

# Decolonizing the African Postcolonial Mind

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**“Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery**

**None but ourselves can free our minds”**

***Bob Marley, "Redemption Song"***



# Suggested readings

- Christopher Clapham (2020): Briefing Decolonising African Studies? *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 58: 1, pp. 137-153
- Frantz Fanon (1961): *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin.
- Frantz Fanon (2008): *Black Skin, White Masks*, Grove Press
- Achilles Mbembe, A. (2001): *On the Postcolony*. Los Angeles: University of California Press
- Albert Memmi (1967): *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Beacon Press: Boston
- Aimé Césaire (2000): *Discourse on Colonialism*., Monthly Review Press: New York
- Chimamanda Adichie (2013): *Americanah*, Vintage: New York
- Chinua Achebe (2017): *The African Trilogy*, Penguin Classics: London
- Wole Soyinka (2013): *Of Africa*, Yale University Press: New Haven
- Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o (1986): *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, James Currey: Woodbridge
- Abdulrazak Gurnah (2021): *Memory of Departure*, Bloomsbury: London

# Postcolonial African Studies Revisited

- ‘Decolonization of African studies’ focuses on the West (Clapham 2020):
  - Liberating African studies from subordination to Western agendas
  - Shifting the perspective from looking at Africa through the colonial lens
  - Understanding Africa’s diverse societies and their structures and values
  - Returning the knowledge production for Africa to the African roots
  - Studying politics in Africa in a Western way is useless
  - Understand Africa’s ‘informal economies’
  - ....

# The Need to Study the African Postcolonial Mind

- Africa's "learned helplessness":
  - Victim mentality: African problems originate from outside
  - A comforting explanation for failure: 'Blame Someone Else'
  - An excuse for intellectual disengagement.
- African academics (Clapham 2020: 145-151):
  - need to re-engage with their own societies,
  - seek to understand where their problems lie,
  - develop theoretical as well as practical ways to deal with them.

# What does it mean to be a researcher in postcolonial Africa?

- Do we maintain our professional ethics or act to please our dictatorial powerholders?



The president of the Uganda Medical Association (UMA) Samuel Oledo begged Yoweri Museveni to seek re-election in 2026 (Dec 5, 2022)

<https://citizen.digital/news/ugandan-doctors-kneel-before-museveni-beg-him-to-run-for-presidency-again-in-2026-n310595>  
<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/entertainment/africa/article/2001462557/kneeling-before-museveni-divides-doctors-in-uganda>

# African Paradoxical Postcolonial Mind

- We put eagerly all the blame on the colonial time and on the West
- We follow blindly the “East” (Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, etc.) and let ourselves be easily mobilized by them against the West.
- We do not have the zeal to overcome our authoritarianism, patriarchy, elitism, clientelism, corruption, ethnicism, intolerance, and parochialism
- We beg around the world for wheat instead of producing it by ourselves

**Vs.**

- We adore the West slavishly: we would like to be Western, migrate to the West, hide our money in the West, consume like the West, look possibly white, etc.
  - We make all efforts to prove to the West that we are their copy:
    - E.g. The Philosophy Conference in Addis Ababa 1975, and the book “African Philosophy” (1998)

<https://www.bu.edu/gdp/2022/10/27/webinar-summary-on-the-trail-of-capital-flight-from-africa-the-takers-and-the-enablers/>

# Conclusion:

## “Africans must be left to decolonize themselves.” (Clapham 2020: 151)

- Stop blaming someone else: the West, China, Russia, the World Bank, IMF, etc.
  - There is no neocolonialism but instead a colonized mind that scapegoats outsiders
- Empower African women
- Abolish our archaic mentality of patriarchy, ethnicism, and religious fanaticism
- Prove white supremacists wrong by doing better than our current miserable performances for the sake of the tens of millions of Africans dehumanized by Western white barbarism of slavery and colonialism
- Strive for self-respect
  - Until we respect ourselves nobody respects us!
- Change Africa not only scientifically, technologically, and economically, but also politically, culturally, and especially **mentally: take our history into our own hands and be respected**

*“Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery  
None but ourselves can free our minds!”*



**Thank you for your attention!**

**mentoring the motivated.**