national narratives in state-run museums and the links between museum organization and nationalist pedagogy in East Africa. States employ museums to articulate a national vision, and a critical reflection on exhibit contents speaks to the divergence between the national trajectories of Kenya and Tanzania.

The third article continues our focus on East Africa, as the anthropologist Lydia Boyd investigates Uganda's touring orphan choirs. In "Circuits of Compassion: The Affective Labor of Uganda's Christian Orphan Choirs" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.70>], Boyd highlights the dependent modalities of charity, and the underlying moral economies of humanitarian affect. She finds that choir participants and acolytes conceive of dependency and indebtedness differently, pointing to the broader global inequalities inherent in care-based humanitarian endeavors.

Mario Krämer's essay entitled "Violence, Autochthony, and Identity Politics in KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa): A Processual Perspective on Local Political Dynamics" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.69>] turns to the uptick in political violence in the eThekweni Municipality in the southeastern province. Krämer advocates for a processual understanding of local dynamics of violence and reveals how exclusionary identities are mobilized, fomenting conflict around notes of autochthony and community belonging.

The final five articles comprise a forum on African refugee histories, convened and introduced [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2020.76>] by Christian Williams, partly in response to Liisa Malkki's call for a "radically historicizing" approach to refugees and displacement—an approach that "insists on acknowledging not only human suffering but also narrative authority, historical agency, and political memory" (Malkki 1996:398).

The first two articles focus on child refuge. Bonny Ibhawoh takes us to the short-lived Republic of Biafra and the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–70. In "Refugees, Evacuees, and Repatriates: Biafran Children, the UNHCR, and the Politics of International Humanitarianism in the Nigerian Civil War" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2020.43>], Ibhawoh offers his case study as a guiding example of post-colonial moral interventionism and a new form of human rights politics. Over 4,000 children were evacuated from Biafra to neighboring countries and beyond, with the context of wider humanitarian relief efforts. Ibhawoh reveals how state interests and interventionist politics created new categories and frameworks as they classified displaced children.

The second article in the forum, by Christian A. Williams, is a biographical study of exile within the wider circuits of refuge in decolonizing southern

Africa. In “SWAPO’s Struggle Children and Exile Home-Making: the Refugee Biography of Mawazo Nakadhilu” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.89>], Williams examines the life of a former refugee born to Namibian-Tanzanian parents in exile in 1972. Nakadhilu’s life illuminates the exilic experience, and in particular debates over forced removal and repatriation among exiled liberation communities.

The third and fourth essays direct our attention to contemporary iterations of refugee identity and historical invocations of migration and displacement. In “Imagining Zimbabwe as home: ethnicity, violence and migration” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.65>], Duduzile Ndlovu moves beyond the economic migrant/asylum seeker binary to reveal the shifting contours of migration narratives. Ndlovu examines how Zimbabwean migrants in Johannesburg memorialize the Gukurahundi. Remembrances of the post-independence massacres of Ndebele people by Zimbabwean military in the 1980s contributed both to the formation of formal opposition parties and to the rise in xenophobic violence in South Africa, all part of broader contestations over national and ethnic identities.

Maarten Bedert’s study of an Ivorian refugee community in contemporary Liberia zeroes in on tensions embodied in the status attached by displacement. In “Refugees, Identity, and the Limits to Inclusion: Revisiting Landlord-Stranger Reciprocity Relations in Contemporary Liberia” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2020.51>], Bedert finds that refugees need to articulate a narrative of belonging in order to generate security. Refugees from the Ivorian Civil Wars of the first decade of the millennium struggle to navigate landlord-stranger relationships against the bureaucratic refugee identity imposed by global humanitarian discourse. While reciprocity and mutual recognition are the ideal, strangers sense their security stems from what they have to offer their landlords.

The final essay in the forum, by Katherine Luongo, zooms out to consider the reception of African refugees beyond the continent. In “‘The Problem of Witchcraft’: Violence and the Supernatural in Global African Refugee Mobilities” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.42>], Luongo revisits the familiar terrain of witchcraft violence but from the new angle of the refugee category known as the “particular social group.” Refugee status determination tribunals in Canada and Australia now regularly hear and deliberate claims of witchcraft violence, which speaks to the importance of cultural knowledge and training for refugee adjudicators.

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References

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