

ANNUAL REPORT 2014



Royal African Society

www.royalafricansociety.org/annualreport

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ABOUT US

We like to think of ourselves as a 'Big Tent' for everyone interested in Africa in the UK and beyond.


We promote a better understanding of Africa through our publications, websites, annual film and literature festivals, and our regular public events, which are mostly free and open to the public.

Our membership is open to all and is made up of people and organisations from a wide range of cultural and professional backgrounds. Join us to become part of a network of individuals and organisations committed to Africa's advancement.

Find out more at: www.royalafricansociety.org

 www.facebook.com/royafrisoc

 www.twitter.com/royafrisoc

 Join our group, search Royal African Society



RAS TEAM

Team

Director

Richard Dowden

Deputy Director

Richard May

Communications & Editorial

Managing Editor,
African Arguments
Magnus Taylor

Communications
Manager & Editor,
Gateway for Africa
Dele Meiji Fatunla

Membership & Administration

Corporate Relations
Manager
Sandra Hrachova (From
December 2014)

Office Manager
Gemma Haxby

Membership &
Contacts Administrator
Melmarie Laccay

Events, Festivals & Meetings Programme

Programme Manager
Sheila Ruiz

Programme Officer
Shushan Tewolde-
Berhan

Policy & Parliament

Policy & Research
Co-ordinator
Africa APPG
Hetty Bailey

RAS Council

Chair
Zeinab Badawi

Vice-Chairs
Alistair Boyd
Prof. Christopher Cramer
Phillip Alikor

Honorary Treasurer
Innes Meek

Council Members

Prof. David Anderson
Dr. Titilola Banjoko
Susana Edjang
Razia Khan
Gregory Kronsten
Robert Molteno
Dr. Mpalive Msiska
Prof. Stephanie Newell
Jide Olanrewaju
Elsie Owusu
Mark Rose
Camilla Toulmin

African Affairs Joint Editors

Prof. Nic Cheeseman
Dr. Lindsay Whitfield
Rita Abrahamsen (until
Dec 2014)

Book Reviews Editor
Dr. Lotte Hughes

Bibliographer
Terry Barringer

Editorial Assistant
Busani Mpofu

RAS Advisors

Honorary Solicitors
Richard McBride
TLT Solicitors
20 Gresham Street
London EC2V 7JE

Auditors

Clark Brownscombe
8 The Drive
East Sussex BN3 3JT

Bankers

Barclays Bank PLC
2 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6SH

Branding & Design

D237
16 Link Yard,
29a Spelman Street,
London E1 5LX

A NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR



Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report for 2014. If you've just discovered us, welcome. In these pages you will find a brief overview of some of the great things we achieved last year and some of the exciting plans that we have for 2015 and beyond.

As you know, now more than ever, the relationship between Africa, Britain and the rest of the world is changing as the continent becomes more prosperous, despite some remaining challenges. The RAS is an institution uniquely placed to engage with the opportunities, issues and interactions these changes bring up and, crucially we provide a platform for Africans and non-Africans to discuss the continent in the UK and beyond.

I would like to invite you to join us at the Royal African Society; if you haven't already. When I was invited to become chair of the Society, I was greatly honoured. I see the organisation very much like the continent we champion – going in the right direction – and we want to accelerate that progress with your help and enthusiasm.

We're very grateful to those of you who are already members and friends who help us continue our work; your commitment and support ensured that in 2014 we delivered remarkable events on current issues, generated important debates about Africa's politics and progress, and celebrated the best of the continent's literature and film. To those of you who are new, please join the conversation.

We look forward to meeting you at one of our events in the near future.

All the best,
Zeinab



RAS and Film Africa Team members at Film Africa 2014 closing reception

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



2014 will be remembered as the year that marked the end of the post-Cold War Western prescription for global governance.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 the United States proclaimed democracy, human rights and the free market as the cornerstones of global governance. But the firm grip of the Communist Party in China, a failing democracy in Russia and now the rise of militant Islamism, have now forced western democracies to support and defend allies whether or not they are democratic and respect human rights. The failure of the World Trade Organisation to complete the Doha Round after seven years suggests a truly global free market is unlikely to materialise.

This has been bad news for Africa, although the picture is mixed. North of the Sahara, the Arab Spring failed to maintain its democratic momentum and looks likely to be overtaken by intolerant militant Islamism. Egypt returned to military repression. In Libya civil war broke out. And Africa's newest country South Sudan imploded in civil war after only 29 months of independence. Although most African countries now hold elections, they have resulted in few changes of government. There has been an increasing trend towards presidents extending their terms and opposition parties have found themselves with less and less space in which to operate.

Most African economies south of the Sahara continued to grow but not fast enough to deliver jobs to rapidly rising populations. With a 5% economic growth rate last year, a nuanced Africa Rising narrative was still credible. But much of the economic growth is still driven by extracting raw materials, without processing or adding value to them, and fails to provide employment for millions of young Africans. Poverty rates in Sub-Saharan Africa have fallen but high population growth rates have meant that the number of people living in poverty has increased.

However these days are complex and exciting times for Africa. As the continent changes, its economies continue to grow and its politics fascinate but sometimes perturb. The Royal African Society closely followed the continent's unfolding drama through our websites, writings and meetings.

Businesses and governments remain interested in Africa and the RAS has become one of the first places that people look to for expert advice. This year I spoke at more than 30 events in the UK, across Europe and in Africa and the number of hits on our websites has increased enormously. We now have over 130,000 unique visitors a week across our various platforms.

I hope you find our journal, websites and programmes to be valuable tools for following the continent and understanding its twists and turns, as well as learning more about its extraordinary history.

Our business programme helps companies find opportunities in Africa and we hold discussions on sector and country investments in all regions of the continent, as well as promoting best practice for doing business across Africa. Business membership has grown from 35 in 2011 to 100 today. We held eight RAS Business Breakfasts in 2014 and gave several briefings to companies trying to find a way into the African market.

In the British parliament, the Africa All-Party Parliamentary Group – which we administer – held 23 meetings and is the largest of the 604 All-Party Groups with 195 members. The annual project of the Group was to explore Democracy in Africa and this resulted in a widely-distributed report on the subject. The Group made submissions to relevant Select Committee inquiries and also provided a weekly briefing on all mentions of Africa in parliament.

We have ambitious plans for expanding the work of the RAS in 2015 and beyond, including revamping our events listing site to make it a global hub for those interested in attending Africa-related events in the UK and beyond.

We will also be extending the remit of 'African Arguments', our political analysis website, to increasingly focus on publishing the work of up-and-coming African journalists. 'African Arguments' is becoming one of the top websites on Africa for people seeking to understand political developments there.

As you know, Zeinab Badawi has become our new Chair and the first African woman in this role. I am delighted. She has already made a huge contribution to the RAS, playing a very active role, promoting us at every opportunity, chairing events, finding speakers and new members, making connections and reaching out to new audiences.

Lastly, all of our work would not have been possible without the excellent RAS staff, who have worked long extra hours with great enthusiasm. Thanks must also be given for the engagement and support of our members, individual and corporate, as well as our hosts, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), and all our partners. Thank you.

Richard Dowden
Director

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”

Richard Dowden

HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

The full audited accounts are contained in the Report of the Trustees, which is sent to the Charity Commission. Copies are available to members on request and at the Annual General Meeting. Shown here is a Financial Summary.

A decision was made in November 2013 by the RAS Council to wind up the associated charity, the First Charitable Trust, and merge it with the Royal African Society. The main reason for this was that the original rationale for the creation of the Trust, which was to limit the scope of the use of its assets, no longer existed. Maintaining two separate funds performing precisely the same charitable work was administratively burdensome and incurred unnecessary cost at no benefit. The Merger was registered with the Charity Commission on 11th June 2014 and the First Charitable Trust funds of £183,996 were transferred to the RAS.

The financial result for the RAS shows a deficit of £13,428. There was a surplus of £170,568 following the transfer received through the merger, leaving a balance of £501,072 to be brought forward into 2015.

The RAS is extremely grateful to its corporate sponsors, donors and members for their continued support. The RAS would also like to thank SOAS for the provision of office space at a reduced cost and, therefore, providing a gift in kind of £15,870 per annum.

The surplus arising from the RAS journal, African Affairs, included in the overall result was £168,489 up from £157,173 in 2013.

The most significant projects undertaken in 2014 were in the Business Programme and included the prestigious Africa Business Breakfasts at Simpson's-in-the Strand, the Annual Lecture, African Arguments, Africa Writes 2014 and Film Africa 2014.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

For the year ended 31st December 2014

| The Royal African Society | 2014 | 2013 |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| | £,000 | £,000 |

Income and Expenditure Account

Incoming resources from Generated Funds

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Voluntary Income | 105 | 62 |
| Members Subscriptions | 84 | 88 |
| ASAUUK Fee | 6 | 6 |
| Journal Income | 217 | 203 |
| Projects and festivals | 218 | 218 |
| Investment Income and other | 7 | 3 |
| Total Incoming Resources | 637 | 580 |

Resources Expended

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Journal expenditure | 49 | 46 |
| Projects and festivals | 237 | 219 |
| Advancement of knowledge | 341 | 308 |
| Governance costs | 30 | 27 |
| Total resources expended | 657 | 600 |

| | | |
|---|------------|------------|
| Net outgoing resources | -20 | -20 |
| Gain/Loss on revaluation of investments | 7 | -1 |
| Net movement in funds | -13 | -21 |

| | | |
|---|------------|------------|
| Funds received through merger with FCT | 184 | 0 |
| Net movement in funds after transfer of FCT funds | 171 | -21 |
| Total Funds brought forward | 330 | 351 |
| Total Funds carried forward | 501 | 330 |

Balance Sheet

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| Investments | 194 | 18 |
| Current assets | 486 | 375 |
| Current liabilities | 179 | 64 |
| Total net assets | 501 | 331 |

RAS 2014 BUSINESS PROGRAMME

In 2014, our business programme continued to provide a valuable platform for our corporate members to gain insights into Africa, meet influential policy-makers, business and thought leaders and experts from Africa and the UK, as well as make connections with other businesses, and use these networks to realise business potential in Africa.

RAS corporate membership provided companies with a powerful resource through government relations, brand exposure, education and corporate entertainment. We hosted eight Africa Business Breakfasts with first-class speakers, held various events focusing on socio-political issues across Africa and their possible implications for businesses, and held a number of closed business briefings and events, which provided our members with further networking opportunities.

In December a new Corporate Relations Manager, Sandra Hrachova, was appointed on a full-time basis. Sandra's primary goal is to create a corporate membership strategy and further expand our business offering and corporate membership base.

We were delighted to welcome Prudential as one of our core corporate members and we look forward to attracting more in 2015. We aim to develop and broaden our Business Programme in order to better serve our corporate members' needs.

BUSINESS BREAKFAST LIST



Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, Founder of Agang Party, South Africa
Theme: *South Africa: Prospects for 2014*
20.01.2014



Diana Layfield, CEO, Africa Region
Standard Chartered Bank
Theme: *Africa Rising: Parallels with other emerging markets*
06.03.2014



Tutu Agyare, Managing Director
Nubuke Investments
Theme: *How to invest in Africa's growth*
23.09.2014



Kandeh Yumkella, Chairman
UN Secretary-General's High-Level Group on Sustainable Energy for All
Theme: *Transforming energy access for inclusive African growth*
07.10.2014



Maria Ramos, CEO of Absa Group
Theme: *Investing in African Growth – Capturing the Opportunity*
15.10.2014



H.E. John Dramani Mahama
President of Ghana
Theme: *Investing in Ghana – The right choice for your business*
22.10.2014



K.Y. Amoako, Founder and President of African Centre for Economic Transformation
Theme: *Is Africa Really Rising?*
28.10.2014



Arnold Ekpe, Former CEO of Ecobank and Non-Executive Chairman at Atlas Mara Ltd
Theme: *Banking in Africa: the next big thing*
12.11.2014

AFRICA ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

2014 was the Africa APPG's 11th year of existence and saw our former Chair, James Duddridge MP, promoted to Minister for Africa at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. We saw this as recognition of his commitment to Africa as a successful entrepreneur in West Africa.

In addition, a long standing member of our Executive Committee, Baroness Lindsay Northover, was promoted to Under-Secretary of State at DFID (Department for International Development).

New Chair

RAS would like to welcome the new Chair, Lord Chidgey who is dedicated to raising issues of importance to Africa in the House of Lords. In 2014, we also had a change in the Secretariat of the Group with Hetty Bailey taking over from Victoria Crawford in October.

Membership

The Africa APPG remains one of the most active All-Party Groups in Parliament having hosted 23 meetings in 2014 with a membership that has grown to 195 parliamentarians and a growing number of ministers joining our panel discussions

New Report: Democracy Soup

May 2014 saw the publication of the APPG's comprehensive discussion paper

Democracy Soup, which was submitted to the Government. The DFID Minister at the time, Rt. Hon. Lynne Featherstone MP said in her response that the report would inform DFID's continued efforts to strengthen democratic governance in Africa.

In addition to its own report, the group submitted evidence to two enquiries of Parliament's International Development Select Committee.

Research Focus

Since October and the election of our new Chair, the group has focused on the Ebola outbreak holding a series of parliamentary panel events and closed roundtables on the subject (for details see Public Events pages).

A report on the subject will be published later in 2015. The group has also recently launched an inquiry into the UKVI (Visas and Immigration) decision-making process for visa applications from Africans.



AFRICAN ARGUMENTS ONLINE



African Arguments is the online political analysis publication from the RAS. We publish at least one article per day freely available to a global audience (25% of our readership is within Africa).

Readership

In 2014 African Arguments expanded its readership to 60,000 unique visits per month and increased the scope of projects run by the site. Whilst we cover the whole of Africa, we focus in particular on Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and the Central African Republic, as well as Kenya, Uganda and Somalia.

African Journalism Fund

In 2014, African Arguments started the African Journalism Fund (AJF); a ring-fenced part of our commissioning budget reserved for paying journalists from and in Africa, who often have a precarious professional existence in an industry whose employees are generally overworked, underpaid and often under attack. The intention of the AJF is to provide a sustainable international outlet for African journalists and incentivise them to pursue this profession.

Over the year, African Arguments Editor Magnus Taylor made trips to Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria, the latter as part of African Arguments' most exciting project, The Nigeria Forum. This series provided a year's worth of analysis pieces pivoted on the Nigerian general and presidential elections. As well as diversifying its roster of paid contributors and publishing many more African writers, African Arguments now receives regular contributions from two former US assistant Secretaries of State for African Affairs; Hank Cohen and Johnnie Carson.

Roundtables

African Arguments also launched a partnership with the International Crisis Group in which the RAS hosts roundtable events for RAS individual and corporate members with ICG analysts discussing their latest reports. In 2014 this included reports on Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Overview

2014 was another good year for African Affairs. Individual subscriptions increased from 1,205 to 1,213 while the number of institutional subscriptions from developing countries increased to 1,031. Of this group, some 908 institutions received free access to the journal under the Developing Countries Initiative, 465 of which are located within Africa. The editors were particularly pleased that the proportion of visitors to the African Affairs website originating from the continent increased to 27%; this figure is now equal to North America and only just behind Europe. Very few other journals can boast such a strong African readership.

The journal has continued to perform very well in the rankings, outperforming all other journals in African Studies and Area Studies in terms of impact factor (a measure of how widely articles published by the journal are cited in other articles). Articles that were particularly heavily downloaded in 2014 included a series of works on the crisis in South Sudan. Douglas Johnson's excellent briefing provided a concise crash course on the conflict, while Clemence Pinaud and Alex de Waal provided different takes on the historical context of the breakdown of political order in Africa's newest country. All of these articles were made freely available on the African Affairs website (<http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org/>), which greatly aided their dissemination within academia and media.

African Affairs continues to illicit submissions and to publish articles from scholars working in a broad range of countries. In 2014, published authors were drawn from Belgium (3), Botswana (1), Cameroon (1), France (1), Germany (2), Kenya (1), Netherlands (1), South Africa (2), Switzerland (3), the United Kingdom (12) and the United States (11). The editors (Professor Rita Abrahamsen and Professor Nic Cheeseman) continue to reach out to potential authors and readers at every opportunity, and ran "meet the editor" sessions at the African Studies Association (USA) and African Studies Association (UK) annual meetings.

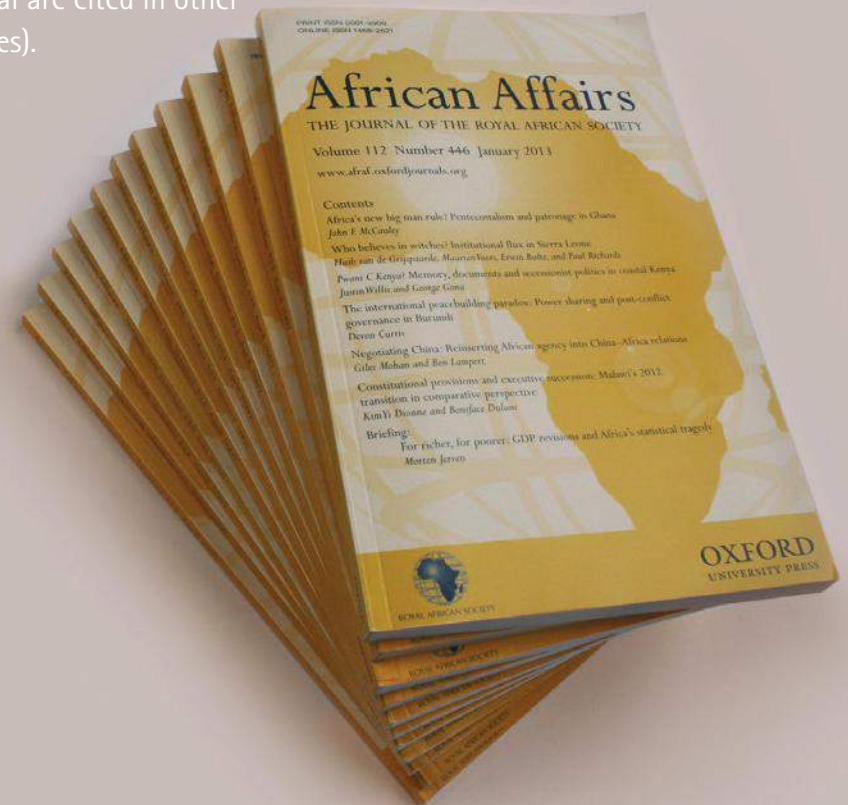
Professor Nic Cheeseman also represented the journal at a writing workshop in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in February 2014, which was designed to support young African authors wishing to publish in academic journals such as African Affairs.

In January 2015, Dr. Lindsay Whitfield took over from Professor Rita Abrahamsen as joint editor of the journal. The RAS would like to thank Professor Abrahamsen for her contribution to maintaining the journal's pre-eminence in its field.

“

The journal has continued to perform very well in the rankings, outperforming all other journals in African Studies and Area Studies in terms of impact factor... (a measure of how widely articles published by the journal are cited in other articles).

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GATEWAY FOR AFRICA > WHAT'S ON AFRICA

In 2014, we continued to support a wide range of organisations by listing and promoting their events via Gateway for Africa, with an increasing number of users adding their events to the site using our self-listing service.

Over the year, we were able to increase editorial coverage on the Gateway for Africa website – some of the events covered included the 1:54 Contemporary Art Fair, a retrospective of the artist Rotimi Fani-Kayode's work, and the London African Music Festival. We published 55 articles on the site in 2014 – most of them generated internally.

New Partnerships

We established a partnership with the Bookshy Blogger to produce content focused on literature in the run up to the RAS literature festival, Africa Writes.

Gateway for Africa editor, Dele Meiji Fatunla, also travelled to Nigeria to report on the Ake Arts and Books Festival.

Site Visits & Development

The combined number of visits to the Royal African Society and Gateway for Africa websites from January 2014 to 2015 was over 130,000 unique visits. Towards the end of 2014, we formed a strategy for a further development of the Gateway for Africa site – which would include giving it an improved look and feel and implementation of a content strategy led by Dele Meiji Fatunla that will see the site rebuilt and renamed. The new site: www.whatsonafrica.org will launch in 2015, and will have a broad focus on culture, creative economy, business and development, alongside a comprehensive listing of Africa-related events in the UK and beyond.

Author, Chibundu Oluo in conversation at Wole Soyinka at 80, May 2014. Picture Credit: Yves Salmon

COMMUNICATIONS

Social Media

Social media continues to be an important avenue of communication for us and a source of new audiences. In 2014, we introduced a limited use of paid-for advertising to promote major events, with great success. More importantly our audience is growing in number and diversity across all our platforms. We are now 'liked' by over 4,800 people on Facebook, we have over 3,700 followers on our @Royafrioc Twitter account and over 26,000 on @africaarguments.

Newsletters

Regional segmentation of users in our mailing list has proved successful, with new registrants to the RAS site expressing interest as follows: East & Central Africa (785); West Africa (873) North Africa (381) and Southern Africa (651). In our areas of thematic interest: Business, (847); Arts & Culture (736); Politics (1058) and Development (1018).

Our events communication has gone from strength to strength; see Pg. 18 for details.

RAS members continue to receive Africa in the News – as well as Africa in Parliament, specifically for corporate members. Subscriptions to our optional African Arguments, Gateway for Africa, Film Africa, and Africa Writes newsletters continue to grow as well.

Media Coverage in 2014

Our activities continue to get significant coverage from a wide variety of media, both in the UK and in Africa.

As a result of Africa Writes, we coordinated major interviews for Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka and Ghanaian novelist Ama Ata Aidoo.

Our regular events programme also generated significant attention from a variety of publications, with particular recognition coming from online diaspora publications, as well as national publications in Africa.

Film Africa, our annual film festival, also generated significant media coverage for the RAS including coverage in The New African, CNN, BBC, Bloomberg TV and numerous online publications.



We continued to benefit from the high profile of our director, Richard Dowden – and his appearance and commentary was in high demand across various publications including The Telegraph, The Times, CNN, Sky News, the BBC, China Daily and The Independent amongst many others. In 2014, RAS programme team members; in particular Dele Meiji Fatunla, Magnus

Taylor and Sheila Ruiz also provided commentary on our various areas of expertise, including business, culture and politics.

Attendee asking a question at Africa Writes 2014. Picture Credit: Yves Salmon

PUBLIC EVENTS & MEETINGS

We continued to deliver a diverse and successful public events programme with panel discussions, book launches, roundtable meetings, our esteemed Annual Lecture and our two very popular annual festivals – Africa Writes and Film Africa.

Impact & Attendance

We attracted a total of 8,429 attendees across all of our activities, hosting an average of 70 people per event. We also continued to engage new audiences, as evidenced in the monitoring data collected at our two cultural festivals and other key events. Our events newsletter subscription increased from 6,660 in 2013 to 8,036 in 2014 and we continued to upload audio podcasts of our events to make the discussions available to as wide an audience as possible.

All our events came under one of four main subject areas – business, politics, academia, and arts and culture – corresponding to the four pillars encompassed in our mission of promoting a better, more nuanced understanding of Africa.

As in previous years, the RAS events programme responded to current affairs and topical issues, drawing on the work of our news and analysis blog African Arguments and the Africa All Party Parliamentary Group. Two such meetings that stand out are 'Central African Republic: Explaining the Crisis' held in January 2014, and our panel discussion on the Ebola outbreak in West Africa held in October 2014.

Programme Highlight: Event Series

Other highlights from 2014 included two major event series. The first, '[How to Fix Nigeria](#)', organised in partnership with multi-award winning TV personality Funmi Iyanda, was launched to explore practical solutions to Nigeria's contemporary challenges as the country marked a centenary since its amalgamation and prepared for its fourth democratic presidential elections in 2015.

The second major event series was Basil Davidson's award-winning documentary film series '[AFRICA: A Voyage of Discovery](#)' was organised in partnership with Producer and Director Mick Csáky. This documentary series first appeared in the UK on Channel 4 in 1984 and was subsequently broadcast all over the world. The RAS celebrated its 30th anniversary with four screenings of the documentary followed by Q&A's and discussions, one of which was part of the Film Africa programme.

The 2014 RAS events programme, including [Africa Writes](#), was organised and delivered by Programme Manager Sheila Ruiz, and Programme Officer, Shushan Tewolde-Berhan, with input from the rest of the RAS team. [Film Africa](#), continued to be produced in-house with a wider team, including freelance staff and volunteers. A summary report on both cultural festivals and our Annual Lecture can be seen overleaf. Our business programme is covered on page 10.

WOLE SOYINKA @ 80: AN EVENING WITH AN ICON

On Thursday 8th May, we hosted Professor Wole Soyinka, Nigerian playwright, poet and novelist and the first African to win the Nobel Prize in Literature (1986). In addition to his successful literary career, he is also well known for his political activism. As part of the celebrations of his 80th year of life, we held a special, pre-Africa Writes event at the British Library. He was interviewed by Margaret Busby, in a wide ranging conversation that explored the relationship between culture and politics, his legacy and the future of African literature.

The event also launched the book *'Crucible of the Ages: Essays in Honour of Wole Soyinka at 80'* published by Ayebia Clarke publishers.

Asked by writer Chibundu Onuzo about his iconic Afro, and how he deals with being such a recognizably iconic figure, Professor Soyinka said: "Well, it's a nuisance sometimes, quite frankly...it's a nuisance, because you like your anonymity, as much as possible; you know that some is lost already, because you're...what you might call a public figure, but to carry literally, this burden on your head, is a level of masochism, which I didn't think I was capable of...I think I should hold a patent to it, it might earn me more money than royalties from books" he said, to applause and delighted laughter from the audience.

Asked about influencing and leading the next generation of African writers and their role in politics and society, Professor Soyinka said "I think by now we should stop looking in this direction for leadership. I think by now you should have produced your own leaders"

“
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leaders

”
Wole Soyinka

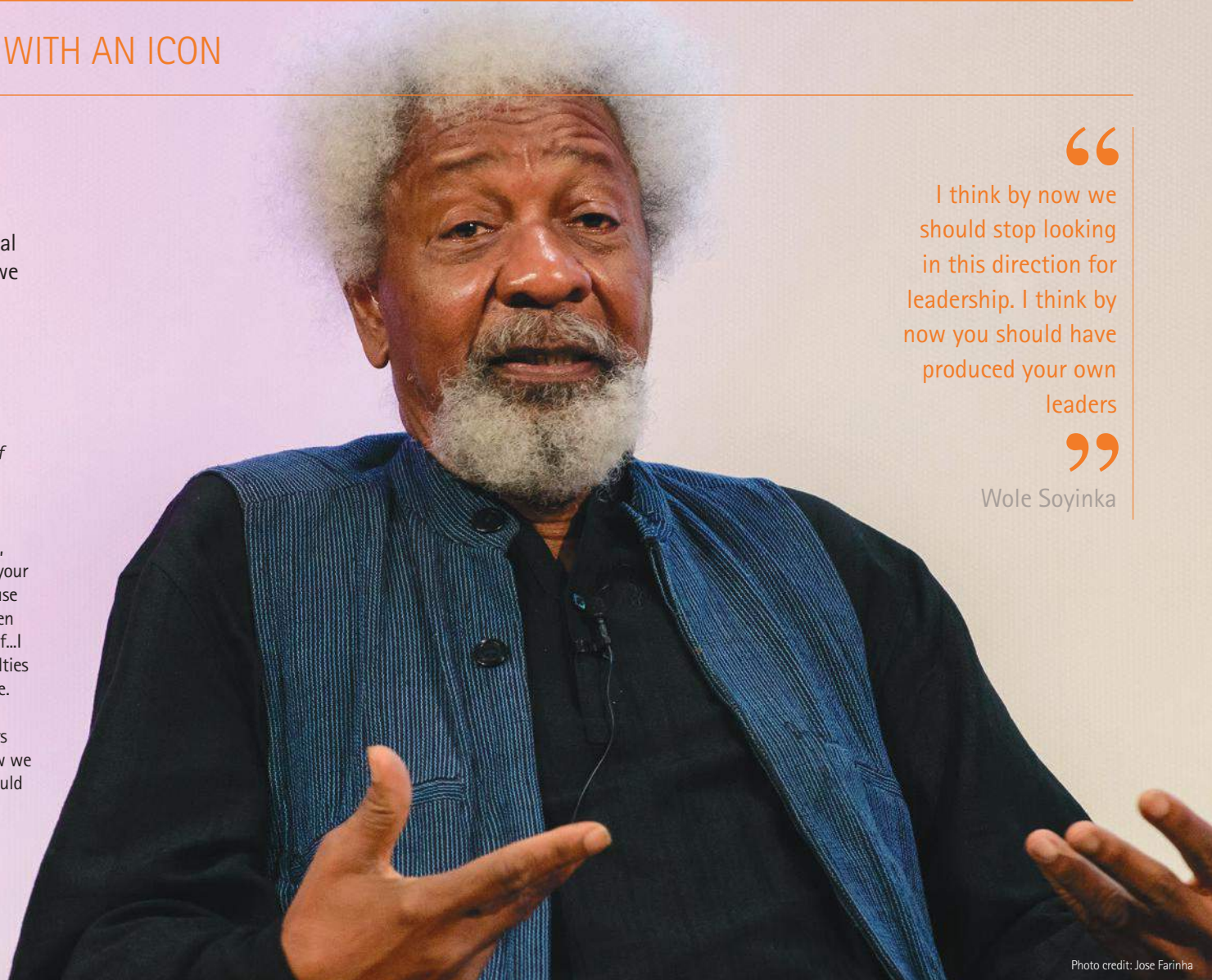


Photo credit: Jose Farinha



AMA ATA AIDOO @ AFRICA WRITES 2014

Ama Ata Aidoo, the leading author, poet, playwright, academic and the former Minister of Education of Ghana was the headline speaker at the Africa Writes 2014 festival. On Saturday 12th July, she joined translator and critic Wangui wa Goro for a conversation in front of a packed audience to reflect on her expansive literary career and the main themes that emerge in her ground-breaking works, from *Our Sister Killjoy* to *Changes: A Love Story*, and her poignant play, *Anowa: Dilemma of a Ghost*. Aidoo's protagonists are women who make radical choices and defy traditional gender roles.

Answering a young audience member who asked for a list of young writers from Africa that she finds exciting, Ama Ata Aidoo replied:

"...there are lots of young writers... listen, why don't you Google? [sic]" To delighted audience laughter and she continued "I mean this thing about googling, it's not all together a joke with me. Yesterday I was on Focus on Africa; the interviewer started by saying something like, why aren't young Africans writing? And I said well, whom have you read? And they have not read anything...and he could mention Chimamanda...but Chimamanda

belongs to a category all her own... but then he would flatter me with: but people are not writing like you...well, have you read them? You cannot criticise people for not writing when you haven't looked for their books. And you cannot criticise people for not writing with gravitas when you have not even read them. So you see, I could give you a whole list of young people writing today in Africa who excite me, but I think that, that's your job"

“
"...listen, why don't
you Google?" I could
give you a whole list of
young people writing
today in Africa who
excite me, but I think
that's your job
”

Ama Ata Aidoo



Photo credit: Jose Farinha



AFRICA WRITES 2014

The third edition of Africa Writes, our annual literature and book festival, took place from Friday 11 to Sunday 13 July at The British Library, featuring an exciting programme of book launches, readings, panel discussions, young people's workshops and an international book fair. Below are some festival highlights and statistics:

- Africa Writes 2014 brought together 57 contributors from the world of contemporary African literature, ranging from authors, poets and playwrights to critics, publishers and experts.
- The festival was mainly free and attended by approximately over 1,500 people. The Friday and Saturday evening events which were the only paid sessions at the festival were sold-out to audiences of over 250.
- Festival audiences expressed a high level of satisfaction, with 97% of attendees rating their experience as 'good' or 'excellent' and 100% stating they would attend Africa Writes again.
- Africa Writes 2014 attracted 77% new attendees and 28% new visitors to The British Library. For 30% of attendees, the festival was the first time they had heard of The Royal African Society and 98% of attendees said they planned to attend future RAS events.
- Africa Writes 2014 audiences were diverse – 48% described themselves as Black African, 12% as White British and 9% as Black Caribbean – and seriously interested in literature (31% of attendees said they worked in publishing and literature).

Sponsorship and Partners

Africa Writes 2014 was principally funded by Arts Council England through their 'Grants for the Arts' programme and through corporate sponsorship from SCIB Nigeria insurance brokers. The festival also enjoyed the support of a wide range of cultural and media partners, including: The Caine Prize for African Writing, Centre of African Studies (SOAS), The British Museum, British Council, Sidensi, Africa39, Africa Book Centre, Commonwealth Writers, English PEN, Kwani?, The Pelican Post, Spora Stories, TEDxEuston, Cassava Republic, Styled by Africa, Afrikult, BookShy, Africa in Words, the African & Black Reading Groups and Worldreader.

Writer and activist Jessica Horn at Africa Writes 2014. Picture Credit: Yves Salmon





THE ROYAL AFRICAN SOCIETY'S -ANNUAL- FILM FESTIVAL

Film Africa 2014 took place over the course of 10 days (Friday 31 October – Sunday 9 November) across 11 London cinemas and venues. In its fourth edition, the festival hosted 56 screenings and events, including appearances from leading African filmmakers and industry experts offering Q&As, panel discussions, master-classes and workshops. The statistics tell the story:

- Film Africa 2014 presented a high-quality and wide-ranging programme with 85 films from across 23 different African countries, including 44 features, 41 shorts and 56 premieres.
- The festival returned high Box Office takings of (£6,722) and drew high audience numbers (3,400) figures, with 69% of all available seats sold on average and a fifth of the screenings sold-out.
- The festival hosted 20 visiting film-makers and other involved in film from the continent and the diaspora and another 20 industry experts and guest contributors.
- All films featured introductions by a festival programmer and 22 out of 49 of all screenings were contextualised with post-screening discussions and/or director Q&As.
- 70% of the complementary events programme were free, enabling festival access to school children and young people, those on low incomes and the unemployed.
- Audiences, made up of both repeat (35%) and new (65%) attendees, expressed a high level of satisfaction – 99% of attendees said they would attend Film Africa again and 98% said they would recommend the festival to a friend. A further 95% stated that they would be keen on watching more African films in the cinema year-round, should they be on offer.
- Our monitoring and evaluation data shows that our audiences were predominantly young (20–40 on average), ethnically diverse (40% described themselves as White European, 28% as Black African, followed by 7% as mixed) The primary reason for audiences attending the festival was their interest in African film.
- Film Africa 2014 secured widespread coverage in national and international media, further consolidating the festival's profile as the key platform for African cinema in London and the UK.

Sponsors and Partners

Film Africa 2014 funders and sponsors (both financial and in-kind) included: Miles Morland Foundation, BFI Film Festival Fund & BFI Programming Development Fund, SA-UK Seasons, MOFILM, the Centre of African Studies (SOAS), SABMiller, Divine Chocolate and Aduna.

Cultural partners included: British Council, Commonwealth Writers, Brand South Africa, The Maghreb Cinema Series, Culturama, NUMBI Arts, Open The Gate, The Pelican Post, Lights Camera Africa! Festival in Nigeria and all the UK film festivals – Africa in Motion (AiM) Film Festival in Edinburgh and Glasgow, Afrika Eye in Bristol, the Cambridge African Film Festival and Watch Africa in Wales. Our main media partners were: IC Publications and The Africa Channel.



Still from The Narrow Frame of Midnight, Film Africa 2014, Opening Night Film



2014 RAS ANNUAL LECTURE

The 2014 Royal African Society Annual Lecture was delivered by Dr Obiageli 'Oby' Ezekwesili, Senior Economic Adviser at Open Society Foundations (OSF). A former Vice-President of the World Bank (Africa Region) and Minister of Education in Nigeria from 2006–2007, Dr Ezekwesili is one of the leading campaigners for the 'Bring Back Our Girls' movement, which formed following the kidnapping by Boko Haram of over 300 girls from a boarding school in Chibok, north-eastern Nigeria, in April 2014.

Her inspiring lecture titled *'Africa Rising? What will happen when her citizens arise'*, matched Dr Ezekwesili's blunt statement that the missing link in the African growth story was ownership by its citizens. Dr Ezekwesili warned against complacency in a continent where 48% of the population still lives in poverty, highlighting that economic growth must translate into structural social change and improved living standards for the majority. She called on African citizens to make their leaders accountable, emphasising that the quality of policies that will drive the next phase of Africa's development can only be delivered if people demand good governance, the rule of law, transparency and probity.

The 2014 Annual Lecture was sponsored by Diageo, hosted by the Royal Society of Medicine and chaired by Zeinab Badawi, Chair of the RAS.



DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S NOTE: A LOOK FORWARD



2014 was another fantastic year for the RAS. From Film Africa with 85 films screened over 10 days to our fourth Annual Lecture delivered by Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, to the

memorable event at the British Library with Wole Soyinka, the numerous book launches held at SOAS and our prestigious Business Breakfasts, we continue to provide our members and supporters with an exciting and varied programme exploring the depth and diversity of Africa.

As the UK's leading organisation promoting the understanding of Africa in the UK, we have been able to tap into the growing interest in the continent. People come to us because of our unique blend of events and offerings. We are the only organisation that covers Africa in the round with our focus on four key areas: business, politics, academia, and arts and culture.

We are now in the process of planning for the next five years with continuity and change in mind. A new visual identity is currently under development and an expanded digital presence will enable us to inspire new audiences around the world. We are already doing this. Lagos is running a close second to London as the city with most readers of African Arguments, our political analysis website, with Nairobi coming in fourth place.

We will soon be going live with a new website What's on Africa, a successor to Gateway for Africa, with more content and wider coverage of events both in the UK and in Africa. We will also be updating our main RAS website with new branding and easier systems for event and membership registration.

We will continue to raise the profile of Africa in Westminster and Whitehall through our administration of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Africa. Membership is at an all-time high and the group will publish a report on the Ebola outbreak later in the year. We are already preparing for our two cultural festivals, Africa Writes and Film Africa. Our journal, African Affairs, continues to be cited as the leading journal for African studies. We are in the process of expanding our business programme and now have over 100 business members.

Our work is not possible without collaboration and partnerships with a range of organizations. We are particularly grateful to SOAS and LIDC (London International Development Centre) for hosting us, and to our corporate sponsors, donors and individual members for their continued support. And the last word goes to our excellent staff. All our work would not be possible without their dedication and commitment.

We are equally grateful to you, our friends, members and supporters, and hope you will join us in making 2015 an equally successful year for the Royal African Society.

Richard May
Deputy Director

Join the RAS as a corporate or an individual member

When you join the Royal African Society, you become part of a vibrant network of individuals and organisations committed to promoting a better understanding of Africa in Britain.

To find out about joining visit
www.royalafricansociety.org/join-us

Join us in 2015



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CONTACT DETAILS

Royal African Society
36 Gordon Square
London
WC1H 0PD
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 3073 8335

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