



African Studies Initiative

Reframing Mass Violence in Africa: Social Memory and Social Justice

African Studies Initiative Public Symposium

co-sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change,
Global Programs and Strategy Alliance, UMN Extension Global Initiatives,
and the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

April 12–13, 2018

120 Elmer L. Andersen Library | West Bank Auditorium • University of Minnesota

Welcome

The African Studies Initiative (ASI), a University of Minnesota Title VI African Studies National Resource Center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is pleased to convene this international public symposium on **Reframing Mass Violence in Africa: Social Memory and Social Justice**. The Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC), Global Programs and Strategy (GPS) Alliance, UMN Extension Global Initiatives, and the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies are co-sponsoring the symposium. This event is the latest in a series of Institute for Global Studies events exploring mass violence and its reframings in other geopolitical contexts, including Europe and Latin America.

Understanding the history of mass violence in Africa—and its political, social, and cultural aftermaths—is vital to understanding contemporary life on the continent. Africa has been shaped and scarred by some of the largest episodes of mass violence in modern human history, including the trans-Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades and the nearly continent-wide experience of colonial expropriation and dispossession. In recent decades, genocides in Darfur and Rwanda and civil wars in such contexts as Algeria, Angola, the Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, and the Sudans—often with at least partial roots in colonial histories and the ongoing influence of foreign powers in the post-independence period—continue to roil Africa. Yet in focusing attention on mass violence in Africa, do U.S. and other observers perpetuate reductions of Africa *to* violence? How do those of us based in the U.S. academy address that problem? When, for example, some U.S. scholarship and media portrays violence in Africa as “ethnic” or “tribal” genocide, eliding the fact that such violence might stem from a struggle over material resources, political access, etc., do such representations distort and obstruct a deeper understanding of that violence? Are the categories we use to speak of violence in some ways constitutive of that violence? How might reframing those categories challenge us to see and to rethink the problem in new ways? How do African academics, journalists, and policymakers understand “mass violence,” and how might the categories they use to interpret it project different modes of redress?

We have organized the symposium into three core panel sessions engaging these and related questions:

1. Uncivil Wars: Repression, Revolution, Fragmentation, and the Record

- How might “civil” wars be interpreted as the result of complex determinants, exogenous as well as indigenous? What of “failed states”?
- Do the assassinations and disappearances perpetrated as a result of the intransigence of dictatorships qualify as mass violence?
- How are revolutions mobilized to spur repression? Are revolutions excesses of communal violence?
- Why are some wars made “civil” when they should not be? How do we restore forgotten genocides to history?

2. Remembering and Representing Genocide: Darfur and Rwanda

- Where and when does mass violence by one or more groups against others turn into genocide?
- Were the Darfur and Rwanda genocides driven by communal or ethnic conflict, as common representations suggest? Might they be reframed as contests over political or economic resources, or as responses to climate change, desertification, ecosystem degradation? Where foreign powers are complicit, do these contests turn also *geopolitical*?
- How might the representation of the Darfur and Rwanda genocides be reframed through the lens of women's experience? Do women's bodies remember genocide differently?

3. Economies of Violence and the Labor of Marked Bodies: Race, Gender, Religion, Migration

- How might gender and sexual violence be brought into the frame of "mass" violence?
- How is religion marshaled as a force for or against mass violence (e.g., apartheid, terror) by states and revolutionaries?
- Might the mass violence of workers in protest represent unfinished struggles for decolonization and social justice? What of state or police violence against insurgent labor? Should that too be brought into the compass of mass violence?
- Can we reframe dehistoricized discussions of the contemporary "refugee crisis" by foregrounding histories of violence (e.g., colonialism, apartheid) and their role in forced migration and the displacement of refugees?

To reframe mass violence in Africa is to call attention to overlooked determinants and definitions and to invite fresh analysis that African peoples and allies might marshal not only for redress and restitution of past trauma but also for prevention of future violence. We understand "reframing" in its many senses:

- Representation in mass media, policymaking, historiography, orature, literature, art, photography, film, dance
- (Re)mediation and reconstruction
- Redress and reparations
- Revisitation and reinterpretation
- Transitional justice between dictatorship and democracy
- Response, in all forms

We are delighted to bring into conversation, here at the University of Minnesota, scholars from Africa and the United States whose work explores these urgent questions. To our speakers and to all in attendance, we extend a warm welcome!

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SCHEDULE | Thursday, April 12

11:30–11:40 am: Welcome, opening remarks, introductions by Shaden M. Tageldin, Director, African Studies Initiative

11:40–11:50 am: Welcome by Evelyn Davidheiser, Director, Institute for Global Studies, and Assistant Dean for International Programs, College of Liberal Arts

11:50 am–noon: Welcome by Meredith McQuaid, Associate Vice President and Dean of International Programs, Global Programs and Strategy Alliance, University of Minnesota

12:00–1:00 pm: Lunch

1:00–2:30 pm | Special Session: ICGC Alumni Lecture

Welcome by Karen Brown, Director, Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change (ICGC)

Amanda Lock Swarr

Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies,
Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies, University of Washington

Racing Intersex: Rethinking Violence and Gendered Medicine in South Africa

Why do South African physicians claim that intersexuality is more common among black South Africans than white South Africans? And how have the parameters of gender been violently inscribed and undermined in medical contexts? This presentation addresses these questions by drawing on fifty years of South African medical scholarship to interrogate the contested parameters of gender and by putting these considerations into conversation with assertions and activism of South Africans who identify as intersex themselves. In so doing, it historicizes contemporary conversations, such as those focused on the mistreatment of Olympian athlete Caster Semenya, and retheorizes gender binaries and gender violence.

2:30–2:45 pm: Coffee break

2:45–4:45 pm | Panel 1: **Uncivil Wars: Repression, Revolution, Fragmentation, and the Record**

Moderator: Patricia Lorcin, Professor of History and Samuel Russell Chair in the Humanities,
University of Minnesota

- Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, University of New England: “When the Subaltern Speak: Researching Italian Fascist Colonial Genocide in Libya, 1929–1934”
- Lisa Mueller, Macalester College: “Protest and Democratic Accountability in Africa”
- Michael Woldemariam, Boston University: “Discourses of Internationalization: External Intervention and Its Framing in African Civil Wars”

4:45–5:00 pm: Informal mingling over coffee, tea, and refreshments

5:00–6:30 pm (West Bank Auditorium): uKukhumbula uNokutela / Remembering Nokutela: documentary film screening and discussion with director Chérif Keïta, Carleton College

6:45–8:45 pm: Dinner for invited symposium participants (speakers, moderators, and planning committee)



African Studies Initiative

SCHEDULE | Friday, April 13

9:15–9:45 am: Continental breakfast

9:45–10:00 am: Welcome back, introductions by Shaden M. Tageldin, Director, African Studies Initiative

10:00 am–12:00 pm | Panel 2: Remembering and Representing Genocide: Darfur and Rwanda

Discussant and Moderator: Alejandro Baer, Associate Professor of Sociology / Stephen C. Feinstein Chair and Director, Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota

- Jennie Burnet, Georgia State University: “Embracing the Complexity of Genocide: Drivers of Collective and Individual Action in the Rwandan Genocide”
- Joachim J. Savelsberg, University of Minnesota: “Representations of African Mass Violence: Global, Northern, Field, and Country-Level Forces in the Case of Darfur”
- J. Wahutu Siguru, Harvard University / University of Minnesota: “‘We Have Failed as a Continent’: Covering an African Atrocity for an African Audience”

12:00–1:00 pm: Lunch

1:00–3:00 pm | Panel 3: Economies of Violence and the Labor of Marked Bodies: Race, Gender, Religion, Migration

Moderator: Dianna Shandy, Associate Dean, Institute for Global Citizenship / Professor of Anthropology, Macalester College

- Chérif Keïta, Carleton College: “William Cullen Wilcox: The Missionary Who Planted the Seeds of Liberation in South Africa”
- Meriem El Haitami and Badr Guennoun, International University of Rabat: “Morocco’s State-Sanctioned Murshidat: Women as Providers of Spiritual Security?”
- Suren Pillay, University of the Western Cape: “Migrants, Refugees, and Mass Atrocity: Rethinking Apartheid’s Violence”

3:00–3:15 pm: Coffee break

3:15–4:45 pm | Keynote Address

Ngwarsungu Chiwengo
Professor of English and Director of Black Studies Minor, Creighton University

They Say, We Say: Representation of Congo (DRC) Conflict and Rapes

Understanding conflicts and rapes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is no easy task because the conflicts have been referred to as civil wars and the location where the rapes and conflicts take place described as another lieu, the Great Lakes. DRC rapes and conflicts are also oftentimes conflated with the Rwandan genocide, which frequently elides the violence, the cruelty of the rapes and naturalizes them. The humanity of the Congolese people and of the various crises are themselves often obliterated by the ethnological and ecological discourses framing the events and the people described in a primal Conradian vision that ascribes, overtly and covertly, these tendencies to irrational, unmanly Congolese behavior and culture. The international discourse obfuscates and collectivizes the rapes as a Congolese phenomenon and implies that they are encouraged by Congolese culture and Codes of Family Law. In fact, many local rapes are individual acts or gratifications sanctioned by superiors, and many are committed by external factions. Fortunately, counter-discourses to such representations of conflicts and rapes have emerged from both Congolese and international academic publications, films, and novels and the popular sites of resistance Facebook and WhatsApp. But, to move into the future, the marked bodies of Congolese women must also be rewritten and named womanhood.

4:45–5:00 pm: Thanks, closing remarks, farewells by Shaden M. Tageldin, Director, African Studies Initiative
Informal mingling over coffee, tea, and refreshments

6:00 pm: Dinner for invited symposium participants (speakers, moderators, and planning committee)



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Ngwarsungu Chiwengo

Professor of English and Director of Black Studies Minor, Creighton University



**They Say, We Say:
Representation of Congo (DRC) Conflict and Rapes**

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Ngwarsungu Chiwengo, Professor of English and Director of the Black Studies Minor at Creighton University, is a native of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). She earned her *licence* at the National University of Zaire (now UNILU) and her PhD at the State University of New York, Buffalo. At Creighton, she teaches world, African, and African American literature. As a Fulbright grantee, Chiwengo taught at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa; back in the DRC, she taught at the University of Lubumbashi as Assistant and Associate Professor and chaired the English Department. During the Mobutu transition, she was Federal and Vice-President of the Democratic Social Christian Party (PDSC) and later its U.S. representative. She also has taught at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. Chiwengo's scholarly work in French and English has appeared in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Journal of Black Studies*, *La Revue de l'Université de Moncton*, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, and *Présence Francophone*. She is author of *Understanding 'Cry, the Beloved Country': A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents* (Greenwood Press, 2007), which analyzes the literary/historical background of Alan Paton's 1948 novel about racial tensions in South Africa, and co-editor of a special issue of the *Journal of the African Literature Association* on "The Teaching of Violence and Human Rights in African Literature," *JALA* 9.1 (2014). Much of Chiwengo's work deals with violence, trauma, and embodiment, mainly in the DRC. Her articles in English include "When Wounds and Corpses Fail to Speak: Narratives of Violence and Rape in Congo (DRC)," in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* (2008), and "Making Visible and Eradicating Congo's History of Violence: Maiming the Female/National Body," in *Violence in/and the Great Lakes: The Thought of V. Y. Mudimbe and Beyond*, ed. Grant Farred, Kasereka Kavwahirehi, and Leonhard Praeg (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2014). Chiwengo is also a member of the International Research Group "Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict" (SVAC).