Migrations and Creative Expressions in Africa and the African Diaspora
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Toyin Falola
University of Texas at Austin

Nyi Afolabi
University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Adérónké Adésolá Adésànyà
University of Ibadan-Nigeria

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Dr. Julius Adekunle for his contributions to Nigerian History
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Preface

*Migrations and Creative Expressions in Africa and the African Diaspora* brings together twenty-three chapters on the cultural and spiritual dynamics of migrations in Africa and the African diaspora. The contributors range in professional and interdisciplinary backgrounds as disparate as architects, cultural theorists, historians, literary critics, and linguists.

Migrations occur in different patterns including forced and voluntary paradigms. For the pilgrim souls of African origin who were displaced from their native homelands and who traversed African landscapes to other lands during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, migration represents the forced pattern. For later migrants especially those who relocated for sundry reasons from their homelands to the Americas and scholars of different academic persuasions who journeyed from different parts of the world (but mostly from Africa) to Texas to participate in the 2006 Africa Conference, “Movements, Migrations, and Displacement in Africa,” migration is voluntary and purposeful. The journeys however find a common ground in the academic feast at the Texas conference where scholars unmasked burning issues on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, broke silences, reaffirmed positions, and opened new discourses on the displacement, transportations, migration, celebrations, trials, and resilience of African kindred scattered in the diaspora. They recall confluences of celebratory spirits (rising from the curse of slavery) and opened up new perspectives on Africa and its diaspora. By the “curse” of slavery, we mean the horrific experience of millions of human beings who were captured, shackled, wrenched from their families, branded, sold, packed into the holds of ships, sold once more, and put to work in American mines and fields; enslavement meant pain and horror. For them, slavery was an unmitigated and terrible curse.

Some of the engaging essays on the subject culminate in this collection aptly tagged *Migrations and Creative Expressions in Africa and the African Diaspora*. The studies address multiple issues ranging from diaspora, masked performances, identity formation, definitions and projections, group mobilizations, protests, self-reclamation and assertion, celebratory spaces, and food culture. Perhaps more than anything else, the chapters explore and discuss the nexus between Africans in the homelands and those of the diaspora including the hybrid forms generated by the contacts with other cultures. The essays in this volume have a forerunner in Falola and Childs’ edited volume: *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, a book which addresses very similar and cogent issues:
migration, culture and resistance, contradictions of colonialism, complications of imperialism, tensions between host and guest communities in the diaspora, culture, language, and nationalism. Whether they comment on the lore of the Yoruba, the ethos of the Igbo in Nigeria, the tradition of the Fante/Ewe of Ghana in relation to the variants of their kindred use in the Americas or in the Caribbean, the essays engage, explicate, and complicate issues on the diaspora experience of Africans.

We want to thank all the contributors who, despite security and financial concerns, traveled long distances to be with us in Texas. Presenters and participants engaged in lively discussion throughout the three-day period. Such an undertaking does not come without copious debts. We are grateful to a host of graduate students (Roy Doron, Tyler Fleming, Matthew Heaton, Ann Genova, and Saheed Aderinto); the technical personnel (Sam Saverance); and many staff of the University of Texas (Gail Davis, Laura Flack and Martha Gail Moore). The organizations and departments that supported us financially include the Departments of History, Government, and English, the Center for African and African American Studies, the Office of the Vice President, College of Liberal Arts, Office of the Dean of Students, the Texas Cowboys Fund, The Louann and Larry Temple Fund, The Frances Higgenbotham Nalle Fund, and Dedman College, Southern Methodist University, Dallas. We are also grateful to Dr. Vik Bahl of Green River Community College in Auburn, Ms. Ronke Obadina of Austin, and Dr. Segun Fayemi of New York for their commitment to the conference.

Toyin Falola, University of Texas at Austin
Niyi Afolabi, University of Massachusetts at Amherst
Adérónké Adésolá Adésànyà, University of Ibadan-Nigeria
Notes on Authors

CHRISTOPHER O. ADEJUMO is an Associate Professor of Visual Art Studies / Art Education at the University of Texas at Austin. He has published more than twenty-five book chapters, articles, and instructional guides on visual art and art education. Professor Adejumo has given more than forty lectures on art education and contemporary / traditional visual art practices. He is a practicing artist, and his relief prints, low-relief sculptures, and paintings have been shown in thirty local, state, national, and international exhibitions, of which twelve were solo exhibitions. He has conducted more than twenty-eight visual art workshops at highly regarded venues, including the Dallas Museum of Art. He collaborated with the Dallas Museum of Art to produce a documentary on the Yoruba ibeji or twin figures. Adejumo founded and directs the Greater Tomorrow Youth Art Program in Austin and the Youth Summer Art Program at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the recipient of the 2004 J. Eugene Grigsby, Jr. National Award for outstanding and continuous contributions to multiethnic art education, given by the National Art Education Association.

ADÉRÔNÇÉ ADÉSOLÁ ADÉSÀNYÀ is an Art Historian who teaches at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. She obtained a Bachelors Degree in Fine Arts Education from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; her M.A. and Ph.D. in African art history from the University of Ibadan; and a Postgraduate Diploma in Peace and Conflict Studies from Uppsala University, Sweden. Her academic background and research interests include African art history, gender studies, folklore studies, and peace and conflict studies. Her publications articulate an interdisciplinary interface between these academic disciplines. She received the 2005 International Visitor Award of the African Studies Association, ASA. Apart from scholarship, Adesanya is also involved in creative endeavors. She is a renowned Nigerian cartoonist who has published cartoons of different types, but principally on gender issues, in a number of Nigerian tabloids. Her famous cartoons include “Missus” of the Nigerian Tribune and “Virginia” strips of the Vanguard, among others. The scholar cum artist is also a prolific illustrator whose illustrations have been published in literary texts including Niyi Osundare’s Seize the Day and Phillip Ogundeji’s Orin Ewuro. Dr. Adesanya is on the board of the Governing Council of the Institute of Chartered Mediators and Conciliators (ICMC) Nigeria, a training and certification institute for ADR practitioners.
NIYI AFOLABI, Ph.D., is co-editor of *Migrations and Creativity in Africa and the African Diaspora*. He teaches African and African Diaspora studies at the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is the author of *The Golden Cage: Regeneration in Lusophone African Literature and Culture* and editor of *Marvels of the African World*.

AKINTUNDE AKINYEMI is an Assistant Professor of Yoruba at the University of Florida in Gainesville. He earned his Ph.D. in Yoruba Language and Literature at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria in 1991. From 1999-2001 he was a post-doctoral fellow at the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Institute for African Studies, University of Bayreuth, Germany and the Centre for West African Studies, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. His research focuses on Yoruba oral literature, popular culture, and the African diaspora. His book, *Yoruba Royal Poetry*, was published in 2004.

ANN ALBUYEH teaches in San Juan where she is Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has also taught in Tehran, Iran and Jalingo, Nigeria, as well as at Harvard University and the University of Wisconsin. She has been a teaching fellow at the International School of Theory at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Although her research has included theoretical issues in language acquisition, her publications have focused on the history of English from Old English to the current varieties of English pidgins, creoles, and standard dialects worldwide. She also writes short stories and has worked as a newspaper and magazine reporter for English language publications in the Middle East.

ABIMBOLA ASOJO is an Associate Professor and the Director of the Interior Design Division at the College of Architecture, University of Oklahoma. Her research areas are cross-cultural design issues, African architecture, and computing and design. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Interior Design (JID)*, *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, *Designing for the 21st Century*, the *Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA)* journal, and the *Journal of Design Communication*. She has taught design at the University of Oklahoma since 1997. Her teaching has resulted in the international and regional recognition of University of Oklahoma interior design students, as well as the production of more creative and complex student design portfolios incorporating technology and culture-based projects.

ADEMOLA OMOBWEJIA DASILVA, former Acting Head, Department of English, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, teaches African literature (drama, poetry, and the African novel — theory and criticism), oral literature, and folklore. He is a poet. He co-coordinates the Ibadan Cultural Studies Group, a study group based at the University of Ibadan for the promotion of excellence in cultural studies. He is co-editor of *ISESE: Ibadan Journal of Folklore*. In 2001-2002 he was a Visiting Associate Professor, Department of Languages and Communication, Babcock University, Ilishan, Nigeria; and in 2004-2005 he was a visiting scholar in the Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Besides his many articles in scholarly journals, he has published a number of books, including, among others, *Understanding Wole Soyinka: Death and the King’s Horseman* (1995); *Dramatic Literature: A Source Book for Colleges and*
Notes on Authors


TOYIN FALOLA, Ph.D., is a University Distinguished Teaching Professor, University of Texas at Austin. He has held numerous appointments and received various awards, most recently the 2006 Cheikh Anta Diop Award for Exemplary Scholarship in African Studies. Author of various books, including the edited collection The Yoruba in the Atlantic World, Professor Falola is also a poet.

HETTY TER HAAR (BA in History, London School of Economics) is an independent researcher.

VERONIQUE HELENON, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in History and a faculty member of the African-New World Studies program at Florida International University. Her field is African Diaspora History with a special emphasis on the French-speaking African diaspora. Her research also looks at the Caribbean as well as colonialism and French hip-hop. She graduated from the EHESS (School of Higher Education in Social Sciences) in Paris, France with a Ph.D. in History. In 1996, she was the recipient of a Fulbright scholarship in Africana Studies at NYU. Prior to joining FIU, she taught at UMass-Dartmouth, Columbia University, New York University, Manhattan Community College, and Brooklyn College.

ABDOULAYE KANE is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology and African Studies at the University of Florida. His teaching and research focus are on internal and international mobility, transnational migration, and new African diasporas in Europe and in the United States. He has published several book chapters and articles on migrants’ social networks and their role in financing community projects in their home communities. He is currently finishing a book manuscript looking at the relations between Haal Pulaar migrants (an ethnic community living in the border area between Senegal, Mauritania and Mali) and their home villages. He is specifically interested in how the flow of money, objects, ideas, and images from host countries to sending communities contributes to the emergence of a culture of migration in which social success, social capital, and social status are more and more tied to mobility.

RAY A. KEA is a Professor of History at the University of California at Riverside. He is the author of Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast. He has written articles and conference papers on Gold Coast history, the Western Sudan world-system, the eighteenth-century Danish West Indies, Islamic learning in eighteenth-century West Africa and the Afro-Eurasian Oikumene, Africa and world history, race, Africans in pre-fifteenth-century Europe. His current book projects include the following: The Gold Coast in the Era of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Social and Cultural History; Africa and Africans in the Early Modern Era; and Material Life and the Everyday on the Gold Coast in the eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. He is a member of several professional organizations including the African Studies Association and the Ghana Studies Council.

KRISTINA MĀKI has a BA in Swahili and Development Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, UK. She is currently studying on the MA Pro-
gramme on National and International Literatures in English at the Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London.

LINDAH MHANDO is an Assistant Professor at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. Her research broadly examines transnational migration and identities of people in the diaspora. She is interested in inter-group relations, political, economic, and social-cultural transformation in a long durée, in particular how cultural settings are created and institutionalized in a particular local locations and how this process impact subsequent patterns of social action and relations between individuals and groups in the global context. Integrating oral traditions, court documents, rituals and other data, her research focuses on the articulation of local histories and political economy, and how these processes inform framework of local / regional / global intersections. Dr. Mhando has worked and / or conducted field work in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mali, Senegal, Malawi, Sudan, and Canada. She was also a facilitator during the 1995 U.N Women’s Decade conference in Beijing, China. She has received numerous awards including the Ford Foundation (1993-4), Canadian Women Funds (1993), UNDP- Tanzania (1994), UN- New York (1995), Who’s Who in America among rising scholars (2004), Nyerere Foundation award for migration research in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda (2006) among others. She has edited a book on Dialoguing Global Peace and Social Justice among Diaspora (2005) with African World Press, “Theorizing African Identities and Multiple Modernities: Questions Revisited,” published by Journal of Concerned African Scholars (ACAS), Spring (2006), From Smorgasbord Pedagogy to Critical Pedagogy: Rethinking How we Teach Race, co-authored with Stephen Philion (American Sociological Association, Summer 2006), and is author of Cultures and Customs in Algeria (Greenwood Press, Spring 2007). She received her Ph.D. from State University of New York at Binghamton in 2003.

FEHINTOLA MOSADOMI holds a Ph.D. from Tulane University with a specialization in Yoruba phonology. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is a poet and linguist. Her interests include studies in Yoruba language and linguistics, French language and literature (including Francophone), Creole studies, language pedagogy, language and power, and language and gender.

JOE NAPOLITANO, an M.A. candidate in the Department of English at George-town University, is currently completing a thesis project that examines the influence of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process on literary form and analyzes the various ways in which recent literary narratives complement, complicate, and / or contest the work of the TRC. His primary area of academic interest is in South African literature and literary history, and his secondary research interests include post-colonial theory and literatures more broadly, as well as Marx and Marxisms, literary theory, and existentialist philosophy. Joe is also acutely interested in the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, and at Georgetown he works as a teaching assistant with the Community Scholars program, an academic program administered through the Center for Minority Educational Affairs that predominantly serves underrepresented and first-generation college student populations.

FALLOU NGOM is Associate Professor of French and Linguistics in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages at Western Washington University. His re-

**RAPHAEL CHIJIOKE NJOKU**, Ph.D, is a first class honors graduate of University of Nigeria Nsukka. He received two Ph.Ds in: (1) African History from Dalhousie University, Canada, 2003, and (2) African Politics from Free University Brussels, 2001. Njoku holds a joint position as Assistant Professor of African History in the Department of History and the Department of Pan African Studies, University of Louisville, KY. Before he joined the University of Louisville faculty in 2003, Dr. Njoku had taught briefly at the Department of History, Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, Nigeria. His research specialty is African history and African politics. He is the author of *Culture and Customs of Morocco* (Greenwood, 2005), and *African Cultural Values: Igbo Political Leadership in Colonial Nigeria 1900-1966* (Routledge, 2006). Dr. Njoku has also published twenty articles in scholarly journals, edited volumes, and encyclopedias. With a fellowship from the New York based Schomburg Center for Research in Black Studies, Njoku is beginning a new book project on *African Masks and Masquerades and Carnival of the Diaspora*.

**SAMUEL OBENG** is Professor of Linguistics, African Studies, Hutton Honors College, and International Studies and Director of Undergraduate Studies in Linguistics at Indiana University in Bloomington. He obtained his Ph.D. in Language and Linguistic Science from the University of York, United Kingdom. He teaches political discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, African linguistics, and international communication. Dr. Obeng has published twelve books including edited volumes and about eighty papers in refereed journals and book chapters. He is the co-editor of *Issues in Political Discourse Analysis and Issues in Intercultural Communication*. Presently, he is working on three endangered languages in West Africa and completing a book of poems titled *Voices from the Grave*. Professor Obeng also writes political satire for a Ghanaian newspaper under various pen-names.

**MICHAEL SHARP** is Professor of English at the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan where he teaches Nineteenth Century Literature and Ideas. His Ph.D. is from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has taught in Britain, Greece, Portugal, and Nigeria, as well as at Binghamton, Harvard, and the University of Wisconsin in the United States, and has been a Teaching Fellow at the International School of Theory in the Humanities at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. His research centers on images of science in Romantic and Victorian poetry, but he has also published essays on dramatists and poets from countries within the Diaspora, most recently focusing on Derek Walcott. His own poetry has been published on both sides of the Atlantic.
RYAN SKINNER is a Ph.D. candidate in ethnomusicology at Columbia University. He received his B.A. in French and Francophone Studies from Carleton College (2000), and M.A. and M.Phil. degrees in ethnomusicology from Columbia University (2005, 2006). He studies music, aurality, postcolonial history, and urban culture in Mali, West Africa. In his Master’s Thesis, “Jeliya in New York City: An Ethnography of Space, Travel, and Practice in Urban America” (2005), Skinner examines the effects of transnational migration on musical expression and cultural identity in the Mande diaspora of New York City. In a recent article, “Determined Urbanites: Diasporic Jeliya in the 21st Century” (Mande Studies 6: 2004), Skinner elucidates an emergent culture of travel among West African musicians practicing an increasingly global tradition of praise singing, instrumental performance, storytelling, and dance known as “jeliya.” His current research focuses on the aesthetics of personhood in postcolonial Bamako, Mali. This work is supported by fellowships from the Social Science Research Council and Wenner-Gren Foundation.

CHERYL STERLING received her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and is currently a Master Teacher at New York University where she teaches African and African Diaspora Studies in the General Studies Program of the Faculty of Arts. Her research interests include post-colonial identity formation, African Studies, Gender, Literary and Cultural movements in the Afro-Atlantic World. She recently conducted funded research in Bahia-Brazil and is currently working on a book-length study on issues of identity among Afro-Brazilians entitled Where They Are with the Issue of Identity: The Transformation of Africa in Afro-Brazilian Discourse. She has published critical essays in Marvels of the African World, The Afro-Brazilian Mind, and Cadernos Negros / Black notebooks, among others.

OLIVIER J. TCHOUAFFE competed his Ph.D. in the Department of Radio-TV-Film, the University of Texas at Austin. His areas of concentration are film studies and critical cultural studies, minorities and international communication and globalization.