

African Global Experiences: An Introduction to the Special Edition

by

Tracy Keith Flemming, Ph.D.

Guest Editor;

Managing Editor, *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*;

Associate Professor of African/African American Studies,

Department of Area and Global Studies,

Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies,

Grand Valley State University

Allendale, Michigan

The power of imagination to help humans break free of confinement is truly the story of all art.

— Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

“Note to this Edition” in *Wrestling with the Devil: A Prison Memoir*¹

This special edition of A:JPAS is the response to a call for studies that explore dimensions of the full scope of the African world, as we are especially seeking to broaden our scope of diasporic African content. To this end, we sought submissions from all disciplinary fields of academic inquiry, including the arts, humanities and social sciences, interdisciplinary studies, STEM-related fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) as well as Africology (i.e., African Diaspora Studies, African Studies, Africana Studies, African American Studies, Afro-American Studies, Black Studies, Pan African Studies, etc.). The non-exhaustive relevant topics sought for this special edition include the main topic as well as the following subtopics:

- Reports on international study experiences
- The process of merging African American Studies and African Studies
- Historically Black College and University (HBCU) international partnerships
- Partnerships with institutions of higher learning and/or community agencies in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, Asia, or the Pacific that serve African people

In my Preliminary Remarks that were a part of a roundtable discussion that was titled “When the Dust Settles: JPAS in the Mix” at the National Council for Black Studies 41st Annual Conference in Houston, Texas (March 2017), I noted that my first engagement with *The Journal of Pan African Studies* was during its emergence in March 2006 – to use the journal’s own description – “as an open access multilingual trans-disciplinary on-line peer reviewed scholarly journal”. This occurred during my graduate studies in African/African-American History. Between 2006 and 2008, I read issues of the journal with keen interest; indeed, the content and form of the publication was one that I not only admired for purely personal reasons, but it was one that I saw as a sorely needed one in Africology. Two moments will help explicate the development of the enhancement of my cognizance of the importance of *The Journal of Pan African Studies*.

In 2001 I served as the Chief Editorial Assistant for a Women’s Health in the City of Accra Research Collective, a joint project between the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and the University of Ghana, Legon (Accra); while working in offices at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, and while conducting collaborative field research with a Ghanaian geography graduate student near and in Kwame Nkrumah Circle, Osu, and other neighborhoods in Accra, in the words of *The Journal of Pan African Studies*’s website, “the importance of universal access in cyberspace; regardless of geography, economic, social or cultural diversity” was clear to me as I negotiated and witnessed knowledge production and research in environments in which infrastructures were not configured to take full advantage of the global information age.² Indeed, I was operating in zones whose exploitation fueled the economic success of the West. This critical recognition of “the importance of universal access in cyberspace” was also clear to me in 2008 as I was working on my dissertation while living for a time in Indianola, Mississippi, in the Mississippi Delta. In short, the privileges that are normally associated with access to scholarly publications – especially journals – became increasingly clear to me, as I was already very familiar with the large number of Ghanaians and Mississippians who did not have access to the Internet and/or to subscriptions to scholarly journals.

According to *Global Studies: Africa*, Fourteenth Edition (2013), in terms of “Communications” there were 997,000 “Internet Users” in Ghana, whose population at the time of publication of the volume was 24,791,073. Accra’s population was listed as 2,269,000, and a large percentage of Ghanaian Internet users reside in the capital city of Ghana. In terms of telephones, 143,000 “main lines” and 11,570,000 “cellular/mobile” users were counted, and it is also important to note that the “Adult Literacy Rate” was 59.9%.³

In 2014, the Pew Research Center published an article titled “Computer Ownership, Internet Connection Varies Widely Across U.S.” And “according to a Pew Research Center analysis of the Census Bureau’s first estimates of computer use and internet connections for local areas ... [that was] released” on September 18, 2014, “The bureau has previously published national and state data, but the new estimates from the 2013 American Community Survey add a vastly more detailed geographic dimension to analysis of online and offline Americans.”⁴

Hence, *The Journal of Pan African Studies* became an even larger part of my thinking about the dissemination of knowledge in places like Ghana and Mississippi. As a student, I had access to a multiplicity of information. However, it was clear to me that most of the people whom I came into contact with did not have this same privilege, or they did not see the importance of exploring the vast amount of critically important information embedded in scholarly journals. It is unlikely that they will subscribe to a journal based on a sample issue, which some publications employ as a strategy to gain readership. I decided to contact Itibari M. Zulu, Sr., the Senior Editor of *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, in 2008 while I was residing in the Mississippi Delta because I wanted to contribute to knowledge production that would be disseminated on a truly global scale. My experiences as an undergraduate student intern in the late 1990s for *The Journal of Negro History* under the editorship of the late Alton Hornsby, Jr.⁵, had already served as a resource for understanding and appreciating the significance of scholarly work that centered the experiences of African people. *The Journal of Pan African Studies* was a necessary move forward. Over the years, *The Journal of Pan African Studies* has played a dualistic role in my life as a scholar; on the one hand, it has kept me an active scholar, as the volume and variety of submissions are consistent reminders of the ongoing development of Africology. On the other hand, I also envision *The Journal of Pan African Studies* as possessing a catalyzing effect on me as a producer of knowledge, an impact that *The Journal of Pan African Studies* has had on me during and after graduate studies. Now known as *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, this journal accomplishes the goal of disseminating knowledge about Africa and African people from the origins of humanity through the contemporary moment. Thus, it remains one of the best modes to truly – and to use words from the journal’s website, again – “build a transnational community of scholars, theorists and practitioners” without restrictions or paid subscriptions, and, perhaps most importantly, from perspectives that are indisputably rooted and “based upon an affirmative African centered logic and discourse of liberation.”

The response to our July 2017 Call for Papers on African Global Experiences that is presented in this special edition includes contributions from and/or about a variety of sites across the planet. We have thirty-four articles that offer readers an abundance of data on the following issues by the following authors: “changes Ilé-Ifè has witnessed in socio-religious and political structures under the regimes of the late Oba Adèsojí Adèrémí and the late Oba Okùnádé Síjúwadé II” by Akinyemi Yetunde Blessing; “African women writers engaging commonplace stereotypes” by Robin Brooks; how “ritual festivals in Nigeria have, to a great extent, lost the ritual potency for which they originated” and the “transition from festival theatre, to flekstival theatre, using Emuodje flekstival of Ekakpamre people of Southern Nigeria, as a paradigm” by Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah; “the prayers of Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Nigeria, with the aim of determining the degree of influence of Yoruba culture and religious tradition on them” by S.I. Fabarebo; “US-based Nigerian Diaspora artists’ cultural productions as offering dynamic fictional yet real/realistic lived experiences and perspectives on becoming in the African

Diaspora” by Olaocha Nwadiuto Nwabara; “the apparent obscurity and inconspicuousness of the gains of solo drama and solo acting in Nigeria” by Greg Mbajiorgu; “an African-based approach that puts under the critical spotlight colonialism in Africa” by Mansour Gueye; “international partnerships between public and private higher education institutions in the USA, South Africa and East Africa” by Derise E. Tolliver, Akilah Martin, and Nyambura Salome; “corporate social responsibility, sustainability, education, and collaborative partnerships within Africa’s social, environmental and economic resources both domestically and globally” by Ruth Wolf and Monica Thiel; “the relationship between the AU [African Union] and the African Diaspora with special reference to the African-American Diaspora” by Roland Mireku Yeboah; “contemporary thoughts of Yoruba on Magun, the Magic against adultery among the Yoruba” by S.I. Fabarebo; “how masculinity is portrayed in [M.G.] Vassanji’s *No New Land* and how immigration to foreign lands reinforces or challenges men’s masculinity” by Edwin Asa Adjei; “the complexities that surrounded the Zimbabwean emigration to South Africa since the late 1990’s through a series of migration waves and flows” by Douglas Mponi and Liberty Mupakati; “the Diasporan African adventuress taking control of her destiny in the framework of the activist traveler” by Maryam Sharron Muhammad; “the collective construction of national identities represented in the discourse of Independence Day speeches of five postcolonial Anglophone countries in West Africa and the discursive features used in enacting these identities” by Dora F. Edu-Buandoh and Nancy Boahemaa Nkansah; “the connection between Black cultural citizenship and the work of the Black female artists (residents) at the Goethe-Institut in Salvador-Bahia” by Marny Garcia Mommertz; “the views of Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá, a prolific Yorùbá literary writer on causes of social unrest and how to curb its frequent occurrence” by Layò Ògúnlólá; “Nigeria’s political leadership in relation to her national anthem and national pledge using secondary sources within elite theory frame” by Iliyasu Biu Mohammed and Evans Oluwagbamila Ayeni; “the debate that African and specifically Nigerian institutions of higher education need to reinvent themselves” by Iliyasu Biu Mohammed; “Russia’s contribution to African studies” by Kristina Bekenova; “how the view of satirized feminism is projected” and how “consciousness of imperative mediation comes into focus as it becomes manifest in the logic of [Chimamanda Ngozi] Adichie’s narratology” by Uwakwe Uchenna David; “how an inner city United States community of Black Americans of West African descent” and “Ghanaian artists and a rural community” creatively and collaboratively “developed the resources needed for grassroots-level change” by Cynthia Cupit Swenson, Samuel Nkrumah Yeboah, Nana Ama Yeboah, Eve Garlington Spratt, Marguerite Archie-Hudson, and Ida Singletary Taylor; “the impact of the brain drain and skilled labour migration on Africa’s socio-economic development since the 1990s” by Adesote Samson Adesola and Osunkoya Olusesan Adewunmi; how “the contact of the British and amalgamation of Nigeria brought into historical limelight the ethnic consciousness of diverse groups in the evolving state, which in turn sparked minority agitation” by Paul Ilesanmi Akanmidu; “the origins of the contemporary Haitian oppositional protest cry, ‘the children of Pétion v. the children of Dessalines’” and how “the metaphors, contemporarily, have come to represent Marxist categories for class struggle on the

island of Haiti” by Paul C. Mocombe; “the labor market impacts of physical disabilities in Tanzania” by Emmanuel N. Enemchukwu; how “Qlojɔ festival serves as the worship of deities and a bridge between the society and the spiritual world” and the political significance of its “demands [of] the full participation of the reigning Ooni of Ife” by Akinyemi Yetunde Blessing; “the impact of globalisation as a key social policy driver in global South contexts as Zimbabwe” by Takudzwa Leonard Mathende and Tatenda Goodman Nhapi; “the value of dance as an effective catalyst for change in Nigeria” by Nicholas Chielotam Akas; “remittances sent from urban to rural areas and how this has become a major source of income and an invaluable means of reducing rural poverty” among “Igbomina migrants in Lagos” as well as “rural Igbomina Society” by E.O. Ibiloye; “a first-hand account of the proceedings, study sessions, cultural events, cultural trends, Pan-African discussions, and findings during the ‘2nd Kwame Nkrumah Pan-African Intellectual & Cultural Festival’” by Latif A. Tarik; “the post-Emancipation response on a community level that the formerly enslaved organized and employed as their own self-help and mutual aid efforts to compensate for the non-support by government and societal institutions” via “the Bermuda friendly societies” by Michael Bradshaw; “works of African and Black Caribbean writers [and how] there are great affinities that are traceable to explorations of a common heritage of African cosmology and oral tradition” by Olusegun Adekoya; and, finally, “U.S. African and European American College Students’ notions of, knowledge of, and experiences with Africa” by Kenneth Sean Chaplin.⁶

The contributors to this volume collectively expand the imagination of readers in ways that reflect the best traditions of Africology.

Notes

¹ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Wrestling with the Devil: A Prison Memoir* (New York, New York and London, United Kingdom: The New Press, 2018), xv.

² R. Lane Clark, Nancy Rose Hunt, and Takyiwaa Manuh, “Accra’s Women on Screen, 2001: A Documentary Pair about Body, Risk, Tonics, and Health,” *Ghana Studies*, Volume 15/16 (2012/2013): 331-335. See also the following two documentaries: R. Lane Clark (Director), Nancy Rose Hunt (Producer), and Takyiwaa Manuh (Co-Producer), “Where Shall I Go?” -- *Tonics, Clinics, and Miracles in Accra* (Nancy Rose Hunt and R. Lane Clark: 2010); R. Lane Clark (Director), Nancy Rose Hunt (Producer), and Takyiwaa Manuh (Co-Producer), “Excuse me to say...” -- *Notions of Body and Risk in Accra* (Nancy Rose Hunt and R. Lane Clark: 2010), accessed July 14, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/rlaneclark>.

³ Thomas Krabacher, Ezekiel Kalipeni, and Azzedine Layachi, *Global Studies: Africa*, Fourteenth Edition, Global Studies Series (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013), 321.

⁴ Lee Rainie and D’Vera Cohn, “Computer Ownership, Internet Connection Varies Widely Across U.S.,” Pew Research Center, Fact Tank: News in the Numbers, September 19, 2014, accessed March 6, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/19/census-computer-ownership-internet-connection-varies-widely-across-u-s/>.

⁵ See “In Memoriam: Alton Hornsby, Jr.” in this special edition.

⁶ Topics that are quoted in this section of the Introduction are drawn from the abstracts of each paper.