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Abstract

“Towards Decolonization: Migrated Kenyan Archives and the Politics of Knowledge Production” examines ethical questions of archival removal in relation to access to knowledge and the politicization of access. Utilizing a theoretical framework of postcolonial theory, decolonial theory, and epistemic decolonization, this study investigates Kenyan archival holdings within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office files at The National Archives in London and the East African Archives at Syracuse University. Analysis of these archives is conducted using qualitative methods of archival research and interviews. This research reveals British colonial efforts to protect its reputation by migrating, concealing, and destroying archives and to preserve its imperial legacy by initiating microfilming projects overseas. This thesis argues that archival removal from Africa has resulted in epistemic violence, reproducing coloniality of knowledge production in academia and further marginalizing scholars of African studies in the Global South. This thesis suggests rethinking access to knowledge through the return of migrated archives and structural decolonization of institutions with migrated archival holdings.

Towards Decolonization: Migrated Kenyan Archives and the Politics of Knowledge Production

By

Joy Nyokabi Karinge

B.A., United States International University-Africa, 2018

Thesis

Submitted in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Pan African Studies

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter Outline	3
Background	4
<i>British Colonialism in Kenya</i>	4
<i>Hanslope disclosure</i>	13
The Syracuse Microfilm Project	15
Research objectives	17
Research questions	17
Argument	18
Positionality	19
Theoretical framework	23
<i>Postcolonial theory</i>	23
<i>Decolonial theory</i>	24
<i>Epistemic decolonization</i>	26
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	30
The "Migrated Archives"	30
<i>Operation Legacy in Kenya</i>	30
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS	36
<i>The Hanslope Papers</i>	37
<i>East African Archives at Syracuse University</i>	39
Interviews	41
Limitations	47
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	47
Archival analysis	47
<i>Evidence of colonial brutality</i>	48
<i>Operation Legacy</i>	49
<i>Efforts for restitution</i>	52
Analysis of interviews	56
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS	59
Politics of Inaccess	60
Sanitized history of British Colonialism	64
Miseducation of the Youth	65
Archives as Tools for Social Justice	67

Epistemological Scramble for Africa	68
Revisiting the East African archives at SU.....	81
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS	92
Return "Migrated Archives"	93
Decolonize Syracuse University	102
Decolonize African studies	105
Pan African implication	108
Further work	110
Bibliography	111
Vita	135

List of Illustrative Materials

Fig 1. Map showing the location of Kenya in Africa

Fig 2. Operation Anvil

Fig 3. Operation Anvil.

Fig 4. Operation Anvil

Fig 5. Operation Anvil

Fig 6. Operation Anvil

Fig 7. Image of interview with Lucy Wanjiku Karinge

Fig 8. FCO 141 document

Fig 9. ASA Presidents 1957- 2018

Fig 10. Poster of Kenya National Archives collection at Syracuse University

Fig 11. Poster excerpt of Kenya National Archives collection at Syracuse University

Abbreviations

ASA: African Studies Association

DTC: Department of Technical Co-Operation (United Kingdom)

FCO: Foreign and Commonwealth Office (United Kingdom)

HBCU: Historically Black Colleges & Universities

HMG: Her Majesty's Government (United Kingdom)

KNA: Kenya National Archives

NDEA: National Defense Education Act

PRO: Public Records Office (United Kingdom)

SU: Syracuse University

TNA: The National Archives (United Kingdom)



Fig 1. Map showing the location of Kenya in Africa¹

¹ “Detailed Location Map of Kenya in Africa | Kenya | Africa | Mapsland | Maps of the World,” accessed April 16, 2023, <https://www.mapsland.com/africa/kenya/detailed-location-map-of-kenya-in-africa>.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The violent appropriation of the wealth of African countries by the West during colonialism² continues to reshape itself in the postcolonial era. Colonialism was a monumental juncture for Africans as it set the foundation for the looting and extraction of African natural wealth, labor, and resources.³ African cultural productions such as artefacts, historical records and archaeological material did not escape the raid. They too were part of the brutal conquest and subjugation that bankrolled palaces and institutions across Europe.⁴

Colonial looting of cultural objects such as the Benin bronzes and the Congolese masks, not only degraded African heritage but served to undermine the political and cultural sovereignty of African nations.⁵ Six decades after independence, African governments are still actively seeking the repatriation of stolen artefacts.⁶ In February 2023, the Kenyan Principal Secretary for Culture and Heritage, Ummi Bashir asked the United Kingdom to return historically significant artefacts and documents to Kenya.⁷

Institutions that were part of the colonial quagmire such as museums, archives, and universities, that continue to hold on to culturally and spiritually significant African artefacts

² Walter Rodney, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. Walter Rodney 1973," 1973.

³ Paul Tiyambe Zeleza 1955 and Codesria, *A Modern Economic History of Africa*, Book, Whole (Oxford [England];Dakar, Senegal; Codesria, 1993), <https://go.exlibris.link/kgWVQm3J>.

⁴ Walter Marsh, "Stuff the British Stole: Marc Fennell's TV Series Wades Headfirst into Colonial Quagmires," *The Guardian*, October 31, 2022, sec. Television & radio, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/nov/01/stuff-the-british-stole-australia-abc-tv-series-marc-fennell-colonial-history>.

⁵ Sarah Van Beurden, "The Art of (Re)Possession: Heritage and the Cultural Politics of Congo's Decolonization," *Journal of African History* 56, no. 1 (March 2015): 143–64, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853714000681>.

⁶ Nosmot Gbadamosi, "Stealing Africa: How Britain Looted the Continent's Art," accessed March 17, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/10/12/stealing-africa-how-britain-looted-the-continents-art>.

⁷ "Culture PS Asks UK to Return Historical Kenyan Artefacts," *The Star*, accessed February 25, 2023, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/realtime/2023-02-25-culture-ps-asks-uk-to-return-historical-kenyan-artefacts/>.

amid calls for repatriation, represent the more subtle chains of neocolonial dispossession and continued colonial violence.

In order to justify the "civilizing mission" in Africa, the imperialists waged war on the cultural frontier, attacking African systems of knowing, heritage and cultural memory, and migrated records relating to African history. The effect of this cultural erasure as described by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was to "annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves."⁸

This thesis explores the removal of archives from Africa through a theoretical lens of postcolonialism, decolonization and epistemic injustice. More specifically, it examines the transfer process and resulting complexities of Kenyan archives abroad, putting two archival holdings in conversation with each other: the Foreign and Commonwealth Office files (FCO 141) at The National Archives in London and the East African Archives at Syracuse University.

This thesis further examines ethical questions on access to knowledge and the politicization of this access through migrating, concealing, and destroying archives. It explores the coloniality of knowledge production. Micere Mugo highlights this in her seminal work, *The Imperative of Utu/Ubuntu in Africana Scholarship*, outlining that "knowledge and scholarship can either be colonizing, alienating and enslaving or alternatively, it can be conscientizing, humanizing and liberating."⁹

In similar fashion, given the centering role of archives in research and scholarship, this thesis studies the role of migrated archives in reproducing the coloniality of knowledge

⁸ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "Decolonising the Mind," *Diogenes* 46, no. 184 (December 1, 1998): 101–4, <https://doi.org/10.1177/039219219804618409>.

⁹ Micere Mugo, "The Imperative of Utu / Ubuntu in Africana Scholarship," *Daraja Press*, 2021.

production in academia. It considers the implications of migrating archives on the marginalization and displacement of scholars of African studies in the Global South.

Chapter Outline

The paper is divided into six chapters. The first chapter which is the introduction, provides a background of colonialism in Kenya, the resulting reparations case (Mau Mau vs the British government) and the outcomes of that case which ultimately lead to the disclosure of the migrated archives. Here I also introduce the Syracuse Microfilm Project.

The next chapter outlines the literature review and the theoretical frameworks selected by the author, notably postcolonial theory, decolonial theory and epistemic decolonization. The literature review analyzes works written about these records and the debates around them.

The methods chapter discusses the methodological approaches taken by the author including archival research, oral history interviews and informal conversations, while the findings chapter analyzes the resulting themes of this field research.

In the discussions chapter, I delve deeper into these underlying themes and situate them within broader conversations on: the politicization of access to the records at The National Archives in London; the influential role of destroying archives in presenting a sanitized version of British colonialism and the subsequent miseducation of youth; the overarching importance of archives as tools for social justice.

Additionally, I argue that migrating archives was part of an epistemological scramble for Africa and African knowledge and situate this within the geopolitical context of the time. Lastly, I revisit the East African archives at Syracuse, evaluating their response to equity, access and inclusion.

In the final chapter, I propose recommendations to deal with these records, including returning the FCO 141 files to their countries of origin, considering structural decolonization efforts for institutions of higher education such as Syracuse University and implementing measures to democratize scholarship of African studies for scholars of Africa in the Global South. Finally, I situate my work within the broader Pan Africanism movement. Let us now move on to the background section on the case of the British in colonial and postcolonial Kenya.

Background

British Colonialism in Kenya

The Berlin conference of 1884 set in motion the "Scramble for Africa" and institutionalized the white supremacist European nationalist agenda. European powers divided Africa amongst themselves and drew their borders in Africa without regard to local conditions or seeking input from African leaders.¹⁰ The East African region acquired by Britain in the era of the scramble and partition became the British East Africa Protectorate, which was renamed Kenya Colony and Protectorate in 1920. Kenya was occupied by the British and obtained its name from the second tallest mountain in Africa, named by the Kikuyu as Mt. Kirinyaga, the British could not pronounce Kirinyaga and so they named it Mt. Kenya.¹¹

The British settled mainly in the highlands of Kenya and in doing so forcibly expelled large numbers of people from their ancestral lands.¹² Moreover, they established a racist administrative system where the British were at the top of the hierarchy and the Africans at the

¹⁰ Wolfgang Reinhard, "Colonization and Colonialism, History Of," *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* 4, no. Generic (2015): 223–27, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.62081-0>.

¹¹ M. P. K. Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, vol. no. 2, Book, Whole (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968).

¹² John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, "Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914," *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 4 (1979): 487–505, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/181774>.

bottom, acting as squatters and workers. Harold Isaacs explains that "The white man, in his superior power, found ample sanctions for all his deeds. He cared seldom and not enough about the impact of his actions on Africans. In the eyes of the new settlers, the Africans were childish creatures, savages who belonged little to human society".¹³

In 1952, members of the Kikuyu ethnic group founded the Kenya Land and Freedom Army and waged an armed struggle to reclaim "ithaka na wiyathi" or land and freedom.¹⁴ The British derogatorily named them Mau Mau. To them, "the Mau Mau rebellion [was] nothing less than an attack on the racial superiority on which their society is based".¹⁵ With the death toll rising and unrest increasing, the then British governor Evelyn Baring decided to implement Section 3 of the Emergency Powers Order and declare a state of Emergency over Kenya in 1952.¹⁶

To quell the revolt, the British launched several operations, including Operation Jock Scott, Operation Anvil and Operation Hammer. Taking the case of Operation Anvil in 1954, British troops, in an effort to quash Mau Mau, attempted to remove all Gikuyu, Embu and Meru men and their families from Nairobi. The men were captured from all over town and taken to a central screening location. Those who resisted had their faces painted like cows and were subjected to intense screening.

The screening process entailed being brought before a hooded man, deemed to be a police informant, and if the hooded man recognized the suspect, they would be sent to Lang'ata

¹³ Harold R. Isaacs, "The Re-Discovery of Africa: Notes on Some Recent Books," ed. L. S. B. Leakey et al., *International Journal* 9, no. 1 (1954): 48–53, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40197882>.

¹⁴ Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*, 1st ed., Book, Whole (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2005), <https://go.exlibris.link/3Q6Nv5G8>.

¹⁵ David Anderson 1957, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, 1st American, Book, Whole (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005).

¹⁶ Anderson.

detention camp. Before this, they were disenfranchised of all their property and belongings, separated from their wives and children who were sent back to the reserves. The images below illustrate the activities of Operation Anvil, noting their assigned captions:



Fig 2. Operation Anvil “*Before being put with the other detainees, each man was carefully searched for concealed weapons.*”¹⁷

¹⁷ *Operation Anvil*, n.d., n.d., DO 226/26/902/31, The National Archives, Kew.

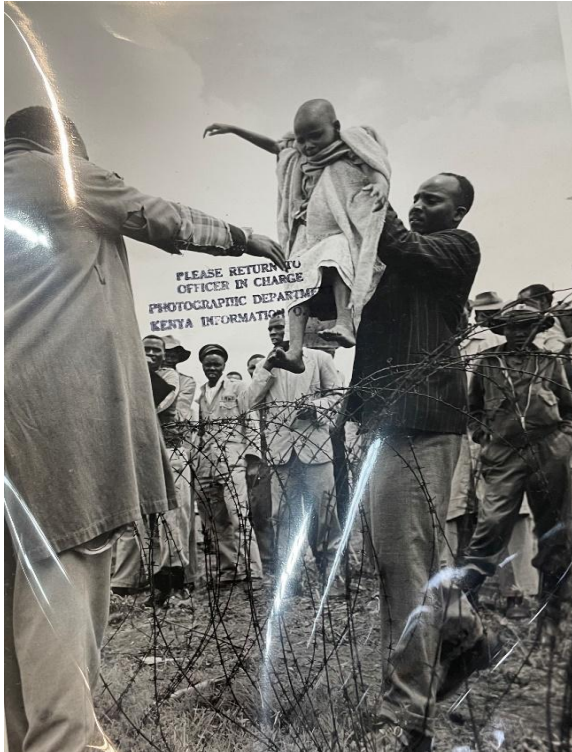


Fig 3. Operation Anvil. *“This child’s father has failed to pass the scrutiny of the Screening teams at Bahati, and he is passing her over the wire of a compound to a friend.”*¹⁸

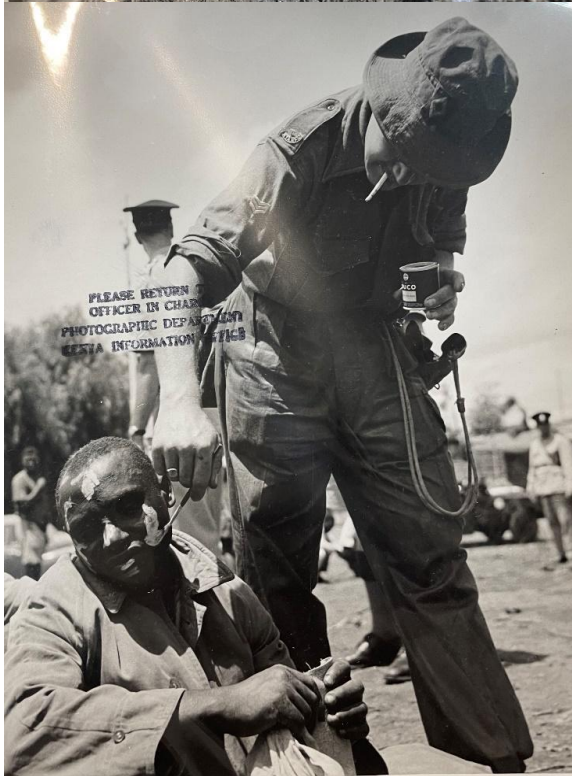


Fig 4. Operation Anvil *“Certain Kikuyu found hiding during the search of the river road area, were marked with paint to prevent their mingling with the rest of the crowd during the screening process.”*¹⁹

¹⁸ *Operation Anvil*, n.d., n.d., DO 226/ 26/902/32, The National Archives, Kew.

¹⁹ *Operation Anvil*, n.d., n.d., DO 226/26/902/3, The National Archives, Kew.

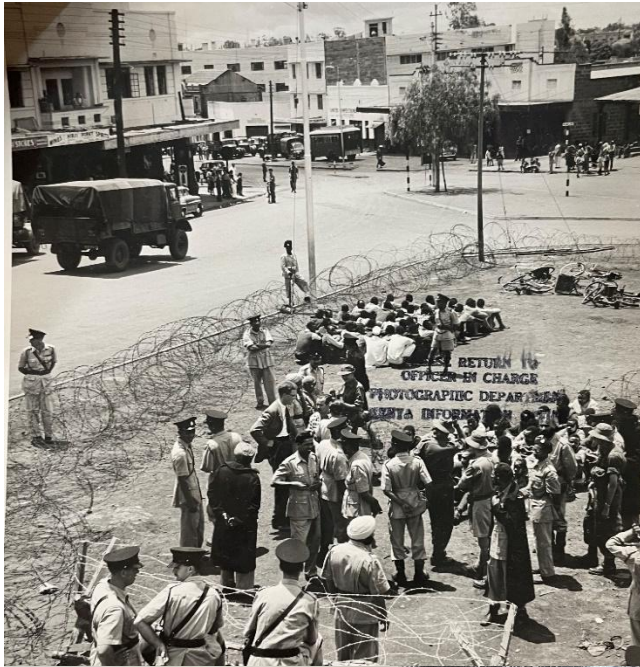


Fig 5. Operation Anvil “Having been searched, the detainees are gathered in batches of five hundred to be taken to one of the detention pens.”²⁰



Fig 6. Operation Anvil “On arrival at Lang’ata Camp the detainees, still in batches of fifty, are counted off the lorries and sent to one of the reception pens.”²¹

²⁰ Operation Anvil, n.d., n.d., DO 226/26/902/22, The National Archives, Kew.

²¹ Operation Anvil, n.d., n.d., DO 226/26/902/5, The National Archives, Kew.

At the time of the Emergency, British military and air force troops arrived to buttress local law enforcement, and political leaders associated with Mau Mau, including Jomo Kenyatta, were detained in 1953. Hundreds of thousands of innocent Africans were apprehended and placed in concentration camps where they were imprisoned, tortured, and murdered.²²

More than a decade later, with the wind of change blowing in Africa, Kenya gained independence in 1963. However, Mau Mau remained a movement that was banned and a topic that was silenced.²³ The new African president, Jomo Kenyatta, made a famous speech shortly after independence, stating that Kenyans must "forgive and forget the past",²⁴ that Kenya would not be "a government of gangstas", and that "we would not chase out the white man". On the question of land reform, he stated that "we do not want free things" and that "land must be bought at full valuation".²⁵

In doing so, Kenyatta assured the white settlers of the security of their property and absolved them of any responsibility for the past suffering of Africans, while at the same time denouncing the claim of the ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters to land, which they felt to be their due from independent Kenya. In addition to this, Kenyatta collaborated with the British government through the controversial 'Million Acre Scheme' to compensate white settlers returning to Britain for their loss of land and labor. In 2003, the Societies Act Law, an order declaring Mau a society

²² Daniel Branch 1978, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization*, vol. no. 111;111.;, Book, Whole (Cambridge;New York; Cambridge University Press, 2009), <https://go.exlibris.link/TqtwNTjY>.

²³ Mickie Mwanzia Koster, "Malcolm X, The Mau Mau, and Kenya's New Revolutionaries: A Legacy of Transnationalism," *The Journal of African American History*, March 1, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.5323/jafriamerhist.100.2.0250>.

²⁴ Oginga Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru* (East African Educational Publishers, 1995).

²⁵ W. O. Maloba, *The Anatomy of Neo-Colonialism in Kenya* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50965-5>.

dangerous to the good government of the public, was revoked by the Kibaki regime, and in 2009 the veterans were successfully supported by Kenya Human Rights Commission to file a complaint at the British High Court.²⁶

Mau Mau vs. the British Government

In June 2009, five ex-Mau Mau victims who suffered British atrocities during the 1952 State of Emergency brought a case to the British High Court in London against the British Government; that was represented by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The victims, who suffered abuses ranging from castration, beatings, to rape, included Ndiku Mutua, Paulo Mzili, Wambugu Nyingi, Jane Muthoni Mara and Susan Ngondi.²⁷

Leigh Day law firm brought several claims on behalf of the Mau Mau victims against the British government. First, they claimed that the British government has inherited the liabilities of Kenya's Colonial Government. Second, they claimed that the British government was liable for having "instigated and procured through the army, and the Colonial Office, a system of torture and ill-treatment of detainees as part of a common design shared with the Colonial Government in Kenya."

Third, they argued that the British government "expressly instructed, authorized, or approved a policy of mistreatment of detainees," backed up by exchanges between the Governor of the colony and the Colonial Office in London. Lastly, they proffered that the British government owed a duty to care for and prevent abuses to the Mau Mau, which the British knew were being committed.²⁸ They postulated that in doing so, the British violated the European

²⁶ Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*.

²⁷ Caroline Elkins, "Alchemy of Evidence: Mau Mau, the British Empire, and the High Court of Justice," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39, no. 5 (December 2011): 731–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2011.629084>.

²⁸ "Mutua and Others v. Foreign and Commonwealth Office [2011] EWHC 1913 (QB).," October 5, 2012.

Convention on Human Rights Article five as well as the Geneva Conventions, both of which Britain was a party.²⁹

In response to these claims, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office twice sought to strike out the case. The first strikeout attempt centered on the question of liability and state succession. The FCO argued that all legal liability was transferred to the independent Kenyan government in December 1963, and therefore the current British government was not responsible for events that took place during the colonial period. The Honorable Mr. Justice McCombe, the justice presiding in the British High Court, dismissed this argument, calling it “dishonorable.”³⁰

Githu Muigai, the former Attorney General of Kenya, who played an advisory role on the case, noted that on the question of liability:

“The rights, liabilities and obligations of the colonial government before 12th December 1963 remained intact not having been transferred from the Colonial Administration to the dominion Government or assumed by the Government of the Republic of Kenya. There can be no logical or legal reason for the independent government to assume liabilities not otherwise imposed by the 1963 Act.”³¹

The FCO sought to strike out the claimants’ case a second time, this time arguing that the claims long exceeded the statute of limitations. Once again, Justice McCombe ruled in favor of the claimants.

Several historians took part in the case as expert witnesses and advisors, including Caroline Elkins, David Anderson and Huw Bennett, who provided evidence in favor of the claimants on capital cases and forest war, the role of the British military in counter-insurgency operations and on the system of detention and villagization.

²⁹ Elkins, “Alchemy of Evidence.”

³⁰ David M. Anderson, “Mau Mau in the High Court and the ‘Lost’ British Empire Archives: Colonial Conspiracy or Bureaucratic Bungle?,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39, no. 5 (December 2011): 699–716, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2011.629082>.

³¹ “Mutua and Others v. Foreign and Commonwealth Office [2011] EWHC 1913 (QB).”

In 2013, the case was set to go to the Court of Appeals, but the British government decided to settle instead. The Kenya Human Rights Commission had initially proposed that an apology should be issued and a welfare fund created as a means of collective reparations for the estimated 5,000 survivors. However, the FCO opted to provide financial compensation, issue a statement of regret, and put up a monument in Nairobi. This outcome was not well received by Mau Mau veterans.³² At the unveiling of the monument, a protestor put up a poster saying, “we did not fight for a monument; we fought for land.”³³

Subsequently, the then FCO secretary, William Hague gave a gaslighting apology to the victims, while boldly recognizing the contributions of British colonial officials in Kenya, denying liability “on behalf of the Government and British taxpayers,” emphasizing that “widespread violence was committed by both sides,” and that of importance was to “look to the future.” More damning, he stated, “we do not believe that this settlement establishes a precedent in relation to any other former British colonial administration.”³⁴

Shortly after, the British parliament passed the Overseas Operations Bill to prevent any future cases arising regarding torture and other war crimes committed by British colonial personnel after a period of five years. This bill is a reactionary measure to the reparations movement and prevents former British colonies from seeking redress for colonial injustices.

Amnesty International observes that “with this bill the government shows contempt for the rule

³² “Kenya Has Betrayed the Heroes of Its Independence Movement,” accessed March 8, 2023, <https://jacobin.com/2022/06/kenya-mau-mau-rebellion-colonialism-kenyatta>.

³³ Wangui Kimari, “Wangui Kimari - No Country for Our Real Heroes: A Monument for the Mau Mau at Last, but No Land | The Elephant,” November 25, 2021, <https://www.theelephant.info/op-eds/2021/11/25/no-country-for-our-real-heroes-a-monument-for-the-mau-mau-at-last-but-no-land/>.

³⁴ “Statement to Parliament on Settlement of Mau Mau Claims,” Gov. UK, accessed March 18, 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-to-parliament-on-settlement-of-mau-mau-claims>.

of law, violates the UK's international commitments to prosecute the worst crimes, and risks creating impunity for grave abuse.”³⁵

Hanslope disclosure

Among the highlights of the Mau Mau case vs the British government was the Hanslope Disclosure. The documents revealed through this disclosure buttressed the judge's decision to rule in favor of the claimants. During the court case, David Anderson made a statement explaining that he understood that a number of documents relating to the Emergency had been removed from Kenya before independence in 1963 so that these would not be among the records handed over to the incoming independent Kenyan government. Anderson stated that he had acquired information that during this period, crates of documents were burned up in bonfires, others dropped over the Indian Ocean, while others were flown back to Britain.

Indeed, Kenyan scholars such as Musila Musembi had earlier written on the destruction and removal of records from Kenya to overseas countries just before independence. Additionally, the East African Standard had reported on September 7, 1961, that numerous classified documents on Mau Mau had been burnt and destroyed, and many others transferred to Britain.

As a result of this information, FCO was forced to produce the documents but claimed at first that they had no knowledge of the existence of such documents. The judge decided that there was substantial evidence of missing documents and that FCO had to account for these documents or be held in contempt of court. Further inquiries were conducted, and a discovery was made at a government location in Hanslope Park in England of 300 boxes of documents containing 1,500 files removed from Kenya. FCO also disclosed that it holds 9,500 files from 36

³⁵ "UK Government: Don't Decriminalize Torture," Amnesty International, accessed February 23, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/campaigns-blog/5-things-you-need-know-about-overseas-operations-bill>.

other former British colonies. These documents showed the full scale of abuse against detainees, and the paper trail went all the way up to the colonial secretary.³⁶

The Hanslope files reveal in extensive detail the degree to which the British colonial government directed and orchestrated -in Britain and Kenya - the purging of evidence pertaining to the formulation and use of systematized violence in an operation known as “Operation Legacy.” They also reveal the various efforts made by the Kenyan government to retrieve these records. Too dangerous to pass on to a new nation, the disclosure is a fragment of an archive made up of material that was considered “not worth the burning, but worth keeping secret nonetheless.”³⁷

The records were later released to The National Archives in Kew, London, in heavily redacted format and are now known as the "FCO 141" files. To date, Kenya is still trying to retrieve this record of its historical memory and heritage. This is in the spirit of the general principles of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which assert that:

“Every national community has the right to an identity acquired from its history. In the name of human solidarity, national communities are required to assist each other in the search for historical truth and continuity. Military and colonial occupation should grant no particular right to retain records acquired by virtue of such occupation.”³⁸

³⁶ Ian Cobain, Owen Bowcott, and Richard Norton-Taylor, “Britain Destroyed Records of Colonial Crimes,” *The Guardian*, April 17, 2012, sec. UK news, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/apr/18/britain-destroyed-records-colonial-crimes>.

³⁷ Elliot Ross, “Reading and Repair: Fictions of ‘Mau Mau’” (Ph.D., United States -- New York, Columbia University), accessed March 21, 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2158808101/abstract/656D871231EF490FPQ/1>.

³⁸ “Report by the Director-General on the Study on the Possibility of Transferring Documents from Archives Constituted within the Territory of Other Countries or Relating to Their History, within the Framework of Bilateral Agreements - UNESCO Digital Library,” accessed April 16, 2023, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000022224>.

The British colonial violence that was released upon Mau Mau was inhumane and despicable. Further, the outcomes of the case were not only unsatisfactory to the victims of torture and abuse, but they did also not meet the tenets of the reparations framework.³⁹ While this study acknowledges the heroes who suffered colonial brutality for the price of independence, its focus is not on physical colonial violence but rather, on the epistemic violence resulting from the migration of archives.

The Syracuse Microfilm Project

In the 1960s the Program of Eastern African Studies at Syracuse University sought to obtain literature from Africa to enrich its program and library.⁴⁰ Under the stewardship of Fred G. Burke, the Syracuse Microfilm project received funding from the Ford Foundation, the US National Science Foundation and the university, to purchase manuscripts, records and books from East Africa. The department entered into an agreement with the then government archivist Derek Charman to commence a microfilming project of Kenyan archives.⁴¹

The purpose of project was to make available knowledge in African studies to scholars in North America. The project continued throughout the 1960's and early 1970's, expanding into Ethiopia with the assistance of a new African government archivist in Kenya, Nadhan Fedha.⁴² In order to copy the microfilms, Syracuse University agreed to certain terms and conditions:

³⁹ Hilary Beckles 1955, *Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide*, Book, Whole (Kingston, Jamaica: University Of West Indies Press, 2013).

⁴⁰ David L Easterbrook and Kenneth P Lohrentz, "Africana Microfilms at the ES Bird Library, Syracuse University : An Annotated Guide," n.d.

⁴¹ Robert G Gregory, Robert M Maxon, and Leon P Spencer, "A Guide to the Kenya National Archives to the Microfilms of the Provincial and District Annual Reports, Record Books, and Handing-Over Reports; Miscellaneous Correspondence; and Intelligence Reports," n.d.

⁴² Nathan Mnjama, "The Records of the East African Community," *African Research and Documentation* 82 (ed 2000): 3–12, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305862X00021208>.

First, the university pledged not to reproduce or sell copies of the records. Second, the university was required to obtain a written pledge from everyone permitted access to the microfilms not to publish anything based on them without first obtaining permission from the Kenya government. Access to government records was only available after a "Request for Access to the Kenya National Archives Microfilm collection" form had been filled out and submitted to the *Africana Bibliographer*. The student was required to sign a form stating that:

"I hereby agree to abide by the rules and regulations as put forth by the Kenya Government that the use and reproduction of the documents of the Kenya National Archives is solely for the purpose of research and will not be quoted or otherwise reproduced by any means, either in whole or in part, without the express permission of the Kenya Government Archivist...to whom all communications respecting this film should be addressed."

The advisor was also required to sign the following statement:

"I have approved the research project of this student. I am aware of the nature of these documents, the need for controls, and the particular restrictions applicable to these materials as outlined above. I recommend that this student be permitted access to this primary source."⁴³

Syracuse University would obtain a duplicate negative to "safeguard Kenya against the destruction of the master negative by some disaster" – so they can reproduce them if they so wish. In exchange, the Kenya National Archives would get a new station wagon, a camera and microfilming equipment, trained and subsidized microfilming staff, and supervised production of microfilm.

The microfilming was also performed on behalf of other parties, including the African Studies Association, and the Cooperative Africana microfilm Project (CAMP) of the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago which received duplicates of the microfilms.

⁴³ David Leigh and Rodger F Morton, "Microfilms Related to Eastern Africa Part II (Kenya, Asian and Miscellaneous) : A Guide to Recent Acquisitions of Syracuse University," n.d.

The Syracuse Microfilm Project differs from Operation Legacy as the archives found at Syracuse are not “migrated archives” by definition and are actually copies contained in microfilms. Further the acquisition of these materials was legal and consensual at the time of Kenyan independence. The microfilms at Syracuse have been excellently preserved and many scholars have found the archives to be extremely valuable for research and conducting academic studies.

Nonetheless, this project received criticism from scholars of African studies in North America and in Africa as we will see in the coming chapters. Syracuse University Libraries writes that, “The story of how the documents were chosen, found, collected, and received by the scholarly community is full of suspense and political intrigue.”⁴⁴The files and microfilms are now held in the E.S. Bird Library of Syracuse University.

Research objectives

The author of this project seeks to carry out two studies: First is to investigate how and why the British secretly migrated archives out of Kenya. Here, the author seeks to understand the systemized epistemic violence effort launched to delink these files from their African birthplace. Second, the researcher aims to understand the material conditions behind the Syracuse Microfilm Project by analyzing the agreement made between Syracuse University and the Kenya National Archives to microfilm records. Additionally, the researcher questions the impact this project has had on knowledge equity, access, and justice. Lastly, I seek to analyze the effect of archival migration on knowledge production in African studies.

Research questions

1. How and why did the British government migrate colonial archives out of Kenya?

⁴⁴ “Kenya National Archives,” Syracuse University Libraries, February 17, 2020, <https://library.syracuse.edu/blog/kenya-national-archives/>.

2. What were the material circumstances surrounding the Syracuse Microfilm Project?
3. What impact did the Syracuse Microfilm Project have on knowledge equity and access?
4. How does the removal of archives shape the politics of knowledge production in African studies?

Argument

Migrating archives out of Africa was part of a concerted and systemic violent effort to dislocate systems of African knowledge, culture, and heritage. Migrating archives dislodges the politics of knowledge production by politicizing access to knowledge and further reproducing inequities in scholarship and research between scholars of African studies in the Global North and the Global South.

Definition of terms

Migrated Archives

In various sections of this paper, I use the term migrated archives and place it in quotes. This is due to my general discomfort with this colonial reference for records that were stolen from their countries of origin. In my view, these are captive archives or archives held hostage, owing to the fact that former colonial powers refuse to return them. However, I employ the term 'migrated archives' as it that which is commonly understood and widely accepted.

The Society of American Archivists (2005) Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology defines migrated archives as "The archives of a country that have moved from the country where they were originally accumulated; removed archives". Various other scholars have grappled with the definition and label of migrated archives.

Nomsa Nsibandze's definition⁴⁵ of migrated archives positions them as “ archives in exile or archives unjustly transferred from one country to another.” Lowry refers to archives that have been removed from the context of their creation as "displaced archives."⁴⁶

On the other hand, Garaba argued that:

"Whether one employs the term 'fugitive archival material', or 'missing documents', 'migrated archives', 'removed' or 'displaced archives', 'expatriate archives', 'disputed archival claims', 'joint archival heritage', 'shared archival heritage' etc. the common factor is that they are not where they are supposed to be, in their rightful place of custody."⁴⁷

African studies

For purposes of this study, my definition of African studies is as expounded upon by Ratele and others who state that, “African studies refers to transdisciplinary knowledge production concerning Africa or Africans. This includes scholarship in, by, with, for, of, on, and from Africa.”⁴⁸ This definition of African studies refers to the knowledge produced on Africa rather than the discipline of African Studies. Further, I expand on this definition to include scholarship on Africa not only produced by Africans but by non-African scholars of Africa as well.

Positionality

One’s positionality is understood as “where one stands in relation to ‘the other’.” In research, one’s positionality vis-a`-vis race, class, gender , culture, and other factors may determine the researcher’s perspective and can shape knowledge produced. A growing body of

⁴⁵ Nomsa Nsibandze, “Southern African Archives in Exile.,” *SA Arch J*, no. 38 (1996).

⁴⁶ James Lowry, *Displaced Archives* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁴⁷ F. Garaba, “Provenance, Identification, Restitution and Management of the Liberation Struggle Heritage in the ESARBICA Region,” *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists* 44 (2011): 26–42, <https://doi.org/10.4314/jsasa.v44i0>.

⁴⁸ Kopano Ratele et al., “Some Basic Questions about (a) Decolonizing Africa(n)-Centred Psychology Considered,” *South African Journal of Psychology* 48, no. 3 (September 2018): 331–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0081246318790444>.

literature centers issues of positionality in the discussion on power, knowledge construction and representation in research.⁴⁹

Thinking through the evidence in my research, I considered the complex insider/outsider positionality⁵⁰ that I occupied as a scholar based in the West and a descendant of Mau Mau. In addition, my intersectional identities as a young black cis-gender woman, a graduate student at a predominantly white U.S. institution, and an international student from Africa all held different meanings in relation to my research. I acknowledge that people with different positionalities might have different perspectives on different subjects. Nevertheless, I have found this work to be informative and important.

Awareness of my dual positionality in this study, further enriched my work as I gathered information thanks to my insider/outsider status. First, my positioning as a graduate student at Syracuse University granted me access to the East African archives held at Bird Library. My reading of the archive, as a Pan African Black feminist scholar, over sixty years after the project's initiation by white cis-gender male professors, was based on a different lens.

Secondly, as a Mau Mau descendent, I was conscious of the autoethnographic position in my research of the migrated archives and the Mau Mau case for reparations. To provide a better understanding of this, I give a brief background of my family history.

My great grandfather, who is the grandfather to my father, named “Githutha” was part of Mau Mau and lived in a green fertile part of Kenya known as Tigoni in Limuru in the period between the 1920s and 1950s. He was captured by colonial soldiers during Operation Anvil in

⁴⁹ David Mwambari, “Local Positionality in the Production of Knowledge in Northern Uganda,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 18 (January 1, 2019): 1609406919864845, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919864845>.

⁵⁰ Sharan B. Merriam et al., “Power and Positionality: Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status within and across Cultures,” *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 20, no. 5 (September 1, 2001): 405–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370120490>.

1954 and sent to Lang'ata detention camp, now Lang'ata Prison. He was thereafter detained at Athi-River detention camp, which is now Kitengela Prison, nearly 100 kilometers away from his home. Coincidentally, the place where I grew up and call home in Kitengela is a 5minutes drive away from Kitengela Prison, where my great grandfather was detained.

While he was detained his land was grabbed by a white farmer. His wives and children were sent to work for the infamous Lord Delamare in Naivasha, a white settler who believed Blacks were a necessary evil,⁵¹ another 70 kilometers away. There, they became squatters on the farm, deprived of land rights and forced to work on settler land for low wages. Later, my great grandfather's land became the location of the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research potato research center.

In one of my final moments with my grandmother, she recounted how she sustained a permanent back injury from being beaten at the farm and referred to her white masters as "*munyabaara*" in Kikuyu, which loosely translates to slave-owner in English. After he was released, Githutha would peddle on his bicycle for 250 kilometers weekly from Naivasha to Molo to attend meetings on decolonization and land redistribution through Jomo Kenyatta's 'Million Acre Scheme'.

He would later relocate his family to Molo, although it would take him another 20 years of hard labor to repay the costs of the land provided through this controversial scheme. Through a life of hardship, he was only able to educate his sons and because of this my father, and not his sisters, went to school and studied up to PhD level. I recognize that my family history of peril and privilege has shaped who I am today and continues to shape my intellectual work.

⁵¹ Chris McGreal, "A Lost World," *The Guardian*, October 25, 2006, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/oct/26/kenya.chrismcgreal>.



Fig 7. Image of interview with Lucy Wanjiku Karinge
Joy Nyokabi Karinge (right) interviewing her late grandmother, Lucy Wanjiku Karinge (left), in Molo, Kenya on 24th July 2022.

Thirdly, my positionality as a Kenyan influences my research of the FCO 141 files. In many ways, I hope that my work speaks for a people who have been denied access to their historical memory. My investigation into the politics of inaccess to these records, which I address in the following chapters, was conducted both as a researcher and as a member of the group denied access.

Furthermore, my (partial) access to these documents was offset by the benefits I received of being in a North American institution and having access to visas, research funding to cover the costs of travel and accommodation, as well as the scholarly connections who shared copies of their files with me, even when The National Archives in London shut me out.

Like Zora Neal Hurston, I believe that my strategic positionality in this study and the resulting multiple subjectivities give me a "spyglass" to "bring that which is far from view into

sharp and static focus." ⁵² I believe that my work, not only as a scholar but as a scholar activist, gives me the "power to define and fix [new] meaning"⁵³ to the histories and lived experiences of global Africans in the world over.

Theoretical framework

For this study, I use postcolonial theory and decolonial theory as my leading theories while my sub-accompanying theory is epistemic decolonization. These frameworks provide a powerful lens to address my research questions and examine the broader issues surrounding migrating archives, including its implications for the production of knowledge and denial of epistemic justice.

Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory emerged from and is deeply influenced by anticolonial thought from South Asia and Africa during the first half of the 20th century. Robert Young argues that to understand postcolonialism, one must understand anticolonial thought and movements across the "tricontinental" world (South America, Africa, and South Asia). ⁵⁴ An important objective of postcolonial theory is to explain the political, aesthetic, economic, historical, and social effects of European colonialism across the globe throughout history.

Fundamentally, postcolonial theory argues that the world we inhabit can only be understood in relation to the history of imperialism and colonialism. Thus, much of postcolonial theory is concerned with the lingering forms of colonialism.

⁵² Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men*, Book, Whole, 1936.

⁵³ "Multiple Mediations in Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*," accessed April 3, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X9301300404>.

⁵⁴ Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (London: Blackwell, 2001).

Postcolonialism has underpinned contemporary political movements for equity and justice. This has meant that it has taken multiple forms: First, It has been concerned with various forms of political and aesthetic representation through its commitment to globalization and internationalism. Second, it allows for a reimagination of politics and ethics beyond colonial ideals.

Third, it has been invested in perpetually discovering and theorizing new forms of human injustice, including epistemic injustice as a postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory has influenced the way we read and write texts, the way we understand national and transnational histories and the way we understand the political implications of knowledge as scholars.⁵⁵

Postcolonial theory is an important framework in my study of colonial archives held in postcolonial institutions. It provides a basis for understanding the colonial context and time period when these archives were removed from their countries of origin. Further, it helps to explain the colonial ideologies for why these archives had to be removed, from a postcolonial perspective of the formerly colonized. Moreover, it problematizes the continued holding of Kenyan archives and documentary heritage in Western capitals as a lingering form of colonialism.

Decolonial theory

Decolonial theory is an anticolonial and postcolonial theory founded on Black radical tradition, as evidenced by ideologies such as Black consciousness, Black feminism and Pan-Africanism.⁵⁶ It is at the core of movements initiated by Black intelligentsia, such as Aimé

⁵⁵ Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonial Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵⁶ Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Césaire's Negritude and Frantz Fanon's decolonial interventions. Fanon viewed decolonial theory through its "critical appraisal of Western culture and its institutions in order to remove the legacies of hierarchical, racialized thinking towards minorities and other cultures."⁵⁷

Other Black radical thinkers have expounded on this framing to entail "a political and normative ethic and practice of resistance and intentional undoing – unlearning and dismantling unjust practices, assumptions, and institutions – as well as persistent positive action to create and build alternative spaces, networks, and ways of knowing that transcend our epicolonial inheritance."⁵⁸ Certainly, decolonizing work is "a form of agitation" that is "dangerous and powerful."⁵⁹

The Rhodes Must Fall movement by students at the University of Cape Town was a symbolic gesture of a decolonial effort.⁶⁰ By attacking the Cecil Rhodes statue, students confronted white supremacist systems of racism, apartheid and inequality in South Africa, instead affirming their rights to quality, decolonized education and professing that #BlackLivesMatter.

The process of decolonization is not only political but also cognitive and epistemic. In his book, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o emphasizes the importance of speaking and thinking in African languages for mental

⁵⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*, New Evergreen ed (New York: Grove Press, 1988).

⁵⁸ Shose Kessi, Zoe Marks, and Elelwani Ramugondo, "Decolonizing African Studies," *Critical African Studies* 12, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 271–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2020.1813413>.

⁵⁹ Sista Resista, "Is Decolonizing the New Black?," *Sisters of Resistance* (blog), July 12, 2018, <https://sistersofresistance.wordpress.com/2018/07/12/is-decolonizing-the-new-black/>.

⁶⁰ Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization* (London: Routledge, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429492204>.

decolonization.⁶¹ Decolonizing scholarship is 'the last frontier' of the rejection of colonial supremacy in order to democratize, dehomogenize, and dewesternize knowledge.⁶²

In the context of knowledge production, “a lot still needs to be done for actualization of decolonization in the academia to be realized.”⁶³ Epistemic decolonization is urgently needed to delink from the reality of epistemic coloniality in which the teaching, writing and research of African studies is founded.⁶⁴

Decolonial theory is fundamental to my study as it provides a baseline for my argument. It revisits the discussion on representation, ethics, access, equity and inclusion. These and other decolonial concepts, such as disparate access, marginalization and displacement are at the core of my argument in this study. While postcolonial theory problematizes the presence of Kenyan archives in Western capitals, decolonial theory calls for radical change by returning these archives to their countries of origin amongst other democratizing efforts.

Epistemic decolonization

The process of decolonizing knowledge and achieving epistemic decolonization requires an understanding of the epistemic line, epistemicide, framing epistemic injustice, and finally working towards epistemic freedom.⁶⁵

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni brings us back to the teachings of W.E.B Du Bois by introducing the concept of the "epistemic line."⁶⁶ He explains how forces of imperialism invaded

⁶¹ Thiong'o, “Decolonising the Mind.”

⁶² Sara Marzagora, “The Humanism of Reconstruction: African Intellectuals, Decolonial Critical Theory and the Opposition to the ‘posts’ (Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, Postcolonialism),” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 28, no. 2 (2016): 161–78, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24758410>.

⁶³ Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Decolonization, Development and Knowledge in Africa: Turning Over a New Leaf* (London: Routledge, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003030423>.

⁶⁴ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*.

⁶⁵ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Decolonization, Development and Knowledge in Africa*.

⁶⁶ Ndlovu-Gatsheni.

the knowledge sphere and led to epistemic coloniality. This was due to the "theft of history" in Africa, which centered the Global North as the geo-political location of African knowledge.⁶⁷

The politics of power and the politics of knowledge are inextricably intertwined. Controlling knowledge generation and knowledge cultivation was a powerful tool in the imperial arsenal of maintaining global power structures. Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains that to destabilize this hegemonic center, there is an urgent need to "'provincialize' Europe and North America while 'deprovincializing' Africa" in the global knowledge economy.⁶⁸

Epistemicide is defined by Beth Patin and others as "the killing, silencing, annihilation, or devaluing of a knowledge system and this happens when epistemic injustices are persistent and systematic and collectively work as a structured and systemic oppression of our particular ways of knowing."⁶⁹ It is the systemic erasure of knowledge and the silencing of indigenous voices. Miranda Fricker defines epistemic injustice as "wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower".⁷⁰

David Thomas and others present archival silences as a form of epistemic injustice when archival holdings are destroyed to eradicate a legacy of oppression or annihilate evidence of abuse through a silence of destruction.⁷¹ Markus Friedrich provides a historical account of epistemicide through archival destruction, noting that, "the seizure of an archive was an act of

⁶⁷ Jack Goody, *The Theft of History*, ACLS Humanities E-Book (Series) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), http://link.library.utoronto.ca/eir/EIRdetail.cfm?Resources__ID=1051046&T=F.

⁶⁸ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Decolonization, Development and Knowledge in Africa*.

⁶⁹ Beth Patin et al., "Toward Epistemic Justice: An Approach for Conceptualizing Epistemicide in the Information Professions," *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 57, no. 1 (2020): e242, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pr2.242>.

⁷⁰ Miranda Fricker, "Hermeneutical Injustice," in *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, ed. Miranda Fricker (Oxford University Press, 2007), 0, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.003.0008>.

⁷¹ David Thomas 1950 et al., *The Silence of the Archive*, Book, Whole (Chicago: Neal-Schuman, an imprint of the American Library Association, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.29085/9781783301577>.

taking full control of a territory, the withholding or destruction [was] an act of silencing the record with the purpose of inflicting damage on the enemy."⁷²

Similarly, in *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos indicates that there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice.⁷³ The destruction of archives, as was done in Kenya through Operation Legacy, is a form of epistemicide. I argue that the ongoing withholding of migrated archives at The National Archive in London is a manifestation of epistemic injustice. Releasing lost records to unmute archival silence⁷⁴ is not all it takes to achieve epistemic justice.

One way of achieving epistemic justice is through epistemic decolonization. Epistemic decoloniality rejects the exclusion, marginalization and monopolization of knowledge production. Fredrick Wanjala laments that "the most unfortunate thing is that many years after her political independence Africa still remains under epistemic coloniality."⁷⁵ This is made apparent not only by the national records being held hostage, but also through the control of knowledge production in the African academy.

Fredrick Wanjala points out three major functions of epistemic decolonization: First, it acknowledges the immense contribution of Africans who have been selectively ignored and 'othered' in knowledge production, which has been dominated by Western epistemological paradigms. Second, it denounces the notion of epistemic dualism that categorizes Africa as a

⁷² "The Birth of the Archive," accessed April 19, 2023, https://www.press.umich.edu/9394639/birth_of_the_archive.

⁷³ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*, Book, Whole (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315634876>.

⁷⁴ *Archival Silences: Missing, Lost and, Uncreated Archives*, Book, Whole (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003003618>.

⁷⁵ Nafula Fredrick Wanjala, "Decolonising Epistemic Academic Disciplines in Africa," *Asia-Africa Journal of Academic Research and Review* 2 (December 26, 2022), <https://journals.iapaar.com/index.php/AAJARR/article/view/103>.

consumer of knowledge and the West as a producer of knowledge. Third, epistemic decolonization ensures that no one group has epistemic monopoly over the other and that all human beings are capable of knowledge production.⁷⁶

Epistemic decolonization is necessary to achieve epistemic freedom, which "underscores the right to think, theorize, interpret the world, develop one's own methodologies and write from where one is located, unencumbered by Eurocentrism."⁷⁷ Epistemic decolonization proclaims that subjectivity, situatedness, and positionality matter.⁷⁸ Today, the calls for epistemic freedom from Pan-African forefathers such as Kwame Nkrumah ring loud as the path to epistemic independence.

Epistemic decolonization as a sub-accompanying theory for my study, frames my conceptual argument on the politicization of access to migrated archives, and the resulting politics of knowledge production and research on these materials. Questioning the mediated access to these archives and the inequities reproduced through scholarship is therefore a form of epistemic disobedience⁷⁹ aiming to reimagine and reconstruct how African history is shaped and written.

⁷⁶ Wanjala.

⁷⁷ Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Empire, Global Coloniality and African Subjectivity*, 1st ed., Book, Whole (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780857459527>.

⁷⁸ Kessi, Marks, and Ramugondo, "Decolonizing African Studies."

⁷⁹ Walter D Mignolo, "Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (de)Coloniality, Border Thinking and Epistemic Disobedience," *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 3 (September 2011): 273–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2011.613105>.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The "Migrated Archives"

*"If we are going to sin, we must sin quietly"*⁸⁰

Operation Legacy in Kenya

FCO 141 scholars are in agreement about one thing; that the most provocative aspect of the migrated archives relates to "Operation Legacy". Operation Legacy referred to the meticulous and detailed planning and the specific instructions that went into migrating and destroying documents from Kenya prior to independence. David Anderson and Caroline Elkins paint a picture from the archives of how this operation was carried out from the highest echelons of the British government.⁸¹

Operation Legacy provides a detailed account of a systemic cover-up of colonial abuses in Kenya. It "pieces together a picture of administrative subterfuge, suppression of facts, and whitewashing atrocities, threaded through with official denial, which long outlived its colonial genesis."⁸² Regarding the nature of the other "Kenya files", Mandy Banton notes that the vast majority of the files concern the Emergency and Mau Mau, including "intelligence reports and

⁸⁰ This is what the attorney general Eric Griffith-Jones writes to Governor Baring in 1957. Caroline Elkins, "Looking beyond Mau Mau: Archiving Violence in the Era of Decolonization," *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 3 (June 1, 2015): 852–68, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/120.3.852>.

⁸¹ David M. Anderson, "Guilty Secrets: Deceit, Denial, and the Discovery of Kenya's 'Migrated Archive,'" *History Workshop Journal* 80, no. 1 (October 2015): 142–60, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbv027>.

⁸² Aoife Duffy, "Legacies of British Colonial Violence: Viewing Kenyan Detention Camps through the Hanslope Disclosure," *Law and History Review* 33, no. 3 (August 2015): 489–542, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248015000267>.

summaries, African associations, activities of Africans, unrest in the districts, collective punishment, detainees, and detention camps."⁸³

"Migrated Archives" in other countries

Following the Mau Mau case, the FCO initiated an internal review by Anthony Cary, the former British High commissioner to Canada. The resulting Cary report of 2011 outlined the content of the "migrated archive", indicating that 294 boxes or about 1500 files from Kenya are part of a much wider collection of about 8,800 files in total covering former colonies such as Jamaica, Gambia, Tanzania and India.⁸⁴

In light of this information, James Lowry conducted an international survey from 2018-2019 of ongoing disputed archival claims. His research found a total of seventeen claims from a majority of African countries, including Kenya, Rwanda, Swaziland, Cameroon, Uganda and South Africa to their former colonial powers, notably Britain, France, Belgium and Germany.⁸⁵

The policy of migrating archives is arguably proof that Western powers, in their retreat from the continent, sought to conceal incriminating evidence of their role in the abuse and violence against Africans. Rawlings exposes that colonial authorities had plenty to be embarrassed about. He provides examples of acts of colonial brutality committed by Britain detailed in the files noting that:

"Files show that in addition to torture, maltreatment of detainees and human rights violations in Kenya, the UK was involved in the forced deportation of the Ilois from their island homeland of Diego Garcia to make way for an American military base, considered

⁸³ Mandy Banton, "Destroy? 'Migrate'? Conceal? British Strategies for the Disposal of Sensitive Records of Colonial Administrations at Independence," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 2 (June 2012): 321–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2012.697622>.

⁸⁴ Anthony Cary, "Cary Report," February 24, 2011.

⁸⁵ Lowry, *Displaced Archives*.

testing poison gas in Botswana, and proposed the 'elimination' of insurgents in Malaya during its anti-communist 'emergency'."⁸⁶

Other countries such as Nigeria, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi also experienced 'non-official migrations' of their records prior to independence. In Nigeria, five army trucks were mobilized to 'dispose' of documents pertaining to "the possible 'splitting' of Nigeria, the 'Muslim Movement', an inquiry into Dr Azikwe's alleged mishandling of public funds, the Minorities Commission and the African Continental Bank."⁸⁷ In Namibia, government records were transported to Germany and Pretoria before its independence. The papers of Roy Welensky, who had served as the Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Rhodesia and Nyasaland were also taken out of the two countries and are now held at the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and Rhodes House Library in Oxford, UK.⁸⁸

To return or not to return the archives?

Archives are a fundamentally important asset to a nation. Indeed, "Of all the national assets, archives are the most precious: they are the gift of one generation to another, and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization."⁸⁹ Sir Seretse Khama, the first President of Botswana, asserted that "a nation without its archives is a body without a soul."⁹⁰ Yet a good number of African countries have been denied custody of their archives.

The Universal Declaration on Archives affirms that: "archives are a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another... They are authoritative sources of

⁸⁶ Gregory Rawlings, "Lost Files, Forgotten Papers and Colonial Disclosures: The 'Migrated Archives' and the Pacific, 1963–2013," *The Journal of Pacific History* 50, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 189–212, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2015.1048585>.

⁸⁷ Banton, "Destroy?"

⁸⁸ N. Mnjama, "Migrated Archives Revisited," *ESARBICA Journal* 30 (2011): 15–34, <https://doi.org/10.4314/esarjo.v30i1>.

⁸⁹ Arthur George Doughty, *The Canadian Archives and Its Activities*. (FA Acland, printer, 1924).

⁹⁰ Neil Parsons, "Unravelling History and Cultural Heritage in Botswana," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, December 2006, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070600995350>.

information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions."⁹¹ They serve as the collective heritage and memory of the nation.⁹²

Moreso, Dr. Shitla Prasad declared at the International Congress on Archives in 1972, that:

"An important part of the archives of most developing countries presently lies in various repositories in developed countries. The former colonial powers have either taken them or else they were created in the colonial powers by the branch of the government concerned with the administration of the colony ... Morally these records belong to the developing countries concerned, they are vitally necessary for reconstructing their history ... The developing countries feel strongly and unanimously that these migrated archives must be restored to them."⁹³

Despite the fact that it has been over 70 years since the problem of the "migrated archive" was raised, only a tiny fraction of records outside their countries of origin have been copied, let alone returned.⁹⁴ Former British archivists at The National Archives (TNA), such as Mandy Banton, are reconciling with their failure to do more to identify "migrated archives,"⁹⁵ yet TNA has expressed "no public interest in engaging with the restitution demands by Kenya or other lands and peoples claiming archival returns."⁹⁶

Nevertheless, some scholars have argued against the return of colonial archives. Francis Garaba quotes former Ghanaian President John Mahama, who said that "Our history did not begin with colonization."⁹⁷ Garaba uses this framework to argue that:

⁹¹ "Universal Declaration on Archives - UDA | International Council on Archives," accessed April 3, 2023, <https://www.ica.org/en/universal-declaration-archives>.

⁹² Mnjama, "Migrated Archives Revisited."

⁹³ Banton, "Destroy?"

⁹⁴ Mnjama, "Migrated Archives Revisited."

⁹⁵ Banton, "Destroy?"

⁹⁶ Riley Linebaugh, "Decolonization and In_Visibilities in Colonial Archives:," *On_Culture*, no. 13 (July 6, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.22029/oc.2022.1297>.

⁹⁷ Francis Garaba, "Migrated Archives: Time for Closure to Turn the Wheels of Reconciliation and Healing for Africa," *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists* 54 (November 4, 2021): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.4314/jsasa.v54i1.1>.

"we need to start afresh and forget about this genre of archives in view of the protracted issues involved and considering the archival service challenges that most archival institutions are facing. We are now talking about decolonization/refiguring or Africanization of our archives because there is overdocumentation of the colonial record in our repositories and these records are often biased or incorrect."⁹⁸

Writer Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor also argues against using colonial frameworks to understand African history. She explains that if the “fairly recent encounter of Africa with the Occident...dominates so much of our historical conversations it is because it was an existential wound-creating encounter with structures, systems, ways of thought that penetrates our lives to this moment. It is, however, not the single point upon which our entire African lives pivot.”⁹⁹

Debates around the "Migrated Archives"

Scholars have brought out several debates and outlined various issues surrounding the "migrated archives." Tim Livsey uses a social science analysis of 'secrecy' to argue that the presence of the "migrated archives" stored at Hanslope Park was an open secret based upon racialized and hierarchical access.¹⁰⁰ Shohei Sato confirms this as he illustrates how access to certain government documents in colonial Kenya and Uganda was mediated through racial lines.¹⁰¹

Riley Linebaugh uses the lens of 'white fragility' defined by Robin DiAngelo as "the discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information

⁹⁸ Garaba.

⁹⁹ Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, “Derelict Shards & The Roaming of Colonial Phantoms | The Elephant,” November 6, 2020, <https://www.theelephant.info/long-reads/2020/11/06/derelict-shards-the-roaming-of-colonial-phantoms/>.

¹⁰⁰ Tim Livsey, "Open Secrets: The British 'Migrated Archives', Colonial History, and Post-colonial History," *History Workshop Journal* 93, no. 1 (May 28, 2022): 95–116, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbac002>.

¹⁰¹ Shohei Sato, ““Operation Legacy”: Britain’s Destruction and Concealment of Colonial Records Worldwide,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 4 (July 4, 2017): 697–719, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2017.1294256>.

about racial inequality and injustice,"¹⁰² to examine the colonial fragility of Britain as demonstrated by how it migrated archives in order to preserve its reputation and avoid embarrassment.¹⁰³

Linebaugh and James Lowry further explicate on the racism of the imperial project as they argue that the ongoing withholding of migrated archives is the result of an "archival color line."¹⁰⁴ They utilize W.E.B Du Bois' conceptualization of the racial color line, which refers to "the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea" (Du Bois, 1903). Lowry and Linebaugh conclude that the ongoing European custody of the records in question results from and fortifies a global racist order.¹⁰⁵

Linebaugh further conceives of withholding the "migrated archives" as a denial of archival custody to African peoples. She notes that "a powerful section of the English archival profession has made the structures of white privilege and supremacy appear obvious and consequently tightly bound together colonial archival custody with imperial authority."¹⁰⁶

These strands of literature provide an excellent background understanding of the migrated archives and complement my study. They place Operation Legacy within its colonial context of looting of cultural and documentary heritage. Further, they enhance the legitimacy of the calls to return the migrated archives to their countries of origin. In addition to the debates raised in these bodies of literature, I argue that the migration of archives to Western capitals

¹⁰² Robin DiAngelo 1956, *White Fragility: Why It's so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*, Book, Whole (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

¹⁰³ Riley Linebaugh, "Colonial Fragility: British Embarrassment and the So-Called 'Migrated Archives,'" *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 50, no. 4 (July 4, 2022): 729–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2022.2057740>.

¹⁰⁴ Riley Linebaugh and James Lowry, "The Archival Colour Line: Race, Records and Post-Colonial Custody," *Archives and Records* 42, no. 3 (September 2, 2021): 284–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2021.1940898>.

¹⁰⁵ Linebaugh and Lowry.

¹⁰⁶ Linebaugh, "Decolonization and In_Visibilities in Colonial Archives."

further politicizes access to knowledge, research and knowledge production, as will be discussed in later chapters.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, I wanted to get a deeper understanding of how the British migrated Kenyan archives and how Syracuse University acquired the same. Therefore, I selected to use qualitative analysis and adopted a mixed methods study incorporating archival research, oral history interviews and informal conversations. This decision was based on a variety of factors. First, based on my literature review on migrating archives, I found that the best source of information on Operation Legacy and how the British migrated Kenyan archives would be the FCO 141 files located at The National Archives at Kew, London.

For further information on Operation Legacy, I opted to conduct additional documentary research on the legal documents from the Mau Mau case, Hansard papers from the British parliament as well as government reports. In order to corroborate this information, I identified a few key people who had background information on these files, including expert witnesses from the Mau Mau case, and reached out to them for informal interviews and conversations.

Second, based on my reading on the East African archives at Syracuse University, I wanted to look into the files at Bird Library and familiarize with their content. In addition to this, I reached out to personnel at the Kenya National Archives for a formal interview to provide background on the same. Through informal conversations, I was also able to get further information on the context of these archives.

Archival research

The National Archives (UK) highlight the significance of archival research by describing archives as "collections of documents or records which have been selected for permanent

preservation because of their value as evidence or as a source for historical or other research".

These records come about through the activities of organizations and people; they serve an "active purpose" whilst in use and are preserved whilst not in use to be part of an archival collection.

Archives are indeed a valuable resource for nations and regions, organizations, communities, and individual people. They:

“provide evidence of activities which occurred in the past, they tell stories, document people and identity and are valuable sources of information for research. They are our recorded memory and form an important part of our community, cultural, official and unofficial history.”¹⁰⁷

The Hanslope Papers

The Hanslope Papers are catalogued at The National Archives, UK as "Foreign and Commonwealth Office and predecessors: Records of Former Colonial Administrations: Migrated Archives" otherwise known as FCO 141 files.¹⁰⁸ They are a collection of documents that were migrated from former British colonies in the period preceding their independence, so as not to be passed on to the successive governments. They include records of 41 former British colonies all over Africa, Asia and the Pacific and prominently feature former territories that fought fierce independence revolutions such as Kenya, Malaya and Aden.

The records provide details of the British colonial administration, what was happening in the territories prior to independence, and "Her Majesty's Government's views at that time."¹⁰⁹

These files, which arrived at the Public Records Office in Britain in the mid-1900's were held at

¹⁰⁷ "Archive Principles and Practice: An Introduction to Archives for Non-Archivists," n.d.

¹⁰⁸ "Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Predecessors: Records of Former Colonial Administrations: Migrated Archives" (files and volumes, 2012 1835), FCO 141, The National Archives, Kew.

¹⁰⁹ "Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Predecessors."

a secret government site in Hanslope Park for over 50 years and only came to light thanks to the Mau Mau case in 2011.

In order to view these files, one has to visit The British National Archives in Kew (TNA), formerly the Public Records Office, as they are not available online. On their website, as of April 2023, TNA lists the access conditions as "open unless otherwise stated" and provides some restrictions on use, including additional safe handling procedures and advance order of documents¹¹⁰. The contents of the FCO 141 file offer voluminous archival documentation on British colonial violence, including acts of colonial brutality and evidence of the responsibility and knowledge of policymakers on colonial abuse.

In the summer of 2022, I travelled to Kew to conduct archival research for 2 weeks. I made an advance bulk order and was interested in viewing files relating to Operation Legacy in Kenya including: "Method of Destroying Classified Documents",¹¹¹ "The Designation 'WATCH',"¹¹² "Security Documents," "Provincial and District Records," and "Disposal of Kenya records."¹¹³ I was also interested in viewing other Kenya files to gain an insider's perspective on colonialism in Kenya, such as: "Jomo Kenyatta, Confession of Kenyatta's son",¹¹⁴ "Psychological warfare, Anti-Mau Mau propaganda",¹¹⁵ "Operation Anvil,"¹¹⁶ "Collective punishments,"¹¹⁷ and "US interests in Kenya."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ "Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Predecessors."

¹¹¹ "Method of Destroying Classified Documents," n.d., FCO 141/6971, The National Archives, Kew.

¹¹² "The Designation 'WATCH'," n.d., FCO/141/6975, The National Archives, Kew.

¹¹³ "Disposal of Kenya Records," n.d., FCO 141/6970, The National Archives, Kew.

¹¹⁴ "Jomo Kenyatta, Confession of Kenyatta's Son," n.d., FCO 141/6766-6771, The National Archives, Kew.

¹¹⁵ "Psychological Warfare, Anti-Mau Mau Propaganda," n.d., FCO 141/6227, The National Archives, Kew.

¹¹⁶ "Operation Anvil," n.d., FCO 141/6464, The National Archives, Kew.

¹¹⁷ "Collective Punishments," n.d., FCO 141/6086-6123, The National Archives, Kew.

¹¹⁸ "US Interests in Kenya," n.d., FCO 141/7092, The National Archives, Kew.

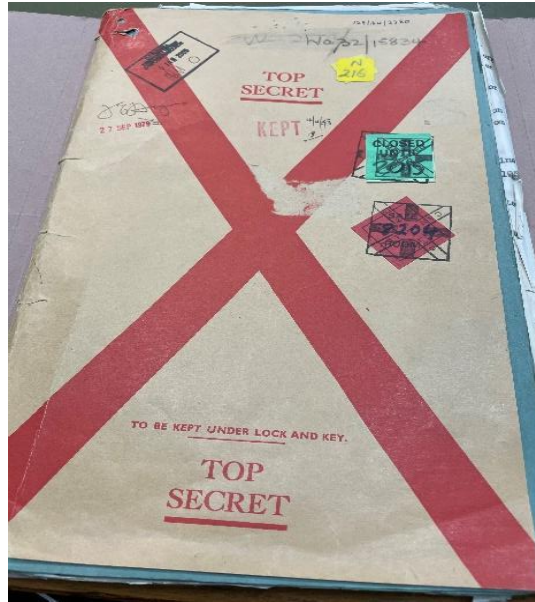


Fig 8. FCO 141 document. Picture of a FCO 141 file taken at The National Archives in Kew, London, UK.

East African Archives at Syracuse University

The East African Archives at Syracuse University are a compilation of microfilms, rare books, manuscripts, personal papers and special collections. The microfilms contain government records and newspaper articles from both Kenya and Ethiopia stored in 157 reels.¹¹⁹

They are divided into the following seven sections: Provincial and District Annual Reports, Provincial and District Record Books, Provincial and District Handing Over Reports, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Intelligence Reports, Secretariat Circulars, Debates of the Legislative Council and The National Assembly.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Gregory, Maxon, and Spencer, “A Guide to the Kenya National Archives to the Microfilms of the Provincial and District Annual Reports, Record Books, and Handing-Over Reports; Miscellaneous Correspondence; and Intelligence Reports.”

¹²⁰ Rodger F Morton and Harvey Soff, “Microfilms Relating to Eastern Africa Part I (Kenya, Miscellaneous) : A Guide to Recent Acquisitions of Syracuse University,” n.d.

The archive on Kenya contains daily correspondence from four provinces namely: Coast Province, Central Province, Rift Valley Province, and Northeastern Province.¹²¹ These daily correspondences provide a detailed record of the colonial administration in Kenya and consist of letters, telegrams, circulars, reports, memoranda, and copies of legislation that were circulated among the colonial officials.¹²² Ease of access to these files is made by several guides¹²³ published by the Syracuse University Program of Eastern African Studies.

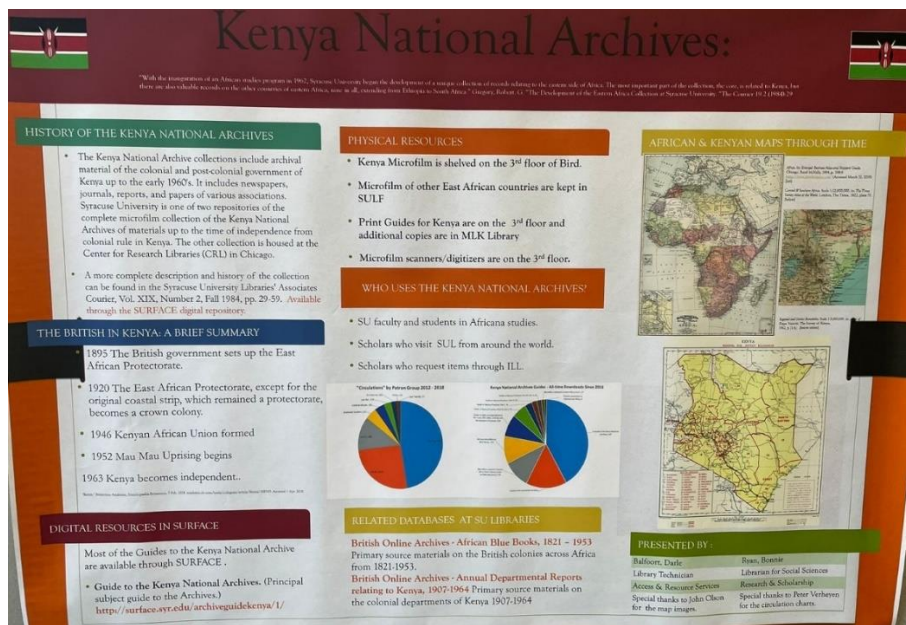


Fig 10. Poster of KNA collection at SU

Poster of the Kenya National Archives collection at Syracuse University presented by librarians Boni Ryan and Darle Balfourt.

¹²¹ Leigh and Morton, "Microfilms Related to Eastern Africa Part II (Kenya, Asian and Miscellaneous) : A Guide to Recent Acquisitions of Syracuse University."

¹²² Robert G. Gregory and Richard E. Lewis, *A Guide to Daily Correspondence of the Coast, Rift Valley, Central, and Northeastern Provinces: Kenya National Archives Microfilm*, Eastern Africa Occasional Bibliography, no. 28 (Syracuse, N.Y., U.S.A: Foreign and Comparative Studies, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1984).

¹²³ Alan C Solomon and C A Crosby, "Guide to Nyanza Province Microfilm Collection, Kenya National Archives, Part I: Section 10B, Correspondence and Reports 1925-1960," n.d.

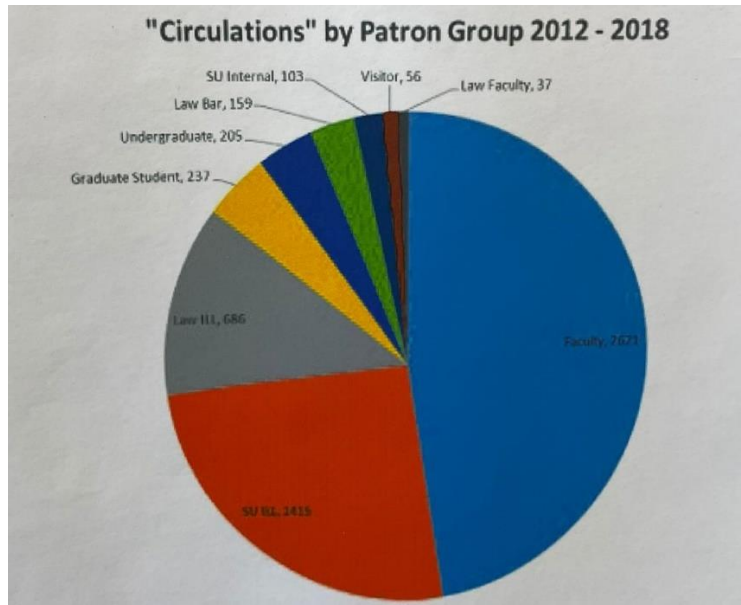


Fig 11. Poster excerpt of KNA collection at SU

Poster excerpt detailing the number of circulations by Patron Group from 2012 to 2018.

Interviews

In order to gain a better understanding of the contents of the archival materials, I conducted oral history interviews, and had informal interviews and conversations in London and Nairobi, on zoom and in person, in the Summer of 2022. My focus was to speak with experts who were either involved in the Hanslope disclosure or had extensive knowledge of the Kenyan archives at TNA and at Syracuse University.

To get in touch with these experts, I used snowball sampling whereby research participants recruit and refer other participants for a study. To start with, I reached out to the following individuals: Dr. David Anderson, professor of African history at the University of Warwick; and Dr. Martin Shanguhya, professor of African history at Syracuse University. Some interviewees wanted to preserve their identities and so I anonymized them for purposes of this study.

Through snowball sampling, initial conversations with Dr. Anderson and Dr. Shanguhya enabled me to engage with other experts including Dr. Caroline Elkins, professor of history and African and African American Studies at Harvard University; Mr. Alex Wessely, solicitor at Leigh Day; Dr. Riley Linebaugh, lecturer and researcher in British History at the Centre for British Studies; Mr. Francis Mwangi, director of Kenya National Archives; Dr. Max Pinckers, photographer and documentarist; Ms. Chao Maina, co-founder of the Museum for British Colonialism and Dr. Wangui Kimari, coordinator at the Mathare Social Justice Center. In this section, I also outline the debates that came out of the 2022 Mau Mau conference surrounding the "migrated archives". The conversations outlined the following:

Ms. Chao Maina, co-founder of the Museum for British Colonialism (MBC)
(March 4th 2022, by Zoom, Nairobi, Kenya)

I met with Ms. Maina on zoom after a series of collaborations. She shared with me her work on an exhibition they organized on the migrated archive titled "lost unities: an exhibition for archival repatriation". (MBC) As a digital heritage specialist, she was concerned that TNA does not prioritize the digitization of these records. Through her work as a public historian, she shed light on what history means culturally and politically to Kenyans today. Through Ms. Maina, I was able to contact Dr. Max Pinckers.

Dr. David Anderson, Professor of African history at the University of Warwick
(June 5th 2022, in person, Oxford, UK)

I reached out to Dr. Anderson who invited me to visit with him in Oxford, UK. He shared with me his experience as an expert witness for the Mau Mau case, his past frustration with the gaps at the Kenya National Archive, and the proceedings that led to the Hanslope Disclosure. He

outlined the past and ongoing efforts of the Kenyan government to retrieve these records since the 1960s.

As I will discuss later, I did not gain access to the FCO 141 files, and Dr. Anderson was very instrumental in laying out its contents and sharing with me a few of his copies. He provided an illuminating opinion of the archives stating that "You don't find secrets in FCO 141, you find secrecy."¹²⁴ Dr. Anderson also provided me with a background of how the East African archives came to Syracuse University, raising questions around the material conditions of the project. Through Dr. Anderson, I was able to get in touch with Dr. Linebaugh and Mr. Alex Wessely.

Mr. Alex Wessely, solicitor at Leigh Day

(June 24th 2022, by Zoom, London, UK)

I met with Mr. Alex Wessely and his colleagues Mr. Rishi Khanna and Mr. David Roberts on zoom. He described the role of Leigh Day and the Kenya Human Rights Commission in securing a settlement for over 5,000 Mau Mau torture victims from the British government. He clarified that the British have not made reparations for their atrocities; in this case it was compensation.

He provided me with copies of the legal case proceedings and summary judgements. (Mutua vs FCO) He also explained that the subsequent cases brought forth against the British government by other law firms, including a case filed by the widow of Dedan Kimathi, who was seen by many as the leader of Mau Mau, on behalf of 40,000 Mau Mau victims was thrown out by the judge. Mr. Wessely illuminated the contents of the Overseas operations Act passed in British parliament, which bans overseas claims meaning there can never be another colonial case brought against the British government.

¹²⁴ *Interview with David Anderson* (Oxford, United Kingdom, 2022).

*Dr. Riley Linebaugh, lecturer and researcher in British History at the Centre for British Studies
(July 13th 2022, by Zoom, Nairobi, Kenya)*

I spoke with Dr. Linebaugh over zoom. Dr. Linebaugh outlined her own findings on the migrated archives and their role in creating a phenomenon of power to conceal Kenyan history and reproduce conditions for British impunity. She noted how the sensitivity review of the FCO 141 files redacted the identities of British officials involved in the Mau Mau struggle while the names of detainees were left open, revictimizing them again. Dr. Linebaugh expressed her favor for the return of archives as a political question for Kenya and was critical about the East African archives at Syracuse University.

*Dr. Martin Shanguhya, Associate Professor of African history at Syracuse University
(August 4th 2022, in person, Nairobi, Kenya)*

I met with Dr. Shanguhya while he was carrying out his own research at the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. Dr. Shanguhya provided a broader framework of understanding the archives through a postcolonial lens of how the African experience was impacted by colonial domination. He questioned the African postcolonial mind on their own historical perspective as to how they grapple with their racialized history. He also provided a guiding framework through which to comb through archives. He too provided me a background of how the East African archives came to Syracuse University.

Dr. Shanguhya explained that during his conversations talking firsthand with individuals who worked on the project in Syracuse at the time, he understood that the material was acquired legally. He explained that he was familiar with the criticisms raised on the archives, which allege that they were acquired in an illicit manner and that they should be returned. However, he

emphasized that the material in Syracuse is only copies and that the criticisms raised were baseless and without evidence. Through Dr. Shanguhya I was able to get in touch with Mr. Francis Mwangi.

Dr. Caroline Elkins, professor of history and African and African American studies at Harvard University

(August 4th 2022, in person, Nairobi, Kenya)

I met with Dr. Elkins during the launch of her book "Legacies of Violence" at the British Institute of East Africa in Nairobi. She provided a revisionist historical perspective on British colonial violence in Kenya. She also expounded on the Hanslope disclosure and the role of paternalism and state-directed violence in Kenya.

Dr. Elkins expressed disappointment at the academy and the legal system during the Mau Mau case, which made it so that the archives had to be "excavated" to validate the oral history testimonies of the Mau Mau victims. She explained the criticism she had received from writing her book "Imperial Reckoning" based predominantly on oral history, as she often was told "Well, the Africans are always liars."

Mr. Francis Mwangi, director of Kenya National Archives

(August 17th 2022, in person, Nairobi, Kenya)

I met with Mr. Mwangi at his office at the Kenya National Archives. We spoke at length about the question of migrated archives. He provided me with a historical background of the efforts of the Kenyan government through the Kenya National Archives (KNA) and other channels to retrieve the migrated Kenyan archives at TNA. He explained that KNA had spent an extensive budget in their efforts to retrieve the migrated archive. He expressed that KNA had renewed interest in the Kenyan archives at Syracuse University and had sent a delegation to

Syracuse in 2019 to catalogue the contents of this archive. Director Mwangi hoped that their visit would open future discussions between the Kenyan government and Syracuse University on the preservation and conservation of the University's Kenya National Archive collections.

Dr. Max Pinckers, photographer and documentarist

(September 9th 2022, by Zoom, Nairobi, Kenya)

Dr. Max Pinckers and I discussed his documentary project, "Unhistories" and its genesis from the Hanslope Disclosure. His work seeks to revisualize Kenyan history through photography drawing from authentic accounts of Mau Mau veterans. Through Dr. Pinckers, I had access to additional FCO 141 documents.

Dr. Wangui Kimari, coordinator at the Mathare Social Justice Center

(September 16th 2022, by Zoom, Nairobi, Kenya)

I met with Dr. Kimari on zoom. Our conversation covered the shortcomings of the Mau Mau case, as the question of reparations for colonialism and land redistribution was buried with the statue at Uhuru Park. She expressed concern over the continued class struggle of a majority of Kenyans who continue to suffer due to colonial dispossession.

International Conference on the 70th Anniversary of the British Declaration of State of Emergency in Kenya in 1952

(October 17th – 19th, 2022, University Of Nairobi, Kenya)

This was the first ever conference to be organized on Mau Mau since Kenyan independence, celebrating the Mau Mau anti-colonial movement, 70 years since the British Declaration of State of Emergency in Kenya in 1952. The conference's theme was "Recasting *Mau Mau* Discourse: Reflections on the Declaration of the State of Emergency 70 years later." Scholars from all corners of the world were represented. A good number of scholars, myself

included, presented on the "migrated archives", and it quickly became a topic eliciting hot debate.¹²⁵

Limitations

The limitations of my research included time constraints, since I only had one summer for fieldwork, and based on the geographical scope of my research in Syracuse, London and Nairobi, additional time would have allowed me to collect more extensive primary data for this project. With additional time, my research on the Syracuse Microfilm Project would have been further enhanced through interviews and questionnaires with persons related to the project.

Limitation on the literature on the FCO 141 files and the Syracuse Microfilm Project also impacted the findings of my research. However, I was able to supplement the literature with archival data and interviews.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Archival analysis

In my analysis of the FCO 141 files, I found evidence of colonial brutality, which the British colonial officials did not want to be made public. Further, I found information implicating the British government in a systemic operation to secretly remove and destroy records from Kenya through Operation Legacy. In addition to this, I found letters from the top administration in the Kenyan government, making various efforts to retrieve these records.

¹²⁵ "Recasting Mau Mau Discourse: Reflections on the Declaration of the State of Emergency 70 Years Later" (International Conference on the 70th Anniversary of the British Declaration of State of Emergency in Kenya in 1952, University of Nairobi, 2022).

Evidence of colonial brutality

An analysis of the FCO 141 files uncovers evidence of brutality by colonial forces against Mau Mau suspects. In one case, documents reveal an investigation into two district officers accused of “harming and killing a Kikuyu in cold blood”, which they deny. The accusations made are as follows:

“In September 1955, Mr. Potgieter and Mr. Bartlett who had just been transferred to Meru, entered the Mt. Kenya forest with a small patrol... As they approached a ‘terrorist’ exposed himself briefly and Mr. Potgieter fired a burst from his gun... The man had managed to run a short distance from the hide after being shot, but his wounds proved fatal and he died on the spot.”¹²⁶

In another instance, a major of the British army is convicted of cruelty. On 11th March 1954 Captain G.S.L Griffiths of the Durham Light Infantry was convicted by the General Court Martial of two cases of causing grievous bodily harm with intent and three cases of disgraceful conduct of cruel kind contrary to the Army Act. The court proceedings detail the extent of brutality enacted upon the Mau Mau suspects. They explain how two prisoners, Kivengi Njoka and Njeru Ndegwa were brutalized after being handed over to Major Griffiths and Lieutenant Innes-Walker from a police station in Nyeri.

“The prisoners handcuffed together by the wrists, were taken along in the patrol’s transport under an escort.. They were questioned about the whereabouts of Mau Mau in the area.”

Private Ali Segat had accompanied Major Griffiths. Major Griffiths handed him his Somali knife and gave an order to castrate the smaller of the two prisoners, Njeru Ndegwa.

Then, “both Major Griffiths and Lieutenant Innes-Walker pulled the prisoner’s trousers down, leaving his private parts exposed. Private Ali Segat was reluctant to comply with the major’s orders saying that such “is a very bad thing”

¹²⁶ “African Affairs,” n.d., FCO 141/7193, The National Archives, Kew.

The major then said to Ali Segat that “My orders are to cut them off” and when he refused to do this, Major Griffiths accused him of being a coward and then ordered him in Swahili to cut off the prisoner’s ears.”

Ali Segat then describes how in the presence of the three officers , he severed the left ear of the prisoner Njeru Ndegwa while he was handcuffed to the second prisoner. Private Ali Segat then cleaned the blood from the knife on the prisoner’s trousers and handed it back to Major Griffith. Both prisoners were subject to a beating by Ali Segat, using the butt of his rifle under orders of Major Griffiths.

Then “Lietuenant Ines-Walker then ordered the soldiers to take the prisoners further away from the camp to the bush. Innes-Walker then separated the prisoners by unlocking their handcuffs. Innes-Walker then suddenly ordered Njeru Ndegwa to run in front of them an in the direction of the bush saying in Swahili “Kimbia”. The prisoner commenced to run away form them. Innes-Walker shouted “Piga” which the soldiers took to be an order to shoot the prisoner down. They both fired their rifles, hitting the prisoner and killing him instantly.”¹²⁷

The evidence contained in this record explain the reason why colonial officials were intent on destroying and migrating this records out of Kenya.

Operation Legacy

Operation Legacy refers to the meticulous and detailed planning and the specific instructions that went into migrating and destroying documents from Kenya prior to independence. In a letter dated May 3, 1961, the colonial secretary dispatched the "usual Colonial Office instructions" to the Governor of Kenya ordering that the independent Kenyan government should not inherit papers that:

- might embarrass Her Majesty’s Government or other governments;
- might embarrass members of the Police, military forces, public servants or others (such as Police agents or informers);

¹²⁷ “Conviction by Court Martial,” n.d., WO 32/ 22202, The National Archives, Kew.

- might compromise sources of intelligence;
- might be used unethically by Ministers in the successor government.¹²⁸

On May 13, 1961, a second memo titled "The Designation 'Watch'," followed from the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defense in Nairobi, which detailed the division of government records into "Watch" and "Legacy" material. Papers with the designation "Watch" would only be seen by "authorized" officers and were to be destroyed or removed to the United Kingdom. Papers with the designation "Legacy" could be seen by "non-authorized" officers and would eventually be inherited by an independent Government. Such papers constitute what may be entitled for convenience "LEGACY" material.¹²⁹

The memo goes on to define who could be "authorized" for the task, namely government officials who were "a British subject of European descent." It was clear that "No non-European secretary must be allowed to know of the existence of this system."¹³⁰ Further, another letter reveals the contents of the "Watch" material, the majority of which concerned Mau Mau and the State of Emergency.

The colonial secretary offers various alternatives to destroy these documents specifying that "it is permissible, as an alternative to destruction by fire, for documents to be packed in weighted crates and dumped in very deep and current-free water at maximum practicable distance from the coast."¹³¹ Further, he writes to the Governors of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika stating, "I welcome your purge... of documents which should not be handed over to a successor government."¹³²

¹²⁸ "Disposal of Classified Records and Accountable Documents," May 3, 1961, FCO 141/6957, The National Archives, Kew.

¹²⁹ "Security Documents," n.d., FCO 141/6969, The National Archives, Kew.

¹³⁰ "Security Documents."

¹³¹ "Disposal of Classified Records and Accountable Documents."

¹³² "The Designation 'WATCH'."

However, preparations for the purge had been underway years before the Colonial Secretary's instructions. From August 1959, colonial offices had received a memo detailing the "Method of Destroying Classified Documents." Each department was required to provide specific details regarding "routine destruction" and "emergency destruction" of documents. Some of the proposals included the use of an incinerator, "capable of destroying 600 lbs. within six hours." The Ministry of African Affairs responded that it would take "35 hours, or perhaps 4 working days, to destroy our total accumulation of Secret documents."

The Attorney General's office proposed more dramatic options, offering that

"Our present buildings are of wood... Were they to catch fire, I surmise that all our secret papers -- and indeed all our other papers -- would be destroyed in some 20 minutes. However, if we were required for some other reason ourselves to destroy our secret papers, I think that if all the European staff in Chambers were to assist we could do so by fire in about an hour."¹³³

Another official at the Ministry of Defense, proposed that, "it is estimated that under proper supervision, a bonfire would dispose of approximately 1,120 pounds per hour." A policeman suggested "pouring petrol on the papers first", adding that "a more efficient method of destruction would be by the use of an appropriate corrosive acid. Acid could be poured on the files, if they were placed in the concrete open drain which runs through this Headquarters."¹³⁴

Documents that were destroyed included those concerning: Mau Mau association, unrest and Mau Mau, restriction orders, correspondence from the Emergency period, security and intelligence reports, security precautions and instructions, and matters concerning the 'Watch' classification.

¹³³ "Method of Destroying Classified Documents."

¹³⁴ "Destruction of Classified Waste," October 14, 1959, FCO 141/6971, The National Archives, Kew.

Documents that were not destroyed were transferred to London and stored in a security cage at Hayes then later at Hanslope Park in England. In a letter from the Kenya Governor to the British Secretary of State, he informs the latter that the air force had transferred the archives to England, writing that the “R.A.F [Royal Air Force] Nairobi is lifting further three crates by a Britannia flight to Berkshire arriving Thursday 5th December 1963.”¹³⁵

Another letter titled "Kenya: Migrated Archive" is sent to Miss Blayney, the head of the Library Records Department, on July 7, 1982. It details the contents of "307 boxes containing about 1500 files" of classified material that could not be transferred to the independent Kenyan government. The majority of the files concern Mau Mau and the Emergency, while others include personal files on Jomo Kenyatta, Tom Mboya, Oginga Odinga and Arap Moi.

Efforts for restitution

*“If they are not public records, we have carte blanche over their fate”.*¹³⁶

The first request by a former British colonial territory for the return of archives was made by Kenya. It was made in 1967 by Mr. Kibinge, Permanent Secretary of the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who wrote to the British High Commission, Nairobi. He expressed "the wish to open preliminary discussions on ways of returning to Kenya all the documents removed from Government ministries and State House during the pre-independence period."¹³⁷ In his letter, Kibinge pointed out that the Governor had informed the Government of Kenya in November 1963 that certain documents had been removed to London.

¹³⁵ “The Designation ‘WATCH’.”

¹³⁶ “Letter from R. R. M. Hollas,” February 1, 1995, FCO 141/19933, The National Archives, Kew.

¹³⁷ “Migrated Records History of Colonial Territories and Disposal of Classified Material,” n.d., FCO 141/19934, The National Archives, Kew.

The British government was alarmed by this request and requested Mr. Cheeseman, the Commonwealth Office Librarian, to propose a course of action. He proposed three options: First was to return all the migrated records. however, this idea was thrown out as they "would be under constant pressure to make good any gaps that exist in the records...and there was always the danger that any returned record is likely to provide clues to the material which we could not return or which had been destroyed".¹³⁸

Second was to review the collections and return all non-sensitive material which he advises against stating that they "would be pressed to state which records had been withdrawn". The Third was to say that certain records were brought back to the UK, but it was not intended to return them as they were the property of Her Majesty's Government (HMG). Eventually, they settled on the third option and the British High Commission was provided with an analogy with instructions to explain that:

"It was the general practice to withdraw shortly after independence certain documents, the property of HMG which it was not possible to hand on to the successor government...Frankly, HMG was unable to release for return to Kenya any of the material of this nature which it holds and would not negotiate on this."¹³⁹

This was under the instruction of Sir D MacGillivray, who had been the Governor of Malaya during the period of its bloody independence war and when archives were being secretly migrated out of Malaya as well.

In 1973, Dr. Mungai, the then Kenyan Minister of Foreign Affairs, raised the question of pre-independence records and was told that his government could obtain photocopies of material from the Public Records Office (PRO). That same year the Kenya National Assembly set up an Inter-ministerial committee on the retrieval of records.

¹³⁸ "Migrated Records History of Colonial Territories and Disposal of Classified Material."

¹³⁹ "Migrated Records History of Colonial Territories and Disposal of Classified Material."

In 1974, the Kenyan High Commissioner met with the British High Commissioner, citing the working arrangement that had been reached with Dr. Mungai and hoping to reach a further agreement to discuss the return of records. His interests, however, were not the return of all the records, but rather to retrieve personal documents belonging to President Kenyatta, which he did not manage to obtain.

In 1979, the Kenya National Archives sent a delegation of Dr. Nathan Mnjama and Dr. Anne Thurston from the Kenya National Archives Overseas Survey Team to London to search for the missing Kenyan archives. They met with the head of the Library Records Department Miss Blayney who "professed to know little about material sent to UK."

In 1981, Dr. Robert Ouko, the Kenyan Minister of Foreign Affairs made an inquiry to the Secretary of State, which was forwarded to the British High Commission in Nairobi. The British could not comprehend the Kenyan demands and claimed that it was only due to the presence of Dr. Thurston an American working for the Kenya National Archives, a "professional archivist advising the Kenyan government" that the government was interested in the archives at all.

The issue of the "Migrated Archives" quickly garnered attention from international bodies. The United Nations General Assembly resolutions from 1972-1976 drew attention to "the protection and restoration of cultural and historical archives and works of art, with a view to the preservation and future development of cultural values".

A UNESCO working group was set up on "migrated archives", and in July 1976, the Public Records Office (PRO) received a letter from the UNESCO Executive Council on Archives inquiring whether they had received any claims for the return of archives. PRO cowardly responded that "no claims had been made by any overseas governments for records in their custody". Meanwhile, the International Roundtable Conference on Archives reaffirmed the

“right of each state to recover archives which are part of its heritage" especially "considering the large number of archival disputes and in particular those resulting from decolonization."¹⁴⁰

In Africa, awareness and advocacy of the "migrated archives" was also rising. At the general conference of the East and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council, ESARBICA (formerly known as the Eastern and Central Africa Branch of the International Council on Archives, ECARBICA), the issue of migrated archives was again raised. PRO made a record of a paper from this conference, noting the problem of migrated archives in ESARBICA member countries.

This issue escalated to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) whose members signed a declaration in 1973 on the Preservation and Development of National cultures which stressed the need to “reaffirm national cultural identity and eliminate the harmful consequences of the colonial era, so that...national culture and traditions will be preserved". Additionally, NAM "requests urgently all states in possession of works of art and manuscripts to restore them promptly to their countries of origin."

Despite all the efforts made to repatriate “migrated archives”, the British government maintained a stance of ‘lawful lawlessness’, using the law and bureaucratic hogwash to withhold the records. This is evident through the comments made by Sir Arthur Galsworthy that,

"no doubt it will be said that the records... are vitally important parts of the history of any developing Commonwealth state. But the plain fact is that this correspondence deals with the hammering of UK policies. They are therefore, in my view, essentially UK documents and records.”

The Lord Chancellor also remarked that “If they are not public records, we have carte blanche over their fate”. The official policy line taken with Kenya in 1983 was therefore:

¹⁴⁰ “Migrated Records History of Colonial Territories and Disposal of Classified Material.”

"to admit that the records were migrated or destroyed prior to independence; that the records migrated or destroyed concerned the development of UK policy; or that they related to a third country made it necessary to withhold them; that the removal of these documents was in relation with the usual policy by which the secret documents of one government were not left to its successors and that frankly that HMG is unable to return these documents and cannot negotiate on this," and that "This policy line has not changed."¹⁴¹

Today, the British government is still unwilling to negotiate on the return of these documents and still maintains its claim on the documents. Clearly, this absurd and impracticable policy line has still not changed.

Analysis of interviews

The themes that came out of the oral history and informal interviews include epistemic violence, the repatriation of the migrated archives, and the questions surrounding the East African archives at Syracuse University.

At the Mau Mau conference in Nairobi in October 2022, Dr. Pamela Nyongesa regretted that the withholding of the Kenyan migrated archives was a manifestation of the "powers that continue to control us, our economics, our politics..." She proclaimed that "we are still so badly colonized we can't access them."¹⁴² Without question, the denial of access of an independent country to its historical records is a manifestation of lingering imperial domination.

Withholding migrated archives is testament to the "last stage of imperialism" by way of Nkrumah's definition of neocolonialism.¹⁴³ In addition to this, Linebaugh outlines how withholding archives to citizens with rights has consequences for political independence and speaks to the power of the record. She further explains that the dispute of the FCO 141 files

¹⁴¹ "Migrated Records History of Colonial Territories and Disposal of Classified Material."

¹⁴² "Recasting Mau Mau Discourse: Reflections on the Declaration of the State of Emergency 70 Years Later."

¹⁴³ Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, Book, Whole (London: Nelson, 1965).

should not be a clue hunting mission of Western scholars and that there is need to dislodge the Eurocentric telling of this story.

The need for restitution of the archives was raised in a majority of the interviews. Maina discussed the public outcry for the return of archives across Africa. Activists have organized movements in Kenya for "Rejesheni Kenya kumbukumbu za makavazi" to return back Kenya's archival memory: In Zimbabwe, they call for "Dzosai nhorondo ye Zimbabwe" to bring back the archives of Zimbabwe; in Botswana they demand "Busang mekwalo ya ditso tsa rona" to bring back the archives of Botswana and in Zambia they shout "Bwezani zolembedwa za dziko la Zambia" to return the records that belong to Zambia."¹⁴⁴

Further, there are ongoing efforts by governments such as Kenya as Mwangi explained:

“Our search for our migrated archives started in about 1969 when the then-permanent secretary of foreign affairs and our foreign mission office started following about the records that had been taken away. From 1969 up to today, we have not been able to retrieve all those records. We have retrieved quite a bit, some ... a fraction of them in digital copies or microfilms. But we have never brought any single hard copy file here. Because the British say that they are the records of the queen ... and they are public records governed by the public records act of the UK. So, we weren't able to get them. Although we have tried bilaterally to get those records, but up to now it has not become possible to get those records. Of course, they have been giving us access to go photocopy them, microfilm them, and bring some of them, but we have never got the entire collection. But we have a lot.”¹⁴⁵

In addition to this, another source, wanting to remain anonymous, divulged to me that the former president Uhuru Kenyatta had met with a team during the Mau Mau case proceedings and the Hanslope disclosure. The source noted that the president expressed his full support for the case and the return of migrated archives in private, but he never officially raised the issue in

¹⁴⁴ Museum of British Colonialism, “Lost Unities: An Exhibition for Archival Repatriation,” MBC, accessed February 23, 2023, <https://www.museumofbritishcolonialism.org/lost-unities>.

¹⁴⁵ *Interview with Francis G. Mwangi, Director KNA (Nairobi, Kenya, 2022).*

cabinet. The source also believed that damaging information about prominent political families in Kenya could be to blame for the lack of political will to return these documents.¹⁴⁶

Riley Linebaugh described the Syracuse microfilm effort as the "most devastating thing in the history of Kenyan archives".¹⁴⁷ Linebaugh explained that the Kenya National Archive tried to participate in nation building after independence and played a foundational role in redefining postcolonial African philosophy, identity, culture and epistemology in Kenya. However, the involvement of the Syracuse microfilming project shifted the attention to neoliberalism, decentering KNA's control over archive production and dethroning KNA as a player in nation building. Mwangi also regretted the terms that his predecessor had agreed to in the project.

Another respondent explained that the initial agreement that the Kenya National Archives had with Syracuse University was not adhered to. That Syracuse University had distributed the material outside of the initial agreement with KNA and that it had been required to split the profits of the sale of the guidebooks with KNA but this was not to be the case.

At the conference, criticism was raised on the capacity and management of KNA. Dr. Misigo asserted that "we should try and get back the archives." However, he questioned, "are we archiving what we have here?." Another scholar expressed her horror upon visiting KNA and discovering that the staff were selling documents because the salary they receive is heavily insufficient to live on. Yet another scholar expressed that in his research, he visited a government office to review some records only to be told that "we burnt the files because we did not have space for them."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ *Anonymous Interview*, 2022.

¹⁴⁷ *Interview with Riley Linebaugh* (Zoom, 2022).

¹⁴⁸ "Recasting Mau Mau Discourse: Reflections on the Declaration of the State of Emergency 70 Years Later."

My own experience at the Kenya National Archives was starkly different to that at The National Archives, UK. At Kew, I walked into an expansive compound with a majestic structure surrounded by a lovely park with benches and a pond in the middle, populated by swans and geese. Inside, I was welcomed by the fragrance of coffee emanating from the café on the main level and was given a free membership pass to scan in and out of the building to view the over three stories of documents.

In Nairobi, on the other hand, I stepped into the archives located right in the middle of downtown, engulfed in the noise of touts, *matatus* and media campaigns. I had to pay fifty Kenyan Shillings to gain entry to the archive, which is housed in a tiny reading area on the second level, while the first and second floors are primarily an art gallery.

Yet in Kew, I was acutely aware that I was standing in the midst of a colonial vestige, one that had a hand in the brutal subjugation of people of color all over the world.¹⁴⁹ In fact, the ongoing withholding of records pertaining to sovereign states made it an active crime scene for ongoing colonial violence. Therefore, despite the fact that KNA is severely underfunded and under-resourced, this is not sufficient cause for denying Kenyans access to their historical memory.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, I discuss the consequences of removing the FCO 141 files as well as the East African archives. I argue that the consequences of migrating the FCO 141 files are reproducing the politics of inaccess, sanitizing British history, miseducating youth and impeding social justice. Further, I argue that the Syracuse Microfilming Project, whilst dissimilar to

¹⁴⁹ “Kew and Colonialism: A History of Entanglement | Kew,” accessed April 25, 2023, <https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/kew-empire-indigo-factory-model>.

Operation Legacy, also served to reproduce inequality and inaccess to knowledge and research in African studies.

Politics of Inaccess

The main impact of migrating archives is to reproduce inaccessibility. This became evident to me during my attempts to examine the FCO 141 files at The National Archives. These documents, having been migrated from Kenya in the post-independence years, are not accessible online, neither are they accessible in any other part of the world apart from where they are being held, at The National Archive in Kew.

My efforts to access the FCO 141 files begun on March 3rd, 2022, when I first contacted TNA planning for my visit to view the records. I was conscious of the fact that the British government had released these records, to the public in several tranches since 2012. I made a bulk order request for the files and even received a letter from TNA to support my visa application. I went ahead and booked my flights and hotel accommodation and travelled over 3,000 miles to view these records only to be told that I could not access the FCO 141 files. This news came as a surprise to me as there was no official communication on the website nor on email stating that these archives were inaccessible.

I wrote a letter to the administration expressing my dissatisfaction with the treatment I had received from TNA and demanding a written explanation on why such a huge archive of 2,500 files had been withdrawn. In my email, I pointed out that I found it curious that TNA had chosen to withdraw these files at the end of COVID travel restrictions and the height of the summer period when overseas researchers were visiting the archive.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Karinge Joy, "Feedback & Inquiry on FCO 141," June 10, 2022.

The response I got was inconsistent and unconvincing – that they had been withdrawn for conservation and later that they were under inspection for insecticides. Other scholars such as Mandy Banton were also incensed with how TNA had treated researchers wishing to use the FCO 141 files "with indifference, if not contempt." Noting my experience, Banton wrote:

“A Kenyan student at a US university was one frustrated user when she travelled to the UK having put in an advance order only to be denied access. She was brave enough – or maybe just angry enough – to demand a meeting with a manager. This outlined the conservation concerns, but did not improve the situation for her.”

In addition to this, she observed that it was "hardly possible" that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office did not treat the collection for insecticides for the many years it was stored in its repositories. Banton further remarked that "Coincidentally or not, the withdrawal immediately followed requests to film some parts of the records, which had been turned down" and added that this withdrawal came "exactly the time of year when overseas researchers are most likely to be visiting TNA."¹⁵¹

Other scholars also rallied behind the demand for the immediate reinstatement of the FCO 141 files which have a “legacy of suspicion.”¹⁵² The UK Libraries and Archives Group on Africa (SCOLMA) wrote an open letter to The National Archives interrogating how the entire documentation came to be infected with insecticide, yet the files came from 37 separate colonies. They noted the importance of making the records available to the public and urged TNA to make them available as soon as possible even if it meant committing additional resources to do so.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Mandy Banton “Recent Withdrawal from Public Access of Important ‘Migrated Archives,’” Institute of Commonwealth Studies, accessed April 3, 2023, <https://commonwealth.sas.ac.uk/blog/recent-withdrawal-public-access-important-migrated-archives>.

¹⁵² Anthony Badger, “Historians, a Legacy of Suspicion and the ‘Migrated Archives,’” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23, no. 4–5 (October 1, 2012): 799–807, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2012.709761>.

¹⁵³ “Scolma.Org – News – Open Letter about FCO 141- the ‘Migrated Archives,’” accessed February 23, 2023, <https://scolma.org/?p=2956>.

On social media, there was an uproar over the withdrawal of these files. The Institute of Commonwealth Studies twitted that:

“#ICWS acutely concerned at #TNA public closure of the #Migrated #Archives #commonwealth @SASNews @LondonU.”¹⁵⁴

James Lowry, assistant professor at City University of New York, and author of “*Displaced Archives*” twitted:

“Could @UkNatArchives explain how the whole of FCO 141 was contaminated with insecticide (immediately after a film crew asked to see the records)? #MigratedArchives #DisplacedArchives #Twitterstorians @philipvmurphy @rileysline @chatereraf @museumofbc @ARALondonRegion.”¹⁵⁵

Phillip Murphy, professor of British and Commonwealth History at the University of London twitted:

“The withdrawal of the entire FCO 141 series from @UkNatArchives- ostensibly as a temporary measure for conservation purposes - simply underlines the overwhelming moral, practical and intellectual case for the digitization of these materials.”¹⁵⁶

Riley Linebaugh, lecturer and researcher in British History at the Centre for British Studies twitted:

“The sneaky withdrawal of FCO141 shows what power UK gov continues to hold as gatekeeper to histories pertaining to lands and peoples across the globe. @gathara reminds us what's at stake.”¹⁵⁷

April Jackson, PhD student in history at the University of Leicester twitted:

“This is appalling - FCO 141 are “migrated archives” that were hidden by the British government and contain details of colonial abuses - the circumstance of their withdrawal is highly suspicious.”¹⁵⁸

The UK Migrated Archives Working Group at University College London Centre for Critical Archives & Records Management Studies responded by organizing a workshop in

¹⁵⁴ Commonwealth Studies [@ICwS_SAS], Tweet, *Twitter*, June 29, 2022, https://twitter.com/ICwS_SAS/status/1542081500451147776.

¹⁵⁵ James Lowry [@JamesLowryATL], Tweet, *Twitter*, June 25, 2022, <https://twitter.com/JamesLowryATL/status/1540744174303158273>.

¹⁵⁶ Philip Murphy [@philipvmurphy], Tweet, *Twitter*, June 28, 2022, <https://twitter.com/philipvmurphy/status/1541689192631222272>.

¹⁵⁷ Riley Linebaugh [@rileysline], Tweet, *Twitter*, June 27, 2022, <https://twitter.com/rileysline/status/1541429779425120256>.

¹⁵⁸ April [@ajacksonhistory], ” Tweet, *Twitter*, June 27, 2022, <https://twitter.com/ajacksonhistory/status/1541380057238831104>.

October 2022 to raise awareness around the challenges and ethics surrounding the FCO 141 files, center the perspectives of archivists from affected countries; and promote and provide opportunities to be involved in reparative action.

Among the key elements of the workshop was to review the existing UK Foreign and Commonwealth migrated archives Wikipedia page to reflect changes in the history of the UK Migrated Archives, which had long been misreported.¹⁵⁹

Reflecting on the placement of FCO 141 in London, Riley Linebaugh writes on the "invisibility" of the records. She notes that "the questions of what is available to whom and how, are currently addressed at the discretion of TNA," in its role as a curator of the colonial past. Further, she finds that "Under its custody, FCO 141 is visible to those granted archival access (further mediated by racist border regimes, costly travel, and the privilege of time)."

Linebaugh is reminded by her colleague based in Kenya that her colleague "will likely never see FCO 141." She highlights that the documents are thousands of kilometers and an ocean away from their origins. She emphasizes that they are thus "more readily visible to "strangers," blind though they may be, than to their kin".

Similarly, it is apparent that the disparate access to the FCO 141 files in London has led to a noticeable absence of continental-based scholars involved in the issue of the migrated archives. A bibliography on displaced archives provided by the International Council of Archives demonstrates that the majority of literature based on FCO 141 material has been written by Western scholars, while Black or African scholars are barely represented.¹⁶⁰ Evidently, there

¹⁵⁹ UCL, "Centre for Critical Archives & Records Management Studies - Events," Information Studies, May 12, 2022, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/information-studies/research/centre-critical-archives-records-management-studies/centre-critical-archives-records-2>.

¹⁶⁰ Expert Group on Shared Archival Heritage, "Displaced Archives and Shared Archival Heritage: A Bibliography," *International Council on Archives*, October 2021, https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/egsah_bibliography_october_2021.pdf.

is need for a democratization of access to these records, as the United Nations Human Rights Charter recognizes access to records and information as a basic human right to be enjoyed by all.¹⁶¹

Sanitized history of British Colonialism

*'Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.'*¹⁶²

Migrating archives from its former colonies was Britain's strategic method of sanitizing its past. The great bulk of past literature about colonialism in Kenya as recorded by white settlers, talks about a romanticized period in a "happy valley" of debauchery, sex and drugs.¹⁶³ Notions were put forth of Kenya as a beautiful tourist location and its "natives" as "child-like savage creatures" by racist anthropologists such as Louis Leakey.¹⁶⁴ Other racist writers such as Karen Blixen wrote about the inferiority of the African while promoting a view of white saviorism.¹⁶⁵

The danger of this single story¹⁶⁶ is that it perpetuates a historical amnesia to efface from the record the brutal history of Britain's colonial and imperial past. Stuart Hall constructs the idea of historical amnesia as an "operation on popular memory", a "loss of historical memory" and "a decisive mental repression" of Britain's racist imperial past. Therefore, archival erasure was a

¹⁶¹ United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," United Nations (United Nations), accessed April 14, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

¹⁶² Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Everyman's Library 135 (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1992).

¹⁶³ Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa. Bk. I*, Book, Whole (Rochester; Woodbridge; Boydell & Brewer, Limited, 1992), <https://go.exlibris.link/9nZxnQNs>.

¹⁶⁴ J.E.G. Sutton, "Denying History in Colonial Kenya: The Anthropology and Archeology of G.W.B. Huntingford and L.S.B. Leakey," *History in Africa* 33 (2006): 287–320, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.2006.0021>.

¹⁶⁵ Abdi Latif Dahir, "Celebrating Karen Blixen's 'Out of Africa' Shows Why White Savior Tropes Still Persist," n.d.

¹⁶⁶ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story | TED Talk," accessed March 22, 2023, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/comments.

"carefully tended British fiction" rationalized by fear and aversion of the so-called "embarrassment".¹⁶⁷

Juliana Appiah and others explain the relationship between archives, knowledge and history outlining that, "archives and other repositories of documentary information shape the production of knowledge, and therefore determine what truths or histories it is possible to reconstruct and know." They go ahead to explain the effect of state erasure of archives highlighting that:

"When states, the longstanding arbiters of archives, actively seek to influence the production of archival knowledge to further parochial and geopolitical self-interests, the methodological tools and epistemological certainties of historians are eroded."¹⁶⁸

The disclosure of the FCO 141 files has hence shaped the rewriting, rethinking, reframing and "unhistorizing" of British colonial history.¹⁶⁹ This has also led to an acceptance of revisionist historical writing by scholars such as David Anderson, Caroline Elkins and Hilary Beckles who are "in the vanguard of a new reparative history".¹⁷⁰

Miseducation of the Youth

Among the dangers of telling a single story is the miseducation of the youth. In the course of my research, I remembered that while studying high school history, we were taught through a book that outlined the 'benefits of colonialism.' This is a myth that was long debunked

¹⁶⁷ Elliot Ross, "Reading and Repair: Fictions of 'Mau Mau'" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2019),

¹⁶⁸ Juliana Appiah, Roland Mireku Yeboah, and Akosua Asah-Asante, "Architecture of Denial: Imperial Violence, the Construction of Law and Historical Knowledge during the Mau Mau Uprising, 1952–1960," *African Journal of Legal Studies* 14, no. 1 (May 14, 2021): 3–27, <https://doi.org/10.1163/17087384-12340080>.

¹⁶⁹ Max Pinckers and Chao T. Maina, "Reimagining Time, Reconstructing Space: Visual Approaches to Mau Mau History in Kenya," *Trigger*, 2020.

¹⁷⁰ Horace G. Campbell, "Queen Elizabeth II and the Weight of History," CounterPunch.org, September 23, 2022, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/09/23/queen-elizabeth-ii-and-the-weight-of-history/>.

by Rodney.¹⁷¹ Upon further investigation, I discovered that the book is still being used to teach high school history in Kenya. The book is called "*The Evolving World*" or as Rene Odanga notoriously calls it, "The (D)Evolving World".¹⁷²

This book tells history from 'the perspective of the hunter' and provides an empirical and glorifying account of British colonialism in Kenya, while being totally detached from the African historical and human experience. Under the "Positive effects of colonization of Africa," the book identifies that "European powers who gained more colonies in Africa gained fame and power".¹⁷³ Furthermore, the book exalts racist explorers and colonial administrators such as Henry Morton Stanley and Cecil Rhodes.

For me and a majority of Kenyans, the annual high school history trip was to visit the Vasco Da Gama pillar in Malindi, which he erected after he ironically "discovered" the East African coast in 1498. Perhaps what is even more striking is what is not taught in the high school history lesson. Little is mentioned of British colonial violence during the Mau Mau war, Operation Anvil and Operation Legacy. Even less is said of African history around the continent and almost nothing on African American history.

Wanjala explains that the purpose of colonialist education was "not for the good of the colonized or for the sake of knowledge."¹⁷⁴ Rather, it was to keep the Africans subjugated and serving colonialist interests. Achille Mbembe agrees that there is indeed something profoundly

¹⁷¹ Rodney, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. Walter Rodney 1973."

¹⁷² K. René Odanga, "The (D)Evolving World – on the Books We Use to Teach Our Children," *Africxn Review*, 2021.

¹⁷³ Felix Kiruthu, Jacinta Kapiyo, and Wilson Kimori, *The Evolving World. A History and Government Course. Form 3* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁷⁴ Wanjala, "Decolonising Epistemic Academic Disciplines in Africa"

wrong when syllabi designed to meet the needs of colonialism and apartheid continue into the liberation era.

It is true what the Nigerian poet and writer Ben Okri once said “to poison a people...poison their stories.”¹⁷⁵ The need to decolonize the education curriculum in Africa is urgent and immediate to "reverse those injustices of colonial education" and undo the "psychological violence of the classroom" that continues to mark the current educational terrain in Africa.¹⁷⁶

The result of the miseducation of the youth is a generation of Black people who are distorted from their identity and history. Their subsequent desire for proximity to whiteness reinforces colorism, upholds white standards of beauty, and leads to an overall inferiority complex problem. Using Bob Marley's Redemption song, the emancipation of a people and a nation starts with breaking the chains of mental slavery.¹⁷⁷

Archives as Tools for Social Justice

Among the greatest impact resulting from the removal of archives to Western capitals is the loss of valuable records required to address historical injustices inflicted upon local communities by colonial rulers. Victims of historical injustices are often unable to gain redress due to the non-availability of evidence to hold the perpetrators of these crimes and injustices accountable. Concealing evidence through migrated archives acts as an impediment to reparations and makes it impossible for victims to get justice for historical crimes.

¹⁷⁵ “From Looted Lands to Restless Hands — Return Africa’s Stolen Artifacts.,” MBC, November 27, 2018, <https://www.museumofbritishcolonialism.org/ourblog/2018/11/27/from-looted-lands-to-restless-handsreturn-african-stolen-artifacts>.

¹⁷⁶ Dennis Masaka, “Challenging Epistemicide through Transformation and Africanisation of the Philosophy Curriculum in Africa,” *South African Journal of Philosophy*, no. 36 (4) (2017).

¹⁷⁷ Isabel Carvalho, *Bob Marley - Redemption Song*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOFu6b3w6c0>.

The Mau Mau case is a powerful example of how disclosed archives could help victims secure redress for historical injustice. This case is so powerful that the British government had to pass legislation through the Overseas Operations Act to prevent such a case from ever reaching the British courts of justice. In similar breath, the value of archival records as evidence in court makes them influential "agents of accountability". Archival records have the potential of acting as both a safeguard and a deterrent, to encourage governments to act responsibly and promote a culture of accountability and transparency. This is what makes them important in the political arena as useful tools for social justice.¹⁷⁸

Epistemological Scramble for Africa

*Where were you when we were we?*¹⁷⁹

In the period following the independence of African countries, a 'new scrambling of Africa' emerged for African knowledge. Concerted effort was made to monopolize knowledge in Africa and to 'write Africa'. As we have seen in previous chapters, institutions mandated to be ethical and equal including universities, museums, libraries, and archives all over the Western world were raiding collections in Africa in a bid to extract African knowledge and history. As Western hegemonization of African studies increased, scholarship on African anthropology, politics and development became tainted by problematic narratives created out of a culture of "peeping voyeurism."¹⁸⁰ This effort to monopolize African knowledge is what I characterize as the 'epistemological scramble for Africa'.

¹⁷⁸ Mnjama, "Migrated Archives Revisited."

¹⁷⁹ Mukoma Wa Ng, "White Privilege in African Studies: When You Are Done, Please Call Us," n.d.

¹⁸⁰ K. René Odanga, "CODESRIA Bulletin Online, No. 12, August 2022 - (In)Validating Crises in African Studies: Certain Reflections on Disciplinary Stagnancy," *CODESRIA Bulletin*, August 1, 2022, <https://journals.codesria.org/index.php/codesriabulletin/article/view/2210>.

Having its roots in the colonial era, the epistemological scramble for Africa emerged more prominently in the period following African independence. During this period, authoritarian regimes in African countries such as Nigeria and Kenya largely targeted institutions of higher education to silence political dissent from scholars such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka who were detained and exiled.¹⁸¹ The silencing was also financial as public universities became largely underfunded, exacerbating inequalities between scholars of Africa in the Global North and the Global South.

At the same time, global geopolitical tensions led to increasing interest in the study of Africa. The African studies discipline burgeoned in the U.S.A., bolstered by a massive influx of foundation and government funds and brought together by a predominantly white African Studies Association U.S.A. To support this industry, various efforts were lanced by educational institutions to have bibliographic control of Africa through the acquisition of archives, monographs and other source material.¹⁸²

Jean Allman describes this period as a "rapid American style recolonizing in the wake of African independence." Allman explains that the "Africanist enterprise" emerged in North America with academics, "overwhelmingly white, serving as the gatekeepers" and determining on an unprecedented scale "what knowledge could be produced, what questions should be asked,

¹⁸¹ Sabella Ogbobode Abidde, "African Scholars and the Question of Exile," in *African Scholars and Intellectuals in North American Academies* (Routledge, 2020).

¹⁸² Association of Research Libraries, "Farmington Plan Newsletter," 1949, 31 no., <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000544332>.

what was of value".¹⁸³ Robtel Pailey agrees that African Studies remains a colonized space "rife with misrepresentation, homogenization and essentializing about Africa."¹⁸⁴

In William Martin's article, "*The Rise of African Studies (USA) and the Transnational Study of Africa*," he notes that federal funding channeled towards the "Title VI" African studies centers, sustained the programs and created a cohort of faculty at major research universities who organized collectively to form the African Studies Association." This in turn led to the displacement of "an earlier, transnational black scholarly tradition in the U.S., putting in its place a narrower intellectual endeavor carried out at historically white universities."¹⁸⁵

Paul Zeleza in his article "*The Perpetual Solitudes and Crises of African Studies*" further illuminates on how African Studies as a discipline was pioneered in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). He observes that beginning in the 1950s, funds and other resources were channeled to historically white colleges at the expense of HBCUs and so "paternity of the field was wrested from W. E. B. Du Bois [who was seen as the father of African Studies] and given to Melville Herskovits".¹⁸⁶ Herskovitz, the first (white) president of the African Studies Association once bragged that he was responsible for ensuring that W.E.B. Du Bois did not receive funding in 1909 for his *Encyclopedia Africana* project with Nkrumah.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Jean M. Allman, "#HerskovitsMustFall? A Meditation on Whiteness, African Studies, and the Unfinished Business of 1968," *African Studies Review* 62, no. 3 (September 2019): 6–39, <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.40>.

¹⁸⁴ Robtel Neajai Pailey, "Why It Is Crucial to Locate the 'African' in African Studies," *The Conversation*, June 14, 2016, <http://theconversation.com/why-it-is-crucial-to-locate-the-african-in-african-studies-60807>.

¹⁸⁵ William G. Martin, "The Rise of African Studies (USA) and the Transnational Study of Africa," *African Studies Review* 54, no. 1 (April 2011): 59–83, <https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2011.0003>.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "The Perpetual Solitudes and Crises of African Studies in the United States," *Africa Today* 44, no. 2 (1997): 193–210, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4187161>.

¹⁸⁷ Jean Allman, "Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production in the Black Star of Africa," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 46, no. 2 (2013): 181–203, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24393385>.

Therefore, the hostile treatment that Black scholars received from the leadership of the African Studies Association contributed to the severing of ties between the fields of African Studies and African American Studies that is still palpable today.¹⁸⁸ The ASA was henceforth established as a "white man's dominion." Clearly the long conflicted and fractured history of African Studies or knowledge production about Africa starts with an investigation into the African Studies Association.¹⁸⁹

African Studies Association U.S.A

At the African Studies Association conference of 1969 in Montreal, the meeting was disrupted by Black activists and their white allies. They chastised the ASA for colonialist and racist practices claiming that it "legitimized academic colonialism." They were concerned that "research and publication of white scholars, have been responsible for a legacy of misinformation and distorted concepts about Africa."

Further, the activists charged that "the work of white scholars had not been relevant to the problems of black men, either in Africa or in the United States, and that it had not been relevant basically because it had not been committed to the cause of black liberation from white domination." In addition to this, they criticized the political role of ASA for failing "to condemn apartheid in South Africa"¹⁹⁰ and "to condemn links of scholars with the CIA."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Allman, "#HerskovitsMustFall?"

¹⁸⁹ Gwendolen M. Carter, "The Founding of the African Studies Association," *African Studies Review* 26, no. 3/4 (1983): 5–9, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/524159>.

¹⁹⁰ See "The United States and South Africa: The Reagan Years (South Africa Update Series) - Baker, Pauline H.: 9780871241290 - AbeBooks," accessed April 8, 2023, <https://www.abebooks.com/9780871241290/United-States-South-Africa-Reagan-0871241293/plp>.

¹⁹¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, "Africa, America, and the Africanists," *Africa Today* 16, no. 5/6 (1969): 12–13, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4185037>.

In response to these accusations, the ASA made several changes, notably to the constitution of its executive board which criticized for being “lily white.”¹⁹² Fred Burke of Syracuse University made a proposal to include a governing board that would be 50% White and 50% Black and this suggestion was adopted by the members at the Montreal Conference. Some scholars saw the Montreal conference as an unfortunate event, a one-time occurrence instigated by energetic youth and that had repaired the racial tensions, but this was not to be.¹⁹³

Years later, In 1992, at the ASA conference once more in Montreal, Philip Curtin, a renowned 'Africanist' from the University of Wisconsin Madison, submitted a paper titled "*Ghettoizing of African studies*" published with Cambridge University Press. Curtin, argued that letting Black people into Black academia will ghettoize African Studies and that white graduate students should blame “a ghettoized job market” for their job finding difficulties.¹⁹⁴

Micere Mugo, also at the conference submitted a response to his paper, where she described his “outburst” as “condescending, ridden with covert/overt racism, divisive and insidious and callously mischievous in intent.” Mugo noted that the “academic scramble has carved up Africa, all over again, into territories and fiefdoms of research monopoly” and that forbidden is the question of African scholars coming to America to “challenge this intellectual monopoly game.” This meant that African scholars coming to America would face significant pushback while seeking epistemological recognition and authenticity.

She reminded Curtin of the role of the policies of the IMF and the World Bank which aided in the erosion of African universities under neocolonial governments, resulting in scholar migration. She drew attention to the unjust economic conditions historically responsible for the

¹⁹² Nell Painter, “Letter to James Duffy,” November 25, 1969, ASA, Annual Meeting: 3/2.

¹⁹³ Wallerstein, “Africa, America, and the Africanists.”

¹⁹⁴ Philip D. Curtin, “Ghettoizing African History,” *ASA News* 28, no. 4 (December 1995): 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0278221900600913>.

disparities in access to knowledge production, control, and information dissemination between scholars in the South and their counterparts in the North. Mugo proclaimed that, “Serious, committed Africana scholars are seizing agency by assuming the limelight and becoming generators of their own knowledge -- experts of their epistemological heritage.”¹⁹⁵

By 2018, the situation had not changed much. At the ASA annual meeting in Atlanta, Jean Allman gave a powerful speech titled “#HerskovitsMustFall: Revisiting the conversation on whiteness, African Studies, and the Unfinished Business of 1968”, referring to Philip Curtin's paper.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, since the organization's inception in 1957, little has changed in the ASA's leadership composition and criteria for recognizing scholarship.

The underrepresentation of Africans in African Studies has far-reaching consequences beyond the ASA. It influences how students think about knowledge creation and who counts as a knowledge producer. Marius Kothor explains that it supports the idea that Africans can be research assistants, informants, and objects of study, but “never theorists of their own cultures, analysts of their own politics, or historians of their own pasts”.¹⁹⁷ The marginalization of Black scholars is further aggravated by structural inequities in scholarship on matters pertaining publishing and tenure, where they are often dissed and dismissed.¹⁹⁸

Haythem Guesmi's viral article on “*The gentrification of African studies*” investigates further this exclusion through the historic lens of gentrification to describe the forced displacement of continent-based African scholars. Further, Guesmi questions the wisdom of

¹⁹⁵ Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, “The Ghettoization Debate: Africa, Africans and African Studies,” Special Issue 46 (Bulletin, 1996), 1–43.

¹⁹⁶ Allman, “#HerskovitsMustFall?”

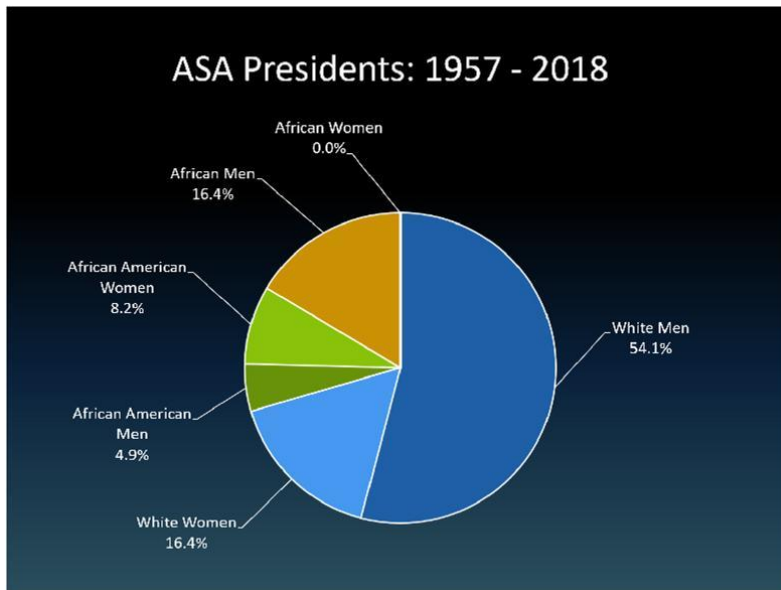
¹⁹⁷ Marius Kothor, “Race and the Politics of Knowledge Production in African Studies,” AAIHS, April 8, 2019, <https://www.aaihs.org/race-and-the-politics-of-knowledge-production-in-african-studies/>.

¹⁹⁸ Katie Robertson, “Nikole Hannah-Jones Denied Tenure at University of North Carolina,” *The New York Times*, May 20, 2021, sec. Business, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/19/business/media/nikole-hannah-jones-unc.html>.

hosting the African Studies Association’s annual meeting and the annual conference of the African Literature Association at North American venues, further reproducing inaccessibility by the difficulty of travel logistics and punitive visa requirements for African scholars and Africans.¹⁹⁹

Certainly, numerous efforts were made at the African Studies Association of America to deal with this fractured and racialized past. The dissent raised by the Black Caucus and the African Heritage Studies Association played a critical role in this turn around. Fred Burke’s proposal allowed for the inclusion of many Black and African scholars including Franklin Frazier and Ali Mazrui who both served as presidents. The ASA has also opened up its study of Africa to bring back the African diaspora and its social, cultural, and political manifestations.

In the past few years, the board of the ASA has led several progressive initiatives including committing to having Africa-based scholars serve on the Board and initiating a policy of diversity and inclusion in its procedures. The racial and national demographics of the organization have also seen a change over the years.



¹⁹⁹ Haythem Guesmi, “The Gentrification of African Studies,” n.d.

Fig.9 ASA Presidents 1957- 2018²⁰⁰

The above table shows that as of 2018, 54.1% of ASA presidents have been white men, 16.4% have been white women, 8.2% African American women and 4.9% African American men. Only 16.4% of ASA presidents have been African and no African woman has been president as of April 2023. Allman observes that, though there have been gains in representation at ASA, the balance of power has remained constant revealing "clear patterns of privilege and power that have changed over time but have not been displaced or transcended."²⁰¹

Africanists

Mukoma wa Ngugi calls attention to the racism and the politics of knowledge production in African Studies in his article, "*White Privilege in African Studies: When You Are Done, Please Call Us*". Mukoma demonstrates how white privilege serves as the "African Studies Industrial Complex." Like his father Ngugi wa Thiong'o, his passion for African languages is conveyed when he observes critically that only when information taken from African cultures and languages is preserved in European languages does it assume value. Mukoma acknowledges the important and urgent work of African Studies but criticizes "Africanists (both Black and white) wearing intellectual black face". He calls for a redistribution of power and a move from an academic benevolence to democratizing the production and access to knowledge.²⁰²

The term "Africanist" has come under criticism from different scholars. Certainly, many non-African scholars of Africa, Black and White alike, have made significant and groundbreaking contributions to the field. Some white allies have even gone beyond the duties of

²⁰⁰ Allman, "#HerskovitsMustFall?"

²⁰¹ Allman.

²⁰² wa Ngũgĩ, Mukoma. "White Privilege in African Studies: When you Are Done, Please Call us." *en ligne*, *Brittle Paper* 28 (2021).

scholarship to address colonial injustices and champion reparations, advocate land redistribution, campaign for human rights among other social and political Black causes.

However, many others have in the words of the Black activists at Montreal, provided misinformed and distorted concepts on Africa. Scholars such as S.N. Sangmpam have responded theoretically to these distorted concepts in political science, writing that the African State is neither soft nor dead, it is alive and well.²⁰³

The Africanist philosophy traces its origins from colonialism, where the study of Africa was used to justify or in other cases support imperial conquest and subjugation of Africa. In the recent past, Africanists have been under fire for: using problematic methodological and ethnographical approaches; fetishizing African cultures and histories; claiming to pioneer knowledge in Africa; objectifying the African in their research or only using the African as an object of study- and never as a co-researcher or scholarly reference. For purposes of this study, this is the definition used for Africanists as distinct from non-African scholars of Africa. Various other scholars have used the term “Africanist” in this way.

Paul Zeleza uses the term “Africanist” to denote “the entire intellectual enterprise of producing knowledge based on a Western epistemological order in which both educated Africans and non-Africans are engaged”.²⁰⁴ Similarly, Robtel Pailey, in her article "*Why it is Crucial to Locate the 'African' in African Studies*" defines Africanists as “non-African scholars who have strategically positioned themselves as the authoritative voices in a 21st century scramble for influence.”²⁰⁵

²⁰³ S. N. Sangmpam, “Neither Soft nor Dead: The African State Is Alive and Well,” *African Studies Review* 36, no. 2 (1993): 73–94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/524734>.

²⁰⁴ Tiyambe Zeleza and Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (African Books Collective, 1997).

²⁰⁵ Pailey, “Why It Is Crucial to Locate the ‘African’ in African Studies.”

Guesmi explains that Africanists have become the "acceptable faces of African intelligentsia."²⁰⁶ Political analyst David Ndi provided a more critical outlook, tweeting that "African Studies is the pursuit of Africanists, not Africans, and it remains for the most part an appendage of imperialism."²⁰⁷

In her article, "*Is it Ethical to Study Africa?*", Mama positions Africanists in America as those who have been complicit in advancing a colonial patriarchal order by dismissing African scholars' intellectual agendas. She challenges the methodological approaches adopted through "externalization of Africa scholarship."²⁰⁸ Generally, Africanists have been accused of reinforcing negative stereotypes about Africa, a fact which has which has sparked outrage among African scholars.

In May 2022, Kathryn Mara and Katrina Daly Thompson from the African Cultural studies department at the University of Wisconsin Madison published an article titled "*African Studies Keyword: Autoethnography*." In the article, the author 'reveals secrets' from her time as a Swahili woman.²⁰⁹

In protest to her article, seven scholars of African heritage wrote an open letter to the publisher (Cambridge University Press) registering their discontent. They lamented that the paper utilized extractive research methodologies and cited harms such as lack of informed consent with marginalized communities in the name of autoethnography. They were incensed

²⁰⁶ Guesmi, "The Gentrification of African Studies."

²⁰⁷ David Ndi [[@DavidNdi](#)], "African Studies Is the Pursuit of Africanists, Not Africans, and It Remains for the Most Part an Appendage of Imperialism.," Tweet, *Twitter*, December 26, 2018, <https://twitter.com/DavidNdi/status/1077840823000158209>.

²⁰⁸ Amina Mama, "Is It Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom," *African Studies Review* 50, no. 1 (2007): 1–26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20065338>.

²⁰⁹ Kathryn Mara and Katrina Daly Thompson, "African Studies Keyword: Autoethnography," *African Studies Review* 65, no. 2 (June 2022): 372–98, <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.58>.

that the paper, propagated white saviourism and frontierism while erasing and appropriating African scholarship, reducing African people to native informants.²¹⁰

In response, the publisher maintained that they did not find any harm in the article and refused to pull it down. This did not silence the debate as Chigbo Anyaduba responded to the article with an essay titled "*Africanist Autoethnography: same old bad joke.*" Denouncing the organizing ideology of Africanists, he remarked that it was:

“a belief system founded on a European fantasy about the savage and natural primitiveness of Africans, of Africa as a dark place, and Africans as modestly advanced orangutans with inferior mental capacity and in possession of some ancient wisdom that provides some clues of existence to the modern world.”

He criticized those who go about calling themselves "Africanists and other such “-nists,” seeking to excavate so-called insider secrets in the name of research and denounced the 'Africanist ideology' for its colonial mindset of packaging itself as an authentic or authenticated specialist of the other's experience.²¹¹

Voices of African scholars

In *The Invention of Africa*, V.Y. Mudimbe regrets that in postcolonial Africa, African Studies continues to be conducted within a colonial framework that devalorizes African systems of thought and practice as savage and primitive.²¹² This condition of epistemic coloniality is due to the hegemonic Western control of the systems of knowledge production in African Studies.²¹³

²¹⁰ “Open Letter to African Studies Review Journal Editorial Board: Call for Retraction of Article ‘African Studies Keyword: Autoethnography,’” Google Docs, accessed March 16, 2023,

²¹¹ Chigbo Arthur Anyaduba, “Africanist Autoethnography: Same Old Bad Joke,” *Public Parking*, September 14, 2022.

²¹² V. Y. Mudimbe 1941, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, Book, Whole (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), <https://go.exlibris.link/mrnyHLJ7>.

²¹³ Alex De Waal, “African Academics Face a Huge Divide between Their Real and Scholarly Selves,” *The Conversation*, March 10, 2016, <http://theconversation.com/african-academics-face-a-huge-divide-between-their-real-and-scholarly-selves-55899>.

White supremacist power continues to maintain its grip on African knowledge in turn acting as the main arbiter of African people and the African reality.²¹⁴

Early ideologies in African Studies can be traced back to Black intellectuals of the 19th-20th century. Marcus Garvey championed the reparations movement while W.E.B Du Bois and Edward Blyden were among founding fathers of Pan Africanism.²¹⁵ Franz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral were fierce anti-colonialists and influenced independence movements across Africa.²¹⁶

In fact, one aspect of Kwame Nkrumah Pan Africanist agenda was for postcolonial knowledge production in Africa to be “Africa-centered, Africa-based, and globally engaged.” He was involved in two specific projects to achieve this aim: the formation of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana and the establishment of the *Encyclopedia Africana* with W.E.B Du Bois.

At the launch of the Institute of African Studies, Kwame Nkrumah gave a speech titled “*The African Genius*.” He begins by stating that:

“We have to recognize frankly, that African Studies, in the form in which they have been developed in the universities and centers of learning in the West, have been largely influenced by the concepts of old style “colonial studies,” and still to some extent remain under the shadow of colonial ideologies and mentality.”²¹⁷

He traces back the problematic narratives of African studies promoted to serve colonial interests highlighting that:

“The study of African languages was closely related to the practical objectives of the European missionary and the administrator. African music, dancing and sculpture were labelled “primitive art.” They were studied in such a way as to reinforce the picture of

²¹⁴ Odanga, “CODESRIA Bulletin Online, No. 12, August 2022 - (In)Validating Crises in African Studies.”

²¹⁵ Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*.

²¹⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois and Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford [England] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²¹⁷ “Kwame Nkrumah: The African Genius 1,” GhanaWeb, September 1, 2015, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Kwame-Nkrumah-The-African-Genius-1-378974>.

African society as something grotesque, as a curious, mysterious human backwater, which helped to retard social progress in Africa and to prolong colonial domination over its peoples.

African economic problems, organization, labor, immigration, agriculture, communications, industrial development were generally viewed from the standpoint of the European interest in the exploitation of African resources, just as African politics were studied in the context of the European interest in the management or manipulation of African affairs.”²¹⁸

Nkrumah also talks about non-African scholars of Africa, denouncing any barriers but calling for

Africa-centered ways of thinking and knowing, affirming that:

“The non-Ghanaian non-African Professors and Lecturers are, of course, welcome to work here [at the Institute of African Studies] with us. Intellectually, there is no barrier between us and them. We appreciate, however, that their mental make-up has been largely influenced by their system of education and the facts of their society and environment.

For this reason, they must endeavor to adjust and re-orientate their attitudes and thought to our African conditions and aspirations. They must not try simply to reproduce here their own diverse patterns of education and culture. They must embrace and develop those aspirations and responsibilities which are clearly essential for maintaining a progressive and dynamic African society.

One essential function of this Institute must surely be to study the history, culture and institutions, languages and arts of Ghana and of Africa in new African-centered ways—in entire freedom from the propositions and pre-suppositions of the colonial epoch, and from the distortions of those Professors and Lecturers who continue to make European studies of Africa the basis of this new assessment.

He concludes by affirming that:

By the work of this Institute, we must re-assess and assert the glories and achievements of our African past and inspire our generation, and succeeding generations, with a vision of a better future.”²¹⁹

Nkrumah was committed to “the Africanization of Africa” and positioned African institutions and African scholars at the center African Studies and the production of knowledge

²¹⁸ “Kwame Nkrumah.”

²¹⁹ “Kwame Nkrumah.”

about Africa. He was at the forefront of a larger movement that mounted an African challenge to the Western dominance of African studies in the 1960s. Upon his overthrow in 1966, “the multi sited struggle to recapture, reconfigure, and decolonize African studies lost its center, its magnetic core” and it “splintered into a thousand pieces.”²²⁰

The epistemological scramble for Africa, was marked by: the physical extraction of knowledge sources from Africa; the emergence of its disciplines from U.S. national security strategy; the exclusion of African scholars from the most prominent African Studies association—the ASA and Western hegemonization of African scholarship. This is also the historical context from which the East African archives were brought to Syracuse University.

Revisiting the East African archives at SU

“Also, some of the Kenyan faculty believed that a country's archival records were a natural resource like gold or silver and that a country was weakened to the degree that it lost control of its archives. Syracuse, they charged, was guilty of a neocolonialist exploitation.”²²¹

A discussion on the Syracuse Microfilm Project must be framed within the context of British decolonization policy in Kenya, particularly the policy on government records. Evidently, Britain’s ‘unofficial official’ policy was to conceal, migrate or destroy documents that it deemed too ‘sensitive’ to hand over to successor governments. However, with regard to documents remaining in independent countries, British policy was to have microfilm copies of the documents preserved in an overseas country in order to safeguard Britain’s imperial legacy.

²²⁰ Allman, “Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production in the Black Star of Africa.”

²²¹ Robert G Gregory, “The Development of the Eastern Africa Collection at Syracuse University,” *The Courier* 19.2, 1984, 29–59.

Musila Musembi, who served as the Director of the Kenya National Archives for over twenty years, provides further context of the Syracuse Microfilm Project in his book, *Archives Management. The Kenyan experience*. He details how in the period before Kenyan independence, top British colonial officials had put in motion a plan to microfilm colonial records, “just in case a future nationalist government wishes to erase all records of the colonial past and re-write history to accord their point of view.”

The urgency of this project is expressed by the Provincial Commissioner of Central Province who informed his District commissioners that:

“It is obvious, with the present pace of events that if we were to place the important records in safe keeping before someone else decides to destroy them for political purposes we must act now.”²²²

The plan was to engage professional archivists to microfilm vital documents for their preservation in an overseas country. This was to be done “with minimum publicity and fuss to avoid a similar incident of when the East African standard had published the news of destruction of records.” The Attorney General Eric Griffith Jones, and architect of Operation Legacy then wrote to the Department of Technical Co-operation (DTC) in England requesting for an experienced archivist. The DTC then sent over Derek Charman with a camera, processing equipment and film to initiate this project and take up the post of Government Archivist.²²³

Charman, on the other hand, was interested in undertaking archival roles beyond just the microfilming interests of the British Colonial government. In a letter dated 21st June 1963 addressed to a Mr. R.C.H Greig at the Department of Technical Co-operation, Charman, accepts the job and embraces fully "the Kenya Government's [colonial government] desire to run a large

²²² Musila Musembi, *Archives Management. The Kenyan Experience* (Africa Book Services, 1985).

²²³ *Kenya Government Archives. Archives Microfilming Program*, Mimeographed, 75 I. fold. 33cm. (Nairobi, March 1964).

scale program of microfilming.” However, he asserts that, “from an archivist's point of view, microfilming is only a subsidiary technique in the work of preserving records.” He continues to set out the following conditions, among others, that would preclude him accepting the job stating:

“ I do not feel that, as a professional Archivist, I could accept the job unless it was explicitly accepted by the Kenya Government before I left this country,

- a. That my primary concern in Kenya will be the selection of records for permanent preservation, and the introduction of a system of archive keeping to that end
- b. that I will not be expected to undertake the microfilming of records myself, as this is not the job of an Archivist, and that I will be allocated a suitable person to train up to do the work.”²²⁴

Once in Kenya, Charman begins designing the project and looking for external funding sources.

A memorandum presented to the Library-Archives committee of the African Studies Association in 1967 highlights the initial contact between Derek Charman and Syracuse University:

“In 1963, Mr. Derek Charman approached a number of sources in the United States and in Britain for advice and assistance. One of these was the Historical Evaluation and Research Organization (HERO). ..Another was Syracuse University's Program of Eastern African Studies.”²²⁵

Syracuse University then begun seeking the funding necessary to engage with this project.

Initially, Syracuse University approached the African Studies Association for possible financial assistance. The Library-Archives committee accepted this request, forwarding \$6,000 and proposing that “Kenya deposit a master negative of these microfilms somewhere in the United States while surrendering any rights to royalties for copies which could be duplicated” and that they should ask the Ford Foundation for assistance. However, the first application to the Ford Foundation was rejected.²²⁶

²²⁴ Derek Charman, “Letter to Mr. R.C.H Greig at the Department of Technical Co-Operation,” June 21, 1963, KNA VP 2/1, Kenya National Archives.

²²⁵ Association of Research Libraries, *Minutes of the Meeting* (Association of Research Libraries., 1968).

²²⁶ Libraries.

Meanwhile, Derek Charman wrote to Dr. Fred Burke of Syracuse University, who was “acting as liaison between myself [him] and the African Studies Association” stressing “the importance of an early decision on this matter.”²²⁷ Soon afterward, Fred Burke submitted a proposal to the National Science Foundation and received \$24,700. In return, “Syracuse University would assume responsibility for making the material available to scholars and institutions throughout the United States.” It was the desire of “Syracuse and the National Science Foundation to make this collection available for research to Africanists residing in the US.”²²⁸

Syracuse University Library and the Program of Eastern African Studies provided an additional \$14,000. The National Science Foundation would continue to finance the later stages of the project.²²⁹ Syracuse University Libraries writes that the microfilm collection was then sent to Syracuse University to “preserve the records of the colonial government for research purposes.”²³⁰ This marked the beginning of the agreement between Syracuse University and the Kenya National Archives.

This agreement was legal and consensual, and outlined some positive outcomes for the emerging Kenya National Archives (KNA). Through the agreement, KNA received a microfilming camera, microfilm equipment, a vehicle and microfilming training for its staff. Musembi outlines that the vehicle greatly facilitated the collection and preservation of

²²⁷ Derek Charman, “Letter to Fred Burke,” August 28, 1964, KNA VP 2/1, Kenya National Archives.

²²⁸ Libraries, *Minutes of the Meeting*.

²²⁹ J. B. Webster, “The Research and Activities of the Bibliographic Section of the Program of Eastern African Studies, Syracuse University = Les Recherches et Les Activités de La Section Bibliographique Du Programme d’études de l’Afrique Orientale de l’Université de Syracuse,” no. 31 (1967), <https://www.africabib.org/rec.php?RID=182167941>.

²³⁰ “Kenya National Archives.”

government records which were scattered around the country. Further, the microfilm equipment positioned KNA as a leading archival institution in East and Central Africa.²³¹

Yet legality, as we know, does not always reflect ethicality, particularly in the context of colonialism.²³² It is also not clear whether this agreement was well known among African government officials. Robert Gregory writes that:

"A bad moment occurred for us in December when Kenya's Vice-President, Daniel Arap Moi, paid a surprise visit to the Archives. He was astounded to see in the depths of the Archives a floodlit microfilm table, a clicking camera, and two Americans shuffling the government's documents. Nothing could have looked more sinister and, of course, we were soon ordered out."

In Africa as in America there was protest over this project. The University of Nairobi, as the hub of research and scholarly work in Kenya regretted that it had not been consulted over the terms of the project. In America, there was at the same time "resentment" from African studies programs at other institutions, who questioned why Syracuse University it seemed, was the "sole beneficiary" of the records.²³³ In fact, part of the reason why Syracuse University faculty presented the memorandum before the African Studies Association in 1967 was to "allay any remaining anxieties in the scholarly community to the effect that Syracuse is monopolizing these films."²³⁴

An additional important aspect the project, is its position within the broader geopolitical context of the time. In the U.S. various political and geo-political changes had led to a renewed interest in the study of Africa. In her chapter on *Cold War and African Studies*, Pearl Robinson

²³¹ Musembi, *Archives Management. The Kenyan Experience*.

²³² Robert J. Miller and Olivia Stitz, "The International Law of Colonialism in East Africa: Germany, England, and the Doctrine of Discovery," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3798893>.

²³³ Gregory, "The Development of the Eastern Africa Collection at Syracuse University."

²³⁴ Libraries, *Minutes of the Meeting*.

explains that by 1962 the State Department's Guidelines for Policy and Operations in Africa had concluded that "Africa was probably the greatest open field of maneuver in the world-wide competition between the [Sino-Soviet] Bloc and the non-Communist world."²³⁵

Further, Paul Zeleza in his book *"The Study of Africa"* explains that the need for information on Africa was bolstered by the need for America to overcome its isolationist policies, influence the global South and emerge as a superpower in the struggle for global supremacy between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.²³⁶

In his article, *United States Reactions to Empire, Colonialism, and Cold War in Black Africa, 1949–57*, John Kent outlines how beyond claims of America as an ally to the decolonizing world, Cold War concerns quickly superseded any altruistic efforts and American officials now worked to replace British influence in Africa.²³⁷ Policy-makers under former U.S. President Eisenhower recognized the dwindling power of Britain on the African continent and considered different interventions to stop the spread of communism.²³⁸

In light of this geopolitical situation, the U.S. Congress passed the 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA). Title VI of the NDEA allowed for funding to establish "Area studies" programs on Africa, Latin America and other regions, and provided grants to support programs, student fellowships, library resources, and language faculty in these programs.²³⁹ This massive

²³⁵ Pearl T. Robinson, "Area Studies in Search of Africa: The Case of the United States," in *The Study of Africa*, vol. 2, Book, Section vols., 2007, 235–76, <https://go.exlibris.link/BwblxB86>.

²³⁶ Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Introduction: The Internationalisation of African Knowledges," in *The Study of Africa*, vol. 2, Book, Section vols., 2007, 1–24, <https://go.exlibris.link/mJ20CnZZ>.

²³⁷ John Kent, "United States Reactions to Empire, Colonialism, and Cold War in Black Africa, 1949–57," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33, no. 2 (May 2005): 195–220, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086530500123804>.

²³⁸ "US Interests in Africa. (Letter to Selwyn Lloyd)," July 10, 1957, FCO 141/7092, The National Archives, Kew.

²³⁹ Robinson, "Area Studies in Search of Africa: The Case of the United States."

influx of “Cold War-related funding” to African area studies in the U.S. would lead to the emergence and fortification of the “Africanist enterprise.”²⁴⁰

Gregory explains that the East African Program benefitted from financial support from various government and affiliate sources including the U.S. Office of Education funded NDEA, the U.S. Agency for International Development, The New York State Department of Education, The National Science Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. While the implication of this funding is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is nonetheless worth mentioning as it positions the Syracuse Microfilm Project within the conversation on U.S. national security interests in the 1960s.²⁴¹

Agreement or disagreement with the analysis provided above is subjective, nonetheless of more importance is addressing the broader issues surrounding the East African archives at Syracuse University.

Unfortunately, the end result was that SU's project unwittingly became part of the Colonial project to safeguard British imperial legacy, as part of Britain's decolonization policy on records. This policy involved erasing, through Operation Legacy, evidence of colonial impropriety and instead upholding the remaining evidence of Britain's 'civilizing mission' in Kenya through sending microfilms overseas. Evidently, few of the records in the East African archive at Syracuse University's Bird Library discuss colonial violence or the torture, rape and killing of Mau Mau, yet extensive discussion is made on “the progress of education, medicine, sanitation, agriculture and forestry.”²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Allman, “#HerskovitsMustFall?”

²⁴¹ Student Research Group, *Braintrust of the Empire: Syracuse University in the Service of United States Imperialism* (Syracuse: Student Research Group, 1974), <https://go.exlibris.link/IQqhrD7n>.

²⁴² Gregory, Maxon, and Spencer, “A Guide to the Kenya National Archives to the Microfilms of the Provincial and District Annual Reports, Record Books, and Handing-Over Reports; Miscellaneous Correspondence; and Intelligence Reports.”

This was part of Britain's efforts to control the narrative of colonialism in Kenya. It was a British effort to "re-write history" before a "future African nationalist government" did it first. Chinua Achebe affirms that "there is such a thing as absolute power over narrative."²⁴³ This act of epistemic injustice is inseparable from colonialism itself and is in fact, an extension of colonialism.

The Kenya National Archives was emerging out of severe colonial underdevelopment. Noting this situation, Derek Charman commented that, "the virtual extinction of the archives service by the outgoing administration has seriously jeopardized the future care and custody of archives in Kenya."²⁴⁴ He observed that the "colonial government had made some rather perfunctory efforts to create archives organization, but to all appearances, to appease the Colonial Office rather than out of a real conviction of the need."²⁴⁵

Given the epicolonial realities of the archives in Kenya, Charman was hesitant to establish a microfilming program, opining that:

"I cannot therefore undertake the responsibility of...nor of undertaking any programme of microfilming, as it would only place the originals in even greater jeopardy until adequate long term arrangements have been made for the preservation of archives."

Indeed, the agreement with Syracuse ought to have given more consideration to the preservation of archival documents in Kenya that were just then being put together to establish a national archive, and further to help in building the archival infrastructure needed to maintain these documents.

²⁴³ Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile*, Book, Whole (New York; Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁴⁴ Derek Charman, "Notes on the Necessity of Establishing an Archives Service in Kenya for the Meeting at the Treasury with Mr. Gilbosys," January 8, 1964, KNA VP 2/1, Kenya National Archives.

²⁴⁵ Michael Cook, L. J. McDonald, and Edwin Welch, "The Management of Records," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3, no. 8 (January 1, 1968): 417–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00379816509513893>.

The Syracuse Microfilm Project, as Musembi notes, was “perhaps the greatest transfer of copies of documents from a national archival institution to a research institution in modern history”²⁴⁶ This in turn made it difficult for the Kenya National Archives (KNA) to control its archival holdings in North America. While Syracuse University (SU) had promised not to duplicate the microfilms without the knowledge of KNA, there was no way for KNA to enforce this agreement.

Charman’s letter to Burke acknowledges this fact as Charman writes:

“You will understand that I could not possibly recommend the Kenya Government to release the original negative, as this would mean that they would lose all control over the distribution of copies from it.”²⁴⁷ He however added, that monetary contribution to the project would grant one special consideration, and in the end SU obtained an original negative.

In addition to this, KNA’s control over its archives in Syracuse was complicated by the fact that restricted and confidential material that was not yet open to the public in Kenya, was also microfilmed and copies sent to SU. Moreover, KNA did not have control over the accessibility of these confidential documents as in Syracuse University, as they were made freely available to the North American public through interlibrary loans.

Musembi proclaims that the “Syracuse Microfilming Project was perhaps the greatest blunder ever made by Kenyan archivists.” He submits that it was a grave mistake for Derek Charman to have ever supported the project given the fact that it involved copying closed secret and confidential records. This was unusual as it is not standard practice for archival institutions to have closed records which are not open for public inspection, microfilmed and deposited to

²⁴⁶ Musembi, *Archives Management. The Kenyan Experience*.

²⁴⁷ Derek Charman, “Letter to Dr. Fred Burke,” June 4, 1964, KNA VP 2/1, Kenya National Archives.

another country or institution for any reason at all. Yet even when the first African chief archivist, Nadhan Fedha took up Charman's role, no changes were made to the project.²⁴⁸

The “invisible” costs of the project to KNA were equally high. For a decade, KNA staff were deployed to the microfilm project while the cost of their labor was not accounted for in the SU project, leaving the burden on the shoulders of KNA and further distorting personnel utilization at the Archives. Managerial staff also seem to have been unduly focused on the SU project as it was during this time that the chief archivist Nadhan Fedha published a catalogue of the microfilms at Syracuse University in 1967 alongside John Webster (the Head of the Bibliographic section of the program of Eastern African Studies at SU).²⁴⁹

This was at a time when KNA did not have any published finding aids, guides or lists to give indication of its total holdings. The guide published by chief archivist Nadhan Fedha facilitated the use of the microfilms at Syracuse, contributing to the advancement of scholarship in North America, while simultaneously denying this chance to Kenyan scholars and other researchers at KNA who did not have such a guide.

The prophesy made by British colonial officials and by the Syracuse project to create microfilms “before the documents in Nairobi were destroyed” and before their “inevitable destruction” became self-fulfilling.²⁵⁰ Being unable to use the underdeveloped archives in Nairobi, Kenyans and Kenyan scholars were now forced to fly to Syracuse to access their

²⁴⁸ Musembi, *Archives Management. The Kenyan Experience*.

²⁴⁹ Nathan W. Fedha, John B. Webster, and Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Program of Eastern African Studies. Bibliographic Section, *A Catalogue of the Kenya National Archive Collection on Microfilm at Syracuse University*, vol. no. 6.;no. 6.;, Book, Whole (Syracuse, N.Y: Bibliographic Section, Program of Eastern African Studies, Maxwell Graduate School for Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1967).

²⁵⁰ J. D. Pearson and Ruth Jones, “African Bibliography. A Report on the International Conference Organized by the International African Institute and Held at University College, Nairobi, 4-8 December 1967,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 38, no. 3 (1968): 293–331, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1157221>.

historical records, a small number of whom had the requisite resources. This further created knowledge inequity and was “one of the prices the National Archives had to pay for allowing its records to be copied haphazardly by an outside agency.”²⁵¹

In conversation with a librarian at Bird Library, the librarian commented that there is a lingering issue that Kenya was not given the support it needed (and needs) to build its archival infrastructure, and that this has created inequities in access to the materials at Syracuse. The librarian explained that because of this, Kenyan scholars visiting the archives lament that they are forced to travel to Syracuse to undertake their research since the microfilms in Nairobi are degrading and KNA no longer has the original records.

Syracuse University Libraries further writes on their website that among the challenges facing the future of the Kenya National Archives collection are concerns regarding access and ownership. They highlight that:

“There are many challenges facing the future of this rich collection, primarily in terms of preservation and access... In terms of access, there is also a question of how to make the resources, including their guides and indexes, open and accessible to a wider group of scholars. There is also the real and unresolved issue of ownership and corresponding rights to the documents themselves that must also be discussed between a number of stakeholders around the world, most importantly between Syracuse University and the Kenyan Government.”²⁵²

The SU Libraries therefore acknowledge the limitations of the Kenyan archives within its holdings, noting the need to make it more accessible and resolve the questions around its ownership for the future preservation of this archive.

At Syracuse, the archives were used extensively as the basis of master’s and PhD dissertations. They were also used to produce books and articles published by the Journal of

²⁵¹ Musembi, *Archives Management. The Kenyan Experience*.

²⁵² “Kenya National Archives.”

Eastern African Studies housed at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs including "*Africans in European Eyes: The Portrayal of Black Africans in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Europe*"²⁵³, "*Protest Movements in Colonial East Africa: Aspects of Early African Response to European Rule*"²⁵⁴ and "*The Conflict Over What is to be Learned in Schools: A History of Curriculum Politics in Africa.*"²⁵⁵

The Syracuse Microfilm Project, conceived of a colonial construction, oblivious to epicoloniality, and unconcerned about government confidentiality, created a disparity in access to the knowledge and history of East Africa. The terms of access to these records were controlled by SU, perpetuating inequity in access and resulting to information injustice at the expense of African scholars and African scholarship on the continent. Further, this mediated access to research ultimately determined who gets to write African history and from where.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

*"From the Niger Delta to all the corners of Africa, America and the world, Black people are turning the tables, taking back our place. We will be heard because we matter."*²⁵⁶

The effects of extracting knowledge out of Africa through inequitable microfilming projects and migrating archives has had a devastating effect on African scholarship and its institutions. The need for structural decolonizing and reparative justice is urgent and immediate,

²⁵³ Peter Mark 1948, *Africans in European Eyes: The Portrayal of Black Africans in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Europe*, vol. 16;16., Book, Whole (Syracuse, N.Y.: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1974).

²⁵⁴ Robert W. Strayer, Edward I. Steinhart, and Robert M. Maxon, *Protest Movements in Colonial East Africa: Aspects of Early African Response to European Rule*, vol. 12;12., Book, Whole (Syracuse, N.Y.: Program of Eastern African Studies, Syracuse University, 1973), <https://go.exlibris.link/pyrZRW80>.

²⁵⁵ Stephen P. Heyneman, *The Conflict over What Is to Be Learned in Schools: A History of Curriculum Politics in Africa*, vol. 2.;2., Book, Whole (Syracuse, N.Y.: Program of Eastern African Studies, Syracuse University, 1971).

²⁵⁶ Burna Boy, *Burna Boy - Time Flies (Feat. Sauti Sol) [Official Audio]*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ixK3IbdStc>.

in order to repair these past wrongs and promote equity and access in the knowledge production of Africa.

To mitigate the effects of these past practices, I propose three recommendations: the return of the migrated archives, structural decolonization of Syracuse University as well as decolonization of the structures and tenets of African studies. I aim to put different voices in conversation, acknowledging that my voice is one among many.

Borrowing from principles of International Relations, I utilize the concept of sovereignty to make a case for the return of migrated archives, echoing the voices that have been raised in the international community. I highlight efforts made by international agencies such as the International Council on Archives, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations to solve this issue.

I reference international law tenets to demonstrate how to deal with state disputes. Lastly, I consider the role of negotiation and bilateral talks in reaching an agreement and promoting equal relations between former colonial powers and their former colonies.

Return "Migrated Archives"

The chorus to return migrated archives has for decades been echoed in Africa and around the world. The disclosure of the Hanslope papers has led to a renewed call for the return of archives from governments, international organizations, journalists, activists, and archivists alike. Recent documentaries such as Aljazeera's "A Very British Way of Torture"²⁵⁷ have once more brought to the fore the question of migrating archives.

²⁵⁷ Al Jazeera English, *A Very British Way of Torture* / *Featured Documentaries*, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4sSGd2w_rk.

The film highlights the experiences of Mau Mau freedom fighters who lived through British colonialism and survived colonial violence. It cannot be understated the significance of returning the migrated archives to former Mau Mau whose experiences had been erased from history, denying them justice for decades. Justice here is not only for the physical violence they endured but for the epistemic violence as well.

In this way, the return of the migrated archives, memorializes Mau Mau, filling in the gaps in national memory and restoring the displaced role of the African in British imperial history. It allows for the rewriting of history and revising of history books to dispel the myth of colonialism's benefits. This centers a more accurate version of African history, allowing for African youth to form a stronger sense of identity.

Patrick Gathara, a Nairobi-based cartoonist and political analyst argues that the "path to colonial reckoning is through archives," and that the return of FCO 141 and other colonial archives "would make Africans curators of their own history."²⁵⁸ However, efforts to repatriate these documents to their original owners have been stonewalled by British institutions and successive regimes from the 1960s to the present. TNA, just like its predecessor PRO, has been unresponsive and unwilling to continue this dialogue.

Nonetheless, the unrelenting effort of scholars cannot be understated. Scholars such as Musili Musembi, Nathan Mnjama, David Anderson, Caroline Elkins and Riley Linebaugh have all raised their banners calling for reparations. At the Mau Mau conference, Dr. Mwanzia Koster proclaimed that, "From today onward the University of Nairobi should spearhead and follow through to find the information."²⁵⁹ Modern African intellectualism as it is, is embedded with

²⁵⁸ Patrick Gathara, "The Path to Colonial Reckoning Is through Archives, Not Museums," accessed February 18, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/3/14/the-path-to-colonial-reckoning-is-through-archives-not-museums>.

²⁵⁹ "Recasting Mau Mau Discourse: Reflections on the Declaration of the State of Emergency 70 Years Later."

activism. The work of scholarly activism is important as it is necessary to disrupt systems of capitalist exploitation and hegemonic subjugation.

From Samir Amin to Ken Saro Wiwa and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, scholars have borne the brunt of institutional violence when raising their voices against oppression. Just as the scramble for African lands was met with fierce nationalist, Marxist and pan-Africanist resistance,²⁶⁰ the epistemological scramble for Africa must be met with serious ideological intervention. To ignore this call, is not only a mark of cowardice but a surrendering of human dignity.²⁶¹ The intellectuals of the exploited and oppressed peoples of Africa must join this call-in order to stamp out Eurocentric political, social and epistemic domination of Africans and contribute towards true liberation of the continent.

African archivists have also affirmed that migrated archives should be repatriated in their original form to their original owners. A survey conducted by Mnjama among Directors of National Archives in the East and Southern African regions finds that there is a strong consensus amongst African archivists that records removed from Africa should be returned. When asked to comment on the impact that the removal of archives from Africa has had on their respective countries, a director stated that,

"The country lost a natural part of its documentary heritage. This scenario evidently denied our citizens and research scholars access to critical information and data relating to British colonial administration in our country and by extension impacted negatively on the compilation of our country's history."

Another director argued that,

"We do not have a complete picture of our history and there are gaps in our holdings. A lot of money has been spent travelling to the U.K. to consult these records especially

²⁶⁰ William Jethro Mpfu, "Coloniality in the Scramble for African Knowledge: A Decolonial Political Perspective," *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies* 43, no. 2 (March 10, 2017): 105–17, <https://doi.org/10.25159/0304-615X/2305>.

²⁶¹ Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, "The Ghettoization Debate: Africa, Africans and African Studies."

when historians and other researchers were writing books. It becomes difficult and frustrating when you have to travel to another country to consult your archives."²⁶²

Evidently, the return of migrated archives has enormous potential in value as it brings forth the very real possibility of rewriting African history. African archivists are right to assert that it is time for the former colonial governments to open bilateral discussions and institute measures for the return of African records to their places of origin.

International organizations have been at the fore of demanding the return of colonial archives. At the first East and Central Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ECARBICA) conference in 1969, the issue of migrated archives was discussed and a resolution passed urging member states:

“To seek through the International Council on archives the moral support of the United Nations and its agencies and the Organization of African Unity in pursuing governments and national bodies presently possessing such records to secure their return or the supply of photocopies of them and also to seek financial support of the United Nations and its agencies in mounting a programme of copying where governments are unable or unwilling to finance themselves.”

Nonetheless, some international efforts have failed due to backlash from Western countries. The Vienna Convention of 1983, initiated by UNESCO, called for the repatriation of archival materials to their countries of origin, however Western powers refused to ratify the convention, thus making it a powerless treaty.

Ministers responsible for archives in Africa met in Cape Town in 2003. They declared that during the colonial period:

Africa's oral and written archival heritage was ignored, marginalized, transferred, and denied; that urgent competing priorities and scarce resources caused our archival heritage to be further neglected in the post-independence era; that initiatives are being taken

²⁶² Nathan Mnjama, “Migrated Archives: The African Perspectives” 48 (2015).

within Africa and the region to foster cooperation in the preservation of Africa's archival heritage and in the improvement of records management practices, both paper-based and electronic; and that Africans lack access to records produced in colonial capitals about African history and that these records are not readily available to them.

The ministers recommended that the African Union, through NEPAD, authorize the establishment of an archival steering committee to promote co-operation in archival matters including that of ensuring that all the archival material taken from or within Africa in whatever form should be repatriated to countries of origin.²⁶³

The Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers (ACARM) in 2017 declared that these archives belong to the original holding territories and must be repatriated. A resolution was passed unanimously establishing that, “the migrated archives are the property of the countries from which they were removed. It (ACARM) believes that repatriation of the records is the legally and ethically correct course.”²⁶⁴

Furthermore, ACARM recognized the archival principles of ‘territorial provenance’ and ‘functional pertinence’ which position the migrated archives as displaced archives. ACARM encouraged all of its members to abide by the International Council of Archives’ Code of Ethics, which states that “Archivists should cooperate in the repatriation of displaced archives.”²⁶⁵

Despite these assertions made on the need to return archives, the documents continue to be held captive at TNA. The first argument made by the British government is a legal and utilitarian one: That the migration of archives was necessary as the African institutions were not

²⁶³ J Boel, “Resolutions of the Delegates’ Meeting of the International Council on Archives” (Cape Town, 2003).

²⁶⁴ Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers (ACARM), “The ‘Migrated Archives,’” 2017, <https://acarmblog.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/acarm-position-paper-migrated-archives-adopted-20171125.pdf>.

²⁶⁵ “ICA Code of Ethics | International Council on Archives,” accessed April 14, 2023, <https://www.ica.org/en/ica-code-ethics>.

well equipped to hold the files and that the West is where the items are safest and most people i.e., white people will see them. African archivists reject these statements and assert that African archives have adequate facilities and resources to house these archives and make them accessible.²⁶⁶

A second school of thought that posits that these files contain sensitive information on colonial wars that “might cause unrest if left with the natives.”²⁶⁷ Francis Mwangi responds to this by stating that after the independence war in Kenya, the Mau Mau soldiers came home to find that their neighbors, colonial loyalists had taken their land, wives and possessions, and despite this injustice, have lived with this knowledge since independence and so the "sensitive" information contained in the files is already public knowledge.²⁶⁸

Another school of thought calls for the digitization of the FCO 141 files so that the UK can keep the originals and share copies with the respective governments. In fact, The National Archives recently announced through the website, that it has begun a program to digitize the FCO 141 files. This program would be a collaboration of TNA with the national archives of the nations from which the archives were removed. It would begin with a focus on Africa, as per the recommendation of the International Council on Archives’ Africa Program.²⁶⁹

While this is a welcome move as it makes more widely available records from the FCO 141 series, the challenge of the migrated archives is not only a problem of access but also a political problem. Riley Linebaugh accurately observes that, “you can’t deal with the colonial

²⁶⁶ Mnjama, “Migrated Archives: The African Perspectives.”

²⁶⁷ “Migrated Records History of Colonial Territories and Disposal of Classified Material.”

²⁶⁸ *Interview with Francis G. Mwangi, Director KNA.*

²⁶⁹ The National Archives, “The National Archives - Digitising FCO 141 Records,” text, *The National Archives* (blog) (The National Archives), accessed April 14, 2023, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/digitising-fco-141-records/>.

record by digitizing it.”²⁷⁰ Digitizing the archives would mean that TNA would maintain a claim on the records, while only loaning them but digitally to their countries of origin from where they were stolen in the first place.

Further, holding the original archives at TNA follows colonial paternalist thinking that proposes that Africans are incapable of caring for their history. It is a non-recognition of the sovereignty of independent states. Additionally, it brings along accompanying problems of copyright and cost to the states in question.

Other Western institutions have begun to decolonize their structures and rethink their possession of African cultural heritage obtained through colonial looting. In 2021, French president Emmanuel Macron announced that France would return twenty six stolen artifacts to Benin. Shortly after, Western museums begun to follow suit as Humboldt Museum in Germany and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C returned most of their Benin Bronzes collection to Nigeria.²⁷¹

As part of this repatriation, migrated records have also been returned in addition to cultural artifacts. This dates back to 1935, when Italy signed a treaty of peace with Ethiopia providing that, “Italy shall restore all archives and objects of historical value belonging to Ethiopia or its nationals and removed from Ethiopia to Italy since 1935.”²⁷²

Additionally, Germany repatriated its colonial archives back to Namibia in 2001, as part of the ‘Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle’ project. Institutions

²⁷⁰ *Interview with Riley Linebaugh.*

²⁷¹ “Kenya Wants Its Treasures Back. Replicas Could Spur Their Return,” *History*, June 21, 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/kenya-wants-its-stolen-treasures-back-replicas-could-spur-their-return>.

²⁷² “Migrated Records History of Colonial Territories and Disposal of Classified Material.”

that have remained deaf to the call for decolonization have received criticism from around the world.

A trustee of the British Museum resigned due to its rigid position on repatriating cultural artefacts. In her resignation letter, Ahdaf Soueif calls out public cultural institutions, pointing that they have both a professional and moral responsibility in their work.²⁷³ Undoubtedly, returning migrated records is a well-established practice and an essential part of political and epistemological decolonization.

A Gikuyu proverb states “*kihooto gitingiagararika.*” Its literal translation means that justice cannot be leap-frogged. It means that it is futile to ignore justice and conceal truth as it will eventually be revealed.²⁷⁴ Justice for operation legacy would include a return of the migrated archives, in addition to reparative efforts to repair the past injustice.

In his book *Britain’s Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide*, Hillary Beckles provides a framing of reparations through acknowledgement, apology and repair.²⁷⁵ One way for the British government to make reparations for Operation Legacy is by acknowledging and taking responsibility for this injustice and offering an apology from the Head of State, as opposed to a statement of regret.

Melissa Nobles adopts the discourse of apology to offer possibilities of rectifying past wrongs. In her book *The Politics of Official Apologies*, Nobles explains that:

“The power of apologies, and what distinguishes them from other types of symbolic gestures, such as monuments and pronouncements, is that they not only publicly ratify certain reinterpretations of history, but they also morally judge, assign responsibility, and

²⁷³ Ahdaf Soueif, “Ahdaf Soueif | On Resigning from the British Museum’s Board of Trustees · LRB 15 July 2019,” LRB Blog, July 15, 2019, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2019/july/on-resigning-from-the-british-museum-s-board-of-trustees>.

²⁷⁴ Hannah Kinoti, “Aspects of Traditional Gikuyu Justice (Kihooto),” *Scriptura: Journal for Biblical, Theological and Contextual Hermeneutics* 39 (1991): 58–76, <https://doi.org/10.7833/39-0-1723>.

²⁷⁵ Beckles, *Britain’s Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide*.

introduce expectations about what acknowledgment of that history requires. Thus, although apologies focus our attention on the past, they also have implications for the future."²⁷⁶

In this way, apologies acknowledge past wrongs as unjust, reexamine the historical record and validate reinterpretations of history. Inversely, governments that refuse to apologize for past wrongs ignore claims of historical mistreatment and dismiss remedies that could help communities achieve self-determination.

Additionally, the British government might also offer compensation by way of supporting the construction of the archival infrastructure of the respective countries. At the point of Kenyan independence, Derek Charman observed that the responsibility to develop the Kenyan archival service would fall on Britain. He wrote that:

"The whole responsibility for this situation must be placed on the outgoing administration, in that it failed lamentably to take any effective measures to deal with the problem, and to leave behind them a properly organized Archives service as a going concern."

He continues that:

"The sums of money involved are after all relatively small, compared with the great increase in efficiency that would be achieved by re-establishing the service."²⁷⁷

If indeed Britain would take up financial responsibility for these archives, it would include covering the cost of returning the documents as well as the cost of building the physical infrastructure required to hold this archive and maintain it in a way that will preserve the information for generations to come.

²⁷⁶ Melissa Nobles, *The Politics of Official Apologies*, Book, Whole (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511756252>.

²⁷⁷ Derek Charman, "Letter to C.J.M. Ross at the Prime Minister's Office," November 7, 1963, KNA VP 2/1, Kenya National Archives.

By maintaining a claim on these documents, the U.K. simultaneously makes a racialized and white supremacist claim over their former colonies. These former colonies, including Kenya must make a counterclaim. A return of these archives is a representation of liberation from neocolonial oppression, an extension of restorative justice, and a reclamation of historical and intellectual wealth.²⁷⁸

Decolonize Syracuse University

The transfer of archives from Africa to Western capitals has resulted in African researchers failing to undertake any meaningful historical research without having to travel to the West to access records that were created in Africa, while in many instances researchers conducting historical studies on various issues on Africa are able to conduct their studies without ever stepping into the African continent.

The East African archives at Bird Library foster inequity, inaccess and epistemic injustice for scholars of African studies. SU can rectify the past practices and promote equitable access to the archives in the present and in the future by structurally decolonizing. Structural decolonization encompasses “redistributing and reopening material resources and opportunities [by] institutions...that are currently distributed in ways that echo and reproduce colonial relations.”²⁷⁹

In the recent past, many institutions of higher learning have undertaken structural decolonization to confront problematic histories. In 2021, the University of Edinburgh launched the ‘Institute Project on Decoloniality’ to acknowledge and address the university’s legacy of

²⁷⁸ Joy Karinge, “Silencing Kenyan History: Operation Legacy and the ‘Migrated Archives,’” *Democracy in Africa*, December 2022.

²⁷⁹ Kessi, Marks, and Ramugondo, “Decolonizing African Studies.”

colonialism and slavery. On their website, as of April 21st 2023, they highlight the importance of decolonization, not only in the disruption and dismantling of colonial structures but also of colonial behaviors. Their conceptualization of decoloniality is:

“Informed by the work of a variety of writers in both the Global South and Global North, and spanning Indigenous rights, Africana thought, and movements for reparatory justice, decolonial inquiry contends that knowledge generated within what is termed a ‘colonial matrix of power’ has left us with a narrow, patriarchal and contested understanding of ourselves and the world.”²⁸⁰

In tandem with this project, the university launched another project to decolonize the curriculum, pledging to “challenge and rework the current pedagogy, which was rooted in imperial and colonial ideas about knowledge and learning, and make the syllabus more diverse, more international or more inclusive.”²⁸¹ The efforts by the University of Edinburgh to not only grapple with its past but also reevaluate inequities in the production of knowledge within a ‘colonial matrix of power’, highlights the importance of structural decolonization in higher education, and in this case at Syracuse University.

Syracuse University Libraries through its website acknowledges the challenges of access and ownership facing the Kenyan archives in its collection. They underscore the need to remove barriers to access of these records and to engage in discussion with the Kenyan government on questions of ownership and corresponding rights to the documents.²⁸² This, alongside discussion with Syracuse University librarians outlines their progressive views and willingness to decolonize collections and promote equitable access to the materials.

²⁸⁰ “The Institute Project on Decoloniality | IASH,” accessed April 21, 2023, <https://www.iash.ed.ac.uk/institute-project-decoloniality>.

²⁸¹ “Decolonising the Curriculum,” The University of Edinburgh, July 16, 2021, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/informatics/about/work-with-us/equality-diversity-inclusion/decolonising-the-curriculum>.

²⁸² “Kenya National Archives.”

I propose a few ways through which Syracuse University can structurally decolonize. Primarily, SU should consider digitizing the East African archives at Bird Library. A librarian at Bird library noted that a visiting scholar from Kenya suggested making the archives available online by scanning and digitizing them. The librarian opined that it should never have come to the point where someone from Kenya would make such a suggestion.

In today's digital era, the existence of those documents in microfilm is an outdated practice. This not only forces an average of 16-20 scholars from other institutions to make the trip to view the archives each year,²⁸³ but also makes it difficult for them to navigate these records, even with the assistance of guidebooks. Digitizing these archives and making them available online would not only make them accessible to all but also promote knowledge equity and information justice.

On the other hand, digitization alone may not solve the problem as Syracuse University potentially holds a better record of certain elements of Kenyan history than the national government of Kenya. It is therefore necessary to go beyond digitization and consider solutions that make the archives at SU as accessible to scholars in Kenya as they are to those in North America.

As part of its efforts to recreate a more equitable partnership, SU might consider renewing its relationship with the Kenya National Archive to assist KNA in reconstructing its archival infrastructure. This could entail: aiding KNA to achieve its digitization or microfilming goals; expanding the physical structural makeup of the reading room at KNA; training and

²⁸³ "Kenya National Archives."

development of KNA staff; promoting benchmarking programs between SU and KNA archivists or simply by supporting the fundraising efforts of KNA.

Decolonize African studies

*Seek ye epistemic freedom first, and all else will be added unto you.*²⁸⁴

As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, African scholarship and institutions have suffered from the effects of inequitable microfilming projects and archival migration from Africa. African Studies as a discipline has a responsibility to protect knowledge on Africa and ensure its utilization for purposes other than exploitation.

The work of decolonizing African Studies is important as it is humanist in its effort to "develop the study of Africa so that it is more respectful toward the lives and struggles of African people and to their agendas."²⁸⁵ The paradigm of decolonization involves asking disruptive and political questions that address inequities in Africa and African studies.

Decolonizing African studies entails unshackling the Western hegemonic hold on African scholarship. There are various ways through which decolonization can undo epistemic coloniality in African studies and unbind these structures of white privilege: First, decolonization necessitates taking control of knowledge production through. This involves asking questions such as who has the power to define knowledge in African studies? And who controls this narrative? In the past white cisgender males have dominated this field, building careers around African politics and further perpetuating unequal access to power, opportunities, and knowledge.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Decolonization, Development and Knowledge in Africa*.

²⁸⁵ Mama, "Is It Ethical to Study Africa?"

²⁸⁶ Kessi, Marks, and Ramugondo, "Decolonizing African Studies."

Taking control of knowledge production also means questioning; what is the dominant narrative? Knowledge in African studies has been by and large misappropriated, commodified and coopted to support a paternalistic ideology of taking knowledge to 'help' Africa. Continued intellectual effort is required from scholars of African studies to reframe this dominant narrative and revise the writing of African history.

Secondly, decolonizing African studies entails decolonizing the academy; the university, curriculum, research and methodology. African universities have continued to import curriculums, content and research methodologies from their colonial masters in the postcolonial era.²⁸⁷ Samir Amin remarks that "academic programmes in the social sciences in African Universities have been prescribed by the World Bank and allied authorities in order to destroy any capacity to develop critical thought."²⁸⁸ The result is that scientific innovation is made to be a monopoly of the North.

Decolonizing curriculums also means going beyond colonial education and reframing the understanding of coloniality beyond empirical facts and racist explorers. Furthermore, Eurocentric approaches of research on Africa subject information and data from the continent to Western models of interpretation thereby resulting in erroneous interpretation of facts about Africa.²⁸⁹ These Northern-based scholars often have access to more research capital and can therefore control the methodological and epistemic orientations of the political economy of research including the access to publishing, journals and conferences.

The response of decolonization is to concentrate efforts on continent-based research institutions, such as the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa

²⁸⁷ Claude Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa* (Longman Publishers, 1981).

²⁸⁸ Samir Amin, "The Liberal Virus: Permanent War and the Americanization of the World," n.d.

²⁸⁹ Toyin Falola, *Decolonizing African Studies: Epistemologies, Ontologies, and Agencies*, Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora 93 (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2021).

(CODESRIA) who are at the forefront of re-centering knowledge production about Africa in Africa. As for African scholarly associations such as the ASA, it means resisting white supremacist and patriarchal structures of power that reproduce inequalities through the leadership composition, conference location and token recognition.

Nkrumah highlights unifying disciplines of Black Studies in the African diaspora as an important tenet of decolonizing African Studies. In his speech at the Institute for African Studies he emphasized that:

“Your work must also include a study of the origins and culture of peoples of African descent in the Americas and the Caribbean, and you should seek to maintain close relations with their scholars so that there may be cross fertilization between Africa and those who have their roots in the African past.”²⁹⁰

The significance of this “cross-fertilization” is to make the connections in Afro-diasporic communities, histories and struggles be it through the study of foodways, linguistic commonalities, artistic expressions or shared aspirations of a Black/Afro-feminist future.

Yes, decolonization demands for the centering of 'herstory' to begin redressing the hegemony of white male scholars in the production of African knowledge.²⁹¹ This is through the increased representation of women in higher education systems; professorial jobs, tenure awards, publications, research awards, and leadership roles. Kessi et al painfully observe that “When ascending the ranks, Black women and Afro-Diasporic colleagues are laden with the burden of ‘diversity work’ and made responsible for redressing their institution’s racism, but actively undermined and unrecognized in their attempts to do so.”²⁹²

²⁹⁰ “Kwame Nkrumah.”

²⁹¹ Zeleza, “The Perpetual Solitudes and Crises of African Studies in the United States.”

²⁹² Kessi, Marks, and Ramugondo, “Decolonizing African Studies.”

Further, Black women in academia are faced with more intersectional challenges²⁹³ and structural inequities built into higher education systems leading to them falling off the academic ladder. Decolonial work calls for diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and representation and creates opportunities for intellectual accountability in academia.

Pan African implication

In his book *Walter Rodney Speaks*, Rodney articulates the work of Pan Africanism in this way, “One of the most important responsibilities is to define our own situation, that is the first responsibility. A second responsibility is to present that definition to other parts of the Black world, indeed, the whole of the progressive world.”²⁹⁴

This research has problematized the issue on migrating archives as it affects not only Kenya, but other parts of Africa and the Afro-diasporic world including Ethiopia, Nigeria and the United States of America. The call for the repatriation of archives is not just a question of returning documents, but of global anti-colonial solidarity to stamp out any lingering forces of colonial domination and exploitation. This is an emancipatory project that disrupts and transgresses tendencies of racial capitalism and oppression.

Besides, Black people’s efforts to intervene in the knowledge production process of their communities has long been a central component of the global struggle against white supremacy. Progressive Black intellectuals identify with their role not only to create knowledge, but also to recreate and shape this knowledge to humanize Black people’s identities and heritages. Mugo

²⁹³ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “On Intersectionality: Essential Writings,” *Faculty Books*, March 1, 2017, <https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/books/255>.

²⁹⁴ Walter Rodney, Howard Dodson, and Robert A. Hill 1943, *Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual*, Book, Whole (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 1990), <https://go.exlibris.link/tmksD8T9>.

posits that Black scholars have an imperative duty to plant themselves at the heart of the struggle, to achieve true Pan African liberation.²⁹⁵

African philosophy also allows us to view objects such as archival documents as carrying a certain life force, humanity or spirit of their own.²⁹⁶ The repatriation of these objects in diaspora can therefore be framed within Garvey's 'coming back to Africa' philosophy in a sense that the spirit of these documents, the histories and people they represent are coming back to Africa. Within this framing, the imperatives of Utu/Ubuntu²⁹⁷ humanize and restore the identity of these documents that represent Blackness, not just as color but as consciousness.

Nkrumah excellently posits the struggle for the Black man to create his own knowledge as part of the political struggle from colonialism and imperialism asserting that:

“After years of bitter political struggle for our freedom and independence, our Continent is emerging systematically from colonialism and from the yoke of imperialism. The personality of the African which was stunted in this process can only be retrieved from these ruins, if we make a conscious effort to restore Africa’s ancient glory. It is only in conditions of total freedom and independence from foreign rule and interferences that the aspirations of our people will see real fulfillment and the African genius find his best expression.”²⁹⁸

In line with Nkrumah’s vision, this thesis seeks to make a case for the decolonization of African Studies, reorienting it once more to the tenets of Pan Africanism that Nkrumah eloquently presents and enjoining itself once more with the global African diaspora.

²⁹⁵ Mugo, “The Imperative of Utu / Ubuntu in Africana Scholarship.”

²⁹⁶ Nwanchor Otubo Edwin, “Sacred Objects and Igbo Ecospirituality,” n.d.

²⁹⁷ Mugo, “The Imperative of Utu / Ubuntu in Africana Scholarship.”

²⁹⁸ “Kwame Nkrumah.”

This is in line with “*The Africa We Want*” - *African Union’s Agenda 2063* which calls for an integrated continent, politically united, free from all remnants of colonialism and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa’s Renaissance.²⁹⁹

Further work

Going further, I would like to broaden the scope of my project by interrogating additional African archival holdings in Western institutions. In addition to those being held in secret, I would like to investigate those being held in 'public' and explore questions around the material conditions of their return as well as issues of inaccessibility and inequity that they may raise. In addition to this, I would like to expand on possible solutions for Syracuse University to reverse the injustices resulting from the microfilm project and explore additional ways to allow for equitable access to the archives in the future.

²⁹⁹ “Our Aspirations for the Africa We Want | African Union,” accessed April 14, 2023, <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/aspirations>.

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<https://Commonwealth.Sas.Ac.Uk/Blog/Recent-Withdrawal-Public-Access-Important-Migrated-Archives> <https://t.co/NZkm72ijYv>.” Tweet. *Twitter*, June 29, 2022.
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