

PRESS RELEASE

The Africa Institute Hosts Symposium on Race and Slavery in the Indian Ocean and Atlantic Oceans

Leading Scholars from Across the Globe to Convene in Zanzibar for Interdisciplinary Conversations

JUNE 12-14, 2023

ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA



**LEGACIES OF RACE
AND SLAVERY
IN THE ATLANTIC
AND INDIAN OCEANS**

Sharjah, May 29, 2023 - The Africa Institute is proud to announce the second symposium, "Legacies of Race and Slavery in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans," as part of the third edition of its country-focused season, "Thinking the Archipelago: Africa's Indian Ocean Islands." The symposium, scheduled for June 12-14, 2023, in Zanzibar, aims to facilitate interdisciplinary conversations among scholars, experts, and practitioners from around the world to critically examine the historical and contemporary legacies of race and slavery in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

Convened by leading scholars Jeremy Prestholdt, Professor of History at the University of California, San Diego; Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, Professor of Anthropology, Georgetown University in Qatar; and Uday Chandra, Assistant Professor of Government, Georgetown University in Qatar, the symposium will feature prominent scholars from Belgium, Denmark, France, India, Japan, Mauritius, Qatar, UAE, USA, Zanzibar and more. The scholarly and cultural program includes panel discussions, multimedia performances and tours that will cover topics related to the theme, including the role of memory and commemoration in shaping contemporary debates, the impact of slavery on the economic development of the regions, and the intersections of race, gender, and class in shaping experiences of slavery and its aftermath.



"The Africa Institute is committed to promoting cross-disciplinary dialogue and collaboration to deepen our understanding of the complex social, economic, and historical processes that have shaped the Indian Ocean region. Thus, this symposium aims to foster critical thinking and engagement with the legacies of race and slavery in both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and the similarities and differences in the experiences of both, and by extension expands the ongoing conversations about racial justice and equity around the world. Most importantly, the symposium is meant to celebrate the intellectual legacy and immense contributions of Professor Abdul Sheriff, one of the foremost African scholars of slavery and the Indian Ocean studies," said The Africa Institute's Director Salah M. Hassan.

The conference will honor Emeritus Professor Abdul Sheriff for his formidable contribution to the study of the Indian Ocean littoral societies. Like the dhow sailing through the vast Indian Ocean, Professor Abdul Sheriff's scholarship has navigated the complex waters of slavery and its legacies. His profound contributions, particularly his monographs, 'Slaves, Spices & Ivory in Zanzibar' and 'The Dhow Cultures of the Indian Ocean,' have opened new horizons for scholars across the globe.

"As I reflect on my research and experiences, I am reminded of my belief that the sea is not the end of the world, but rather the beginning of a new world of endless possibilities. Through my work, I have witnessed the enduring legacies of slavery and the impact it has had on race in the Indian Ocean region. It is crucial that we examine the powerful socio-economic forces that led to slavery in the first place and understand the various processes of re-assimilation of the enslaved, or failure to do so. I commend The Africa Institute for their commitment to fostering critical thinking and exploring the intricate fabric of the Indian Ocean realm," said Emeritus Professor Abdul Sheriff who is also delivering the keynote address at the symposium.

Professor Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, the conference convenor, praised Abdul Sheriff's contributions, particularly his Dow Cultures, which has enhanced our understanding of the social, economic, and historical processes that influenced generations of scholars. Abusharaf compared Sheriff's work to Fernand Braudel's Long Durée, which shed light on historical dynamics in the Mediterranean.

"The Dow Cultures among others has brilliantly unmasked the connectivity and circularity of people, objects and ideologies. Sheriff's work expounds the granular and interwoven patterns of borrowing and adapting across the Indian Ocean littoral. These microeconomies of exchanges demonstrate the pronounced mutualities that defined its peoples' lifeworld's in both material and symbolic terms," adds Abusharaf.

The country-focused season "*Thinking the Archipelago: Africa's Indian Ocean Islands*" consists of four renditions. "*Legacies of Race and Slavery in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans*" marks the second symposium that follows the inaugural program, "*Reimagining Mobilities/Immobilities in the Indian Ocean*" which took place in December 2022 in Sharjah, UAE. The last two renditions, "*Colorful Threads: The Interwoven Worlds of Art and Culture in the Western Indian Ocean*" and "*Intertwined Ecologies and Interconnected Histories: The Indian Ocean Rim*" are planned for 2023 and 2024, respectively.



The Africa Institute created this annual series to highlight the African world's complex history while providing a forum for creatively engaging its present and imagining new futures. The country-focused season is free and open to the public, and it aims to raise the profile of Indian Ocean societies, bringing the complex history and rich cultural heritage of Indian Ocean Africa's islands to a wide, international audience.

Visit The Africa Institute's website to register and learn more about the symposium and country-focused season.

About The Africa Institute

Established in 2018, The Africa Institute in Sharjah, UAE, is an interdisciplinary academic research institute dedicated to the study, research, and documentation of Africa and the African diaspora. As the only institution of its kind located in the Gulf—the historical nexus of African-Arab cultural exchange—The Africa Institute is uniquely positioned to expand its understanding of African and African diaspora studies as a global enterprise. The Institute is conceived as a research-based think-tank, and a postgraduate studies institution, which aims to train a new generation of critical thinkers in African and African diaspora studies. Offering both master's and Ph.D. programs in the humanities and social sciences, The Africa Institute aims to be a model center of excellence that engages with, as well as shapes, new paradigms of thought in ways that will ensure Africa's place at the forefront of the academy for years to come. This is further pursued through its named senior and postdoctoral fellowships, its programs of international symposia and conferences, visual art exhibitions and artist commissions, film and performance series, and community classes and outreach events. The Institute has commissioned Adjaye Associate to design a future campus, which will allow for significantly expanded programming. For further information visit <theafricainstitute.org>.

About Hoor Al-Qasimi

Hoor Al Qasimi has been spearheading the establishment of The Africa Institute into a major international institution, building upon the rich legacy of Afro-Arab cultural and scholarly interchange in Sharjah, including the landmark 1976 "Symposium on African and Arab Relations" that envisioned a future nexus for learning and collaboration between the two regions. Working in partnership with The Africa Institute's Director Dr. Salah M. Hassan, she continues to shape its programming and future endeavors.

A practicing artist and curator, Al Qasimi is also President and founding Director of Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) which was established in 2009 as a catalyst and advocate for the role of art in Sharjah, the UAE, regionally, and internationally. With a passion for supporting experimentation and innovation in the arts, Al Qasimi has continuously expanded the scope of the Foundation over its 10-year history to include major exhibitions that have toured internationally; artist and curator residencies in visual art, film, and music; commissions and production grants for emerging artists; and a wide range of educational programming for children and adults in Sharjah. As Biennial Director, Al Qasimi co-curated *Sharjah Biennial 6*



(2003) and *Sharjah Biennial 15: Thinking Historically in the Present* (2023). Under her leadership, Sharjah Biennial has become an internationally recognized platform for contemporary artists, curators, and cultural producers. Her leadership in the field led to her election as President of the International Biennial Association (IBA) in 2017, an appointment that transferred IBA's headquarters to Sharjah.

In addition to her role at The Africa Institute and Sharjah Art Foundation, Al Qasimi also serves as President and Director of the Sharjah Architecture Triennial, which inaugurated its first edition in November 2019.

About Dr. Salah M. Hassan

Salah M. Hassan is the Director of The Africa Institute, Sharjah, UAE, and Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences at Cornell University. Salah M. Hassan. Hassan is an art historian, art critic and curator, and editor and co-founder of *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* (Duke University Press). He currently serves as a member of the editorial advisory board of *Atlantica, Journal of Curatorial Studies* and *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. He authored, edited and co-edited several books including *Ahmed Morsi: A Dialogic Imagination* (2021); *Ibrahim El Salahi: A Visionary Modernist* (2012); *Darfur and the Crisis of Governance: A Critical Reader* (2009), and *Diaspora, Memory, Place* (2008); *Unpacking Europe* (2001); *Authentic/Ex-Centric* (2001); and *Art and Islamic Literacy among the Hausa of Northern Nigeria* (1992). He also edited and introduced, *Ibrahim El-Salahi: Prison Notebook* (New York and Sharjah, MoMA and SAF Publications, 2018, and guest-edited a special issue of *SAQ: South Atlantic Quarterly*, titled African Modernism (2010). Hassan has contributed essays to journals, anthologies and exhibition catalogues of contemporary art. He has curated several international exhibitions such as *Ibrahim El Salahi: A Visionary Modernist*, exhibited at The Tate Modern in London (July-October, 2013) after premiering at the Sharjah Art Museum (in March 2012) in Sharjah, UAE; *Authentic/Ex-Centric* (49th Venice Biennale, 2001), *Unpacking Europe* (Rotterdam, 2001-02), and *3x3: Three Artists/Three: David Hammons, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Pamela Z* (Dak'Art, 2004). He also curated several exhibitions for the Sharjah Art Foundation including *The Khartoum School: The Making of the Modern Art Movement in Sudan, 1945-2016* (2016-2017), and *When Art Becomes Liberty: The Egyptian Surrealists (1938-1965)* (2016) in collaboration with Hoor Al Qasimi. He is the recipient of several grants and fellowships, such as the J. Paul Getty Postdoctoral Fellowship, Sharjah Art Foundation, Ford, Rockefeller, Andy Warhol and Prince Claus Fund foundations. Hassan has been honored as the 2021 Distinguished Professor by the College Art Association (CAA).



About the Convenors

Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf is a Sudanese ethnographer and Professor of Anthropology at Georgetown University in Qatar. She was a recipient of Postdoctoral and Senior fellowships at Durham University in the U.K., Brown, and Harvard. Her work was supported by Guggenheim Foundation, the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Sir William Luce Memorial Fellowship, Andrew Mellon and MIT Center for International Studies, and Rockefeller Bellagio Study Center. She writes on culture and politics, anthropology of gender, human rights, migration, and diaspora issues in Sudan, the Gulf, Oman and Zanzibar, and the Indian Ocean. She is the author of *Darfur Allegory, Transforming Displaced Women in Sudan: Politics and the Body in a Squatter Settlement* and *Wanderings*, both published by the University of Chicago Press; *Oceanic Circularities* coedited with Uday Chandra, Irene Promodh and Maurice Jackson and published by Georgetown University Press. She is the editor of the 2010 special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* (Duke University Press) and *Female Circumcision: Multicultural Perspectives* (Ed.) (University of Pennsylvania Press 2006). She is the co-editor with Dale Eickelman of *Africa and the Gulf: Blurred Boundaries Shifting Ties and Higher Education in the Gulf* both from Gerlach Press in 2014 and 2015 respectively. In addition to numerous book chapters and essays, some of her articles appeared in the *Sciences*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Differences*, *Anthropology and Humanism*, *History and Anthropology*, *Oriental Anthropology*, *International Migration*, *Radical Philosophy Review*, *Anthropology News*, *Transition: International Review*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* and *Black Renaissance*. Abusharaf is also the co-editor of *Monsoon: Journal of the Indian Ocean Rim*, which will be published by Duke University Press in collaboration with The Africa Institute, beginning in 2023.

Jeremy Prestholdt is a Professor of History at the University of California, San Diego. He specializes in African, Indian Ocean, and global history, emphasizing on consumer culture and politics in East Africa. His work has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Rockefeller Foundation, Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, Social Science Research Council, and the Fulbright Foundation, among other agencies. He has been a visiting fellow at Ritsumeikan University, the University of Warwick, the University of Basel, and the University of Bergen. His articles have appeared in journals such as the *American Historical Review*, the *Journal of African History*, *Public Culture*, the *Journal of Global History*, the *Journal of World History*, and the *Journal of Eastern African Studies* as well as many edited volumes. He is the author of *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (2008) and *Icons of Dissent: The Global Resonance of Che, Marley, Tupac, and Bin Laden* (2019). Prestholdt is the co-editor of *Monsoon: Journal of the Indian Ocean Rim*, which will be published by Duke University Press in collaboration with The Africa Institute, beginning in 2023. He is also a co-editor of the Brill monograph series *African Social Studies*.



Uday Chandra is an Assistant Professor of Government, Georgetown University, Qatar. He received his B.A. in economics from Grinnell College and his Ph.D. in political science from Yale University. He received the 2013 Sardar Patel Award for writing the best dissertation in a US university on any aspect of modern South Asia. Before coming to Doha, he held a prestigious research fellowship at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Goettingen, Germany. Uday's research lies at the intersection between critical agrarian studies, political anthropology, postcolonial theory, and South Asian studies. He is interested in state-society relations, power and resistance, political violence, agrarian change, rural-urban migration, popular religion, and the philosophy of the social sciences. Uday's work has been published or will appear shortly in the *Law & Society Review*, *Social Movement Studies*, *New Political Science*, *Critical Sociology*, *The Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Contemporary South Asia*, the *Indian Economic & Social History Review*, and *Modern Asian Studies*. He has co-edited volumes and journal issues on self-making in modern South Asia, subaltern politics and the state in modern India, caste relations in eastern India, and social movements across rural India today. His book, *Oceanic Circularities* coedited with Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, Irene Promodh, and Maurice Jackson is published by Georgetown University Press. With regard to his upcoming projects, he is working on volumes on the comparative politics of "populism" and transnational circularities in the Indian Ocean. His first monograph *Negotiating Leviathan: Making Tribes and States in Modern India* will be published by Stanford University Press. Chandra is also working on a second book project on Hindu nationalism and democracy in postcolonial India.

Abdul Mohammed Hussein Sheriff

Abdul Sheriff is a Zanzibari historian who earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1966 and his Ph.D. from the School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London in 1971. He taught history at the University of Dar es Salaam from 1969-1991 and held various positions, including Advisor & Principal Curator of the Zanzibar Museums from 1993-2005 and Executive Director of the Zanzibar Indian Ocean Research Institute from 2007-2012. He has also served on committees and as a delegate to the Tanzanian Constituent Assembly in 2014. Abdul Sheriff is a prolific author, having published books, edited volumes, and written numerous scholarly articles on the history of Zanzibar town and the Swahili coast. He has also benefitted from several fellowships, including the most recent Ali Mazrui Senior Fellowship at The Africa Institute, Sharjah in 2021/22.

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