

## **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE 2019 APAS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

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One of the major reasons for beginning the Association for the Promotion of African Studies is to create a conducive academic forum where African scholars, of all levels and interests, can come together as a community of inquiry to discuss contemporary issues of concern and if possible find solutions to them.

During the 2018 International Conference on “African Ideologies in a World of Change”, we had a wonderful opportunity to renew long-standing acquaintances, and the aperture to connect with a person or group of persons we had not met before. Therein, we found valuable insights and opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

I convey to all of you my profound sentiments of gratitude for the great work we did together during the 2018 APAS Conference. Our academic labours were very fruitful:

- a. Four APAS Journals were published, and have been included in Google Scholar for the visibility of the contributions of APAS scholars to knowledge.
- b. Three books of proceedings were also published with Author House Publications, in Great Britain.
  - i. African Cultural Personalities in a World of Change: Monolithic Cultural Purity and the Emergence of New Values
  - ii. African Governance and Development Issues in a World of Change: The Changing Patterns of a Static Universe
  - iii. Africa at the Cross-roads of Violence and Gender Inequality: The Dilemma of Continuity in a World of Change
- c. Four Books of Chapters were also published with Lambert Publications, in the United States of America.
  - i. Human Rights in Africa: Perspectives within the Ecology of Religion, History and Governance
  - ii. Gender Equality and Power Relations in Africa: Insights from Religious and Socio-Cultural Perspectives
  - iii. Religion, Politics and Development in Africa: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives
  - iv. Religion, Morality and Peace-Building in Africa: Ambiguities and the Imperfect Human Condition

As we promised those who contributed chapters to these books, copies are free for contributors only. Kindly meet the Secretary of the Conference at the appropriate time for your copy. I, therefore, at this juncture send my appreciation to the Chairman and

the Secretary of the 2018 APAS LOC, Dr. Kanayor Louis Nwadiakor and Dr. Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi respectively.

This year, we have come together again to deliberate on an issue of concern, which African governments have battled with and continue to seek solution to: It is that of Migration. While there are several reasons for migration in Africa, at the heart of this movement is the condition of life in Africa.

The Time Magazine casts Africa: “No where is a continent more miserable. Africa has become the basket case of the planet, ‘the third world of the third world’, a vast continent in free fall”<sup>1</sup>. Africa has posed a fresh problem for the external world because their interest in it has now become “merely charitable- a matter of humanitarianism, a moral test for the West”<sup>2</sup>.

The faces of greater percentage of Africans register destitution, frustration and despair. The repression and the general insecurity that has pervaded Africa has forced thousands to flout all international border laws to get out of the continent. Some pass through the deserts of North Africa, preferring to face wild beasts than return home, our young girls in huge numbers are moved to Europe rather than face economic backwardness<sup>3</sup>. If you have tried to go to the American Embassy, you would see the huge number of Africans struggling to leave the continent as though they were given an ultimatum.

I would like to share a poem with you titled: “Home”<sup>4</sup>. It was written by a Somali migrant by name Warsan Shire.

“No one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark

you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city running as well  
your neighbors running faster than you  
the boy you went to school with  
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory  
is holding a gun bigger than his body

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, pp.40-41.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 42

<sup>3</sup> Dagin Sylvester, *Bring Back the Lost Daughters: A Fight Against Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls for International Sex Market*. (Jos: Fab Educational Books, 2005), p.45.

<sup>4</sup> Warsan Shire, 2018, ‘Home’. Retrieved on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2019 from <https://www.pressenza.com/2018/06/home-poem-about-immigration-written-by-an-immigrant>.

you only leave home  
when home won't let you stay.

"You have to understand,  
that no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land

... no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck  
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled  
means something more than a journey.

no one chooses refugee camps  
... or prison,  
because prison is safer  
than a city of fire  
and one prison guard  
in the night  
is better than a truckload  
of men who look like your father"

"No one could take it  
no one could stomach it  
go home blacks  
refugees  
dirty immigrants  
asylum seekers  
sucking our country dry  
niggers with their hands out  
they smell strange  
savage  
messed up their country and now they want  
to mess ours up

how do the words  
the dirty looks  
roll off your backs

maybe because the blow is softer  
than a limb torn off  
or the words are more tender  
than fourteen men between  
your legs  
or the insults are easier

to swallow  
than your child's body  
in pieces.

I want to go home,  
but home is the mouth of a shark  
home is the barrel of the gun  
and no one would leave home  
unless home chased you to the shore...".

Honorable colleagues, William Shakespeare wrote: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat. And we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures". This Shakespearean metaphor, means that there is an occasion in each man's life when he must commit himself to a course of action that would lead to success. I think that the 2019 APAS International Conference on African Identity and Migration, is one of such tides in our history when we must rise to the challenge as African scholars to critically study the issue of migration.

I, therefore, welcome the Chairman of this Occasion, Prof. F. O. C. Njoku, CMF of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; I welcome the Keynote Presenter, Dr. Emeka Obiezu, O.S.A., a migration governance expert of the United Nations Economic and Social Council; I welcome the Lead Paper Presenter, Prof. Ike Odimegwu, the Director of the Centre for Migration Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; I welcome all of you who are here today as we all look forward to a great International Conference. Prof. Nkechinyere Nwokoye, thank you on behalf of APAS for accepting to be the Chair Person of the 2019 LOC. With you as the LOC Chairperson of this Conference, we look forward to being at the shore of the best part of the history of APAS.

Thank you all, and warm welcome to Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

And may God bless the Association for the Promotion of African Studies!