

A word from the new editors

Last year, we were approached with an offer to succeed Leo Villalon and Paul Nugent as co-editors of the *Journal of Modern African Studies*. After five years in the saddle (2012–2017), both Leo and Paul were determined to move on to other professional challenges. Although we briefly debated with ourselves, in the end, it was an easy call – there was no way we were going to pass up the opportunity and the unique privilege to oversee the intellectual direction of what is widely regarded as the flagship journal in the field of African Studies.

To ensure a smooth transition, we have been working behind the scenes with both Leo and Paul, and with the staff of Cambridge University Press. We would like to use this opportunity to thank the outgoing editors for the tremendous shift they have put in over the past five years. Thanks to their unflagging industry, we are assuming the editorship of a journal in fine fettle, secure in its position as the moulder and spearhead of scholarly debate on contemporary issues regarding Africa.

Our path to editorship has been smoothed by the amazing logistical support provided by Sally Hoffmann and her team. In addition, our colleague, Associate Editor Maggie Dwyer has been an extremely reliable fount of knowledge about the inner workings of the journal. We are grateful to both of them for holding our hands through the initial period, and we look forward to the special pleasure of working with them over the course of our editorship.

The torch has passed to us at a unique moment in the history of African Studies, one in which the very bona fides and relevance of the discipline are being called into question. Rather than withdrawal, the situation calls for direct engagement driven by fieldwork and theoretically innovative research; precisely the kind of cutting edge work that, since its founding in 1963, the journal has been committed to. We hereby restate that commitment. As the preeminent outlet for the fruits of the most important research in African Studies, *Journal of Modern African Studies* will continue to publish work, sole-authored or collaborative, that ‘disturbs the peace’ by forcing a rethink of apparently settled assumptions.

In our respective work as scholars, we have always prized the noblest ideals of an independent public sphere – a commitment to free speech, robust debate, transparency and critical engagement. During our editorship, *Journal of Modern African Studies* will embody these crucial ideals and more.

We look forward with excitement to the opportunity to consider your work, and with pride at the honour of being at the service of the entire Africanist academic community, whether located in the continent, or without.

Ebenezer Obadare and Ian Taylor