



UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Centre of African Studies & Global Development Academy

DECOLONIZING THE ACADEMY CONFERENCE

When: 21-22 April 2016

Where: ECCI, High School Yards, Edinburgh EH1 1LZ

Who: African Studies scholars—Research and teaching faculty, students, writers/artists, and practitioners engaged with the production and critique of knowledge about/by/for/with/in Africa

For whom do we research Africa and for what purpose? How do our institutions—be they universities, professional networks, or publishing forums—reinforce unequal access to power, opportunities, and knowledge? What are our responsibilities as scholars and teachers to decolonize our work, on individual and collective levels—and how do we do it? How do we connect critical theoretical debates around decolonization with applied best practices and new practices? What future for African Studies does this envisage? These questions are not new. Rather, they remain at the forefront of our academic and professional enterprise, posing challenges and opportunities to the very legitimacy and quality of our diverse endeavours.

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

'Decolonizing the Academy' is a convergence of critical and creative scholarship, theory, conversation, and empirical research committed to questioning and undoing the foundations of inequality in Africa and African Studies. Hosted by the University of Edinburgh Centre of African Studies and the Global Development Academy, this international conference calls for a collective examination of how knowledge and power are defined, distributed, and denied through the Academy, broadly defined.

Protests throughout South Africa in the wake of #RhodesMustFall and, now, #FeesMustFall have focused attention on the structural inequalities built into higher education systems, both in Africa and in the West. Somali twitter questioned the prominence and dominance of white

'experts' in #CadaanStudies. More than mere hashtags, these movements and moments reflect long-standing contestations over power, agency, and influence in the study of African issues, politics, and people. These debates attend to questions of access and opportunity routinely left out of formal academic discourse. They demand that scholars of Africa confront issues of representation, legitimacy, and accountability in our classrooms and in our research.

In convening the conference, we seek to affirm the urgency of these debates and to generate accountable, creative, and critical dialogue within our disciplines. 'Decolonizing the Academy' calls for a brave conversation about how our institutional policies, ethics, and classroom practices disrupt or perpetuate existing patterns and power structures. We aim to bring these critiques to bear on our research agendas, methodologies, analysis, and dissemination.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We hope you will join us in revisiting these key debates in African Studies, and beyond, as we seek to blaze new trails and engage old struggles. Our 21st century generation of scholars is technologically savvy, increasingly interconnected, and yet, faced with persistently rigid political and institutional structures. Panels will address a range of thematic topics and active approaches to *decolonizing the academy*. We are soliciting papers that engage with issues of agency, legitimacy, and representation; empirical and analytical findings, research methods, and academic practice; and structural and institutional opportunities and obstacles.

If you would like to present a paper, please send the following:

- Your paper title
- Abstract (400-500 words)
- Author bio (200 words)
- Indicate to which panel/theme you are submitting, and any technical equipment your presentation may require

In addition to traditional academic papers presented in panels, we will also consider proposals for other forms of academic 'speech'/representation/engagement, including but not limited to: *poetry; music; theatre and performance art; photography and visual art*. These proposals should speak directly to the conference theme and its focus on Africa and the Diaspora. Rather than submitting an abstract, please provide a detailed summary of your proposal and a web link or electronic file of the work itself or a similar portfolio. By bringing alternative academic expression into dialogue with conventional discursive forms, we hope to newly examine and inform our quest for and production of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences. Further enquiries about non-conventional submissions can be directed to Zoe Marks at (zoe.marks@ed.ac.uk).

Panel Themes: *Decolonizing*__

- __ African Studies*
- __ Art and Representation
- __ The City
- __ Gender and Sexuality
- __ Language and Literature
- __ Media and Technology
- __ Race and Citizenship
- __ Political Economy
- __ The State
- __ Academia and Activism*

*NB: 'Decolonizing African Studies' and 'Academia and Activism' are roundtables to be curated by the conference organizers; however, non-solicited contributions may be considered if they bring a unique perspective, or, if exceptionally high interest generates additional sessions being added.

Registration: Presenters will be required to register for the conference in order to have their place confirmed. Registration costs have been subsidized at the following rates by the University of Edinburgh to maximize access: £60 non-student (£50 early-bird); £30 student (£20 early-bird). Registration will open in early January. The conference fee includes access to all events and performances, as well as a wine reception, coffee and tea, and some meals over the two days. We will endeavor to make some funding available for scholars from Africa; details will be provided via the conference website.

All applications should be submitted to zoe.marks@ed.ac.uk and decolonizing@ed.ac.uk by 31 January 2016.

For further information, please visit our website: <https://decolonizingtheacademy.wordpress.com>

The Centre of African Studies: <http://www.cas.ed.ac.uk>