
Academic Freedom in the Neo-Liberal Order: Governments, Globalization, Governance, and Gender

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the meanings and challenges of academic freedom for African universities and intellectuals as they confront old and new pressures from globalization, governments, and the general public. It is argued that as the “development” university of the 1960s and 1970s shifted to the “market” university of the 1980s and 1990s, threats to academic freedom became less political and more economic. The essay begins by discussing various definitions of academic freedom in Western and African contexts, then proceeds to explore the role of governments, the impact of globalization, the dynamics of internal governance, and finally the gender dimensions of academic freedom.

Résumé

Ce texte cherche à circonscrire la signification et les défis que pose la liberté académique pour les universitaires et les intellectuels africains. Ces derniers subissent des pressions de tout genre et de tout âge nées de la mondialisation, des gouvernements ou de l'autorité publique. L'argument de taille qui est mis en avant ici consiste à reconsidérer la nature de ces pressions: sachant que la notion d'université de « développement » des années 1960 et 1970 a cédé la place à la notion d'université de « marché » au cours des années 1980 et 1990, les menaces qui pèsent sur la liberté académique sont devenues moins politiques et plus économiques. Le texte débute sur une revue critique de plusieurs définitions de la liberté académique selon qu'elles sont produites dans des contextes occidentaux et africains. Dans un deuxième temps, on assiste à une analyse du rôle des gouvernements, de l'impact

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de la mondialisation et de la gouvernance locale, et la dimension genre dans la liberté académique.

Introduction

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the need for redefining and defending academic freedom is as great as ever as universities and academics everywhere confront old and new pressures from globalization, governments, and the general public around questions of relevance and accountability, governance and gender, canon and curricula, and the composition and culture of scholarly communities. The contexts and content of the challenges to academic freedom of course differ between countries, but they all center around the challenges of institutional autonomy, ideological controls, internal governance, and intellectual authority. The forces that seek to erode academic freedom, so vital for the health of the intellectual enterprise, emanate from the state, capital, civil society, and the academy itself and are spawned by complex transformations brought about by capitalist globalization and the consequent decomposition of the welfare state in the North and the developmentalist state in the South. The rising political ecologies of intolerance and intervention by states and cultural actors into university affairs, coupled with the curtailing of their fiscal responsibilities for higher education, threaten academic freedom, as well. This essay will argue that as the “development” university of the 1960s and 1970s shifted to the “market” university of the 1980s and 1990s the constitution of threats to academic freedom became less political and more economic.

The essay is divided into five parts: The first discusses Western and African definitions of academic freedom; the second explores the role of African governments; the third focuses on the impact of globalization; the fourth examines the dynamics of internal governance; and the fifth looks at the gender dimensions of academic freedom. Governments often set the parameters of academic freedom through fiscal, administrative, and ideological controls. Globalization, as a project and process of neoliberalism, which in Africa has primarily been articulated through structural adjustment programs (SAPs), has accelerated the corporatization of university management, commercialization of learning, and commodification of knowledge (Zezeza, 2003). These interventions have reinforced internal transformations in the structures of university governance and the cultures of scholarly discourse. It cannot be overemphasized that gender needs to feature prominently in analyses of academic freedom. Because of all the structured inscriptions and divisions that permeate and polarize African universities as social and scholarly spaces, including class and ethnicity, gender remains the most salient source of contestation in terms of university access and composition, on the one hand, and as a pedagogical and

research construct on the other. All these issues—the roles of governments, globalization, internal governance, and gender—are critical for a comprehensive analysis and understanding of academic freedom as a multi-pronged challenge and agenda for African universities and intellectuals.

The Definitions of Academic Freedom

Like most values or virtues, academic freedom is simpler to defend in its breach than to define. Defenses and definitions of academic freedom are as much conceptual as they are contextual, subject to intellectual, institutional, and ideological transformations within the wider society and the academy itself.² In many Western traditions academic freedom tends to be defined negatively, in terms of institutional autonomy from external intervention especially by the state and individual autonomy of professors from university boards and administrators (in deciding who, what, and how to teach and do research), while in African traditions the emphasis is on both the negative and positive rights, on institutional autonomy and social responsibility. Academic freedom is more than a set of institutional practices; it is also an ideology used by academics to stake claims for and against friends and foes within and outside the academy.

Pragmatic and philosophical defenses of academic freedom have come under attack. For example, the link between tenure and academic freedom increasingly looks frayed in the new ruthless economy of free-market competitiveness and downsizing, in which feeling and looking comfortable has become, in the memorable phrase of Stephen Trachtenberg (1996, p. 24), “the eighth deadly sin, far worse than the other seven.” Richard Chait (1997) advises academe to devise more employment options beyond tenure to contractually guarantee academic freedom, advice that apparently seems to resonate more with younger than older faculty (Power, 1997). The “philosophical grounds on which the concept of academic freedom has traditionally rested,” argues Luis Menand (1993, p. 12), “are now regarded by many academics with skepticism.” Relying on a singular notion of truth, previous interpretations of academic freedom have, in the words of William Tierney (1993, p.144), “privileged some individuals and silenced others.” To critics, the university has never been an apolitical free-market of ideas, where objective facts or truth are traded by impartial scholars, for knowledge is socially

2 Philip Altbach (2001) notes that there is considerable confusion about the proper definition of academic freedom; his own attempt to offer a classification of different historical and contemporary regimes of academic freedom – the latter for example distinguishing between countries with “severe restrictions,” “significant limitations and periodic crisis,” “tension in the context of academic freedom,” “academic freedom with limits,” “re-emergence of academic freedom,” and “the industrialized countries”– shows the difficulties of defining academic freedom coherently.

constructed and the university is inscribed with and reproduces all the unequal power relations around class, gender, race, ethnicity, and other social markers that exist among the wider society.

For Richard Rorty (1994, p. 53) the philosophical propositions said to be presuppositional for academic freedom “turn out to be rhetorical ornaments of practice, rather than foundations of practice.” He tells us that “if we stop trying to give epistemological justifications for academic freedom, and instead give socio-political justifications, we shall be both more honest and more clear-headed” (Rorty, 1994, p. 55). Stanley Fish suggests that the ideology of academic freedom rests on morally thin grounds in that it presumes the equivalence of truth claims, a position based on “the principle of ‘what’s sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander,’” which leads “to a forced inability to make distinctions that would be perfectly clear to any well-informed teenager—distinctions between lynchings and set-asides, between a Shakespeare sonnet and hard-core pornography, between (in Supreme Court John Paul Steven’s words) a welcome mat and a no-entry sign” (Fish, 1999, p. B4). In his view, the debate about academic freedom is never between the inclusive and exclusive university but between competing structures of exclusion.³ A clear example of this can be seen in the contradictory history and effects of speech codes.⁴ Henry Louis Gates finds it paradoxical that “the rubric of ‘free speech,’ in the 1960s, an empowering rubric of campus radicals, has today been ceded to their conservative opponents as an ironic instrument of requital” (Gates, 1994, p. 15). While sensitive to issues raised in the arguments for hate speech bans, he believes that speech codes kill critique, are paternalistic, and reduce serious public debate to “the level of symbolic, gestural politics.” Social inequity cannot be silenced out of existence.

Understandably, defenders of academic freedom, as Walter Metzger (1993, p. 1), observes, “tend to be disquieted by attempts to define its limits: efforts to

3 For a brief history of academic freedom in the United States and its legal foundations, see Standler (2000, p. 1) who argues that contrary to conventional wisdom, academic freedom, despite its apparent desirability, is not a legal right derived from the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, but “an amorphous quasi-legal concept that is neither precisely defined nor convincingly justified from legal principles.” He contends that it refers to two different concepts, individual academic freedom, which “protects an individual professor” and institutional academic freedom, which “protects universities from interference by government, a right that applies to the community of scholars, not to individual faculty” (Standler, 2000, p.3) (emphasis in the original). He concludes, “academic freedom in the U.S. is a matter of internal policy at colleges and universities...not a constitutional right belonging to professors” (Standler, 2000, p. 22) (emphasis in the original).

4 The issue becomes even more murky when you factor in faith statements required in some private religious institutions of higher learning, see McMutrie (2002).

pound boundary markers into this fragile terrain have been known to produce slippery slopes.” Yet squeamishness about drawing lines, he suggests, has prevented them from informing “the cartography of the law with mappings informed by their own traditions” (Metzger, 1993, p. 2). Philip Devine (1996) believes academic freedom should not be confused and conflated with free speech. After all, academics that adopt controversial positions are often siding with some groups in the larger society against others. Frequently, debates about free speech on North American campuses serve as a cover for broader issues concerning equity or affirmative action, diversification, and curriculum reform. A 1994 controversy in Ontario, Canada, is an example of this phenomena.

Ostensibly responding to well-publicized incidents of sexual harassment on campuses and demands for educational and employment equity by women and minorities, the Ontario government’s “Framework Regarding Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination in Ontario Universities,” which called for “zero tolerance,” was as misconceived, misguided and cynical as the Trent University faculty document “Free Inquiry and Expression,” defending “the right to offend” (Sangster and Zeleza, 1994). As someone who participated in the debates at Trent where I was the university’s sole black faculty member, it became quite clear to me that an academic freedom that defends exclusion, as the “Free Inquiry” manifesto does, no matter how lofty the rhetoric, while ignoring power differentials and social inequalities, and imposes or rationalizes structural obstacles to access and equity for historically marginalized groups of people is not worthy of support.

In recent years two dominant contexts have emerged that constrain academic freedom. First, the triumphalist ideology of the market has penetrated academe, so that legal doctrines for “the market are applied to the classroom or the admissions process without nuanced consideration of how the operations and purposes of higher education are different, and how that difference benefits society” (Byrne, 2001, p. B13). Second, there are the oppressive imperatives of the security state following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington, whose effects are most marked in the U.S. itself. The new homeland security regime in the United States promises to have a profound impact on institutional and individual autonomy in the academy. A special report in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2003, p. A12–A25) observes that stringent controls have been imposed on the freedom of movement of foreign students and scholars, controls that have turned many campus international studies offices into data monitoring and tracking agencies for the government. The security services have also stepped up their work on campuses for recruitment and surveillance, inciting fear and anger among academics. Even libraries are not immune as they are expected to monitor and report, if

requested, the reading habits of their patrons. Finally, campuses are now competing for the suddenly bountiful funding available to support research on terrorism, especially bioterrorism, in an opportunistic frenzy of patriotism.⁵

These are chilling developments that seriously threaten academic freedom in the American academy. Those who lived through the McCarthy era in the 1950s see disconcerting parallels (Monastersky, 2003). For those of us who have worked on both sides of the Atlantic, the climate on many American campuses seems eerily reminiscent of the climate on some repressive African campuses. While this generation of American academics is learning that academic freedom is firmly tied to the unpredictable vagaries of state power, this lesson is already deeply etched in the collective memories of generations of African academics. To many African academics, it has always made sense to see issues of academic freedom beyond the gated confines of the university or the nexus of academe-state relations, for they understand, even if they may not like it, that the university as a social arena and a state apparatus is inscribed by complex internal and external political practices, as is the process of knowledge production (Diouf & Mamdani, 1994; CODESRIA, 1996; Federici, et al., 2001).⁶ For scholarly communities reared under colonial and postcolonial despotisms, civil liberties and the rights to education and self-determination are highly prized, and struggles for them have exacted high political and personal costs. These issues have tended to be tied more to the question of institutional autonomy and social responsibility, however, than strictly to internal institutional policing of speech as such. They know through painful experience that opposition to academic freedom is essentially pragmatic and political, so the real challenge is not to rehash or refine old philosophical arguments for tenure or free speech but to rebuild new supportive political constituencies within and outside the academy. This is not to imply that African discourses of academic freedom have not indulged in the intellectual delights of trying to draw lines of Solomonic clarity in the gray area between offensive speech and harmful action, rights and responsibilities, freedoms and duties. On the contrary, these questions have, indeed, been hotly debated.

The reason why the question of academic freedom and social responsibility dominates African discourses lies in the acute politicization of African social

5 Also see the articles by Johnson (2003), Grant (2003), and Stange (2003).

6 There are of course distinctive national discourses on academic freedom as discussed for countries like Nigeria (Mustapha, 1996), Cote d'Ivoire (Dégni-Ségui, 1996), Algeria (El Kenzi, 1996), and Kenya (Mutunga and Kiai, 1996) in CODESRIA (1996). In South Africa, the discourse is centered on the deformities of apartheid, the contradictions of the liberal tradition, and the challenges of Africanizing South Africa, i.e., relations between academic freedom and developmentalism, see Du Toit (2001) and Higgins (2000).

formations, a product of long histories of struggle against the barbarities of the slave trade, colonialism, and postcolonial misrule. The powerful pull of such memories and the strong organic links of academics to the cultures and communities of civil society, and their class affinities to the ruling elite, is what makes them see themselves either in the “magisterial” role of a revolutionary vanguard or a “ministerial” one of facilitating progressive change, to use Joseph Ki-Zerbo’s (1994) interesting metaphors. Rarely do they perceive themselves solely as academics. Intellectualism for intellectualism’s sake is often regarded as a sign of petty-bourgeois self-indulgence or decadence. The pauperizing effects of structural adjustment have merely reinforced the material and political imperatives of struggles for academic freedom. It is this valorization of the “public intellectual” that gives African academic debates about social responsibility their poignancy and urgency.

It is not surprising, then, that among the major international declarations on academic freedom that have been adopted in various regions of the world in the last two decades, the Kampala Declaration adopted by African intellectuals in 1990, is perhaps the most forthright on linking “Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility,” to invoke its very title. Part of the Preamble states: “The struggle for intellectual freedom is an integral part of the struggle of our people for democracy and human rights. Just as popular forces are waging a struggle for democracy and human rights, so are African academics, intellectuals, students and other members of the intelligentsia deeply involved in their own struggles for intellectual and academic freedom” (Diouf & Mamdani, 1994, p. 349). Particularly noteworthy is the reference to both intellectual and academic freedom. The title of the declaration in fact talks of “intellectual” rather than “academic” freedom. The CODESRIA discourse—the preoccupation with the productivity of connections between academic freedom and social responsibility, the problematic of university-society relations—has spread all the way to the corridors of UNESCO, whose 1998 World Conference on Higher Education vigorously debated *Autonomy, Social Responsibility and Academic Freedom* (UNESCO, 1998).

The Role of Governments

The state is central to all discussions of academic freedom in Africa for, until the recent wave of privatization, most African universities were founded, financed, and controlled by the developmentalist postcolonial state. The colonial state, despite its civilizational pretensions, did little to promote university education until the twilight years of colonial rule, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when a few regional universities were belatedly and hurriedly set up to produce skilled professional elites to serve a maturing colonial capitalism and

save it from the dangerous agitation of the nationalist masses. Dominated by expatriates and created in the curricular image of the metropolitan universities, the colonial universities were too small and isolated to have much of an epistemic or cultural presence. That was to change after independence, as the number and size of universities exploded and their expectations as engines of modernization expanded. According to some estimates, from the approximately forty-two universities before the 1960s (mostly concentrated in North Africa and South Africa), there were more than 400 by the end of the 1990s, catering to nearly 3.5 million students compared to the few tens of thousands that were forty years earlier (Ejiaga & Zeleza 2003, p. 183–6).

This historic achievement could not hide the fact that the universities were, in Thandika Mkandawire's (1996, p. 2) memorable phrase, "born in chains." One set of chains was institutional, and the other intellectual. Institutionally, the universities were held on a tight leash by the state, which saw them simultaneously as cathedrals of cultural authenticity and local assembly plants of western modernity. They were assigned a technocratic mission: to churn out the personnel for development and nation-building. It was a powerful, seductive project, which was initially accepted by many African academics, not simply because the universities were fiscally dependent on the state or that the postcolonial leviathan could whip them into submission, but also because they, too, were intoxicated by the immense possibilities of independence, whatever their preferred ideological fix, and they fervently believed in their own nationalist calling to rewrite Africa in the corpus of their respective disciplines, reinscribing it in the western epistemological order.

The honeymoon between the intellectuals and political class did not last, however. It was dissipated by the deepening recessions of development and democracy, as evidence mounted that the postcolonial state was unable to realize the dreams of Uhuru as fast as the giddy aspirations of the masses demanded and the grand assurances of the political class dictated. The erosion of their autonomy, manifested most intrusively in the banning of some disciplines such as political science and sociology in Rwanda and Senegal after the 1968 student riots or law in Mozambique, also alarmed the intellectuals (Sall, 2001a, p. 2). The embattled political leviathan sought to subject academic institutions and critical social thought to its monopolistic will to power enacted through the one-party state that distrusted all pluralisms, whether articulated in the names of class, ethnicity, or culture. The mystification of the nation as one—one race, one language, one culture—reflected not only a homage to the imagined imperatives of developmentalism, but also to the Eurocentric fictions of national identity, and suppressed Africa's own multi-ethnic, multicultural, and even multi-racial realities and possibilities.

Criticisms of the state by academics were framed in increasingly anti-nationalist and anti-developmental terms, although this did not entail a wholesale crusade against the progressive mission of African nationalism and the imperatives of development. The fallout between academics and the state reflected the growing divergence in their respective missions. As the technocratic agenda assigned to the universities was increasingly achieved or became irrelevant, given the small size of most African countries and economies and as economic growth slowed down from the mid-1970s, the university lost its importance in the eyes of the state. State divestment from university education found a theoretical rationale in tendentious rate-of-return studies, which argued that higher education offered lower private and social returns than primary education, so that public interest in universities was substantially lower than in primary schools.

The nationalization of the university labor market from the 1970s, as the inter-territorial universities were dissolved into national universities, simply enabled the state to tighten its hold over the universities. Subsequent expansion and Africanization of staff and curricula did not halt the slide towards the parochialization and politicization of African universities, nor was it always translated into the development of an organic intelligentsia, that is intellectuals who were seen as critical to the articulation of the state project. The imposition of draconian structural adjustment programs forced or facilitated states to reduce their fiscal responsibilities to the universities. The effect was expansion of privatized programs in public universities and the expansion of private universities. In many cases, privatization simply substituted dependency on the feckless state for dependency on the fickle market and foreign donors, none of which promoted intellectual autonomy and commitment to basic research.

By the 1980s, therefore, many of Africa's repressive and strapped structural adjustment states were suspicious and dismissive of their own intellectuals, often seeing them as purveyors of "foreign ideology," which left little room for the latter to occupy public space or to engage in critical discourse openly (Mkandawire, 2003). The tendency established by the dynamic generation of nationalist leaders mutated into cruel parody when invoked by aging dictators or juvenile soldiers and reduced intellectual work to sycophancy. Much African academic research appeared "irrelevant" to the state functionaries, because it was not "applied" research, or because African intellectuals were adversarial, especially those who expected imminent revolution, or because they blindly followed western research themes that did not address local conditions. Governments preached the populist language of "relevance," while intellectuals held onto the elitist language of "excellence," which seemed to confirm for their opponents that African intellectuals suffered from "colonial mentality" or

“intellectual elitism” and was used to justify state assaults against the universities and critical intellectuals.

Yet the same governments became increasingly subservient to foreign policy advice and conditionalities. Indeed, the growing reliance on foreign expatriates for development models and research, bankrolled by the international financial institutions and donor agencies, enabled African governments to ignore their own intellectuals and to lower the short-term costs of intellectual repression. This led to the ironic situation whereby these governments could only access their own intellectuals through donor-contracted reports, as these indigenous intellectuals sought pecuniary and political salvation in consultancies. The transformation of African intellectuals into “paid native informants” for foreign donors was a tragic testimony to the collapse of the nationalist project.

Thus, African intellectuals found themselves fighting against intolerant hegemonies on two fronts: institutionally, against the authoritarian state, and intellectually, against domineering western paradigms. One consequence was the disastrous brain “drain” or “haemorrhage” from the universities to other sectors at home or institutions abroad. The most creative ones founded independent research centers. The establishment of an intellectually vibrant and autonomous academic NGO sector was one of the most exciting developments on the African intellectual scene that emerged in response to growing state control of universities and declining fiscal support. The crisis in which the African intellectual community found itself generated intense self-scrutiny and criticism. Some even turned to the existential and epistemological despair of postmodernism and viciously attacked African intellectuals for having blindly campaigned for the dangerous enlightenment “metanarratives” of nationalism and development. In Achille Mbembe’s (2001a, 2001b) nihilistic critique, the postcolony is a space marked by unusual banality, violence, and corruption; that indeed, Africa is a conflicted sign, text, archive, or library, to use his postmodernist terminology, marked by absences, whose classical borderlines—symbolic, cultural, structural, and territorial—are vanishing and whose redemption and actualization lies in its absorption into the universal. This cynical dismissal echoed the Afro-pessimist condemnation of Africa in western circles.

Others, however, found new fervor in the possibilities of African renewal unleashed by the wave of democratization that swept across the continent from the late 1980s. Indeed, universities became hotbeds of the struggles for democracy that began to rock one African country after another. Strikes and other protests by both students and faculty increased. The state responded with both the sticks of repression and the carrots of reform or cooptation. Many governments tried to buy time by turning to international scabs, development experts

provided by bilateral and multilateral aid donors. According to some estimates, by the mid-1980s, there were as many as 80,000 foreign experts working in the Sub-Saharan region alone, excluding North Africa. None of these measures were sufficient to stem the rising tide of opposition to authoritarian rule. By the end of the 1990s, many African countries had introduced political reforms and were at various stages of democratic transition, although there were some notable reversals. The struggles for democracy in Africa represented the latest moment of accelerated change in a long history of struggles for freedom, an exceptionally complex moment often driven by unpredictable events and new social movements and visions and anchored in the specific histories and conditions of each country. National, regional, and international forces converged unevenly and inconsistently across Africa at this time, and economic and political crises reinforced each other, altering the terrain of state-civil society relationships, the structures of governance, and the claims of citizenship. Representing the pluralization of associational life and the expansion of political space, democratization promised to free African intellectuals from the imposed stupor of state authoritarianism and the stifling preoccupation with the state as the chief agent of social transformation.

Political liberalization brought relief to universities and academics in many countries as state controls and censorship were relaxed. The shift in state policy from control of the universities to supervision; from concern with process, questions of provision, access and equity, to concern with product, questions of appropriateness of outputs to meet market demand, simultaneously facilitated and was facilitated by the expansion of private universities. More specifically, the growth of private universities was engendered by a combination of four factors: to cover the fiscal and provisioning vacuum left by the SAP(ed) state; to meet the excess in social demand for higher education; the need for differentiated education and demand for better education by certain groups; and the influence of market ideology on higher education (Thaver, 2002). The effects soon became evident. Ebrima Sall, a former head of the Academic Freedom Project at CODESRIA (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) observed: "In the last 10 years or so, African academics have seen their fields of research expand as governments have embarked on the road to democracy. Their lives are at risk now in only a few countries, such as Burundi, and censorship is fading" (Sall, 2001b, p. 26). But what they may have gained in political freedoms, they lost in economic viability. In other words, political pressures increasingly gave way to economic constraints, as the state steadily withdrew both its administrative repression and fiscal responsibility from the universities.

Nevertheless, political threats against universities and academics remained in several countries, most vividly and violently through the waging of war perpetrated both by crumbling states and insurgent private militias. Indeed, the privatization of war and security that was occurring in society at large across the world (Keen, 2002) was manifesting itself in what Sam Zia-Zarifi (2001, p. 31) calls “the ‘privatization’ of assaults on academic freedom. Militant opposition groups are increasingly willing and able to attack academics who call for reason.” He gives examples from Spain to Colombia. In Africa, there is the particularly tragic case of Algeria, where, in the 1990s, progressive secular intellectuals were targeted by both Islamic extremists and the state, thus demonstrating the complex interpenetration of the repressive capacities and propensities of both the state and civil society (El Kenzi, 1996). Elsewhere on the continent, many universities were physically destroyed during the wars that raged in the 1990s from Rwanda, Burundi, and the Congo in Central Africa to Somalia in Eastern Africa and Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa. In a few others, such as Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Egypt, old style political repression remained.

In Ethiopia, the hopes that accompanied the overthrow of the Derg dictatorship and the end of the civil war in 1991, and the installation of new government were soon dashed. The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) did not live up to its billing that it was guided by the principles of democracy, development, and minority rights. Assaults against academic freedom continued and, in fact, intensified. First, lethal force was used to suppress student activism. Ethiopian students have a long history of struggle, which resurfaced in January 1993, when a student protest against a planned referendum on Eritrean independence at Addis Ababa University (AAU) was violently attacked by security forces. Student repression increased during the 1998–2000 border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and escalated thereafter, especially against disaffected Oromo students, culminating in the strike of April 2001, when students demanded academic freedom and during which 40 students were killed, 400 wounded, and 3,000 arrested. Throughout 2002, student demonstrations at the country’s four regional universities and private colleges were met with arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, killings, and expulsions.

Second, there was unrelenting repression of the Ethiopian Teachers’ Association (ETA), which had a membership of 80,000 out of an estimated 120,000 teachers in more than 6,000 schools. ETA leaders were imprisoned, and one was assassinated. The government created a new association, under the same name as ETA, in 1993, and pressured teachers to join. Although the old “ETA” was not destroyed, its proscription on university campuses deprived faculty of a collective protective voice. Third, independent thought was stifled through

the denial of university autonomy and government control of activities on campuses. The arbitrary dismissal of some 40 professors in 1993, the use of two-year contracts in faculty employment, absence of tenure, arrest of human rights activists, and the government's repeated failure to grant the university autonomy through a charter (which it enjoyed when it was created in 1950 until the 1974 revolution), and its control of all leadership positions eroded academic freedom. International protest against this regime of academic terror and human rights abuse became muted after September 11, 2001, as Ethiopia became "a partner and a 'frontline state' in the U.S. war on terrorism" (Human Rights Watch, 2003, p. 42).⁷

In Zimbabwe, the state has been equally ruthless in its dealings with academics and students. Once a beacon of national liberation in Southern Africa, Robert Mugabe's bankrupt and beleaguered regime resorted, by the late 1980s, to a reign of terror to silence its critics and launched a disastrous program of land seizures from the white settlers to shore up its tattered revolutionary promises. The universities could escape neither the tightening noose of state repression nor the stiffening muscles of civil resistance. The struggles for institutional autonomy and academic freedom became intertwined with struggles for democracy in the wider society. Besides the bread and butter issues of subsistence, both faculty and students fought for their rights to free association and expression. In the late 1990s, as political tensions in the country rose and the government-appointed university administrations sought to curtail academic freedom on campuses, student and faculty protests escalated.

The Association of University Teachers at the University of Zimbabwe fought vigorously against a draconian code of conduct, first imposed in 1995, which set severe restrictions and penalties on faculty and staff conduct and banned political activism. In September 1998, four months after the university had been closed, six prominent academics resigned from the university council (packed with administration or government appointees) in protest, and in 2002, and again in early 2003, the faculty (whose total membership of 700, down from the official establishment of 1,200 was itself a reflection of the deteriorating conditions of service) went on strike and the university was closed indefinitely. In the meantime, student protests grew, led by the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), which was formed in the late 1980s. In 2001, 30 students were suspended, others arrested and tortured, and two killed by members of the security forces, resulting in new waves of protests. Undaunted, the

⁷ Also see these news reports from Human Rights Watch: July 29, 1998; May 10, 2001; May 19, 2001; May 22, 2002; June 11, 2002; and January 24, 2003.

protests continued into 2003, and ZINASU even petitioned the United Nations to intervene to ensure their rights to education and other chartered human rights.⁸

If not as murderous as in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, state repression against activist intellectuals in Egypt continued to have a chilling effect on academic freedom. The most celebrated case at the turn of the new century involved Saadeddin Ibrahim, a sociology professor at the American University in Cairo and one of the country's leading advocates for political reform and democratic rights. In June 2000, the Egyptian government closed down the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies, which Ibrahim had founded in 1988 and directed, and arrested him and 27 of his co-workers at the Center on trumped-up charges of conspiracy to bribe public television officials, accepting foreign funds without official authorization, disseminating false and harmful information about Egypt, and defrauding European Union funds. All indications are that the arrests were intended to silence the critical monitoring of the 2000 parliamentary elections by the Center and other civil society organizations. The numerous irregularities, both before and during the trial, including the manner of detention, the conduct of interrogations, lack of access for defense lawyers to any of the prosecution documents, and the failure of the presiding judge to respond to any of the key issues raised by the latter lends credence to the fact that the charges were politically motivated.

In May 2001, the Supreme State Security Court sentenced Ibrahim to seven years in prison and six co-defendants to prison terms ranging from two to five years, while imposing suspended one-year sentences on the twenty-one others who were released (Human Rights Watch, 2002b). Upon appeal, the Court of Cassation threw out the conviction twice; by the beginning of 2003 the defendants were awaiting a third trial, as required by Egyptian law, on the same charges by the Court of Cassation itself. It is worth noting that, a month before the arrests, the state of emergency, in force almost continuously since 1967, was extended, and the verdicts came on the heels of a new law of associations, under which non-governmental organizations could be dissolved by administrative order and without recourse in a court of law, and the authorities could interfere in their internal affairs.⁹

Continued state assaults against academic freedom are by no means confined to Africa or even to the South more generally. On the country, "in many

8 See the press reports in *Zimbabwe Independent* (1998, 1999); the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (March 1, March 29, and April 5, 2002); by Mudzengi (2000), Makamure (2002), Makiwa (2002), and Mavhungu (2003); and from the Network for Education and Academic Rights, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, and 2003d.

9 See the following news reports from Human Rights Watch, August 3, 2000a, 2000b; August 10, 2000; May 21, 2001; July 31, 2002; and December 3, 2002.

parts of the world,” to quote John Akker (2002, p. 1), the first executive director of the UNESCO-sponsored Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) established in 2001, “being a college or university academic or student is not a safe thing to be... The chilling fact is that killings, imprisonment, abuse, and harassment for those in education are on the increase and becoming a way of life in many countries.” The annual reports on academic freedom by Human Rights Watch confirm this assessment and paint a depressing picture of growing assaults against academic freedom worldwide. The report for 2000 notes that “academics were disproportionately represented among the world’s political prisoners, and universities were favored targets of repression. Researchers, scholars, teachers, and students in dozens of countries continued to be harassed, censored, dismissed, imprisoned, and, in the worst cases, tortured or killed for openly expressing their views or addressing controversial questions” (Human Rights Watch, 2000, p. 1).

The 2001 report comments: “The pursuit and dissemination of knowledge remained disproportionately dangerous activities as educators and their students were frequent targets of violence and repression sponsored or countenanced by regimes bent on stifling critical analysis and dissent. In the worst cases, these governments used intimidation, physical abuse, and imprisonment to punish campus-based critics, and, by example, to repress civil society. More commonly, governments pursued the same ends by silencing academics and censoring their teaching, research, and publication on important subjects” (Human Rights Watch, 2001, p. 1). The 2002 report further observes the alarming effects of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on New York and Washington, in the wake of which “several academics in the United States and Canada came under official or public pressure for questioning various aspects of their governments’ past or projected policies... The right to education and academic freedom suffered numerous violations around the globe. Oppressive governments punished academics for exercising their right and responsibility to question and criticize their societies” (Human Rights Watch, 2002a, p. 1).¹⁰

The Impact of Globalization

In my book, *Rethinking Africa’s Globalization*, I have argued that six trends—what I call the six Cs’—characterize the impact of contemporary capitalist globalization on higher education: corporatization of management (the adoption of business models for the organization and administration of universi-

¹⁰ *Index on Censorship* records the growing threats to civil liberties across the world by governments hiding behind the banner of national security, see Philip Knightly (2002) and Michael Ignatieff (2001).

ties); collectivization of access (growing massification of higher education, continuing education or lifelong learning, and accountability to outside stakeholders); commercialization of learning (expansion of private universities, privatized programs in public universities, and vocational training); commodification of knowledge (increased production, sponsorship, and dissemination of research by commercial enterprises, applied research, and intellectual property norms); computerization of education (incorporation of new information technologies into the knowledge activities of teaching, research, and publication); and connectivity of institutions (rising emphasis on institutional cooperation and coordination within and across countries) (Zezeza, 2003, ch. 3). The implications of these transformations on academic freedom are not only complex and contradictory but are also quite varied in different regions and countries.

Corporatization in universities reinforces a market ideology and the practices of bureaucratic authoritarianism, which curtail the cultures of collegiality and general education on the one hand, while it encourages managerial efficiency, accountability and relevance, on the other hand. These effects can help contain deeply entrenched patterns of discretionary decision-making and exclusion of historically under-represented groups.

The growing massification and flexibilities of higher education facilitate the diversification of programs and people on campuses as previously excluded social classes and groups, including women, gain access, while growing interventions by external stakeholders threaten to erode traditional notions and values of university autonomy, academic freedom, liberal education, and quality.

Similarly, while the commercialization of learning makes universities more responsive to both the needs of the economy and national competitiveness and promotes skills training and development, the enterprise culture undermines some of the broader social purposes of higher education like promoting social justice, public criticism, humanistic development, and democratic citizenship. Moreover, the marketization of universities imposes enormous strains on faculty, who are required to work longer hours due to funding cuts. The faculty becomes increasingly divided between an elite professoriate in the marketable disciplines (with all the privileges of academia including higher salaries and benefits), and the less-illustrious faculty in the marginalized disciplines (including a growing mass of part-time, poorly paid academics).

The same can be said about the commodification of knowledge production, which often enables universities and academics to attract much-needed resources for research and teaching from industry, philanthropic institutions, and individuals as streams of public funding decrease or dry up. But, the price can be high, not only in terms of undue interference by donors but also in the applica-

tion of proprietary principles to academic research and removing it from the domain of public circulation and discourse.

Proponents and critics of information technology tend to focus on online education and debate about its costs and profitability as well as its pedagogical benefits. To its supporters, the new technologies offer limitless possibilities to expand, democratize, and globalize university education, while the skeptics question whether the primary motive behind the craze for online education lies in the universities' educational interests or vendor companies' aggressive marketing—in profit rather than pedagogy.

As for institutional connectivity, its bane and benefits lie in the details, in the mode of collaboration, whether it is based on what Michael Gibbons (2001) calls a model of static competition, in which institutions compete to achieve incremental efficiency gains out of their existing configuration of resources, thus leaving prevailing national and international stratifications intact; or on a model of dynamic competition, in which institutions seek the long-term benefits of problem-based collaboration in research and teaching and, in the process, transform themselves and the existing hierarchies.

Clearly, globalization as a process and project seeking to impose neo-liberal discipline on tertiary institutions affects all aspects of the university enterprise, including teaching, research, and service, which, inevitably, has a profound impact on academic freedom. While the benefits of globalization on academic freedom should not be underestimated, it seems to me that a market-driven higher education system undermines academic freedom in five major ways: in terms of student access and solidarity, disciplinary differentiation and devaluation, integrity of research and publishing, management and security of tenure, and permeability and dilution of institutional traditions.

The more education is regarded as an economic investment for individuals rather than a public good, the more its costs and returns are calculated according to market principles, which has led in many countries to reduction or removal of state subsidies and steep rises in student fees to reflect the “real” costs of tertiary education. According to Mala Singh, “access has become more difficult for women, minority ethnic groups and the rural poor in a context that prioritizes a ‘user pays’ mindset. The line between public and private provision has become blurred often within the same institution, bringing ambiguity to the role and responsibility of higher education in the broader transformation of society” (Singh, 2001, p. 26).

As fees rise or become more differentiated across programs, learning increasingly becomes a market transaction and a consumer mentality takes hold among the high-fee paying students, thereby weakening their collective capacity to protect their rights and the quality of their education. Writing on the

impact of privatization in East Africa, Chacha Nyaigotti-Chacha reports of growing conflicts at the public universities “between government- and privately-sponsored students. The former feel that the latter are not qualified to join universities and may therefore water down university standards, while at the same time causing unnecessary congestion at the hitherto revered institutions” (Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2002, p. 16). Indeed, there is a general perception that the quality of the so-called “parallel programs” (for privately-sponsored students) is low, as Obong Oula (2002) contends is the case of Makerere University in Uganda, where, despite its widely acclaimed fiscal rejuvenation, academic standards and the quality of scholarship have apparently declined because of inherent flaws in the neo-liberal model which emphasizes managerial efficiency and quantitative measurements at the expense of qualitative aspects of education and faculty input. The hardships of students in the new dispensation cannot be underestimated as Dinah Mwinzi (2002) shows in the case of two Kenyan universities where impoverished students engage in time-consuming and sometimes illegal income generating activities at the expense of their studies.¹¹

As learning becomes increasingly valued for its instrumentality, more emphasis is put on the technical and professional fields at the expense of the humanities and the basic sciences, on applied research over basic research. In Africa, the private sector has tended “to select and support marketable and easy to manage disciplines and avoid expensive but nationally strategic programs such as engineering, medicine, technology, veterinary, the physical sciences, and agriculture” (Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2002, p. 11).¹² This differentiation based on disciplinary marketability places faculty in the “unprofitable” disciplines at a grave disadvantage in institutional battles for resources, undermining their ability to undertake research and articulate a public voice. In Africa’s mushrooming privatized universities or programs, faculty, who are sometimes paid by how many courses or hours they teach, do so much teaching that they have little time left for research, which undermines their individual and institutional contribution to scholarship and public discourse. According to Oketch and Amutabi (2002), faculty in the new, wealthier private universities conduct even less research than in the old cash-strapped public universities.

The devaluation of the humanities is also evident in the North. It is not fortuitous that, notwithstanding all the fulminations about the so-called “cul-

11 In Nigeria, Obasi and Eboh (2002) contend, the issue is not so much student poverty and their ability to pay but willingness to pay, for the vast majority of students are from middle class backgrounds and seem to spend far more on social entertainment than direct educational costs.

12 Also see Bloom, (2001) commenting on the report by the World Bank and UNESCO (2000) on the challenges of education in the developing world in the new millennium.

tural wars” and the self-aggrandizing posturing of the “posts”—poststructuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism—voices from the humanities and the arts have been largely absent from public discourse addressing the fundamental questions of human existence—from war and violence, human rights, and the implications of the demographic transformations of states, nations, and regions, to the ethical and cultural implications of the defining technologies of our times (information technology, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and environmental technology), to the construction, reconstruction and intersections of identities (social, religious, linguistic) at various scales from the local to the global. In a world of repetitive cable television news what passes for public discourse is often nothing but mindless chatter by pompous, opinionated, and ignorant pundits.

It has long been recognized among African academics that donor-funded research, including research sponsored by foundations of impeccable liberal credentials, often comes with thick strings attached that can compromise the choices and integrity of their research (Zeleza, 1997). The growth of commercially-financed research is raising new concerns. In Africa, the impact of corporate sponsorship on academic research is rather limited, as Mbuk Ebong’s (2002) study of university-industry linkages in Nigeria clearly shows. The story is quite different in the developed countries. Not only is “the constant search for funding time-consuming and inefficient,” argues Gillian Evans, corporate-sponsors often seek to “retain control of the direction of the research and even impose a new set of staff relationships.... The sponsor can also control intellectual property rights and even the right to publish the projected results. It can prevent the scientist from sharing research at an international conference and can even stop his or her work if the funder doesn’t like the way it is going. The old expectation was that scientific expertise was global in its reach and exchange.... Today, the corporations are buying up this expertise, leaving very few voices to challenge what they are telling the world” (Evans, 2001, p. 17). Stories abound of the research programs of entire centers or departments being mortgaged to corporations.¹³

The emergence of powerful transnational academic publishers, who set exorbitant journal subscription prices that, effectively, bar access to information to all but those in rich institutions, is also a significant part of the intellectual property rights regime and corporate stranglehold on academic freedom. Resistance against such practices that undermine academic freedom is mounting. There are reported protests against blatant commercialization: Some universi-

13 See, for examples, stories from the University of Toronto (Turk, 2001) and the University of California at Berkeley (Elliot 2001).

ties have adopted conflict-of-interest guidelines; in September 2001 editors of the International Council of Medical Journal Editors adopted new rules concerning the ethics of clinical trial performance and reporting to prevent the publication and legitimation of dubious studies sponsored by pharmaceutical companies (Kellogg, 2001; Brainard, 2001; Blumenstyk, 2000); and reportedly “more than 22,000 scientists from 161 countries launched a boycott of science publication editors and started campaigning for a ‘public science library’” (Lefort, 2001, p. 24).

Business management models have given university administrators more executive powers, which has exacerbated management-faculty tensions and reduced the capacity of faculty to influence the running of their institutions. “The logic of managerial production,” argues Oula (2002, p. 25) “renders irrelevant or unvalued the notion of higher education as a place for dissent and unpopular ideas, for creativity and the life of the mind, for caring and relationships. These are seen as inefficiencies that will likely be wasteful or unaffordable.” In fact, tenure is increasingly under threat where formal tenure systems are instituted. In the United States, for example, tenure, once regarded as indispensable to the academic profession and the pursuit of academic freedom, is now widely perceived by hostile state legislators and the general public as an indefensible sinecure of lifelong employment, an entitlement that is as outdated and dangerous as the other “entitlements” being dismantled in the post-Fordist era of flexible production and merciless free-market competition.

Universities have responded by swelling the ranks of untenured adjunct faculty, whose proportion rose from 35% to 43% in all of faculty employees between 1987 and 1999 (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2002, p. 32). To adjuncts, crowded in introductory level courses, academic freedom is a myth. “Adjuncts are getting dumped for things tenure-track scholars do with impunity—teaching controversial material, fighting grade changes, organizing unions.... All an institution has to do is not renew their contracts. No explanations required; no grievance procedures provided. Adjuncts just disappear” (Schneider, 1999, p. A18). Advocates of academic freedom warn that a dearth of academic freedom for almost half the professoriate threatens it for the other half. Indeed, all is not well for the tenured half either; their academic freedom is often imperiled by the presence of speech codes and the absence of faculty unions on many campuses (Zezeza, 1997).

The intrusion of business practices in academia is paralleled by the appropriation of some academic functions by business. This is to suggest that knowledge production is no longer a monopoly of universities; it has spread to numerous private and public sectors, including business, government agencies, and civil society organizations “that seek social legitimation through recognizable

competence” (Gibbons, 2001, p.5). Academics increasingly enjoy mobility between universities and other research sites outside universities, which offer them unprecedented opportunities to form networks, partnerships, and alliances that can not only enhance their research capacities but also protect them from the iniquitous tendencies of the academy. There can be little doubt that the proliferation of independent research centers and NGOs has saved many African academics from the penury and repression of their structurally adjusted universities. This institutional permeability also makes it harder to define academic freedom, however, to set its parameters in ways that are consistent with and strengthen, rather than weaken, university traditions of academic freedom. Part of the widespread confusion over the meaning and implications of academic freedom arises from transformations and proliferation of sites of knowledge production spawned by the new cultural and political economies of knowledge production.

The Dynamics of Internal Governance

It would clearly be inadequate to attribute the constraints and assaults against academic freedom solely to external agencies such as governments or globalization. Not only is there no great wall separating the academy from the state and society, all the contradictions and conflicts of the outside world are reproduced in the academy, sometimes with an investment of passion that only academics are able of mustering. Struggles for academic freedom are also directed against the authoritarian tendencies and practices embedded in the institutions of higher learning themselves. The challenges against academic freedom transcend administrative practices, encompassing the epistemic frames of knowledge production and what Neville Alexander (2001) calls the “language of tuition.” This suggests that the struggle for academic freedom in African institutions of higher learning has linguistic and epistemological dimensions that are as important and perhaps even more fundamental for the future of the African academy and its contribution to the much-touted African renaissance than the administrative constraints.

The notion that the university is itself a major culprit in the assault on academic freedom has often been expressed by those who find themselves at the bottom of the slippery slope of academia, whether for generational, gender, ethnic, racial, religious, intellectual or ideological reasons. This is abundantly clear in the renowned text, *Academic Freedom in Africa* (Diouf & Mamdani, 1994), which grew out of the 1990 CODESRIA Conference on the same topic and offers a searing critique of oppressive practices in African universities. The late Nigerian political scientist, Claude Ake (1994) has written that state authoritarianism in Africa should not be exaggerated, for the coercive capacities of the postcolonial state are weakened by the limited ideological hege-

mony enjoyed by the political class. Academics themselves shoulder some of the blame for the erosion of academic freedom. Besotted by opportunism, careerism, parochialism, factionalism, and ideological intolerance, academics have often weakened their collective defense against state assaults, and by defining academic freedom in narrow and elitist terms, as a professional right unencumbered by social responsibility, they often forfeit popular support. Thus, the road to academic freedom must begin with honest self-criticism among the academics themselves, of their practices and values. For Ake, academic freedom without internal institutional democratization is inadequate.

African universities have been characterized by authoritarianism, partly as a reflection of prevailing state authoritarianism itself and the fact that in many cases senior university administrators are state appointees, who, in turn, appoint unit heads down the administrative hierarchy. University governance has often been characterized by a discretionary and top-down administrative structure, poor communication, and strained relations between administration and teaching faculty. When combined with the meager funding at many universities, the proximity of faculty housing on or near campus, and the politicization of campus life, the result is internal bitterness, tension, resentment, and divisiveness that can be quite disruptive (Mathieu, 1996).

From the 1980s, while funding constraints indeed became severe, the financial plight of many universities was often compounded by top-level corruption and mismanagement. As resources once meant for teaching and research were frittered away in the conspicuous consumption of the university administrative elite, with their chauffeur-driven cars and special allowances, or filtered through a maze of patron-client networks that rewarded sycophants and marginalized independent-minded scholars, buildings decayed, libraries and laboratory facilities deteriorated, and the culture of learning and knowledge production degenerated. In the worst cases, the patronage system determined the allocation of positions and appointments, departmental budgets and individual salaries, promotions and rewards, teaching loads and research facilities, sabbaticals and conference travel, housing and allowances, and routine services including conflict-free scheduling, computerized class rosters, grade sheets, and transcript compilation (Nelson, 1996; Domatob, 1996; Peil, 1996; Kirkaldy, 1996). Numerous studies have pointed out that many universities were remiss even in areas that constitute their core mission of teaching, research, and public service. Strategic planning, data management, curricular reform, and staff development suffered from neglect. In a situation where funding levels were erratic, state intervention a constant threat, and independence and innovation frowned upon, strategic planning was often seen as an exercise

in futility. Needless to say, academic freedom could not flourish under such circumstances.

A particularly egregious example of academic authoritarianism occurred in Nigeria, where military officers were appointed vice-chancellors of several universities. Not only did these officers lack experience in or commitment to higher education, many were corrupt. They also destroyed traditional democratic structures of university governance and encouraged violence on the campuses, playing different factions of students against one another to maintain control. Military rule facilitated the imposition of structural adjustment on the university sector, resulting in a gradual shift of educational values away from knowledge and learning and the notion of education as an investment to a focus on technical and remedial education. Moreover, the administration of Nigerian universities became increasingly centralized, as power was concentrated in the National Universities Commission (NUC), which controlled major aspects of university management from setting student enrollment targets and courses of study, to academic and staff salaries and the selection of vice-chancellors (Benedict et al., 2000). No wonder Nigerian universities were rocked by waves of strikes by students and faculty.

While these strikes occurred in the context of deepening repression and growing popular resistance, they were often triggered by and specifically directed against various forms of university governance. J.I. Dibia (2002) presents a fascinating account of student protests against authoritarianism on Nigerian campuses, beginning with the protests of 1971, which started when the university administration invited police to handle students complaining about the cafeteria in one hall at the University of Ibadan; followed by the 1978 crisis, provoked by the repressive manner in which the threefold increase in fees was handled (without consultation with students, faculty, and parents); and the 1986 crisis, triggered by the banning of a student march by the highly autocratic administration—even by Nigerian standards of the time—at Ahmadu Bello University. Starting on one campus, the protests would quickly spread to other campuses and soon escalated into national crises.

The anti-structural adjustment protests began in 1988 and were rekindled in 1989 and 1990, as students protested against a World Bank loan for restructuring Nigerian universities. These protests were followed by recurrent struggles for the democratization of the universities and the state in the 1990s. Nigerian academics also have a long tradition of protest against authoritarian governance and for external and internal institutional autonomy. Faculty protests were spearheaded by powerful academic unions that, in the 1970s, concentrated on promoting the rights, needs, and aspirations of the rapidly expanding professoriate, and, in the 1980s, protecting them from the deepening crisis in

the university system (Jega, 1996). Campus and nationwide faculty strikes and other forms of protest increasingly became common. In one university the faculty resigned en masse to protest the unfair dismissal and harassment of some of their colleagues.

Needless to say, student and faculty strikes against authoritarian governance were not restricted to Nigeria. During the five and half years that I taught at Kenyatta University in Kenya in the 1980s, there was a major student strike every academic year, each of which led to closure of the campus for varying lengths of time. Underlying the protests were broad political, economic, and social causes, although they were often triggered by campus complaints against administrative authoritarianism and poor living and learning conditions.¹⁴ Several years after I left, between November 1993 and 1994, about 3,700 faculty at Kenya's then four public universities, including Kenyatta, went on strike when the government refused to register their union despite the apparent liberalization of the political system. The strike was brutally suppressed: faculty members were evicted from university housing and many lost their jobs (Atteh, 1996, p. 38).

The state responded to student and faculty protests with both the sticks of repression and the carrots of reform or cooptation. In 1991, for example, rioting students were shot and killed at the universities of Yaounde in Cameroon and Lubumbashi in the former Zaire, while in Gabon, Togo, Swaziland, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire many students were beaten, arrested, and detained (Domatob, 1996, p. 32). In Nigeria, between 1985 and 1993, more than 100 students were killed, 1,000 were imprisoned, and hundreds more suspended. Soon after, the National Association of Nigerian Students and the Academic Staff Union of Universities were banned.

Striking faculty members were treated no better. In May 1992, when the universities were closed for six months, hundreds of faculty were fired, imprisoned, and evicted from their houses (Atteh, 1996, p. 38). Most tragically, on Nigerian campuses violent student gangs or "cults" terrorized fellow students and faculty, committing acts of rape, murder, and wanton destruction of property. The fact that they targeted student union leaders and radical academics, were well-armed, included among their members children of powerful people, and were treated with leniency by Nigeria's fierce police and autocratic university administrations led many to believe that the cults, which originally started as social clubs, were patronized by the military regime and vice-chancellors

¹⁴ For two detailed and interesting studies on student strikes in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, see Christopher Wise (1998) and Cyril Dadieh (1996), respectively.

anxious to destroy student unionism (Babaleye, 1998; Jason, 1998; *Tempo*, 1999).

In the 1990s, universities began undertaking fiscal and administrative reforms. The fiscal reforms—principally involving the introduction of student fees, establishment of demand-driven courses, commercialization of some service units and facilities, and creation of limited liability companies to undertake consultancies, which have rescued some universities from financial penury and were, in many instances, preceded and accompanied by administrative reforms predicated on, at least rhetorically, greater democratization of internal governance, decentralization of decision making, and management planning and efficiency. How far have these reforms gone in promoting academic freedom on African campuses? The jury is still out. In so far as the new enterprise culture strengthened the powers of university managers, as noted before, collegiality was trumped by corporatism, which constrained academic freedom.

The changes are still too soon to make definitive conclusions. Clearly, the situation varies among and within countries. Reports from Nigeria and Kenya indicate that there has been little improvement in those countries, unlike, perhaps, the situations in Uganda, Tanzania, and Mozambique. In 2002, student and faculty protests in Nigeria were regenerated by the decision of the government—now a democratically elected civilian government—to take another World Bank loan for Nigerian universities. The struggle for autonomy and democratic governance was still raging at the beginning of 2003 when faculty went on a nation-wide strike over questions of funding, improved access to educational materials including books and journals, university autonomy and governance, and the reinstatement of 44 faculty members who had been sacked earlier at the University of Ilorin. Specifically, regarding university autonomy, they protested against the government's bill which seemed to reinforce the powers of the NUC over the universities in terms of funding and conditions of service on the one hand, and that of councils and vice-chancellors to hire and fire staff thereby compromising security of tenure of faculty and staff on the other (Komolafe, 2003; *Vanguard*, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c).¹⁵

In Kenya, academic freedom remained an alien practice in the universities as Robi Nimar admonished: "Kenya's public universities are in dire need of putting to practice what they teach—democracy" (Nimar, 2002, p. 1). Follow-

15 Asked why he thought the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was fighting against Nigeria taking money from the IMF and World Bank to fund education, the minister of education responded: "I think this is a communist mentality that has been generated over a period of time"! Then he quipped: "Even Russia now take[s] money from IMF. China take money from IMF" (*Vanguard*, 2003a).

ing the victory of the opposition party, the National Rainbow Coalition, in the national elections of December 2002, students and faculty began flexing their collective muscle against internal authoritarian governance. In January 2003, efforts began to revive the un-registered University Academic Staff Union, first formed in 1990, and students at the University of Nairobi forced the administration to reinstate the Student Organization of Nairobi University, which had been banned in 2001. Emboldened by the new dispensation, in early March 2003 students and faculty at Kenyatta University staged a two-day sit-in demanding the resignation of the autocratic Vice-Chancellor and his three deputies. In fact, there seemed to be a rising wave of student riots across the country to the apparent chagrin of the new government (Ramani, 2003; Onyango 2003; Siringi, 2003).

Makerere University in Uganda has become the poster institution for remarkable recovery from the abyss of penury and repression. Everyone, including external donors, seeking academic good news from Africa have invested much in Makerere's success. A report by the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa¹⁶ enthusiastically lists the major transformations that Makerere has undertaken in a context of declining financial support from the state: "Adoption of strategic planning; enlisting the university in support of national goals; implementation of alternative financial strategies; curriculum and academic restructuring; realizing the importance of ICT; emergence of a new management and governance style; increased student access and equity; improvements in the quality of student life; and improvement in staff development and welfare" (Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, 2003a, ch. 4, p. 2)

The administration, we are told, regularly consults with the faculty union (Makerere University Academic Staff Association) and student leaders. But, a lot remains to be done. "While Makerere has moved towards administrative decentralization," the report concedes, "the process is incomplete, with financial decentralization lagging behind the devolution of authority. The governance system of the university has to be further decentralized to give individual departments and faculties the ability to make decisions with financial implications and determine outcomes" (Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, ch.5, p. 2). In fact, there are complaints by MUASA that the quality of education has fallen and research remains seriously underfunded. Also, "it is remarkable," the report notes, perhaps sarcastically, "how little attention has been paid to [students] welfare compared to that given to their capacity to pay

16 This is an initiative of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur, and Rockefeller Foundations, which was launched in May 2000, to provide assistance for the revitalization of higher education in Africa.

and provide the university with income. In addition to the insufficiency of learning facilities (in particular classrooms, laboratories and libraries), student living conditions are particularly egregious” (Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, ch. 5, p. 4).

Similarly, while the University of Dar es Salaam has achieved a dramatic turnaround in its financial fortunes thanks to internal reforms and increased donor funding, “some senior staff distrust the administration’s commitment to more democratic governance of university affairs in the new era of ‘transparency and accountability’” (Partnership for Higher Education in Africa 2003b, ch. 2, p. 5). There has been particular disquiet since 1997, when the University Council replaced the elective principle with search committee procedure in the selection of deans, directors and departmental heads. The University of Dar es Salaam Staff Assembly (UDASA) has been campaigning for the reinstatement of the old, more democratic process. Also, the closure of the university by the Vice-Chancellor in 2000, following student demonstrations, shows the persistence of old high-handed tendencies.

Higher education in Mozambique has also undergone remarkable transformations. Although it has experienced recovery from long years of war as well as expansion and growing diversification and differentiation, serious problems remain which can constrain academic freedom. These include, to quote the report of the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (2003c, ch. 7, p. 9), “the absence of a conceptual model of administration and institutional management; lack of integration of administration and management into one system; unclear administrative legislation; excessive centralization of decision making, with the rector’s office and the central directorates controlling the units; centralization of financial and material resources at the central level, inhibiting academic units’ abilities to act effectively; inadequate use of information and communication technology as a tool for increased efficiency in administrative and financial management; excessive number of administrative and support staff with education and training levels below the minimum requirements for adequate performance; [and] inadequate communication systems resulting in lack of coordination between management and administration.”

It is tempting to confine the analyses of academic freedom to institutional and ideological constraints posed by the state and the universities themselves. In the African context, the discourse ought to be more expansive, for it is quite evident that the pursuit of academic freedom involves not only struggles against the authoritarian predilections and practices of the state, civil society, and the academy itself, but it is also an epistemological one against paradigms, theories, and methodologies that inferiorize, misrepresent, and oversimplify African experiences, conditions, and realities. A lot of studies have been published

in recent years, including my own *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (Zezeza, 1997), on the propensity of all the major social science and humanities disciplines for universalizing western experiences, often highly idealized, into metatheoretical constructs to analyze other societies. The assumed universalism and ethnocentricism of the dominant paradigms, Mama and Imam have argued, circumscribe academic space for African intellectuals who “are forced to take on board these norms and waste time tilting at windmills to find out why we deviate from these patterns instead of finding out what our own patterns and realities are” (Mama & Imam, 1994, p. 86). The result is that the freedom to develop more relevant paradigms for African realities and needs is compromised. African societies are seen in terms of lack, in terms of absences, as caricatures of the West.

These epistemological critiques about academic freedom, of course, differ in their intensity and integrity. The most enlightened ones eschew the Afrocentric fantasies of what Kwame Appiah (1992), calls “nativist handwaving,” sentiments shared by V.Y. Mudimbe (1992, 1994), who has done much to unravel the invention of Africa through the social imaginary of the western epistemological order. According to Archie Mafeje (1994), the struggle for academic freedom in Africa and African studies entails jettisoning Eurocentric theories and paradigms and developing authentic African intellectual discourses, without falling into the trap of an essentializing cultural revivalism that homogenizes Africa’s diverse cultures and histories and poses them in binary opposition to other cultures and histories. Clearly, the challenge is to contest the self-referential universalism of western paradigms without slipping into self-indulgent particularism, to construct a truly global epistemic universalism. This struggle, at the very heart of the academic enterprise as a site of knowledge production, pre-dated the establishment of Africa’s postcolonial universities and may outlive the current material and institutional constraints against academic freedom. The reason for this lies in the languages of tuition, which is the lifeblood of all learning.

Language and Academic Freedom

Outside the ranks of creative writers and socio-linguists, the importance of language for higher education and academic freedom has not received the attention it deserves. Writing in the South African context, which can be extrapolated to many other African countries, Neville Alexander (2001, p. 4) laments: “The extent to which South African intellectuals have chosen to close their eyes to the significance of this question is truly incomprehensible, given the fact that anyone who is endowed with even a modicum of pedagogical imagination knows that there is an indisputable causal link between the mediocrity

of South African intellectual performance, generally speaking, and the language, or languages, of tuition in our educational institutions.”

And he asks rhetorically: “Why am I raising this issue in the context of an academic freedom lecture? The answer is astoundingly simple. If I am unable to express myself fluently in the only legitimate language on any campus in this country, my freedom of speech and a fortiori my academic freedom are literally curtailed... unless we tackle the issue [of mother-tongue education] aggressively, we are dooming countless generations of South Africans, especially black South African youth to a destiny of mediocrity and failure. For, we cannot repeat often enough the paradoxical fact that the only children in South Africa who are beneficiaries of mother-tongue education from the cradle to the university are first-language speakers of English and many first-language speakers of Afrikaans” (Alexander, 2001, p. 5). Language confers symbolic power or cultural capital, and in the language market—a truly invisible hand if ever there was one pervading all social institutions especially education—privileges and exclusions are offered according to one’s possession of linguistic capital; those without it are not only marginalized but also effectively censored.

The hegemony of European languages in African institutions of higher learning and in African intellectual discourse poses a major constraint to the expressive freedom of multitudes of students and even faculty. It is surely a travesty of monumental proportions that, outside of Arab North Africa, the first languages of the majority of Africans are not the languages of public and intellectual discourse. As Ali Mazrui (1994, p. 121) has reminded us, the concept of an African Marxist, economist, physicist, or any other scientist who does not speak a European language, or an academic conference conducted primarily in an African language is, for the time being, “sociologically impossible.” The “linguistic curtain,” as Mahmood Mamdani (1994) calls it, born out of the sharp rupture between the language of the home and the language of the school during colonial times, reproduces and sanctifies the separation of academics from working people, and devalues the relevance of academic work. This might be one reason why African academics have tended to be organic to neither civil society, whose languages they often ignore, nor the state, whose policies they sometimes oppose. More fundamentally, Africa’s linguistic dependence or Eurocentricism excludes ordinary people from the affairs of state and public life, making the pursuit of development and democracy so much more difficult to realize (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1998).

The Gender Dimensions

It is evident that the subject of academic freedom is a broad and complex one indeed, encompassing the structure of relations and practices between the uni-

versity and external constituencies and among the universities own internal constituencies. In a fundamental sense, the struggle for academic freedom is, to use Ebrima Sall's (2000, p. ix) apt metaphor, a struggle for citizenship. While the torchbearers of this struggle are many, including young scholars, students, junior faculty, adjunct professors, and academics from ethnic, religious, and other kinds of minorities, it is women—whether or not they are members of the marginalized groups—who bear the brunt of the absence of and struggle for rights and democracy within the academy and the broader society in which the academy is located. Saida Yahya-Othman (2000, p. 34) insists that consideration of academic freedom should include “policies that disempower half the population of a nation; those which restrict their access to higher education; those which do not provide equal opportunities for the pursuance of any field of study; practices which make it impossible for sections of students or academics to conduct their business in peace; those which limit the amount of time that those sections can spend on their work; and so on.”

Women's access to higher education institutions remains unequal. The reasons for this are already well-documented in the literature on this subject. Research shows that access factors include, to use Joy Kwesiga's (2002) classification, family factors (parental attitudes, socio-economic status of the family, family labor), societal factors (family structures, kinship and lineage, custom and culture, the institution of marriage, religion, historical barriers, urban-rural disparities, link between education and employment, economic conditions, and the role of the state), and institutional factors (school facilities, curriculum and subject options, pedagogical materials, influence of teachers, types of educational institutions, and careers guidance and counseling). In 2000, gross enrollment ratios of the entire age-cohort for Sub-Saharan Africa were 84.1% male and 69.4% female (76.8% for both) at the primary level; 29.1% male and 23.3% female (26.2% for both) at the secondary level; and 5.1% male and 2.8% female (3.9% for both) at the higher education level (Kwesiga, 2002, p. 3; Okeke, 2002).

Save for the few women's universities (such as Ahfad University in Sudan and Kiriri Women University of Science and Technology in Kenya), women remain largely under-represented in African institutions of higher learning. While several countries had managed to attain gender parity at the primary and secondary levels by 2000, very few had managed to do so at the tertiary level. The exceptions were Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, and South Africa. In South Africa, female enrollments increased by 44% between 1993 and 1999, from 202,000 in 1993 to 291,000 in 1999, while male enrollments reached a peak of 305,000 in 1995 and declined to 273,000, so that in 1999, women represented 52% of total enrollments, up from 43% in 1993 (Balintulo, 2000,

2002; Cloete and Bunting, 2000). Taking the continent as a whole, females made up 34%, 22%, and 12% of primary, secondary, and tertiary level students, respectively (Meena, 2001, pp. 4–5). To be sure, gradual improvements were recorded in some countries. For example, at Makerere, female admissions increased from 27% in 1990–91 to about 40% in 1999–2000 (Ssebuwufu, 2001, p. 19), while at the University of Dar es Salaam, where an affirmative action program for female students was introduced, it increased from 13% to 24% between 1993–1994 and 1999–2000 (Meena, 2001, pp. 7; Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, 2003b, ch. 4, pp. 6–7).

The gender gap also manifested itself in fields of study and faculty distribution. Women were concentrated in the humanities and social sciences and were grossly under-represented in the sciences and most of the professional fields. Between 1994 and 1997, female enrollment in the sciences as a percentage of the total female enrollment in the tertiary sector ranged from 6.5% in Chad, 9.1% in Tanzania, 12.6% in Benin, 14% in Zimbabwe, and 16.7% in Uganda, to 32.4% in Tunisia, and 36.8% in South Africa (UNDP, 2000, p. 258). The percentage of female faculty was even lower than that of female students, even in countries that had achieved enrollment gender parity. For example, the number of female faculty in South African universities rose relatively slowly from 30% in 1992 to 35% in 1999, with the bulk of them situated at the rank of lecturer and below. In fact, women outnumbered men at these ranks, while men vastly outnumbered women at the higher ranks, from senior lecturer to full professor (Balintulo, 2000, 2002). At Makerere University women made up 19.2% of faculty in 1998/99, up from 18.6% in 1996/97, but only 5 of the 175 female faculty were at the rank of professor or associate professor (Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, 2003a, ch. 5, p. 5–6). At the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, women made up 11% of the faculty in 1999/2000 (down from 12.5% in 1997/98; only 4 out of the 40 full professors in 1996 were women), while at Abdou Moumouni University in Niger they made up only 9.7% (Meena, 2001, p. 12; Yahya-Othman 2000, p. 39).

Thus, female faculty members were crowded in the lower ranks and in the humanities and “soft” social science disciplines. Women were also visibly under-represented in leadership positions (Otunga and Ojwang, 2002). Despite their rising numbers, they found themselves, as elsewhere, marginalized and excluded in the predominantly masculinist institutional cultures and discursive regimes of higher education. Consequently, “feminism, women-sensitive agendas and the struggle for gender-equality,” argue Tamale and Oloka-Onyango (2000, p. 1), “continue to meet a great deal of resistance and resentment from both within and outside academic life. It is reflected in issues as specific as the choice and structure of a particular curriculum, in the underfunding of gender-

related research, and in the issue of affirmative action in faculty hiring. It extends to the question of academic promotions and the overall administration of the university.”¹⁷ On many African campuses, gender studies—where they have been introduced often after protracted struggles—“have become ghettoized, confined principally to women, and making only a limited impact on the overall struggle against gender bias” (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango 2000, p. 11). Burdened by the patriarchal demands of being the primary caretaker at home (worsened by the disruptions of structural adjustment) on the one hand and the pedagogical requirements of the academy (exacerbated by the marketization of the university) on the other, female academics find themselves severely disadvantaged in advancing their careers and interests in the academy.

Female students and faculty also face various forms of harassment in the academy, including sexual harassment and violence, which constitutes an abuse not only of their academic freedom but also of their fundamental human rights. Isabel Phiri (2000) and Penda Mbow (2000) recount their harrowing stories of harassment from some male students and faculty who disapproved of their research. Phiri, a faculty member at the University of Malawi, presented a paper (co-authored with three female colleagues) on “Violence against women in educational institutions: The case of sexual harassment and rape on Chancellor College Campus” at the university’s annual conference on research and development. Upon hearing of the presentation from a radio interview, a gang of male students, angered at their “tarnished image”, went on a rampage to her home vandalizing her property. Instead of condemning the students, the College Principal castigated Phiri for “irresponsible research” and called her for a disciplinary hearing. Phiri was ostracized by many male colleagues but found support from members of her own department, the Vice-Chancellor, and the general public, who voted her “Woman of the Year” in one of the local dailies. She took pride in bringing a taboo subject out in the open and empowering female students, but the price was high: she left the university and emigrated out of the country for her own psychological and professional well-being.

Penda, a faculty member at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Senegal, presented a paper at a conference on “Women and Aids” in which she had pointed out possible connections between returning migrant workers, wife inheritance, and temporary marriages (*djawaz al muta’a*) in the spread of HIV. She was attacked by minor Muslim extremist factions and some male colleagues and even received death threats. The incident was a poignant reminder of the dan-

17 They make reference to the following authors Phiri (1994) on curriculum, Mama and Imam (1994) and Iweriebor (1990) on research, Mbilinyi and Mbughuni (1991) on hiring, and Hamad (1995) on promotions and administration.

gers and importance, especially for women academics, of conducting scientific studies on sensitive topics in societies increasingly dominated by religious or ethno-cultural discourse.

Cultural and political challenges to academic freedom in the field of gender studies have become particularly pronounced on campuses in countries such as Egypt. Nadia Farah argues that religion has become such a dominant cultural paradigm and ideology in Egyptian society and academe that “few academic researchers attempt to challenge issues relating to gender inequalities which are enshrined in the current interpretation of religious texts” (Farah, 1994, p. 272). Constraints on gender research have a much longer history. Hoda Elsadda (2001, p. 2) informs us that “in fact, the first academic freedom crisis to erupt at Cairo University was related to gender. It was triggered by a Ph.D. thesis written in 1913 by writer and philosopher Mansour Fahmi on the position of women in Islamic society.” There can be little doubt, however, that Islamic extremism in Egypt has grown thanks to the country’s deepening development crisis and the penetration of Islamic capital from, and increased labor migration to, the conservative states of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. This influence from more conservative Islamic states has enabled religious extremists to capture intellectual and ideological space in the universities, a situation which has “led to the exposure of prominent women intellectuals to severe attacks when they dared to publish or adopt radical ideas or social sciences in favor of women or even tried to organize women associations (for example, the case of the Arab Women Solidarity Association led by N Al Saadawy) (Sharawy, 2000, p. 103).

Opposition to gender studies and women’s academic freedom is, of course, not confined to religious extremists in the academy. Olutoyin Fashina (2000) reports the widespread hostility from male faculty to the proposal to establish the Center for Gender and Social Policy Studies at Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria. The dismissal of feminist research is often articulated through various forms of institutional devaluation that include ridicule and contempt. Fashina (2000, p. 123) tells the story of a woman who had been promoted to a senior lectureship in the Department of Economics based on the research she had carried out mainly on women’s issues. “At the end of the promotion exercise, a ‘concerned’ male colleague had pulled her aside and advised her now to work hard at ‘more serious issues and forget about all those things about women’, for her subsequent promotion.” In another context, when women brought up the issue of maternity leave to the faculty union as an important issue for negotiation with the administration, they were greeted with laughter.

Women in the academy are often confronted with a lot more than laughter or snide remarks, however. Particularly troublesome is the question of sexual

harassment. Anecdotal evidence abounds that it is not unusual for male faculty to prey on female students in exchange for grades, a malady that is known in Cameroon as “sexually transmitted grades” (Ouendjil, 2000; Nyamnjoh and Jua, 2002).¹⁸ Male students pose an even bigger threat. In Tanzania, we are told, “there are indications that sexual harassment on university campuses is on the increase, within the new environment of liberalization, increased competition for services, cost-sharing and economic difficulties” (Yahya-Othman, 2000, pp. 42–43). At the University of Dar es Salaam, male students turned a magazine called *Punch*, which in the 1960s had been used as a forum for informed social criticism of government policies and the university administration, into a weapon of female control and suppression by spreading vitriolic rumors about female students. The university was forced to confront this collective masculinized harassment in 1990, when one female student who had been “punched” committed suicide. Another arsenal in the politics and rhetoric of male control is deployed through hurling charges of prostitution at female students. Female students at Cheikh Anta Diop University went on strike in March 1997 to protest such charges (Mbow, 2000, p. 75). Research on sexual harassment on African campuses is growing even in the face of threats of intimidation, as happened to Phiri at the University of Malawi, whose research showed that 67% of the respondents had been sexually harassed, 12.6% of whom had been raped.

Universities are not alone in facing the problems of sexual harassment. One of the most horrific incidents happened at St. Kizito high school in Kenya, in 1991, during which 19 girls were killed and 71 were reportedly raped by their male colleagues (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000, p. 13). It is the growing concern about sexual harassment throughout the educational system in many parts of the world that led Human Rights Watch to issue its first report on the subject, *Scared at School: Sexual Violence Against Girls in South African Schools* in 2001. “South Africa was selected for this study,” the reports states, “not only because of the scope of the problem but also because of the opportunities for change there, where educators both in and outside government have shown increasing interest in finding solutions” (Human Rights Watch, 2001). The report makes gruesome reading, indeed. For many girls, subjected to physical and sexual abuse and harassment by both teachers and male students, the school is a site of violence rather than learning, where their bodily integrity is

18 Charmaine Pereira (forthcoming) makes a distinction between “sexual harassment” and “sexual corruption”. According to her, the latter occurs when male faculty solicit sex from female students in exchange for favors, and the latter when they accede to sexual advances initiated by female students seeking favors.

assaulted and their right to education aborted. The report urges the state, educational institutions, teacher unions, and other stakeholders to adopt as a matter of urgency a national plan of action on sexual violence and harassment in schools, to address the multiple issues involved.

These are all daunting challenges. It is equally critical to note, however, the numerous struggles being waged episodically and daily, in small and large ways, covertly and overtly, by female academics, students and educators, and their male allies across the continent's schools, colleges, and universities. Successes are being won in expanding the entitlements of academic citizenship and freedom for women as is evident from the growth of feminist curricula, research, organizing, and advocacy. The number of gender studies programs has increased: In 2002, the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town identified 30 such programs, indicating that, according to Amina Mama (2002, p. 3), gender studies "has gained a substantial foothold in African institutions of higher education and learning, and the African university in particular," even if, as Charmaine Pereira (2002) maintains, mainstreaming gender still has ways to go even among institutions as progressive as CODESRIA.¹⁹ Affirmation action programs have been designed and implemented in several countries to promote gender equity in institutions of higher learning, especially for student enrollment rather than faculty employment, although, as with affirmative action programs elsewhere, they have sometimes provoked a backlash (Bennett, 2002a). Also, national and regional research efforts and organizations are emerging to fight sexual harassment. For example, in 1996, the Network of Southern African tertiary Institutions Challenging Sexual Harassment (NETSH) was formed and, by 2002, had more than 400 members in the region (Bennett, 2002b).

19 For a discussion of the work of some of these programs, see Deborah Kasente (2002) on the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Makerere, which was established in 1991 and now teaches more than 1,000 students and in 2002, hosted the 8th World's Women Congress; Abiola Odejide (2002) for a profile of the Women's Research and Documentation Center at the University of Ibadan also established in 1991. Other important organizations include the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) established in 1977 to promote research networking among women researchers across the continent; the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) established in 1993 by women ministers of education and vice-chancellors specifically to promote educational prospects for girls and women, and the African Gender Institute (AGI) at the University of Cape Town to spearhead feminist research.

Conclusion

With the perils and possibilities of the new century, academics everywhere, including those in Africa, continue to face multiple challenges, both old and new, emanating from society and academe, which they have to negotiate carefully and creatively in order to protect their interests and promote their mission as teachers, researchers, and public service providers. In fact, universities everywhere are undergoing unprecedented change thanks to rapid technological, economic, political, and social transformation in the wider world. As the old stabilities disappear, the question of academic freedom is being reconfigured, for the task becomes one of managing, in the new times, the creative tensions between institutional and individual autonomy, freedom and accountability, rights and obligations, excellence and efficiency. The university's internal and external constituencies are more pluralistic than ever, as are the networks and alliances that universities can forge, which recast questions of social responsibility and public service.

The way these issues are being handled varies, of course, between and among countries, but academic freedom will remain fundamental, as a functional condition, philosophical proposition, and moral imperative to the unfettered pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. Academic freedom allows universities to meet their responsibilities to society: speaking truth to power, promoting progress, and cultivating democratic citizenship. University autonomy, academic freedom, and social responsibility are instruments of the same implement and are essential for the production of the critical social knowledge that facilitates material and ethical advancement. In this context, the notion of social responsibility should not mean acquiescence to authoritarian regimes or repressive civil society institutions and practices. Rather, it requires a commitment to progressive social causes, which, in the case of Africa, remain development, democracy, and self-determination. African intellectuals and institutions of higher learning cannot make meaningful contributions to these historic and humanistic dreams without institutional autonomy and public accountability. The struggle for the university continues.

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