

[African Studies Association 2023 Panel CFP - Decolonization and the Underground](#)

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Call for Abstracts

African Studies Association Annual Meeting

November 30 - December 2, 2023

San Francisco, CA

Organizers:

Fatoumata Seck (Chair, Stanford University), Mark Drury (Georgetown University), and Erin Pettigrew (New York University Abu Dhabi)

Panel Title: “Decolonization and the Underground”

Panel Abstract:

This panel focuses on histories of revolutionary politics in Africa through the lens of secrecy. From Mau Mau to the National Liberation Front (FLN) to anti-apartheid freedom fighters, political activists and insurgents have incorporated practices of secrecy into their political organization. Typically, such clandestinity is developed to avoid state surveillance and repression. But secrecy, clandestinity and/or “underground” politics also shape, discipline and even amplify dynamics of loyalty, authority, mobilization and presence for political movements involved in projects of transformational social change. Not limited to the anti-imperial or progressive Left, clandestine politics have also included Islamic activism, right-wing extremism, and even elite factions, including diasporic and business interests.

We are seeking papers about underground texts, practices, and networks from decolonization to the early post-independence decades. What can historical and anthropological perspectives tell us about the tactics, techniques, aesthetics, and technologies of underground politics and culture during colonial and postcolonial periods? How did secrecy and clandestinity constitute, reinforce and/or constrain political ideology, mobilization and belonging? How did they influence cultural norms? If everything was hidden and concealed, what are the sources (archival or otherwise) that one can use to write a history or anthropology of secret political mobilization and action? What does the emergence of previously secret (or secretive) organizations reveal about the relationship of past politics to the present? Across which scales (local, national, transnational, global) and through which forms (cells, networks, parties, diaspora) did clandestine movements organize? Texts and topics may include: manifestos, songs, poetry, unofficial literature, autobiographies of freedom fighters or political activists, pamphlets, cassette tapes, and underground periodicals in African and European languages, among other cultural products.

Please send a paper title and abstract (250-300 words) to panel chair Fatoumata Seck (fseck@stanford.edu) by **March 30, 2023**, for consideration. Please also include your contact information (institutional affiliation or independent scholar, email address, phone number). Because of the April 2 deadline for ASA panel submissions, the above is a hard deadline.

Related date:

March 30, 2023