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The Continent

with Mail & Guardian



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Inside Ethiopia's anti-war movement

Illustration: Wynona Mutisi



Cover: If you watch Ethiopian state media, or listen to the speeches of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, you might be forgiven for thinking that the entire country enthusiastically, and unquestioningly, supports the government's war in Tigray. But as the war enters its 22nd month, with fighting intensifying once again, the voices calling for ሰላም (selam, meaning peace in Amharic) are getting louder – despite the great personal risk. (p14)

Inside:

- **Uganda:** A new internet law is designed to shield the powerful from criticism (p11)
- **Letters:** Readers reflect (ruthlessly) on the legacy of Queen Elizabeth II (p12)
- **Review:** A book that will change the way you think about Africa, and the world (p20)
- **Boda-Boda:** Abatwogerera muli bannanfuusi (p21)
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TRIPLE DIGITS, AND COUNTING

We are celebrating: This is the 100th issue of *The Continent*. What started off as a crazy experiment has become one of the most widely read newspapers in the world, with subscribers in 110 countries. You made this possible, by reading it and sharing it every week. Thank you for coming on this journey with us. To mark the occasion, regular contributor Nanjala Nyabola explains what makes the publication so special (p4), and we explain how we got here, and what's up next (p3). Here's to the next 100!

Welcome to our 100th edition

We started *The Continent* in April 2020 with a simple belief: people want quality journalism. One hundred editions, 29 months of work and going on 18,000 subscribers in 110 countries prove to us that you do.

That growth has relied on more than 350 African journalists telling us more about our continent. They've done so not just in news stories, features and investigations, but in photo essays, cartoons and long-form essays, too. Their journalism has been edited and put into this newspaper each week by *The Continent's* core team of just nine people.

You've shared this journalism widely. We know this anecdotally, when someone in a room on the other side of the world opens their phone to show us a copy that they got via a friend. And because you tell us in reader surveys. *You* are the backbone of our distribution network.

Our growth has been organic, without billboards, influencers, bot armies or any other paid-for marketing tricks. Today, this newspaper reaches at least 100,000 people each week – despite the best efforts of both national censors and unaccountable algorithms.

This makes this newspaper one of the most widely read in the world.

At first, *The Continent* was self-funded, but since then it has been supported by a

growing number of funders: the African Climate Foundation, Africa No Filter, the International Institute of Education, Internews, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the MOTT Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy, Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa and the Pulitzer Centre for Crisis Reporting.

Last year, a major African bank took out advertising in the newspaper – a proof-of-concept for making *The Continent* financially sustainable.

And, perhaps most affirming of all, readers also donated generously in our end-of-year fundraiser. (You can donate all year round by visiting thecontinent.org/fundraiser, and if you're interested in advertising with us, write to advertising@thecontinent.org to ask for our rate card).

**Today, this newspaper
reaches at least 100,000
people each week**

We continue to grow, to ensure that more people get more quality journalism. This will be the paper of record for the African continent. Thank you for reading our newspaper every week, and for sharing it – not indiscriminately, but with others who appreciate quality journalism from an African perspective. ■



***The Continent* is the publication that Africa needs right now**

Nanjala Nyabola

Before he gained world renown for his magical realism, Gabriel García Márquez was an intrepid journalist, covering first South America and then Europe for various publications in Latin America. A sample of his journalism is contained in the anthology *The Scandal of the Century*, showing a side of both Gabo and of journalism that many of us might not recognise. Bold and fearless, yet playful and experimental, the articles often contain sketches of people and moments that would later become full-fledged in some of his most beloved books. They are a masterclass in genre-bending nonfiction.

Being a part of *The Continent's* journey continues to be, for me, a moment of experimentation in such genre-bending nonfiction. Sure, we bring you the news, but we try to have fun doing it, reminding our readers that being an African is not all doom and gloom. We are fun, funny and fearless, even while facing down autocrats and accounting for some of the most severe crises at play in the world today. When the team invited me to be a small part of this journey, for me it was never a question of if, but of when and how.

It is often said that play is the cornerstone of creativity. Play is allowing our imaginations to run free, and imagination and world-building is really at the centre of social transformation. You cannot work towards a world that you cannot imagine. So maintaining that spirit of unrestricted play in the way we bring news and analysis to you is our way of imagining and working towards different

futures for our African communities.

Thank you for letting us play.

From Samira Sawlani's hilarious Continental Drift to the ever-exciting rotation of illustrated covers, you let us play and therefore grow. We hit you with an edition written in 15 different African languages, with no subtitles or translation, and you rolled with it. I personally still can't believe the editorial team let me write an article about politics and the mid-life crises of Kenyan men, but here we are.

This kind of publication that knows when to play and when to be sombre is exactly the kind of publication that Africa needs right now. Our voices, our stories, our iterations of play.

The entire credit for this spirit of play goes to the editorial team that week in, week out has brought you 100 editions of this fabulous publication. They set out to revolutionise journalism on the continent by bringing that spirit of creativity right to our phones – to meet us where we are on Whatsapp and Signal – and in the process shifting the global boundaries on what the future of journalism could be in the digital age. This is a model that hasn't been tried or tested at this sort of scale before: This is creativity. This is play.

Gabo once said journalism was his first love. Too many journalists in Africa don't get a chance to develop this kind of love for the profession because there are so few platforms left for us to play. I am honoured to be a small part of this one. ■

Nanjala Nyabola is a writer and political analyst. She is a regular contributor to The Continent, and guest-edited Issue 27.



GREENWASHING

Oil giants' big money pays for cheap talk

Documents from investigators in the US Congress reveal that companies like Exxon and Shell massaged the messaging of the energy industry to make it seem like they wanted to reduce carbon emissions while carefully avoiding making any commitments to act or fund action. In one example, Exxon got all references to the Paris Climate Change Agreement removed from a statement released by a wider oil and gas industry grouping. They didn't want "language that potentially commits members" to act on the agreement, brokered in order to keep the planet at least somewhat habitable.

ORGANISED CRIME

New York flexes its anti-hustle muscles

The New York branch of the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation has indicted a 29-year-old Nigerian man, Chidozie Collins Obasi, for 27 counts of fraud. These all stem from a complicated \$31-million scheme he allegedly conducted from Nigeria with co-conspirators in other countries. It included offering illegitimate "work from home" jobs to individuals; selling non-existent ventilators to US hospitals during the Covid-19 pandemic; and using identity information stolen from American citizens to obtain US Economic Injury Disaster loans. Obasi is presumed to be on the run.

KENYA

Ruto adds fire to fuel and sells out Sahara

It has been a busy week for William Ruto. Since his inauguration at Kasarani Stadium on Tuesday, the new president has already made several major policy decisions that could have far-reaching implications for both Kenya and the continent more broadly. On the domestic front, the most significant is his scrapping of the national fuel subsidy with immediate effect, leading to an immediate increase in fuel prices. Ruto said that the subsidy was too expensive and prone to abuse. On the



Power move: President Ruto surveys his new kingdom. Photo: Presidency

diplomatic front, Ruto has severed ties with Western Sahara, which is occupied by Morocco, breaking with decades of tradition.

UKRAINE WAR

Russia's reavers rush into reverse

In a counter-offensive by the Ukrainian army, Russia has retreated from the Kharkiv region, its biggest setback since it abandoned its march towards the capital, Kyiv. Pundits on Russian state TV are broaching the possibility that Russia might not win the war. "It's absolutely impossible to defeat Ukraine using those resources and colonial war methods, contract soldiers, mercenaries, no mobilisation," said Boris Nadezhdin, a former member of Russia's lower assembly house. Ukraine says it has retaken over 6000km² of territory in the past two weeks.

MALI - CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Don't play that funky music, Ivorian guy

Negotiations for the release of 46 Ivorian soldiers arrested in July at a Bamako airport have stalled. *Le Malien* reports that junta leader Colonel Assimi Goïta said releasing the soldiers would be a "one-way solution" because Côte d'Ivoire continues to give political asylum to certain Malian personalities who "destabilise Mali". In tit-for-tat moves, the countries are now cancelling artists. Last month, an Abidjan concert by Mali's Mariam Bah Lagaré was cancelled and now Ivorian rapper Didi B's concert in Bamako, scheduled for 24 September, has been dropped.

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UNITED KINGDOM

Let them eat cake, if they have the energy

The United Kingdom will have spent at least \$9-million on the funeral of Elizabeth Windsor, its recently deceased monarch. The funeral has been described as a “diplomatic jamboree” that will attract leaders from far and wide, including Joe Biden, who heads a more contemporary empire, the United States of America. It stands in stark contrast to the lives of ordinary British citizens who are struggling to pay energy bills. Nearly four million children in the UK live in poverty.

ZAMBIA

HH gives top legal beagle the heave-ho

President Hakainde Hichilema has fired Zambia’s chief prosecutor, Lillian Siyuni. She was appointed by the country’s previous administration and had been at loggerheads with the new government for some time. Just days before getting sacked, Siyuni claimed that her life was in danger because her official security detail had been withdrawn. She told the BBC that she would have “a great deal to say” if only the president would release her from her oath of secrecy.

Halle Bailey as Ariel in the *Little Mermaid*, due for release in 2023



TRAILER TRASH

Internet racist turns black mermaid white

A computer scientist edited the trailer of a new American movie, *Little Mermaid*, to remove a star black actress and replace her with a generic image of

a white girl. Halle Bailey, the black actor, plays Ariel, the film’s main character. Her casting earlier caused commotion among US conservatives who say that mermaids – mythological creatures that are half woman and half fish – cannot be black, despite being made-up. The person who first shared the racist whitewashed trailer has since been banned from Twitter.

Climate

The cost of climate breakdown

As the world veers between droughts and floods, research shows just how much can be saved with sane planning

Sipho Kings

At least 66 rivers dried up this summer around Chongqing. The sprawling Chinese city of eight million grew around the meeting point of two giant rivers, their water powering the Three Gorges Dam, the largest power station in the world, and the region, where one in every three of the world's laptops is built.

For three months this year, 900-million people in China lived through record heat, with temperatures hovering at 40°C, leading to a drought similar to those that have sucked the life out of parts of East Africa, with warnings of a famine unfolding as cattle die and crops fail.

Much of the world this year has veered between extreme cold and heat. Average global temperatures have increased by less

than half of what they are expected to by the end of the century, but the extremes are already proving deadly. In Pakistan, a third of the country ended up underwater after the monsoon season brought 190% more rainfall than usual, causing floods that killed over a thousand people.

Catastrophe is also expensive. Pakistan's government valued the flood damage at \$30-billion and expects the economy to grow much more slowly than before, which was not fast to begin with.

Extreme weather events become more likely as the planet warms. Warming is caused by pollution, which means Pakistan's future is being wiped out by the world's big polluters.

To compensate for this, the majority of the world's countries, who together are responsible for a fraction of all carbon emissions, have been asking since 2009 that rich polluters pay \$100-billion a year to help them adapt to the changing world and reduce their own emissions.

This week, researchers at Oxford said switching the world from an energy system powered by fossil fuels to one powered by wind, solar and renewable energy would save \$12-trillion by 2050.

That's just from the cost difference between energy sources. It doesn't include the saved lives and money from less pollution being pumped into the atmosphere. ■

Uganda

Repressive cyber-law sharpens its claws

Written to protect users from abuse, fraud, and illegal hacking, the Computer Misuse Act is mostly used to protect the powerful from the impolite opinions of the masses. And the worst is yet to come.

Teddy Nalubowa is currently in Uganda's main prison, Luzira, detained over a video she posted on Facebook and TikTok commenting about the death of Elly Tumwine, the former security minister. She was charged with "offensive communication" in a Kampala court, where she finally appeared nearly two weeks after going missing. In the video, which is no longer available online, Nalubowa allegedly said: "You will die one by one and we shall celebrate."

Tumwine's death prompted mixed reactions among Ugandans online. Some celebrated him as a liberator – he was a founding member of the army that brought President Yoweri Museveni to power.

Refusing to mourn, others highlighted that on national television during the tense campaigns of the last general elections, Tumwine, as security minister, had said: "The police have a right to shoot you and kill you if you reach a certain level of violence."

Police killed more than 40 people during that campaign period.

Uganda's action against Nalubowa is identical to earlier repressions against outspoken Ugandans such as Stella Nyanzi, an academic researcher and activist, and Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, a writer. They, too, posted impolite words about powerful people or families, and disappeared before being abruptly taken to court on "offensive communication" charges and then sent to Luzira prison to await a slow, farcical trial.

This pattern may now be on the cusp of becoming more widespread. On the day Nalubowa was sent to Luzira prison, Parliament passed an amendment of the cyber law under which she was charged, broadening the offences and increasing the penalties. If signed by the president into law, it will target social media users with a seven-year prison term should they "send, share or transmit any misleading or malicious information about or relating to any person". ■

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'The end of the empire': Readers reflect on the legacy of the late Queen Elizabeth II



LETTER OF THE WEEK

Queen Elizabeth II became queen in a treetop hotel in Kenya in 1952.

The common saying is she went up the tree a princess and came down a queen ... I wonder what we, as the people of Kenya, could have had if, when she came down that tree as queen, she had told her people to peacefully leave the lands they had taken from the people they found here.

Lynn Nyaera Onywere

Despite decades of preparation, it is difficult to find the right words for our collective grief. Someone we all recognise, but actually knew so little about, finally passed away so suddenly. Many of you may have licked the back of her head at some point. It is truly the end of some kind of era. Though we were forbidden to touch her, or speak first in her presence, she somehow touched all of our lives, uninvited, in such an intimate way. It is hard to know what our dearest Elizabeth thought about trenchant problems like prejudice in the world at large, within the racially segregated Empire she ruled over, or indeed within her own family ... As such, she perfectly represents the dignified end of the British Empire, with all those unfortunately destroyed archives. God save the queen, because nobody else really knew her.

Anand Madhvani

It's complicated. Any African with knowledge of history would naturally take an antagonistic position to the death of the queen. She was the representation of an establishment that has perpetrated atrocities across the continent while building and maintaining their empire. Some, mostly young Africans, view her as an old lady, distant from their realities, who has embodied "the last remnants of public virtues", to use Oxford academic Yuan Yi Zhu's words, against the backdrop of the disrespect that young Africans receive from their governments. Beneficiaries of scholarships, awards and grants from the Commonwealth will mourn her as someone who championed the organisation despite opposition from British conservatives and liberals alike. Thus, her legacy is ...complicated, and cannot be broad-brushed.

Barima Peprah-Agyemang

I believe we're all mentally enslaved because of how fast we forget the wrongdoings of our colonial masters. The years of racism, centuries of theft rape and brutality. Remember when Meghan Markel was pregnant? Their true colours really showed. I think we as Africans should create our own hierarchy and stop focusing on those who stole everything from us #notmyqueen.

Alexis Ngunyi

"Kaffir! Kaffir! Kaffir!" she yelled. Bongri gripped my hand even tighter as she tried to move us away as quickly as her 10-year-old legs could carry her. I was only six. Our bully was tall, blonde, and her face scrunched up with all the hatred and bitterness a 12-year-old could muster. Our crime? We were black students at a previously all-white school in Harare in the very newly independent Zimbabwe. I now live in Australia but these memories are etched on my soul. You would think Australia would know better but the plight of Aboriginals tells me otherwise. What does Zimbabwe have in common with Australia? Both have and have had the queen as their head. The Commonwealth is a farce. Wealth is common only if you are Caucasian and, preferably, blonde.

Sithulisiwe Dhlamini

The death of Queen Elizabeth II has prompted me to reflect on the impact of the British Monarch on the lives of Africans. I remember my late grandfather who was forcefully recruited by the British colonialists under the King's African Rifles. He was promised reward of land and job in new independent Kenya upon his return from the war. He only became a storekeeper at the European Hospital (now The Nairobi Hospital) in 1961. My grandmother suffered psychological pain during this time. My grandfather died a lonely and dejected man in 1972 with a colonial gramophone being his most prized possession.

Barack Oduor



Volte-fezz: The Queen's Own Nigeria Regiment, 1956. Photo: Hulton Deutsch/Corbis via Getty Images



Feel strongly about something? Write a letter to the editor on letters@thecontinent.org. Be advised that publication is not guaranteed.



Peaceful protest: The women's march on 8 September called for an end to the war
Photo: supplied

Ethiopia's new pacifists

At great personal risk, individuals and organisations are challenging Abiy Ahmed's war propaganda machine.

Zecharias Zelalem

Last Sunday, families across Ethiopia gathered to celebrate 1 Meskerem, the first day of Ethiopia's new calendar year. Along with wishes of good health and prosperity, many Ethiopians expressed hopes that 2015 – the Ethiopian calendar is approximately seven years behind the Gregorian calendar – would mark the end

of the country's two-year-long civil war.

Since then, these hopes have dimmed. Fighting has resumed in the northern Tigray region, and Tigrayans rang in the new year with the sound of armed drones overhead and bombs that killed at least 10 people in the regional capital Mekelle.

The brutal conflict between the Ethiopian government and Tigray's regional leadership is thought to have

killed thousands and left millions displaced, at risk of famine. Civilians have been targeted with alarming frequency. There has also been fighting in parts of the Afar, Amhara and Oromia states.

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a Nobel peace prize laureate, has been widely condemned internationally for his military's abuses during the war, which led to the United States imposing sanctions on the country.

Domestically, however, Abiy has faced far less pressure. Press freedom is virtually non-existent – more than 60 journalists have been arrested since the beginning of the war – and authorities are quick to crack down on any internal dissent. State media outlets broadcast a relentless barrage of war propaganda, making it hard for any other opinions to be heard. This includes incitements to violence, even from government officials, and open calls for genocidal violence.

Defying the war drums

Despite this hostile environment, opposition to Abiy's war – or "law enforcement operation", as he had initially termed it – is gathering momentum.

Twenty-two months into a conflict that has brought the country's economy to the brink of ruin and shredded the social fabric of its ethnically diverse population, more and more Ethiopians are calling for an end to the conflict, despite the risks of doing so.

"People are tired of hearing of death and displacement," said Addisu Bekele*, who works for a ride-hailing service in the capital. He initially supported the war effort. "I think we were tricked. War can't be a solution; too many innocent women and children have died for nothing."

On 8 September, hundreds of women took to the streets of the capital Addis Ababa to call for peace, a negotiated end to the war and an end to sexual violence



**Out of hand:
Abiy Ahmed's
pro-war
propaganda
machine leaves
little space
for dissent.**

Photo: Fana
Broadcasting
Corporation

against women, which has been routinely weaponised by all the warring factions.

Demonstrators wore white clothing bearing messages of peace, and carried placards denouncing the war. Women carrying microphones yelled “Selam!” – the Amharic word for peace. A loudspeaker blared the single of the same name by legendary Ethiopian artist Mahmoud Ahmed.

This song has a storied history. During Ethiopia’s war with Eritrea in the late 90s, Mahmoud was despatched to the front lines to sing patriotic songs for the troops. But he also performed *Selam*, getting the soldiers to dance along to his pacifist anthem – angering and embarrassing the officials who had sent him.

The women’s march, organised by a coalition of local women-led feminist NGOs, is the first of its kind in a city that has seen countless military parades and government-organised pro-army demonstrations over the past two years.

“More than 400 women participated in the march and they expressed their wishes for a happy peaceful New Year for Ethiopia,” said the Timran women’s rights group, who helped to organise the march, in a statement. “They also urged the involvement of women in every peace-building process that possibly takes place in Ethiopia.”

Collective action

Such open rebukes of war on the streets of Addis Ababa have been incredibly rare, and those who make them risk being called “traitor” and subjected to online harassment or arrest.



Protest: ‘Nationwide peace guarantees women’s peace and safety’, reads this placard at the women’s march. Photo: supplied

Nonetheless, the voices calling for peace are getting louder.

Just two days before the women’s march, a collective of 35 civil society organisations scheduled a press conference at the Intercontinental Hotel in Addis Ababa’s upmarket Kazanchis district. They planned to call for an end to hostilities.

But the press conference never happened. Security forces blocked entry to the hotel, forcing the event to be cancelled, saying that their orders came from “higher up”.

A few hours later, the participating organisations – among them the

Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, the Editors Guild of Ethiopia and the Centre for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy – released a joint statement calling for “peace and accountability”. They demanded a mediated end to the war; the commencement of a national dialogue; the restoration of interrupted banking and communications services to the Tigray region; accountability for perpetrators of war crimes; and an end to hate speech.

The statement did not mention the warring parties explicitly, focusing instead on calling for peace: in its original Amharic, “selam” is used 12 times.

Such open rebukes of war on the streets of Addis Ababa have been incredibly rare, and those who make them risk being called ‘traitor’ and subjected to online harassment or arrest.

But for government officials, this statement crossed a red line.

The signatories were summoned to a meeting on 9 September at the Elilly Hotel. Non-state media were denied entry to this meeting. While the meeting was meant to stay private, two attendees who requested anonymity shared details of what took place with *The Continent*.

The meeting was led by Alemu Sime, a member of Parliament and a senior official within the ruling Prosperity Party. He is a close confidante of Prime Minister

Abiy. *The Continent*’s sources said that he used threats and intimidation in an effort to force the statement to be retracted.

“Alemu was very angry. He threatened to revoke our permits and warned us that he could jail us at a moment’s notice,” said one source. “He said, ‘Don’t think you are neutral by calling for peace, you are siding with the enemy. If you don’t think that the survival of our country is your business, let us know now. We will revoke your operating licences.’ He even accused us of betraying Ethiopia.”

The meeting was adjourned with several frightened representatives appearing apologetic and claiming to have been led astray. All were warned that another similar move would result in retaliation by the state.

The participating organisations have so far refrained from publicly discussing the meeting with Alemu. The Ethiopian government did not respond to a request for comment. On Thursday, Jima Dilbo Denbel, the head of the national Agency for Civil Society Organisations – the body that regulates NGOs – was quoted in state media saying that “action will be taken against civil society organisations that are working against our country’s sovereignty and the interests of the people.”

Fall from grace

If anyone knows how risky it is to preach peace in Ethiopia today, it is the singer-songwriter Tariku Gankisi. He is better known as Dishta Gina, which is also the name of his most popular single.

In 2021, Tariku had the world at his feet: he was a rising star in Ethiopian



Redemption song: In this grainy still, Mahmoud Ahmed performs ‘Selam’ to rapturous soldiers on the front line.

music, and the song *Dishta Gina* was racking up millions of YouTube hits (it is currently sitting on more than 28-million views).

It even caught the attention of global superstar Akon, who produced his own remix. Among his many fans was none other than Abiy Ahmed himself.

But before he was a singer, Tariku had been a soldier. He participated in the Ethiopian-Eritrean border war of 1998-2000, which killed an estimated 70,000 people.

The war left a lasting impression. On 7 November, Tariku was asked to perform at a pro-war military rally in Addis Ababa. There were thousands of people in the crowd, and millions watching on TV. But instead of singing, he took the mic and delivered an emotional plea for peace.

“Enough!” he said. “Why do we have to keep killing? Stop sending youths to the front and send elders to reconcile us. The muzzle won’t bring us a solution!”

Tariku’s outburst was covered in international media, and he won admirers the world over.

But he was also subjected to vitriolic criticism on social media, in particular from pro-government accounts, and received death threats.

Eventually, he was paraded on primetime Ethiopian television where he issued a tearful apology. He has since left Addis Ababa for his hometown in southern Ethiopia.

His career appears to be over.

The war goes on. ■

**Names changed for safety*

How good are our elections?

Most Africans see elections as the best way to choose their leaders (75%), Afrobarometer surveys in 34 countries have found. And they want party competition to ensure that voters have real choices (63%).

But how good are our elections?

On the bright side, almost nine out of 10 Africans (87%) – including majorities in every surveyed country – say they feel “somewhat” or “completely” free to vote for candidates of their choice without feeling pressured.

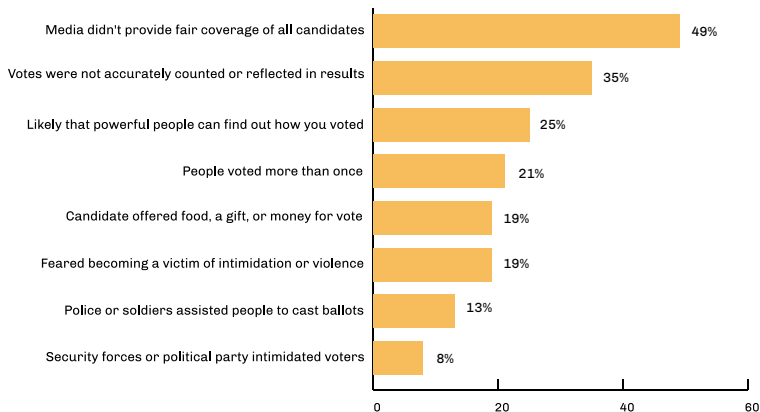
But fewer than half think elections enable voters to remove leaders who don’t do what the people want (44%) or ensure that representatives to Parliament reflect

the views of voters (42%).

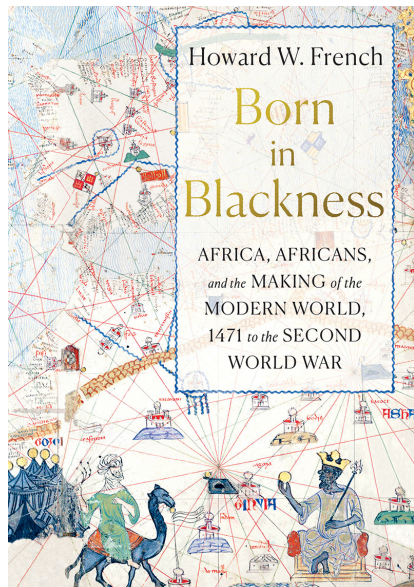
Overall, 63% say their country’s most recent national election was free and fair (either “completely” or “with minor problems”). But this assessment varies widely, from 91% in Tanzania and 86% in Burkina Faso to just 19% in Sudan and 31% in Gabon.

The most common problems? The media “never” or only “sometimes” provided fair coverage of all candidates (49%); votes weren’t counted or reported accurately (35%); respondents worried their ballots weren’t secret (25%); people voted more than once (21%); citizens feared intimidation or violence (19%); and voters were offered a bribe (19%).

Election quality: Negative experiences and perceptions | 34 countries | 2019/2021



Source: Afrobarometer, a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.



This book will change the way you think about world history

Simon Allison

The central thesis of Howard French's *Born in Blackness* is that Africa has been written out of world history. In this seminal work, French not only explains why and how this happens, but

also seeks to rewrite the narrative. He looks at how African gold motivated, then turbocharged Europe's age of exploration; how African bodies, in their millions, were sacrificed to power the west's industrial revolution. The west was built on the enormously profitable trades in sugar, tobacco and cotton – none of which was possible without the brutal enslavement of Africans.

Yet, in most histories and curricula around the world, the centrality of Africa's role in shaping the modern world is rarely remembered. We are not taught that Mansa Musa, ruler of the Kingdom of Mali in the 14th century, was the richest man who ever lived. We are not taught to think of Elmina Castle, where the modern slave trade arguably began, as one of the world's most important historical sites. We are taught about the French Revolution, but not about the Haitian Revolution, where slaves – predominantly African – threw off their shackles and defeated the armies of France, Spain and Britain in an uprising that shook these empires to their core. And that their revolt led directly to the creation of the borders of the United States as we know them today, even as that country's founders built their fortunes from slavery.

In *Born in Blackness*, French accords Africa and Africans their proper place in world history. In doing so, he profoundly challenges how we understand both the past and the present. Read this book to make sure that Africa is not written out of the future too. ■

Owa boda boda alaba bingi

**Okudobonkana
kw'amakubo bakusiba ku
ba bodaboda ffekka wadde
ng'eggwanga lyonna
libuutikiddwa obusiwuufu
bw'empisa.**

Bya Geoffrey Ndhogezi

Nkolera mu lujjudde, sseekwekerera. Buli gwenzisinkana ayanguyirwa okukolagana nange. Bwemba mpitaayita, ne balyoka bampita nti “gwe boda!”, olwo nemmagaamaga okulaba oyo ankowoola. Ngenda okulaba ng'awanise omukono.

Batera okusonga akagalo okuntegeeza gyebalaga. Ssibayiwa, mbatwala gyebaagala kasita tukkaanya. Era mbayita basaabaze bange; mwattu nsanyuka nnyo nga basasulidde olugendo lwabwe. Olwo ne neenyumiriza mu mulimu gw'okusomba abasaabaze ku ppikippiki. Ebbula ly'emirimu nalituula ku nfeete.

Omulumu gwenkola gwa ttunzi. Abagukola nkumu, abettanira obuweereza bwaffe nfaafa, n'egwanga lifunyemu byansusso. Naye banaffe betuweereza balemereddwa okulaba wetugasiza. Tukola bagaya wadde nga be bamu abatutuma wano na wali nga bali mu kafubo k'okutuukiriza ebigererwa byabwe.

Nebalyoka bajweteka, buli ekitabangula eggwanga nebakitusibako. Okudobonkana kw'amakubo bakusiba ku ffe. Buli alemereddwa okutuukiriza obuvunaanyizibwa bwe yeekwasa ffe. Batulaba ng'ekyonziira. Sso nga ekitwawula ku balala olaba nga kitono; kukolera mu kkubo.

Tukolera mu lujjudde lw'abantu buli omu waatulabira, n'asobola okuwa endowooza ye ku buli ekitutuukako, ne bwaba nga tabitegedde bulungi. Okwo kwekuva enjogera etutyoboola.

Ebimu ku bitugumya netusigala nga tukeera netukola, kwe kulaba banaffe nga bongera kutwettanira buli lukya. Okwo kwogatta n'akakisa ketulina ak'okumanya emize, n'ebikolwa by'abo abatwogerera obubi.

Aboogezi baagala ki?

Gwosanga ayogera nti, “aba bodaboda baatutama!”, enkeera omusanga agula ppikippiki nga bwakkaatiriza mbu, “ngenda kugula eziwerako nziwe aba bodaboda bampengayo mutwalo-mutwalo buli lunaku.”

Leero nti, “aba bodaboda basusse okuleeta obubenje!”, enkya y'omu y'agamba owa bodaboda mbu, “yongezaamu ku sipiidi sirina budde!” Ow'engeri eyo ne ku bitaala tayagala tuyimirire.

N'oyo ateesa mu lukiiko nti, “tuteeketeke ekifo kino mu ngeri eremesa aba bodaboda okuyingira”, y'omu y'agamba owa bodaboda mbu, “awo ku geeti yitawo, ontuusize ddala munda.” Bw'omubuuza nti, “gwe akapande akagamba ‘owa bodaboda tasukka wano’ tokalaba?”, ng'akuddamu

mbu, “nze maneja wa wano.” Kyokka ab’engeri eyo era be bagamba mbu aba bodaboda ba mputtu.

Bwetugerageranya byeboogera nga batukonjera, ne byebakola netulabira ddala nti bannanfuusi lukulwe. Olwokuba bbo tebakolera mu kkubo, emize gyabwe basobola okujikweka.

Naye wadde bakukuta, mukubaweereza, ffe tubamanya. Omusaabaze bwe mmutuusa gyalaga, mmany ebikolebwayo. Bw’antikka ebitereke, mmany amakulu agabirimu. Awo wetulabira nti mu betuweereza mulimu ababbi, abenzi, abakumpanya, abanyazi, abalogo, abalyazaamanyi, abafere, abatemu, n’abemize emirala. Atte nno olumu baba ba ttutumu. Kyova olaba nga bwebagamba mbu “aba bodaboda babi”, naffe twebuuzi nti, “omulungi y’ani?” Netusigala nga tukola nga bulijjo.

Tukole tutya okutereeza ebyasoba?

Olugendo olwokutereeza ebyasoba luwanvu ate tetusaanidde kulukwaata mu ngeri ya kupapa. Kubanga ebyasoba bizzo byeyongerako mpolampola, nokubiggyawo tulina kubikwaata mpola nobwegendereza.

Okwesigama ennyo amateeka tekityambye. Wadde abamenyi b’amateeka baweebwa ebibonerezo buli lunaku, effujjo ne waasiwaasi byeyongeraga bweyongezi. Okweyambisa enteekateeka z’ebyuma bya kalimagezi nakyo tekimala. Gyetukomye okufuna kalimagezi, gyetukomye nokuggwaamu obuguminkiriza, ate nga obutaguminkiriza y’ensibuko y’obubenje nebikolwa ebirala ebyeffujjo ku makubo. Ate ebikolwa

ebyo tebikolebwa ba bodaboda bokka, era bwetuba tubirwanyisa tetusaanidde kutunuulira ba bodaboda bokka.

N’olwekyo, tusaanidde tusooke tukkirize fenna nti eggwanga lyonna libuutikiddwa obusiiwuufu bw’empisa obuleetedde buli omu okweefaako yekka, n’abalina ku maanyi okunyigiriza abalala akagenderere. Sso nga, bebandikulembdedde mu kafubo k’okutereeza ebyasoba, nebabeera ekyokulabirako.

Ebikolwa by’abantu abasinga obungi, n’enjogera yaabwe, biraga obusiiwuufu bw’empisa: okupapa, obulyake, ejjoogo, ettima, n’ebiringebyo. Kyova olaba ng’abakola ebitasaana babayita bagezi mu ngeri eyokusaagirira. Ate abakola nga beegendereza, neboolesa obukkakkamu n’obuntubulamu nga bavuga, ensi eno eyawuba ebayita ba “ffala” mu ngeri eyokujereegerera. Olwo abantu bonna nebakoppa ebitasaana, nebadibya enkola eyekitiibwa.

Mu kaweeefube w’okulungamya eggwanga n’okugonjoola obubenje, tusaanidde tukulembeze enteekateeka ewagira obuntubulamu n’empisa. N’amakubo gonna gakolebwe mu ngeri erambika envuga eyobugunjufu. Nabuli akwatibwaako ensonga z’amakubo atuukirize obuvunaanyizibwa bwe. Awo naffe aba bodaboda tunaasobola okuddira empisa zaffe netuzisiiga akazigo. Olwo twongerezeeko amateeka ne kalimagezi. ■

Geofrey Ndhogezzi muvuzi wa bodaboda mu kibuga Kampala, muwandiisi era musunsuzi wa biwandiiko. Agobelera enteekateeka ezebidduka byamasannyalaze, n’ensonga ezobutebenkevu bw’omumakubo.

There are no secrets from your boda guy

Trust me, I've seen it all before

Geofrey Ndhogezi in Kampala

As I cruise the road, working in public where everyone can see me, I hear them call, “Hey boda!”

My eyes scan the roadside and there they are, hand raised, a finger pointing in the direction they wish to go. I always answer their summons, happy to take them wherever they wish – if we can agree on a price. I am proud to ferry passengers on a motorbike. I conquered unemployment.

My work is enviably marketable. Plenty take up the job, many more demand the service and the nation benefits from our labour. Yet the same people we serve turn their noses up at our labour, even as we criss-cross the city for them.

They pin the madness on the road on us. Officials who fail at their responsibilities scapegoat us. They blame us for whatever ails the nation. We are the wretched of the earth.

But they keep turning to us and we keep showing up, taking quiet amusement in the access our work gives us to their secrets and contradictions.

He who spits “boda-bodas are causing accidents” will also instruct his rider to “speed it up, I am out of time” – and tell us to run red lights. She who proposed

that the office yard be closed off to boda-bodas will arrive on one and encourage the rider to ignore the “no boda-boda” sign. “Zoom past the gate and take me closer to the building, I am the manager here.”

Officials who fail at their responsibilities scapegoat us. We are the wretched of the earth. They blame us for whatever ails the nation.

Their words and actions expose rank hypocrisy but they have the luxury of private offices to cover them from the public eye.

But not from us.

We know what happens in the places we take them to, and what is in the packages we deliver for them.

We know our passengers, many revered, include thieves, adulterers, robbers, conmen, murderers, you name it.

You say, “Boda-bodas are thieves.”

And we wonder: “Who isn’t?” ■

Geofrey Ndhogezi is a boda-boda driver, writer and editor in Kampala, Uganda. This story has been translated from the Luganda original and edited for length.

PHOTO ESSAY

Just outside South Africa's capital, a community occupies private land

Inflation and high unemployment, in a country where the majority have been excluded from private land ownership, mean new communities often pop up on private land in South Africa. The state responds with force to protect land ownership.

These photos were taken in a volatile situation.

Photos: Delwyn Verasamy/*Mail & Guardian*



Land ownership is an emotionally charged and politically complex issue in South Africa. A majority of privately owned land is still disproportionately in the hands of those who were, and still are, advantaged by their race. The ruling African National Congress (ANC) has failed to use its nearly three decades of power to change this reality.

Vested interests have pushed back. And corruption and patronage have marred attempts to buy land from white owners and shift it to the rightful owners.

For people, it means not having space in your own country. For the ANC, it has given opportunities to the parties that would seek to topple it – it is projected to drop below 50% of the national vote

in elections in two years. The most vocal of these opposition parties is the third largest, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).

In Olievenhoutbosch, just outside the capital Pretoria, where this photo essay was taken, that party encouraged people to occupy land and build homes. The state has historically responded to this by labelling the behaviour “lawlessness” and forcefully evicting people, continuing

South Africa’s centuries-old tradition of using violence to dispossess. It has not created economic prospects to give people hope of owning their own land, or homes, and unemployment is over 40%. And that has driven anger at foreigners, who are excluded from places like Olievenhoutbosch because they are seen to be taking scarce jobs. Data show otherwise, but politicians have seized upon this anger to grow their influence. ■



Land occupiers in Olievenhoutbosch head home after clearing the land. It had become overgrown and strewn with rubble and waste, with residents claiming that criminals hid here, and brought women here to rape them.



A community meeting with EFF political party leaders takes place to inform residents about new developments. As the area builds up, this meeting area – known as ‘Centre’ – will disappear beneath the sprawl.

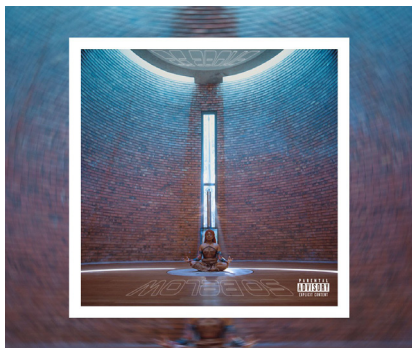
An elderly lady sits on sheets of corrugated iron, waiting to be taken to find a piece of land. To apply for a plot, people have to produce a South African identity document, and come with building materials.



Many people moving into Olievenhoutbosch say that inflation has driven them out of renting back rooms in nearby townships. Here, though, they do not have access to basic services, like water and sanitation.

A wooden stake and red and white barrier tape mark out the boundaries between plots. Residents are asked to leave space between their homes to prevent fires from spreading rapidly through the settlement.





Sampa the Great's great homecoming

Wilfred Okiche

The second studio album by the Zambia-born, Botswana-raised and Australia-residing artist Sampa the Great is an eclectic, exuberant experience that creates something interesting from an amalgamation of sounds.

After finding mainstream success in Australia, Sampa the Great struggled with her sense of self and identity. Her debut album *The Return* dealt considerably with feelings of displacement and finding home when away from home.

As Above, So Below continues this interrogation as a more confident Sampa the Great expresses herself as an African woman to an audience that does not always understand what she is about.

Where *The Return* was scattershot and often tasking, *As Above, So Below* is more confident with Sampa the Great – born Sampa Tembo – laying claim to her roots, paying homage to her predecessors and owning fully her Zambian identity.

As Above, So Below is heavily inspired by zamrock, the fusion of psychedelic rock, reggae, soul and traditional music Zambian musicians made popular in the 70s. She even invites the surviving members of Witch, perhaps the most popular zamrock band, to guest on the rousing *Can I Live?* – an animated mashup of percussive drums and electric guitar. The energy of zamrock proves to be a welcome fit for Sampa the Great's manic, infectious energy as she raps and sings her way, in English and Bemba, into recognition in near equal doses.

The 29-year-old Sampa the Great returned to Zambia to record the album, connecting with local musicians and producers such as Mag44, Chef 187 and James Sakala. Her sister, alternative artist Mwanjé, also supplies vocals on songs like the lilting *Lo Rain* and on the combative reclamation anthem *Never Forget*.

The iconic Angélique Kidjo returns an earlier favour – Sampa the Great appeared on her 2021 album *Mother Nature* – and closes the record with the formidable *Let Me Be Great*. *As Above, So Below* is not quite a complete body of work and Sampa the Great has yet to connect her artistic visions and identity with a sound that is wholly hers but she is on an interesting journey, one that is worth the ride. ■

THE QUIZ

0-3

"I think I need to start reading more newspapers."

4-7

"I can't wait to explore more of this continent."

8-10

"This quiz is like the boda-boda of knowledge – and I am driving."



Photo: Simon Dawson/Bloomberg via Getty Images

1_ Which region of the Sahara does the Polisario Front claim?

2_ Which Arabic term means "from the Sahara" and is used to describe the ethnicity of people from the Western Sahara?

3_ In which country was Queen Elizabeth II when her father died, making her queen?

4_ Enkutatash, or New Year, was observed on 11 September. Which two countries observed the holiday?

5_ São Nicolau is an island of which country?

6_ Which country's

capital (pictured) is also known as Finfinne?

7_ Which country was singer Sampa The Great born in?

8_ Chevrons is the nickname of which country's national cricket team?

9_ "Boda-boda" is a term used to describe what type of transport?

10_ Rigathi Gachagua was sworn into which role this week?

HOW DID I DO?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

Would you like to send us some quiz questions or even curate your own quiz? Let us know at TheContinent@mg.co.za

THE BUHARI DIARIES

'I just want to go home to my cows, please and thank you'

With just a few months left in office, Nigeria's president is not going to let the haters get to him. But he does wish the race to succeed him was just a little more ... dignified?

As transcribed by Elnathan John

In the beginning – not in the *very* beginning when I wore uniforms and berets, but in the *beginning*, when age and silence and frugality had conferred sainthood upon me – things were great. I had been reborn, cleansed of the sins of the war. Sins that, if you ask me, are only of perception, because who can say I committed war crimes? Who was there in Biafra when as a junior officer I commanded a brigade at Awka and at Makurdi, when I was defending Enugu and Abakiliki?

When I said in 2018 that we were soft on the Biafrans, I meant it. All right, yes, over a million people died but, look, if Gowon hadn't told us to be soft on them,

it could have been *six* million! And yes I know I took part in the coup that led to Gowon's ousting, but he was still a good man to make sure so few millions died.

I digress.

People take you for granted when you are silent. Perhaps I should have stated clearly in a public broadcast or through my body language who I wanted to succeed me.

But you know how the body gets when one grows old. Mine isn't what it used to be. I think that is why they disregarded me at my party convention when they chose that bespectacled man whose age no one knows (*The All Progressives Congress's 2023 presidential candidate Bola Ahmed Tinubu – Ed*). And no one wants to tell me, was he involved in the heroin trade or was he not? Those documents about forfeiture of assets in America – no one wants to tell me if they are real or are they not. No one wants to tell me anything.

Oh the indignities one suffers as one grows old. First they start screaming at you as if you have lost your hearing. Then they start talking about you in your presence as if you are not there, talking about what to *do* about you.

You could see my face during the presidential primaries in Abuja. They just went about selecting a man who could barely hold up the party flag – as if I was not sitting right there! Even with all my illnesses I can at least walk in a straight line and lift the party flag and walk without people holding me the way they were holding Mugabe in his final years. I



Cows come home to roost: Muhammadu Buhari says he is retiring to his estate in Katsina to spend more time with his cattle.
Photo: Nigerian Presidency

just hope he doesn't fall some day in New York while reading a speech. Because I will laugh. Don't judge me. Have you seen a grown man fall? That shit is funny.

Now that they have selected him, I truly hope they do not expect me to travel around with him to campaign. I've done my bit. I just want to go back home and tend to my 150 cows.

If no one else will say it, then I will say it: We have done well.

Or *I* have done well, anyway. People talk about how kidnappers, bandits, violent gangs and terrorists have multiplied since my regime began, but I tell you that is only evidence of my success.

Let me explain. When you see a man failing, do you see haters chasing him, trying to ruin his good work? No. If I wasn't doing unprecedented things, and changing the lives of Nigerians, we would not be seeing these kidnappers and bandits trying to ruin my good work. Haters are evidence of success. Try succeeding yourself, and see how haters

will emerge from the woodwork.

When people tell me about the naira crashing, I tell them go and succeed and see if enemies will not chase after you.

My job is done. If they let a man become president who is less stable and coherent – not to mention less good-looking and, frankly, a great deal shorter than I am – then that is their business.

I will go to my cows. Cows don't judge you. They don't betray you. They are there when you sleep and when you wake, quiet and loyal to the very end. Just like me.

P.S. I have been following the kerfuffle following the death of Queen Elizabeth. I mean, RIP to Lizzy and everything but what a relief that she is being blamed for the deaths of millions of Biafrans during the war. Imagine if I also had to take responsibility for those deaths this close to retirement. Thank God for the British. ■

Elnathan John is a Nigerian novelist, satirist and lawyer.

The best party in town



Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

The Continent is at its 100th issue! How excited are we, you ask? Imagine one of our favourite leaders waking up to news that they have won a lifetime supply of tear gas or that term limits have been made illegal, or that the chateau they plan to purchase in France with taxpayers' money has a little prison to throw activists and journalists in! *That* is how high our excitement level is!

For the sake of convenience, we have been contemplating holding it in Nairobi, Kenya, particularly because so many of our favourites were there this week, attending William Ruto's inauguration as he became the country's fifth-ever president.

Well-dressed and on his best behaviour was outgoing president Uhuru Kenyatta, who handed over the instruments of power with a smile on his face, just as he said he would even though this was not the outcome he wanted.

Meanwhile like a rap artist on stage, Ruto took to the podium and did his version of "What's happening Nairobi, who's in the house!" by telling us which leaders were attending, giving a brief



In the house: Billy Ruto's inauguration party was so lit even M7 stayed awake.

Photo: Marco Longari/AFP/ Getty Images

description, and then having them stand up and wave to the crowd.

The formidable guest list of course included Uganda's president and this week's birthday big man, Yoweri "M7" Museveni. Ya boi prides himself on putting the "grrrr" in inaugurrrrration afterparties, and his sick breakdancing moves at the ceremonies for former president Daniel Arap Moi, Mwai Kibaki and of course Uhuru Kenyatta are still the stuff of legend.

Introduced by Ruto as the "Father of East Africa", he gave a speech in which he said he has met Ruto a number of times and that "he likes ideas and frank talking". He also shared some insights, stating that following his 36 years in power, he would like to advise Africans

that “prosperity comes from wealth creation”.

Uh... was he being serious? Oh. He *was* being serious. Well okay then! We’re probably not wise enough to understand, but we’re sure many of his fellow Yoda-like were all over that zen-bomb.

We bet our babe from Brazzaville President Denis Sassou-Nguesso – who himself has been in office over 36 years – appreciated this wisdom, although he might want to ask M7 whether he meant creating wealth for oneself or for the general population.

Conspicuously absent was presidential runner-up Raila Odinga, who said he would be washing his hair that day and out of the country and anyway the election wasn’t “free and fair” and also the Supreme Court was a big bag of hippopotapoop for not agreeing with him.

Unlikely to be attending either the inauguration afterparty or *The Continent’s* own centenary celebrations is Burkina Faso’s Barthémy Simporé.

The now-former security minister was fired from the role by interim president and *Keeping Up With The Koupdashions* star Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, who has decided to take on the role himself! First time we’ve heard of a coup leader overthrowing an underling, but we guess it’s important to keep yourself coup-fit?

At this point we don’t mind who is managing the security situation, just as long as we see an end to the death of innocent civilians in a country where nearly one in 10 people have been displaced by conflict.

RU OK UK?

While we may be celebrating, there are many in that tiny island nation in the north who are not, after their chieftainness passed away. The death of Queen Elizabeth II has seen a crackdown on anti-monarchists with at least four people arrested as they protested against the monarchy.

They were charged with “breaching the peace”, a law remarkably like that which many African opposition leaders and activists have been charged with over the years. For decades the United Kingdom has preached about human rights and freedom of speech, but apparently not content with plundering other countries’ treasures it’s also gone and nicked their tools of oppression, too.

For decades the United Kingdom has preached about human rights and freedom of speech, but it is not one it extends to its citizens

Still, in the spirit of reconciliation, we did invite the royals to our centenary celebrations, but weirdly they didn’t turn up. Guess they might have been put off when they saw that the “R” theme for the party didn’t stand for Royal but rather for Reparations, Restitution of artefacts and the freedom to Remember our histories the way we want them to.

We’re just kidding, of course. We didn’t really invite them. Just Meghan.

Party on folks.

Here’s to the next 100. ■

African scorn was met with British shock – but why?

In Africa, views on the death of Queen Elizabeth II have less to do with her reign and more to do with the United Kingdom's lack of genuine accountability

Sishuwa Sishuwa

Many Africans' unsympathetic reactions to the death of Queen Elizabeth II have come as a surprise to the average British person. One reason for this is the contrasting understandings and memories of the British Empire. As a result, as Queen Elizabeth is being laid to rest, many Africans are seeking to bring the past back to life.

Given the passage of time, most Brits either don't know much about the negative side of the empire, don't associate the queen with it, or think things happened too long ago to matter. Many Africans see things differently. This is less to do with Elizabeth as a person, and more to do with the institution of the British monarchy and the atrocities committed in its name.

In her role as a symbol of a stoic and

stiff-lipped vision of British leadership, the queen's global celebrity has served as a tool of soft power used to legitimise the United Kingdom's foreign policy goals. In response, there are growing calls from across Africa for an acknowledgement that much of Britain's wealth – and the royal family's largesse – is derived from an era of extractive and repressive rule.

There are problems with fixating this campaign on royalty. Elizabeth was the last imperial monarch and oversaw unprecedented decolonisation in Africa. During her reign the empire, forged through force, became the Commonwealth, to which membership is voluntary. Elizabeth can hardly take credit for dismantling the British empire, but she also cannot be accused of building it.

Perhaps more importantly, focusing on the queen deflects attention away from the fact that it was successive elected governments that ruled the empire from the "Scramble for Africa" to decolonisation.

It masks the fact that British people voted in the leaders who committed human rights abuses, and makes it easier for them to avoid fully "owning" their past – the only true path to international reconciliation and healing. ■

Sishuwa Sishuwa is a postdoctoral research fellow in IDCPPA at the University of Cape Town and lectures at the University of Zambia. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa



The Big Picture

Jekesai Njikizana/AFP

Reframing history: Staff of the Zimbabwe National Art Gallery in Harare pull out a portrait of the late British monarch Elizabeth II from storage. Even though she embodied British colonialism, the queen's death is being mourned by many Africans, partly due to her ceremonial status as head of the Church of England and the ubiquity of the Anglican Church across the continent.



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