



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

The Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation

Concept Note

“The Pan-African Pantheon”

May 2017

Concept

This project is an initiative of the newly established Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation (IPATC) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in South Africa's Afropolitan megalopolis. Its intention is to host a three-day conference on "The Pan-African Pantheon" at the Arts Centre at UJ's Auckland Park Kingsway (APK) campus in Johannesburg on Friday 16 to Sunday 18 June 2017. This conference will commemorate the Soweto youth uprising of 16 June 1976 against apartheid education, during which at least 176 protesting students were brutally killed. This conference also represents a concrete initiative to contribute substantively to the University of Johannesburg's efforts to decolonise the academic curriculum, and to ensure that the epistemology of the University's syllabi reflects its African context. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach that focuses on history, politics, sociology, economics, philosophy, literature and music, the project also aims at a comprehensive and holistic effort to contribute to the transformation of South Africa's academic curriculum.

This project represents an ambitious effort to create a "Johannesburg School of Pan-Africanism" that can help revive Pan-Africanism as a civil society movement linking actors from Africa and its Diaspora, and that can move the concept beyond the sterile initiatives of largely rhetorical state-led efforts. The Pan-African solidarity forged in the crucible of the anti-apartheid struggle with the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), TransAfrica, and other civic groups in the United States (US), Canada, the Caribbean, and Europe, has all but disappeared today. Pan-Africanism is thus in need of urgent revival. This is particularly ironic during an era (2009-2016) in which the first black president of the US with African roots – Barack Obama – was the most powerful individual in the world.

This June 2017 conference will take place on the campus of the University of Johannesburg and is open to students, faculty, and other university staff as well as the academic, civil society, and business community in Gauteng; members of the general public; government officials; and diplomats. About 35 prominent African and Diaspora scholars from the continent (including a third based in South Africa), the Caribbean, the US, Canada, and Europe will present papers in 12 sessions over the three days on carefully selected topics including broad themes such as: reparations; the rise and fall of Pan-Africanism; pioneers of Pan-Africanism; politicians and activists; political scientists; sociologists; historians; economists; philosophers; the literati; and musicians.

The intellectual thinking and contributions of the following 35 historical and contemporary figures will be assessed during the June 2017 conference: Edward Blyden, WEB Du Bois, Pixley ka Seme, Marcus Garvey, Amy Ashwood Garvey, George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, Dudley Thompson, Robert Sobukwe, Thabo Mbeki, Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, C.L.R. James, Walter Rodney, Stuart Hall, Ruth First, Randall Robinson, Ali Mazrui, Angela Davis, Arthur Lewis, Samir Amin, Adebayo Adedeji, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott, Léopold Senghor, Buchi Emecheta, Chimamanda Adichie, Mariam Makeba, Bob Marley, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, and Harry Belafonte (See table of contents below). The essays presented at the conference will, however, not just be celebratory but also critical in areas where their subjects may have fallen short of their ideals. It will be important to present a balanced picture of these historical and contemporary Pan-African figures, even while celebrating their intellectual contributions and achievements.

These authors are expected to provide both substantive knowledge and inspiration to UJ students and those of other institutions in Gauteng and beyond in fostering a greater understanding of Pan-Africanism and contributing to efforts to decolonise the curriculum at UJ and other South African universities.

The conference papers will be edited and produced as an edited book that will be used in undergraduate and graduate courses not only at UJ, but throughout South Africa, as a way of contributing to transforming and decolonising the curriculum. This book will, for example, be used in a proposed UJ course on “Pan-African Thought and Leadership” to be rolled out in 2017, and on which this proposal builds. The volume will be published by reputable African and Western publishers, and widely disseminated within Africa and its Diaspora. Within South Africa, the book will also be sold commercially to contribute to broader efforts to educate the general public on Pan-Africanism and to encourage South Africans to engage more with their African identity. Book launches will be held with selected authors in South African universities as well as at book fairs and other fora to promote greater understanding of Pan-Africanism within the country.

Outside South Africa, authors in this project from the US, Canada, the Caribbean, and Europe will also be encouraged to launch the book at their respective institutions as well as to assign it to their students. Aside from the book, the project will aim to publish articles in the media in Africa, the US, Canada, the Caribbean, and Europe on this conference. The Gauteng-based Pan-African media will be encouraged to cover the event, and television and radio stations such as ENCA and SABC will also be invited. The conference will further be filmed so that all or part of it can be used as teaching aids at both universities and schools in South Africa, Africa, and the Diaspora.

Context

Pan-Africanism can be defined as the efforts to promote the political, socio-economic, and cultural unity and self-reliance of Africa and its Diaspora. The subject of Pan-African political thought is one that has historically been under-researched. One of the first attempts to synthesise these ideas into a single volume was Guy Martin’s *African Political Thought* which was published only as recently as 2012. This project is thus particularly timely in ensuring that Pan-African knowledge-production forms part of, and influences, mainstream global thinking. It also responds to current efforts to decolonise the post-apartheid syllabus at the University of Johannesburg and at other academic institutions in South Africa.

The Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation was established at UJ in 2016 as one of six flagship centres of excellence to conduct research. It provides a forum for scholars, practitioners, and civil society actors across Africa and its Diaspora to dialogue and contribute to the rigorous production and dissemination of Pan-African knowledge and culture. The Institute seeks to promote original and innovative Pan-African ideas and critical dialogue in pursuit of global excellence in research and teaching, and to contribute actively to building an international profile for UJ on Pan-African issues. This June 2017 three-day conference will thus directly fulfill the Institute’s vision and mission.

The meeting on “The Pan-African Pantheon” further fulfills an important aspect of the mission of UJ’s Pan-African Institute : to build bridges with institutions in all five African sub-regions, as well as key Diaspora intellectual communities in the US, Canada, the

Caribbean, and Europe. UJ and the University of the West Indies (UWI), for example, signed an agreement in March 2017 to establish a joint Institute for Global African Studies to promote collaborative research, teaching, and scholarly exchanges. These collaborations will reflect the cultural diversity of Pan-Africanism, encompassing the anglophone, francophone, lusophone, and arabophone worlds, as this three-day conference does. Through activities like this three-day conference, the Institute will add value to the public sphere and enrich debates on Pan-African political, socio-economic, and cultural issues. Public dialogues are an important part of the “conversation” aspect of the Institute’s mission, and this three-day conference helps to fulfill this goal.

Content

The June 2017 Johannesburg conference will examine the roots of Pan-Africanism based on the works of pioneering intellectuals such as St. Thomas’s Edward Blyden; America’s W.E.B. Du Bois; Jamaica’s Marcus Garvey and Amy Ashwood Garvey; and Trinidad’s George Padmore. The role of female activists has also often been overlooked in the Pan-African literature. Amy Ashwood Garvey was, for example, instrumental in the activities of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA), driving fund-raising and creating a Ladies Division, as well as working with Marcus Garvey as Chief Assistant in the New York branch, editing *Negro World*, and serving as secretary of the Black Star shipping Line.

Edward Blyden has sometimes been referred to as the “Father of Pan-Africanism”. He spent time mostly in Liberia as a journalist, politician, and diplomat, championing his concept of Ethiopianism which urged African Americans in the Diaspora to return to Africa to help develop the continent. He greatly influenced Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, and George Padmore, and his triple formulation in the 1887 classic *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* was adopted in Kenyan academic, Ali Mazrui’s 1986 nine-part documentary “The Africans: A Triple Heritage”. In spite of the importance of Pan-Africanism to African political thought and practice, consensus is, however, still lacking on the implementation of the concept among Pan-African politicians and civil society actors. From the time of Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois to more contemporary advocates of Pan-Africanism like Nigeria’s Adebayo Adedeji and South Africa’s Thabo Mbeki, the idea has been fiercely contested. Even today, tensions continue within Pan-African thought between the concepts of collective solidarity and collective responsibility.

Fifteen years after the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 at which the rules were effectively set for the partition of Africa by largely European imperial states, the Pan-African movement was born when Trinidadian lawyer, Henry Sylvester-Williams, organised the first Pan-African conference in London in 1900. Between 1919 and 1945, five Pan-African Congresses took place in Paris, London, New York, and Manchester. These meetings were at first dominated by African Americans like W.E.B. DuBois. But in time, Africans and Caribbeans increasingly participated in them. Pan-Africanism had, from the start, political, socio-economic, and cultural dimensions. By the time of the fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945, the Pan-African movement had shifted its centre of influence from the Diaspora to Africa. The conference was dominated by future African leaders like Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta, and Malawi’s Hastings Banda. DuBois symbolically passed the torch of Pan-Africanism to Nkrumah in Manchester. Both he and another towering Pan-African intellectual prophet, Trinidad’s George Padmore, then worked as advisers to Nkrumah’s government in an independent Ghana after 1957.

A historic battle was waged for the soul of Pan-Africanism between a “radical” Casablanca minority bloc led by Kwame Nkrumah and the majority of more conservative African states, grouped under the Brazzaville and Monrovia blocs, who favoured a more gradualist approach to continental unity. Nkrumah’s rejected vision of a “Union Government of African States” would have involved a common currency and monetary zone, an African military command, and a common foreign policy. In May 1963, 32 African states met in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa to sign the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Charter which clearly reflected the triumph of the gradualist, evolutionary path over a speedy, revolutionary one. The threat of foreign intervention in the heart of Africa was tragically symbolised by the martyrdom of Congolese leader, Patrice Lumumba, in January 1961. This led to a recognition of the need for what Ali Mazrui described as a *Pax Africana*: a peace created, cultivated, and consolidated by Africans themselves. At the time of the creation of the OAU in 1963, Nkrumah was in a minority of one in calling for the establishment of an African High Command as a common army to protect the continent from external intervention and to help wage wars of liberation. The OAU’s leaders, however, rejected Nkrumah’s ideas and sought instead to protect their newly-won sovereignty by freezing the map of Africa crafted by Europe’s colonial powers.

Jamaica’s Dudley Thompson was a Pan-African lawyer, and close associate of Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, and C.L.R. James, who put together the legal defence team that defended Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta from charges of being an instigator of the Mau Mau rebellion against British colonial rule in 1952. Thompson was also a founder member of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), and served as his country’s ambassador to Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana and Namibia. He was, with Ali Mazrui, one of the members of the OAU Eminent Persons Group leading the movement for reparations for slavery to citizens of Africa and its Diaspora. He remained a fervent believer in the unity of Africa and its Diaspora until his death in 2012. One of the early champions of African democracy was the only black Nobel prize winner in economics, St. Lucia’s Fabian intellectual, William Arthur Lewis. He served as the economic adviser to Kwame Nkrumah who was one of the early pioneers of one-party rule on the continent. Already in the 1960s, Lewis had called for multi-party democracy in Africa’s diverse states involving proportional representation; coalition government; and federalist devolution.

Despite its governance, human rights, and institutional shortcomings, the OAU deserves credit for its firm commitment to decolonisation and the anti-apartheid struggles in Southern Africa. The African Union (AU) was born in 2002 to deal with governance, security, and socio-economic challenges and to bridge the gap with the African Diaspora, members of which had played such an important role in the anti-apartheid and decolonization struggles. The influential idea of an African Renaissance from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had been led by such figures as South Africa’s Pixley ka Seme, Nigeria’s Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Senegal’s Cheikh Anta Diop, before becoming centrally associated with former South African president, Thabo Mbeki.

Seme was one of the founding members of South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC) in 1912 and its president-general between 1930 and 1936. Mbeki was thus, in a real sense, an heir of Seme: his African Renaissance vision echoed Seme’s famous April 1906 speech at New York’s Columbia University, titled *The Regeneration of Africa*. Kwame Nkrumah had memorably quoted this speech in its entirety at the opening of the first international Congress of Africanists in Accra in December 1962. Another South African struggle icon, Robert

Sobukwe, broke away from the ANC to form the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) by 1959, championing non-racialism in contrast to the ANC's multi-racialism. Sobukwe's ideas influenced Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement, particularly his uncompromising championing of the rights of the African majority free of the influences of what Sobukwe termed the ANC's "liberal-left-multi-racialists."

The AU identified the African Diaspora as a sixth sub-region at its birth in 2002. However, this idea has been devoid of much substance and is in urgent need of intellectual development which is one of the key issues that this three-day conference will tackle. In seeking to rebuild bridges between Africa and its Diaspora, authors such as African-American writer, poet, singer, and actress, Maya Angelou, who identified deeply with Africa, are important. One of the most fascinating of her autobiographies described her three-year sojourn in Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana between 1962 and 1965. The book, *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes*, reminisces about Ghana and describes a memorable visit to Accra by Malcolm X, who did much to mobilise African leadership in support of the struggle for civil rights in apartheid America in the 1950s and 1960s. Two decades later, African-American civil rights lawyer, Randall Robinson, used the TransAfrica Forum to wage the anti-apartheid struggle in the US, as well as to oppose military rule and restore democracy in Haiti in the early 1990s.

Robinson and Angelou's fellow African-American scholar-activist, Angela Davis, delivered the Steve Biko annual lecture in South Africa in September 2016 on "Legacies and Unfinished Activism". Davis honoured Biko's legacy in transforming lives and institutions, and in articulating a "politics of blackness" that released blacks from a sense of inferiority. She also made important connections between historical struggles from the Haitian revolution (1791-1804) to the contemporary "Black Lives Matter" movement in the US. Davis was inspired by the work of Jamaican sociologist and cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, who was one of the pioneers of the "Birmingham School of Cultural Studies". Hall incorporated issues of race, gender, and hegemony into cultural studies and regarded culture as "a critical site of social action and intervention", with his theory of encoding and decoding urging readers not to be passive receivers of texts - particularly race prejudice in the Western media. Hall further demonstrated how culture, race, and ethnicity had contributed to creating the politics of Black Diasporic identities. Similarly, Trinidad's C.L.R. James was a pioneering voice in post-colonial studies. He was also a political activist who focused centrally on subaltern studies. James's 1938 *Black Jacobins* remains a classic of the Haitian revolution, the bicentennial of which Thabo Mbeki attended in January 2004 as the only African leader present. Mbeki's compatriot, Ruth First, who was martyred in Mozambique by an apartheid letter-bomb in August 1982, devoted her life to the study of military rule across Africa, as well as to Southern Africa's liberation struggles.

This project will also explore critically the moral-philosophical foundations of Pan-African political thought and practice, examining some of the intellectual ideas of three generations of sub-Saharan ethicists who have addressed politics: Martinique's Frantz Fanon, South Africa's Steve Biko, America's Angela Davis, and Ghana's Kwame Anthony Appiah. The three generations have involved revolutionary leaders who published philosophical tracts defending their policies in the 1960s and 1970s; the academic philosophers who advocated political programmes informed by indigenous African values in the 1990s; and those contemporary philosophers producing knowledge in the African tradition relating to socio-economic development on the continent. Key African values explored by these philosophers include: human dignity, communalism, vitalism, the common good, and womanism.

The proposed three-day conference will further explore the work of past and contemporary Pan-African thinkers and practitioners who wrote about Africa's dependent position in the international economic system. These include St. Lucia's Arthur Lewis, Egypt's Samir Amin, and Nigeria's Adebayo Adedeji and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. In his famous 1972 treatise *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, the Guyanese scholar-activist, Walter Rodney (who taught at the University of Dar es Salaam in Julius Nyerere's Tanzania) traced the roots of African underdevelopment to European colonialism. He lamented the consumerist rather than productive nature of African economies and the general lack of savings across the continent. Rodney also bemoaned Africa's declining terms of trade, unequal exchange, and exploitation by European colonial powers and the US which, he argued, had integrated African economies into their capitalist systems on vastly unequal terms. Rodney thus called for African self-reliance and self-sustainability. Rodney's fellow scholar-activist, Samir Amin, has remained a persistent critic of the liberal capitalist system whose demise he has often predicted, suggesting that Africa "delink" itself from the system in ways that could promote a genuine transition to world socialism.

Nigerian scholar-technocrat, Adebayo Adedeji, who headed the United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) between 1975 and 1991, was undoubtedly Africa's most renowned visionary of economic integration. He oversaw the creation of regional integration schemes in West, Southern, and Central Africa. He also pushed the OAU to organise an economic summit in 1980 at which he championed – like Walter Rodney - the collective self-reliance and self-sustainability principles of the Lagos Plan of Action. Less than 12 percent of current continental trade is intra-African, and regional integration has been a disappointing failure on the continent. The UJ conference will examine the prospects for substantially increased economic investment in Africa by members of the African Diaspora (and vice versa) as well as the critical role that remittances from African Diaspora communities - now larger than development aid - are playing in the continent's socio-economic development. Adedeji's compatriot, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, served as her country's indomitable finance minister between 2003 and 2006 (and less successfully between 2011 and 2015), overseeing the largest debt annulment in Africa's history and championing anti-corruption reforms that produced improved governance.

Pan-Africanism has also involved a struggle for cultural equality. Initially, the demands of early Pan-Africanists, from about 1900, were limited to education for Africans, economic development, and racial equality. Eventually, however, the doctrine came to emphasize not only the worth of African cultures, but also called for African unity so that these cultures might flourish unhampered by the denigrating influences of Western civilization. Cultural Pan-Africanism, therefore, represented the reaction by the black African Diaspora to the indignities that blacks had suffered from Caucasian Euro-Americans. Some sought refuge in an idealized African past, free of slavery, colonialism, and racism. In the francophone world, writers like Martinique's Aimé Césaire and Senegal's Léopold Senghor contributed to the movement, developing the idea of *négritude* which glorified black culture, looking back nostalgically at a rich African past, and affirming the worth and dignity of black people across the globe. Nigerian Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, famously ridiculed the romanticization of this apolitical, moderate approach to Pan-Africanism in wryly noting that: "The tiger does not profess its tigritude, it pounces."

The post-independence era also produced six Nobel literature laureates in Africa and its Diaspora: Nigeria's Wole Soyinka; Egypt's Naguib Mahfouz; South Africa's Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee; St. Lucia's Derek Walcott; and America's Toni Morrison. This

project focuses on Soyinka and Walcott. Other prominent writers who have achieved acclaim include Kenya's Ngugi wa'Thiongo and Nigeria's Buchi Emecheta and Ben Okri. A younger generation of African writers led by authors such as Nigeria's Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Zimbabwe's NoViolet Bulawayo are also making literary waves, and the work of Emecheta and Adichie are examined in this project.

In the realm of music, for a new Pan-Africanism to be created, Africa and its Diaspora must seek ways of reviving the remarkable solidarity of the 1950s West African-led Highlife era; the Congolese musicians of the *belle époque* of the 1950s and 1960s; the radical reggae rhythms of Jamaica's Bob Marley; the rebellious Afro-jazz of Nigeria's Fela Anikulapo-Kuti; the anti-apartheid melody of South Africa's Mariam Makeba; the fiery calypso rhythms of Jamaican-Martiniquan American, Harry Belafonte; and the brash innovativeness of Nigeria's film industry, "Nollywood". This project will thus focus on the music and political activism of Makeba, Marley, Fela, and Belafonte, which all involved Pan-African protest and anti-apartheid activism.