

COVID-19 and a borderless and stateless Africa: a decolonial moment 'acome'

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From November 15, 1884 to February 26, 1885, patriarchal men from Europe and the United States of America sat at a horseshoe-shaped 'dinner' table in Berlin, Germany, at which Africa was the 'meat' to be devoured by the 'hungry' men. Here, they started drawing straight lines on the map of Africa, which was hitherto borderless, dividing those who should be united; 'uniting' those who should be divided; limiting access to resources that were once part of a shared heritage; exacerbating economic and bureaucratic inefficiencies; and arresting the development of entire regions.

136 years on, the borders of Berlin remain not only intact, but also intimidating, unwelcoming and closed to the sons and daughters of Africa, while welcoming and open to non-Africans under the spurious reasons of tourism and investment. As we mark the second virtual anniversary of Africa Day and Africa Month, I call upon Africa and Africans to take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to remove, rather than consolidate, Berlin's borders.

To do so during this moment of the resurgent and insurgent struggles for epistemological decolonisation is to stand in solidarity with UCT's recent loss of property and 'knowledge hubs', due to the Table Mountain fires. I propose that Africa needs to read the COVID-19 pandemic not just as a cataclysmic moment, but also as an enabling allegory.

I therefore call upon all Africans to see the 21st century as Africa's 'golden moment', notwithstanding suffering and grieving caused by the pandemic. I further posit that fresh beginnings are rare in history and occur after long intervals of time, and that COVID-19 presents that rare moment for a fresh start – it is indeed a decolonial moment 'acome'. COVID-19 presents Africa with a great moment to not only rethink its borders, but also to dismantle Africa's colonially and artificially imposed borders.

Removing Berlin's borders and creating a borderless and stateless Africa will be the best monument that this generation can erect for Africa and its progeny. Furthermore, to remove Berlin's borders will go a long way in confirming the coming of age of epistemologies of the global South, thus installing Africa as a 'place for thinking, living and reconstitution of the destitute' (Mignolo, 2021), rather than being a testing ground of Northern/Western theories or an empirical case study.

As long as Berlin's borders remain intact, we should 'kiss' goodbye to a truly decolonized and united Africa that our forbearers dreamt of. Deborderisation and decrimigration, in total opposition to current reborderisation and crimigration on a continental and world scale, represent concrete efforts to create a utopia of a world with others, as opposed to the West's dystopia of a world without others. The COVID-19 pandemic, I suggest, represents a moment of emancipatory liberation from the regime of politics and knowledge we inherited from a brutal past.

A borderless and stateless Africa, I argue, holds the best for all our political lives and the future of all who live under the sun – all the more with greater and increased planetary human entanglements, notwithstanding concerted efforts of doomsayers to erect a society of enmity.