

From the Editorial Team

Dear readers and friends of CJAS:

On behalf of the editorial team, I am pleased to bring you the first issue of CJAS for 2021. We are now in the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has brought with it many challenges for the academic community that also impact journal publication. Scholars have had to suddenly master the art of online teaching, with all the challenges of data access and connectivity for both themselves and their students. Once-clear schedules have been thrown out of balance. And through all this we have kept calling, asking for reviewers for our submissions. Within this context, our reviewers have been stretched beyond their capacity to keep up with demands and for all of them their work, always a labour of love, has become a huge sacrifice for which we say a big thank you. Authors have been equally stretched and we know it has been a real struggle for many to work on their revisions to the deadlines we set. To them also we are grateful—we appreciate all our authors for being a part of the 2021 issues.

Just when we thought we were beginning to see a semblance of “normality” (whatever that means today—an easing of travel, the beginnings of in-person academic gatherings, and some reprieve from the overwhelming number of online workshops, seminars and conferences), at the time of writing in November 2021, a new variant of the COVID-19 virus has struck. The variant, named Omicron, was discovered by South African scientists, who have since complained that their country is being punished, as countries around the world restrict travel from South Africa, instead of being commended for discovering this new variant of Covid-19. The 28th November issue of the German newspaper, newspaper *Rheinpfalz am Sonntag* had a headline, which translated, reads, “the virus from Africa is with us”. And just in case their readers were in doubt as to the demographic group that was spreading the deadly virus, they included a picture of a Black African mother and child. The controversy made social media headlines. More disturbing is the fact that at the same time as Southern African countries are being targeted with travel restrictions, it came to light that the virus may have first reared its head in the Netherlands earlier than first thought; in other words, there is no way of knowing unequivocally where the Omicron variant first reared its head. On November 28, 2021 Dr Ayoade Alakija, the Co-Chair of the Africa Vaccine Delivery alliance made a passionate statement exposing Western prejudice towards Africa and how this has contributed to the incidence of new Covid variants and compromised the fight to bring the pandemic under control.

The ways in which black and brown bodies have been made to embody disease is not the only relative disadvantage Covid-19 has had on the continent. The Covid-borders that have been instituted by richer nations have been devastating in many ways: borders in terms of vaccine development, access to vaccines, vaccine “passports”, prohibitive costs of Covid-19 tests, whose vaccines are accepted for travel to which countries, and citizens of which countries are allowed to travel to which other countries. Within the scholarly community we have been unable to attend in-person events even when lockdowns were lifted. Our research and design innovations have not received the requisite exposure, and in some cases, research findings have even been questioned. Some grant-awarding organizations have refused to allow funds dedicated for travel to be reallocated for scientific research, knowing full well that travel was impossible in some cases. At the same time, however, scholars on the continent who might have been denied access due to visa barriers and travel costs have been able to participate in events that might have been closed to them during times of in-person meetings. Younger scholars, especially, have had many opportunities to engage, not merely as “participants” but also as experts in their fields. And many organisations across the continent have held numerous meetings on topics relevant to Africa where they determined the agenda and the speakers.

In the light of the foregoing, this issue, which brings us the second collection of papers from the 2018 Kwame Nkrumah Cultural and Intellectual festival held at the Institute of African Studies under the auspices of the then Kwame Nkrumah Chair, Professor Horace Campbell is well-situated. It is painful but also illuminating and in their own ways, encouraging, that these papers speak as eloquently to the Pan-African issues we face today, as our ancestors’ calls did a century ago, albeit in different garb. Campbell provides us with a spirited introduction to that collection, and the collection concludes with an interview with him that was generously carried out for CJAS by Peter Bembir.

In addition to the papers from the intellectual festival, we present a commentary by Marika Sherwood titled, “All African People’s Congress (AAPC) called by Kwame Nkrumah – and George Padmore”. Much has been written about black nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and the roles played by both George Padmore and W.E.B Du Bois in the evolution of Nkrumah’s ideological project, and so this piece is a useful and interesting take from a scholar who has long engaged with the work of Nkrumah.

CJAS is evolving and with future issues we will be including review essays. We hope that graduate students, especially, who generally carry out a lot of reviews during their studies, will consider sending us submissions. We see this as a service to the community while also providing a platform for younger scholars to situate their work within the larger discourse relevant to their field. We continue to welcome book and film reviews, and where such interest exists, we encourage that an expression of interest first be submitted to the editors at CJAS.

On a personal note, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the entire editorial team for their steadfast work on the journal during one of the most difficult periods of our life as a journal, and for the support we receive from the Institute of African Studies and the University of Ghana journals office.

Please enjoy the read!

Akosua Adomako Ampofo
Editor-in-Chief