

In Memoriam

Tribute to Marika Sherwood from the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana

It is with deep respect and a sense of loss that the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana mourns the passing of Marika Sherwood, a distinguished historian, researcher, and a steadfast voice in the study of the African diaspora and anti-racism. Simultaneously we salute this stalwart scholar and activist in the Pan-African struggle. Sherwood passed away on February 16, 2025, at the age of 87.

While not formally a staff member of the Institute of African Studies, Marika Sherwood's work and her connections to Ghana and the Institute have been significant. Her pioneering research into the history of Black British people, her co-founding of the Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA), and her commitment to uncovering marginalized histories resonate deeply with the scholarly pursuits of the Institute.

The Institute recalls with appreciation Sherwood's participation in the Kwame Nkrumah Centenary Colloquium in Accra in 2010. Her contribution to this important event, convened by the African Union and the Ghanaian government, highlighted her deep engagement with Pan-Africanism and the work of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah. Her insights on Nkrumah's time in London and the broader Pan-African movement remain invaluable.

Furthermore, the Institute notes her significant publications related to Pan-Africanism and Kwame Nkrumah. In 2013 she published, "Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism 1942 – 1958", *Hands Off Africa*, edited by Lazare Ki-Zerbo. In the same year her work was included in *The Kwame Nkrumah Centenary Colloquium Proceedings* co-edited by one of the Institutes' former Directors, Professor Emerita Takyiwa Manuh and a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of

Ghana, Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr. More recently, in the Institute's journal, the *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* Sherwood featured as follows: firstly, in a 2020 issue we published Dr Mjiba Frehiwot's review of Sherwood's book, *Kwame Nkrumah and the dawn of the cold war*, published by Sub-Saharan publishers, that was launched at the Institute on February 6, of the same year. In 2021 we published her article, "The All African People's Congress (AAPC) called by Kwame Nkrumah and George Padmore". These and her many other works demonstrate her dedication to exploring the intellectual and political currents that shaped African independence and the diaspora's role in these movements.

She had a particularly soft spot for Ghana's first president, and Ghana as a whole, and in her last years, many of her emails to another former Director of the Institute, Professor Akosua Adomako Ampofo testify to this: "Did I send you the article I've written on Fanon's struggles/relations with Padmore and Nkrumah and his time in Ghana? Frantz Fanon and the struggle for African unity. It is a paper I gave at a conference in Liverpool...".

In 2019 she wrote:

"I trust when you have received a copy of my book you will see why I think it is absolutely essential that further research is carried out. We just don't know what Osagyefo Nkrumah was really facing... I should perhaps add here that a couple of months ago I asked Lord Paul Boateng to ask in the House of Lords for the release of all papers held on George Padmore as none were available. Response: there are two files; one will continue to be withheld; the other will be edited and released. This to me indicates that the UK is hiding much!"

She had a deep commitment to making sure Ghana's derailed independence story was told, and thus shared three

large boxes containing 12 of her personal files to the Institute, she followed up constantly to make sure they were delivered, and wrote, “I hope my research papers and books are of some use. And I hope even more that there are researchers following up what’s in my Cold War book. [my work shows] how [for colonial powers] Independence had to be prevented one way or another…” She had a strong sense of urgency about this, especially as she felt that she was nearing the end of her life, and was extremely generous in sharing her work, her thoughts, suggested strategies and encouragement.



With Archbishop Charles Palmer Buckle, Professor Francis Nkrumah, and Togbi Gobah Tengey at the launch of Sherwood's book, Kwame Nkrumah and the dawn of the cold war; February 6, 2020, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. Photo Credit: IAS Media and Visual Arts.



With Professor Akosua Adomako Ampofo at the launch of the book, Kwame Nkrumah and the dawn of the cold war; February 6, 2020. Photo Credit: IAS Media and Visual Arts.

Recently when the current Director, Professor Samuel Nteuwusu, Professor Akosua Adomako Ampofo, and Dr Mjiba Frehiwot looked through this treasure trove of materials, they were stunned at the breadth of work accumulated and saved, saddened and angered at the stark evidence of the insidious nature of the colonial project and the extent of British and US efforts to undermine the success of Ghana's independence, and excited by what research possibilities this collection of papers portended.



Dr Mjiba Frehiwot, Professor Samuel Ntewusu, and Akosua Adomako Ampofo scanning Sherwood's treasure trove donated to the Institute. Photo Credit: IAS Media and Visual Arts.

The Institute of African Studies recognizes Marika Sherwood's lifelong commitment to historical truth, her tireless work in challenging racial discrimination, and her significant contributions to the fields of African diaspora studies and Pan-African history. Her scholarship has undoubtedly enriched our understanding of these crucial areas.

We extend our deepest condolences to her family, friends, and colleagues. Her legacy as a passionate historian and advocate for social justice will continue to inspire scholars and activists for generations to come.

Though she is no longer with us, Marika Sherwood's impact on African studies, particularly in relation to the diaspora and Pan-Africanism, will be remembered and her work will continue to be a valuable resource for the Institute of African Studies and the wider academic community in Ghana and beyond.