



AFRICAN FUTURES
LAB

ANNUAL REPORT

2022



Cape Coast Castle, Ghana. 2022

Photo courtesy of African Transitional Justice Legacy Fund (ATJLF)

<https://africanfutures.mit.edu/>
info@afalab.org

OUTLINE

1. Introduction: Recalibrating the Lab's Mission	3
2. The Lab in Action: Our work in 2022	5
3. AfaLab in the news	20
4. AfaLab's team and partners in 2022	22
5. 2023-2024 Outlook	30

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been a little over three years since protests erupted in more than 60 countries around the world, in the wake of George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis, USA, to denounce contemporary and historical racial injustices. Though, at the time, these protests gave some measure of hope and suggested that significant political and social change was afoot, today we see that the Black Lives Matter marches of 2020 yielded what many of us feared: backlash, symbolic reforms, and weak political will to pursue justice for Africans and Afro-descendants around the world.

There is no dearth of examples of how racial injustice against Black populations persisted in 2022. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a key global geopolitical event of the year, offered many. Perhaps the most glaring was in the treatment of African students in Ukraine, who were turned away at Europe's borders as they tried to flee the war along with other residents of the invaded nation, or again the open arms and homes that awaited Ukrainian refugees in Europe and North America, while doors continued to be shut in the faces of refugees from Africa and beyond.

In addition, the multiple crises that the planet has been experiencing since 2022, be it climate disaster, the COVID-19 pandemic, or the dangers presented by the rapid development of artificial intelligence, have disproportionately affected global majority populations. Making matters worse is the fact that these populations are also less equipped to deal with the crises, precisely because of their political and economic marginalization in the present day. To put it another way, racialized populations are suffering compounded injustices: not only have our ancestors had to endure the exploitation of our bodies and our ecosystems for centuries, but today we are also suffering the contemporary consequences of this exploitation.

The numerous climatic disasters and ensuing displacements currently affecting the countries of the Global South are ample proof of this reality.

However, the year 2022 also saw a greater leveraging of international institutional spaces in the struggle for racial justice. We saw, for instance, the establishment of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent at the United Nations, whose first session was held in December 2022 (and where the African Futures Lab was represented). Demanded by civil society actors for years, the Permanent Forum offers a space in the galaxy of international institutions for civil society organizations from all over the world to confront States on their practices relating to racial injustice. The Forum also provides a space where these organizations and individuals can co-construct strategies to pursue their common cause and respective battles.

The debate on reparations for colonial crimes and slavery has also gained momentum within the African Union, which co-organized the Accra Summit on reparations for colonial crimes and slavery in August 2022. During this historic summit, Ghanaian President, Nana Akufo Addo, called on former colonial and slave-owning powers to commit to a reparations process.

Similarly, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a resolution on the reparations program in Africa, on "the human rights of Africans in the diaspora and of Africans around the world."¹

Given the scale of both the challenges and the opportunities ahead, the African Futures Lab refined its strategy throughout 2022.

First, our analysis of the events of 2022 and current political dynamics led us to the decision to focus on historical and contemporary racial injustices unfolding *between Africa and Europe* specifically. Until now, the struggle for racial equality and justice for Africans and Afro-descendants has largely been waged on a national scale. But this approach fails to consider how racial injustices have unfolded and are still unfolding between the two continents (as we see not only with colonialism, but also with contemporary inequalities between African and European populations). Adopting a transcontinental prism enables us to tackle the culture of impunity that characterizes the injustices and crimes that take place on the African continent but for which responsibility lies outside of the continent, and to explore areas of political and legal mobilization at the international level that are often under-utilized. Whether in the field of human rights, socio-economic inequalities, or climate issues, these injustices deserve our attention and must not go unpunished, even if their transnational nature makes it difficult to make them visible and to demand justice.

We have also taken the decisive step to expand the Lab's focus beyond research to also include advocacy. Always grounded in an evidence-based approach, we shall work alongside activists in their demands for justice and reparation to together bring forward demands for states and private actors to take responsibility and provide repair for historical and contemporary racial injustices against African and Afro-descendant populations.

It has been a year of setbacks and disappointments, but also of new reasons for hope. We look forward to continuing to walk together as we collectively bend the arc of history towards justice.

Liliane Umubyeyi, PhD
Executive Director
May 2023

¹ Resolution on Africa's Reparations Agenda and The Human Rights of Africans In the Diaspora and People of African Descent Worldwide - ACHPR/Res.543 (LXXIII) 2022, available at <https://achpr.au.int/index.php/en/adopted-resolutions/543-resolution-africas-reparations-agenda-and-human-rights-africans> (accessed on June 28th 2023).

2. THE LAB IN ACTION: OUR WORK IN 2022

2.1. Challenging the endemic denial of historical and contemporary racial injustices

The historical and contemporary racial violence committed by European states during colonialism and slavery remains largely denied by these states. Where there has been some acknowledgement, the recognition of the European state's responsibility has remained extremely limited. Two telling examples are Germany's partial recognition of the genocide committed against the Ovaherero and Nama peoples in Namibia in 2021, and the regrets expressed in 2022 by the King of Belgium for crimes committed in the DRC. Tellingly, these regrets were delivered concurrently with the Belgian state's refusal to accept responsibility for crimes of colonization, which include the abduction of mixed-race children from their African mothers by the Belgian colonial state.

The same denial-centered approach is reflected in European states' refusal, at a national level, to name, recognize, or address racial violence against their Afro-descended populations, and, at a transnational scale, to face how their international relations policies perpetuate global racial injustices. As such, European states' enduring denial not only leads to the persistence of racial violence and inequalities against African and Afro-descended populations in present-day Europe and in Africa, but it also inhibits the attainment of justice for historical crimes.

Mechanisms available for denouncing racial injustice in the face of European states' denial are limited. On one hand, national and international human rights organizations ignore or conceal the racial dimension of the structural forms of violence they denounce. Take, for instance, human rights organizations that denounce gender-based violence, but do not consider the gender-based violence committed during colonization on a racial basis and whose victims are still alive.² On the other hand, the denunciation of racial inequalities is characterized by a national, local, often communitarian character, with little emphasis on the ways in which race is a structuring matrix of relations between the states of the North and South, and the inequalities of power that we are currently experiencing on a global scale. The organizations also tend to adopt in their analyses an approach centered on the discrimination suffered by individuals rather than considering racism from a systemic perspective.

² To date, no international organization has tackled the child abduction policies undertaken by European states against African mothers, despite the many women and children-focused programs on the African continent, like, for instance, UN Women.

Another way in which denunciations are made is through the media. In Europe, while the media can sometimes be a vehicle for highlighting racial injustice, they are also a vehicle for circulating racist ideologies. The current media landscape does not offer systematic reporting of racial injustices; rather, they only cover moments of significant unrest or particularly violent events.

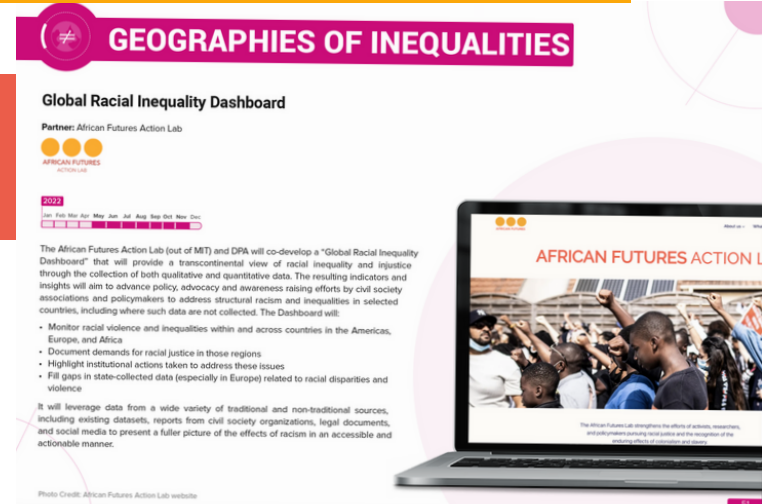
In 2022, our approach to documenting and denouncing racial injustice has centered on two instruments:

- **The publication of research reports and policy papers that reveal how racial injustices are played out in transnational relations.**
- **The creation of media tools, also transnational in scope, to report on the situation of racial injustice in different contexts and on social and political actors' response to it.**

Launch of the Racial Justice Dashboard project (February 222)

We launched the Global Racial Inequality Dashboard project in February 2022. Conceived as a partnership between AfaLab and Data Pop Alliance, a non-profit think-tank committed to “applying cutting edge data science to solve the world’s most pressing problems,” the Dashboard

aims to provide a transcontinental view of racial inequality and injustice through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The resulting indicators and insights will enable civil society associations and policymakers – including in countries where race data is not collected – to advance their policy, advocacy, and awareness-raising efforts.



Graphic design : Amélie Umhererezi

Launch of Future Perfect | Futur Antérieur, AfaLab’s podcast (September 2022)

In September 2022, we were very proud to release the first season of our podcast Future Perfect | Futur Antérieur, where we highlight individual and collective actions across Europe, Africa and the Americas to defend racial equality and justice. Our guests – activists, scholars, artists – share their actions with us,

bringing to light both the forms that historical and contemporary racial violence takes in their context and possibilities for redress, repair, and healing.

Our first season welcomed 6 outstanding guests from Belgium, France, Ghana, Nubia/Sudan, Togo, the US, speaking on topics ranging from decolonizing international development, to avenues for racial healing for Africa and its diasporas, to the pursuit of justice for France’s colonial crimes in Algeria.

Alternating between English and French and with a new episode released every 2 weeks during the season, Future Perfect | Futur Antérieur is hosted and produced by Amah Edoh and Liliane Umubyeyi, with recording and editing by Matt Dann.

You can listen to Future Perfect | Futur Antérieur [here](#), and subscribe on your favorite podcast platform.

Season 1 guests:



Episode 1 - Olivia Rutazibwa :
Décoloniser le développement et
repenser la solidarité
internationale

"Human beings want a restoration of their dignity. Africans want a restoration of African dignity. And because we want that restoration, we know that looking back would not necessarily give us that restoration. But working together will actually give it, even if not to this current generation or to the next generation."

Makmid Kamara



Episode 2 - Makmid Kamara & Amara Enya: Building a Global African movement for reparations and racial healing



Episode 3 - Nouredine Amara : "La mémoire ne vaut pas justice": Violences d'Etat et crimes coloniaux en Algérie

"Ce chemin n'est pas un chemin de ressentiment, ce n'est pas un chemin de personnes recroquevillées sur le passé. Nous sommes engagés dans un chemin d'émancipation pour nous et pour chacun. Et ce chemin, ce n'est pas la mémoire, c'est la justice."

Nourredine Amara



Episode 4 - Mame-Fatou Niang: Working with, through, and around silences in the debate on race in France

"The past is our future, and the only way we can repair our futures is to go back in the past to make sure that our present is taken care of and that we keep on moving."

Mame-Fatou Niang



Episode 5 - Elom 20ce: "Notre force est dans l'amour": Le rôle de l'intime dans les luttes pour la justice raciale



Episode 6 - Menna Agha:
Reclaiming space and being guided by our foremothers' voices

2.2. Tackling the culture of impunity for historical and contemporary racial violence



© Elio Germani

Whether we're talking about historical or contemporary racial injustices, the trend in Europe and Africa is one of impunity. Examples abound of situations where the issue of justice is completely sidestepped, as if racialized populations did not deserve to have their rights protected. Two cases illustrate this situation.

First, the case of mixed-race children mentioned earlier, who were abducted by the Belgian colonial administration from their African mothers and placed in religious institutions. And secondly, the case of the many human remains found in European museums, for which few attempts have been made to identify possible families or descendants who would want justice and/or the return of the remains. Racial violence in Europe is typically approached – when it is addressed – from the angle of memory and recognition, and very rarely from the angle of justice and reparation.

Behind this culture of impunity lie many causes, including the fact that actors who would normally call out responsibilities and pursue prosecution are operating in systems that do not question racial inequalities or that outright adhere to a culture of racial domination (e.g. international human rights organizations).

For instance, recent research by AfaLab has revealed that numerous claims for justice for colonial violence have been brought forward by civil society organizations on the African continent for decades now. However, these organizations lack the necessary legal and political support to advance their demands. Here too, the support of the hundreds of human rights organizations active on the continent has been lacking.

Judicial institutions in both North and South are limited in their ability to tackle racial violence. In the Global North, the task of prosecuting racial violence is prevented by the fact that the legal norms that must be applied are inherited from the colonial era and inhibit the direct condemnation of this violence. In the Global South, formerly colonized countries are still using judicial institutions inherited from colonial administrations that heavily reproduce Eurocentric perspectives to resolving conflicts and thus limit citizens' access to justice.

The Lab implemented 3 projects in 2022 that pursued justice and reparations for historical and contemporary racial injustices by tackling the culture of impunity in European and African states and judicial institutions:

- Support for European and African organizations looking to strengthen their expertise for seeking justice and reparation
- Advocacy work calling for the reform and decolonization of judicial institutions in Africa and in Europe
- Decolonizing justice systems research

A) Advancing the reparations agenda for the colonial crimes and slavery in Africa (November 2022-present): Official launch of research funded by Open Society Africa

In November 2022, African Futures Lab launched the first phase of the project **Advancing the reparations agenda for colonial crimes and slavery in Africa**, supported by Open Society Africa . The project's overall objectives are:

- 1.To strengthen African civil society organizations' demands for reparations related to colonial violence and slavery and their contemporary consequences on the continent with robust, data-driven knowledge.
- 2.To coordinate African civil society actors in designing a reparations agenda for colonial violence and slavery and their consequences and legacies.
- 3.To inform policymaking related to reparations for colonial crimes and slavery at the international, regional, and national levels (in former colonial powers and former colonized states) with recommendations formulated by African civil society actors.

During the first phase of the grant (September 2022-September 2023), AfaLab will conduct research on the state of reparations demands in each of the 5 regions of the African continent. The research will result in the publication of a research report and policy brief for each of the 5 regions, which will be made available in French and English. The second phase of the project (kicking off in Autumn 2023) will bring together Africa-based civil society actors and organizations identified during the research phase for Mobilization Labs, where they will together build on the research findings to develop a coordinated continental strategy for advancing their claims for reparations.

We were delighted to launch the first part of this project in December 2022 with researchers Dr. Aymar Nyenyezi Bisoka (also a 2022-2023 AfaLab Fellow) and Dr. Mutoy Mubiala for Central Africa – the Great Lakes region (Bisoka), and Cameroun and Central African Republic (Mubiala). Joining the research team in 2023 will be: Houda Mzioudet, Dr. Menna Agha, and Dr. Abeer Rabei Youness Abazeed (North Africa); Dr. Kennedy Manduna (Southern Africa); Dr. Adama Ousmanou (Cameroon); Dr. Amah Edoh (West Africa); and Dr. Liliane Umubyeyi (East Africa).

MEET THE RESEARCHERS:



Dr. Abeer Rabei Youness Abazeed is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Cairo University. She obtained her PhD degree from the Institute of Security and Global Affairs, Leiden University (Netherlands). Entitled "Is it one Nile? civic engagement and hydropolitics in the Eastern Nile Basin: the case of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia," her PhD dissertation tackled the role of civil society in hydropolitics through a social network analysis (SNA) approach.

Dr. Abazeed earned her MA degree from the American University in Cairo (AUC) on the topic of aid harmonization in African countries. She also obtained a diploma in Public Policy and Administration from AUC. Dr. Abazeed has published a number of journal articles, research papers, as well as pieces in public newspapers and blogs in Arabic and English covering topics of Nile politics, civic engagement, foreign policy and African Affairs.

Dr. Menna Agha is an Assistant Professor at the Azrieli School and Carleton University's Institute for African Studies in Canada. She holds a Doctorate in Architecture from the University of Antwerp and an MA in Integrated Design from the Cologne University of Applied Sciences. As an architectural researcher and scholar, Dr. Agha was previously a Spatial Justice Fellow at the University of Oregon. She is also a 2022-2023 AfaLab Fellow. Dr. Agha has contributed to international publications such as the Architecture Review Magazine, Funambulist Magazine, and Architectural Histories Journal, among others.



Namely, Dr. Agha is co-author of the research paper "Emotional Capital, and the Other Ontology of the Architect" (2020) and author of a chapter titled "Multi-gendered Identities: The contesting Nubian womanhood(s)" in the book "Breaking Silence" (2020). Currently, her research interests are centered on Design and Spatial Justice, race, gender, space, and territory, greatly influenced by her Nubian heritage. Dr. Agha is a founding member of an academic initiative at the Flanders Architecture Institute in Belgium, where she coordinated the Spatial Justice agenda.



Dr. Aymar Nyenyezi Bisoka is a lawyer and political scientist and Assistant Professor at the University of Mons, in Belgium. He works in the African Great Lakes Region on access to natural resources, the peasantry and armed groups, and the Afro-critical perspective in the social sciences. Dr. Bisoka has taught in recent years at the Rift Valley Institute (UK) and several other universities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Belgium.

Before moving into research, Dr. Bisoka worked for ten years on development cooperation in Africa and Europe and continues to collaborate in this sector on issues of development, governance, and security. He has published numerous articles in English and French in several leading journals as well as in various books and journals readily available to his African students and colleagues. Dr. Bisoka has also won several international awards and grants—including from the African Studies Association (USA, 2019), the CODESRIA (Dakar, 2018) and the SSRC African Peacebuilding Network (USA, 2017). He was recently elected into two visiting scholarships to Oxford University (2019) and Cambridge University (2020 & 2022). You can find a list of Dr. Bisoka’s publications [here](#).

Dr. Kennedy Manduna is a pome research focuses on public policy, political economy, natural resource governance, digital governance and uneven development. Dr. Manduna is currently a Lecturer at Witwatersrand University (Wits) in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the International Research Group on Authoritarianism and Counter-Strategies (IRGAC) of the Rosa Luxemburg-Stiftung.



He completed his PhD in Political Economy and Public Policy in 2022 at Wits, with a dissertation titled “Overpromising and under-delivering: Zimbabwe’s extractive industry indigenisation and uneven development.” Dr. Manduna is the author of several articles, accessible [here](#).



Dr. Mutoy Mubiala graduated with a law degree from the University of Kinshasa (1984), a postgraduate diploma (1990) and a doctorate in International Law from the University of Geneva (1994), obtained at the Institut universitaire de hautes études internationales (IUHEI). He started working for the United Nations in 1993, first as a Research Associate at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), from 1993 to 1994, and then as a staff member of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, from September 1994.

Dr. Mubiala has since held various positions of responsibility in that Office and contributed, namely, to the establishment of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in and Democracy in Central Africa, based in Yaoundé, of which he was the inaugural director, from March 2001 to March 2002. Throughout his career, Dr. Mubiala has contributed to several training programs in international law, including the joint UN/UNITAR training program in international law (The Hague, 1994), the OIF/UNITAR/ENA/IRIC training program for the international civil service (1998-2003), as well as the human rights training programs of the Institut International des Droits de l'Homme (Strasbourg) since 2000, and the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (Paris) since 2010. Dr. Mubiala has published 5 books and some sixty articles on various aspects of international law.

Houda Mzioudet holds an MA in Cultural Studies from the University of Manouba (Tunisia) and is currently pursuing a BA in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Toronto (Canada). She covered the Arab Uprisings in 2011 as an independent researcher with international news outlets such as the BBC, CBC and Al Jazeera English among others. Mzioudet has published articles, policy briefs and papers for international think-tanks such as the Brookings Institution and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.



She also co-authored a book on the Libyan Displacement Crisis with Megan Bradley and Ibrahim Fraihat in 2016 (Georgetown University Press) and in 2022 authored a chapter titled “Breaking the Racial Taboo: Black Tunisian activism as transitional justice” in the volume *Transitional Justice in Tunisia: Innovations, Continuities, Challenges* (edited by Simon Robins and Paul Gready with Routledge). Currently, Mzioudet’s research focuses on transitional justice, border dynamics in North Africa, civil society activism, intersectionality, Black identities in the MENA region, gender and media, and migration and diaspora identities. Mzioudet is a founding member of two Tunisian civil society organizations: ADAM (2012) and The Voice of Tunisian Black Women (2020).

B) The case of the “enfants métisses” (mixed-race children) from Belgium’s colonies in the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi (February 2022-present)

In 2022, the Lab also started working on the case known in Belgium as “Le cas des enfants métisses.” Like other European colonial powers, the Belgian colonial state instituted a policy in its colonies of removing mixed-race children born to African mothers and European fathers from their mothers and placing them in



religious institutions. Between 1959 and 1962, thousands of mixed-race children were taken from their African mothers by the colonial administration in the DRC and in what was then Ruanda-Urundi.

Through its policy of targeted abduction and segregation, the Belgian colonial administration sought to isolate mixed-race children, who were considered at the time to pose a danger to the colonial order and a threat to white prestige. Besides the trauma of being removed from their mothers, the children were subjected to a great deal of abuse and neglect in the institutions where they were placed.

Following an invitation to support the case of five defendants who have sued the Belgian state for crimes against humanity, AfaLab undertook a number of activities related to the case in 2022.

○ Publication: “Litigating for reparations?” (April 2022)

In October 2021, the Tribunal of First Instance of Brussels rejected the case of the five defendants. Liliane Umubyeyi wrote an [article](#) in response, titled “Litigating for reparations? A double-edged sword for mixed-race victims of Belgium’s colonial administration.” Analyzing the Belgian State’s arguments and underlining its incoherence, the article highlights the challenges faced by mixed-race children victims of Belgium’s colonial administration in their quest for reparations. Liliane notes how, despite the Belgian State’s official apologies and recognition of the targeted segregation and forced abduction of mixed-race children, justice is still being denied to victims.

○ Legal clinic with Science Po Paris (September 2022-March 2023)

In partnership with the Legal Clinic at the Sciences Po Law School, AfaLab worked with Masters students over the course of the 2022-2023 academic year to conduct research that could support the defendants' legal arguments. The research will support the legal case and advance the quest for reparations and justice by preventing a precedent from being established for other mixed-race people who were abducted by European colonial administrations as children and who may come before courts in Belgium (or elsewhere in Europe). At Sciences Po, the project was coordinated by Dr. Anne-Charlotte Martineau, specialist in international law, tenured researcher and co-director of the Center for Legal Theory and Analysis at the CNRS (Centre National de Recherche Scientifique) in France.

○ Presentation at the “What’s to be repaired? Postcolonial justice in postcolonial Europe” symposium, Utrecht University (June 2022)

Amah Edoh and Liliane Umubyeyi were invited by organizers to hold the Lab’s “European launch” as part of a three-day symposium bringing together interdisciplinary academics, experts, and activists to discuss postcolonial reparations as a strategy for fighting postcolonial inequalities, combating structural racism, and decolonising societies in Western Europe.

○ Presentation at the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (December 2022)

The United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent was launched at a gathering in Geneva from December 5th to 8th 2022. Along with several other civil society organizations, the African Futures Lab was invited to contribute to a panel focusing on reparative justice efforts in Africa entitled "Snapshots from Across the Globe: Reparations at Work." Liliane Umubyeyi shared her perspectives on the various reparations demands currently

playing out on the African continent, focusing on the case of mixed-race children abducted by colonial administrations (and their African mothers). Liliane argued that the invisibility of these demands for reparations, which have been underway on the continent for years now, is due to the human rights approaches deployed by international organizations (governmental and non-governmental), which neither take into account the historical injustices of colonization and slavery, nor structural racial inequalities.

In advocating at this Forum, we pursued one of our key objectives: to document and make visible demands for reparations that have been ignored.



Liliane Umubyeyi and Dr. Mame Fatou Niang (2022-2023 AfaLab Fellow) at the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent in Geneva

C) Decolonizing justice systems

New research and advocacy axis

The continuity in contemporary African societies of state judicial institutions put in place during colonial times has led to many obstacles in African populations' access to justice. It not only maintains the injustices of colonization (via the application of norms and procedures adopted with the goal of imposing the domination of Western cultures and values on African societies), but it also deprives African populations of access to mechanisms and institutions that are capable of truly protecting their rights.



Liliane and Moriceau at the African Futures Conference, Cologne, Germany (May 2023)

A new project, under development at the Lab since February 2022 through a collaboration between Liliane Umubyeyi and rule of law expert [Julien Moriceau](#), aims to articulate an agenda for decolonizing African judicial systems. To achieve this goal, the Lab will be screening African judicial systems to identify areas where this colonial continuity is most vividly expressed.

This "diagnosis" will take the form of a research project to be undertaken in the 5 regions of the African continent. Based on the results of this research, we will set up working groups composed of justice experts from the continent to develop recommendations to national and international actors involved in strengthening access to justice and rule of law institutions.

○ **Strategies to decolonize justice: The Lab's contribution to ENAR's General Assembly (May 2022)**

In line with the objectives of the project "Decolonizing justice systems," the Lab served as a panelist in [ENAR's](#) (European Network against Racism) General Assembly on May 20th 2022. ENAR is a platform of European NGOs working to combat racism and all related discrimination in all EU Member States. Speaking on a panel titled "Decolonising Justice: A vision for the future of racial justice in Europe," Liliane discussed the definition of justice and possible approaches for decolonizing justice systems, specifically in the area of transitional justice.

2022 Highlight: REPARATIONS COALITION BUILDING



From the top: Bellagio conference (July 13-14, 2022); Global Reparations Leaders of the Global Circle for Reparations and Healing at the Vatican (July 18, 2022); Accra Summit for Racial Healing (August 1-4, 2022)

1) Bellagio Convening (July 13-14, 2022)

AfaLab was invited to attend a 2-day gathering organized by the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center in July 2022. 22 racial justice leaders representing civil society, government, academia, and grassroots advocacy organizations from Africa and its diasporas in the Americas and Europe assembled to work towards a collective agenda for reparations and restitution for slavery and colonialism. Among other outputs, the delegates drafted 15 resolutions anchored in a deep analysis of the current global reparations landscape, to support the development of a collective agenda for reparations and restitution.

"We begin by affirming the thrust of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action in declaring that massive harms committed by various European governments, institutions, corporations and families equated to crimes against African humanity. That the crimes of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, colonialism, apartheid and neocolonialism and the systems, structures and institutions established to perpetuate these harms have left a negative injurious legacy that impacts every aspect of the lives of people of African descent around the world, in the present day and stymies the capacity to be fully self-determining and accorded the rights owed by virtue of being human. We further hold that there is both a moral and legal obligation of the perpetrators of the crimes to engage in full reparations wherever the crimes were committed and the legacies persist."

-- Excerpt from the **Accra Declaration***

*Full text available at: <https://africanfutures.mit.edu/news/2022-08-31-accra-declaration-on-reparations-and-racial-healing/>

2) Delegation of the Global Circle for Reparations and Healing at the Vatican (July 18, 2022)

Represented by Liliane, AfaLab joined a delegation of global reparations leaders from the Global Circle for Reparations and Healing on July 18th, 2022 to formally meet with representatives of the Vatican, Bishop Paul Tighe, Secretary of the Pontifical Council of Culture, and his assistant. The delegation, which included representatives from leading reparations organizations such as the Nia Foundation (Netherlands), the Global African Congress (UK) and National African American Reparations Commission (US), delivered a Presentment outlining the harms and offenses of the Church and its destructive role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the legacy resulting from those harms and offenses, and the reparations measures that are needed for full repair and healing.

3) Accra Summit (August 1-4, 2022)

AfaLab also participated in the Accra Summit, in Ghana, on Reparations for Historical and Contemporary Racial Violence. The summit was co-hosted by the African Union, the Africa Transitional Justice Legacy Fund, and Global Black, and was funded by the MacArthur Foundation. It resulted in the **Accra Declaration on Reparations and Racial Healing**. In her presentation at the summit, Liliane highlighted key aspects of the reparations debate, such as the importance of re-constituting systems of global governance and international solidarity. As Liliane argued in an article she wrote following the gathering, the key achievement of the Accra Summit was its broadening of the reparations debate beyond punctual or piecemeal (if important) actions like cultural heritage restitution, towards a more ambitious agenda focusing on structural reforms.

3. AFALAB IN THE NEWS

European Union-African Union Summit (February 2022)

Speaking in a side event organized by Canal France International for African journalists covering the African Union-European Union Summit, Liliane discussed the need to view how colonial legacies structure economic treaties and trade agreements between the African Union and the European Union. She highlighted the inequality in African and European populations' access to vaccines against COVID as an example of how economic policies between the two supranational institutions continue to be developed at the expense of populations in the Global South.

AfricaCommsWeek: “Is Africa caught in an information war between the EU and Russia?” (March 2022)

Alongside journalist and author Moky Makura, CEO of Africanofilter, and Mimi Kalinda, CEO and Co-founder of Africa Communications Media Group, Liliane addressed the racist treatment of Africans at the Ukraine-EU borders, since the start of Russia's invasion. The panel examined Africa's strategy as an actor in the global information war. It aimed to go beyond indignation and outrage to reach an understanding of what is at stake for Africa in the Russia-EU conflict and develop concrete communications plans and strategies in response.



Chalk Radio podcast: “Finding Expertise Everywhere” (May 2022)

In this podcast episode by Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) OpenCourseWare (OCW), a free and open collection of material from thousands of MIT courses covering the entire MIT curriculum, Amah Edoh discussed the innovative structure of her MIT course, "Reparations for colonialism and slavery." The undergraduate level course included recorded lectures with experts in reparative justice as well as working sessions with AfaLab partners, African and European activists bringing forward reparations claims. [Course materials](#) and videos were made freely available online on OCW, enabling the broader public to participate remotely.

Al-Jazeera: “Symbolic gestures are not enough” (June 2022)



Invited by Al-Jazeera news, Liliane presented AfaLab’s position on the Belgian government’s return of the tooth of the Congolese independence leader, Patrice Lumumba, to his family. Liliane pointed out that the legacies of colonialism cannot be satisfied with symbolic gestures, such as this restitution. She argued that for true repair to happen, Belgium must address more structural demands for justice from Afro-descendant populations in Belgium and populations in the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda.

Press release on the Belgian Parliamentary Commission on Belgium’s colonial past (June 2022)

In collaboration with Avocats Sans Frontières, Bamko ASBL, CaCoBuRwa (the Collective for Congolese, Burundan and Rwandan diaspora organizations in Belgium), Bakushinta, and the lawyer Christophe Marchand, AfaLab co-authored a [press release](#) on the Belgian Parliamentary Commission on the Belgian colonial past. The Commission, which was tasked with investigating the nature and consequences of Belgian colonialism in DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda, concluded in December 2022. The joint signed statement expressed the collective concerns of civil society actors about the limited time and minimal resources provided to the Commission and how these shortcomings jeopardized the Commission’s effectiveness.

4. AFALAB'S TEAM AND PARTNERS IN 2022

2022 was a big year for AfaLab administratively also! Not only did we incorporate as an Association Sans But Lucratif (ASBL) in Belgium, but we also welcomed new members to the team: our advisory Board; the **2021-2022 cohort of AfaLab Fellows**; **Matt Dann** on organizational strategy and podcast development; **Kate Theriault** as an intern; and **Nelly Ilboudo** on accounting.

Lab Leadership

Liliane Umubyeyi & Amah Edoh, Co-Founders



Having founded the Lab together towards the end of 2021, Liliane and Amah turned their attention in 2022 to solidifying the Lab's organizational structure and strategic vision. Over the course of the year, they built on their complementary backgrounds as a legal sociologist/rule of law practitioner and socio-cultural anthropologist/educator respectively, and on their shared commitment to supporting movements for justice for African and Afro-descendants globally to develop new partnerships and design the Lab's first major research project, on African demands for reparations for colonialism and slavery. From working jointly on every aspect of the Lab, Liliane and Amah progressively demarcated their respective roles in the organization, with Liliane taking the lead on organizational strategy, partnerships, and research as **Executive Director**, and Amah, in her role as **Director of Operations and Learning**, leading the Lab's internal operations, fellowship and internship programs, as well as publications.



Introducing AfaLab's Board!

We are honored to be supported in our work by a multi-talented, multi-national, multi-disciplinary Board who, together, bring decades of expertise in organizational development, evidence-based policy, and research on race and racial justice across Europe, Africa, and North America.

Yasmine Abdillahi



Yasmine Abdillahi is a corporate transformation leader based in the US. She is currently Executive Director in Cybersecurity Governance, Risk and Compliance at Comcast NBC Universal (a US-based media company), where she is responsible for policy governance, security certifications & attestations. She has worked with global organizations in the technology, finance, and media entertainment sectors to transform and automate their operations. She has a BrightTalk about Cybersecurity Governance, Risk & Compliance, she mentors women, and advises startups. Yasmine is a member of the Executive Women Forum (EWF), the Information System Audit & Control Association (ISACA), the Women in Cable Telecommunications (WICT), and the Federal Communications Bar Association (FCBA). Of Algerian and Comorian descent, Yasmine is a dual French-American citizen. She holds a BSc in Finance and an MSc in Information System from Paris Dauphine University.

Wezi Msisha



Dr Wezi Msisha is a Malawian international public health specialist whose work focuses on improving the lives of poor and vulnerable individuals in low and middle-income countries. Dr. Msisha is currently a Senior Health Specialist with the World Bank, based in South Africa. In her current role she is responsible for managing a US\$500 million multisectoral nutrition and maternal child health project and a \$512 million health systems improvement project in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Dr. Msisha earned a Diploma in Nursing and Midwifery from the University of Malawi, a Bachelor's degree in Nursing from Howard University, a Master's in Public Health from the George Washington University and a Doctor of Science in Public Health from the Harvard School of Public Health. In addition to professional endeavors, Dr. Msisha has been involved with efforts to support several schools in urban and rural Malawi through provision of books, and school supplies. All of these activities underpin her passion and desire for improved opportunities for people in low-income and developing countries.

Cassandra Okechukwu



Dr. Cassandra A. Okechukwu is a Nigerian American social epidemiologist with over 15 years of experience in health care and public health. Currently, Dr. Okechukwu is Vice President of Health Equity Research at UnitedHealthGroup. Dr. Okechukwu's chief expertise is in using knowledge from social and behavioral sciences to inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs, policies, and technologies that promote population health. Dr. Okechukwu was previously an associate professor at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, where she is still adjunct associate professor. Dr. Okechukwu earned a Bachelor's degree in Nursing from the University of Maryland, Baltimore, Masters in Nursing and a Masters of Public Health degrees from the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and Bloomberg School of Public Health, respectively. She also earned a Doctor of Science degree from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and completed postdoctoral training at the University of California, San Francisco and Berkeley.

Olivia Umurerwa Rutazibwa



Dr. Olivia Umurerwa Rutazibwa is a Belgian and Rwandan International Relations scholar and Senior Research Fellow of the Johannesburg Institute of Advanced Studies (JIAS), South Africa. She is currently Assistant Professor in Human Rights and Politics in the Department of Sociology at the London School of Economics (LSE). Dr. Rutazibwa holds a PhD in Political Science/International Relations from Ghent University in Belgium (2013), prior to which she undertook doctoral training at the European University Institute in Italy (2001-6) as well as internships at the European Commission in Brussels and the EU Institute for Security Studies in Paris (2003-4). Before joining the LSE, she was Senior Lecturer in European and International (Development) Studies at the University of Portsmouth in the UK (2013-21). Dr. Rutazibwa's research and teaching focuses on ways to decolonise (international) solidarity. Building on epistemic Blackness as methodology, she turns to recovering and reconnecting philosophies and practices of dignity and repair and retreat in the postcolony (e.g. autonomous recovery in Somaliland, agaciro in Rwanda and Black Power in the US, Tricontinentalism and the political thought of Thomas Sankara) to theorise solidarity anticolonially. Prior to her scholarly career, Dr. Rutazibwa was a journalist.



Lionel Zevounou

Dr. Lionel Zevounou is a Beninese and French legal scholar. He currently serves as Associate Professor of public Law at University of Paris Nanterre (CTAD, UMR 7074), where his areas of research are legal theory, law and social sciences, and economic law. In 2021-2022, Dr. Zevounou was a Visiting Scholar at the Humanities Institute at Penn State University in the US, and in 2018, he was appointed to the prestigious Institut Universitaire de France for a five-year term. Dr. Zevounou's current research examines the relationship between race and law, particularly the tensions generated by the universalist claim of French law and colonial domination through the category of assimilation. He has published on a wide range of subjects, including race and the law in France, reparations for slavery, and Africa's place in the world.

Dr. Zevounou is a co-founder of CORA, the Collective for the Renewal Of Africa (CORA), a Pan-African intellectual collective whose mission is to create spaces for intellectuals to engage in constructive debate in an uninhibited atmosphere, to develop and contribute powerful and transformative ideas about Africa's future, and to frame the terms of Africans' engagement within the global system.

2022 Staff and Volunteers



Matt Dann, Organizational consultant & Podcast development

In January 2020, after nearly 14 years working at an economics think tank in Brussels, Matt Dann began to work as a consultant helping non-profit organisations in the Caucasus and the Balkans. Matt's collaboration with the Lab started in the autumn of 2021, when Matt supported the Lab with research on and inquiries to possible funders for the Lab. He also worked with Liliane and Amah on developing the podcast, as well as recording and editing the first season, and took the lead on creating the Lab's first annual report, for 2021. We are very grateful to Matt for his nimbleness and for his contributions to many of the Lab's activities!



Kate Theriault, Intern

An undergraduate student in Political Science and Geography at the University of Victoria in Canada, joined the Lab as an intern from May-July 2022 as part of the EUSTIP (EU Study Tour & Internship Program). Kate, whose studies and work experience have focused on climate policy and community engagement, played a crucial role during her internship by conducting background research for all of our meetings and presentations, setting up the Lab's communications strategy, and, importantly, in navigating the administrative process for incorporating the Lab in Belgium. She was a truly exceptional addition to the team and her contributions advanced the Lab's work greatly in 2022!

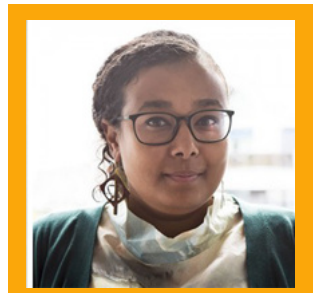
2022-2023 Fellows

The AfaLab Fellows program brings together activists, scholars, and artists from across Europe, Africa, and the Americas, whose work centers on racial justice for African and Afro-descended peoples.

In 2021-2022, our Fellows came from a dozen countries and as many disciplines. Through quarterly meetings over the course of one year, the Fellowship provides a space for Fellows to present work in progress, as well as insights or challenges from their practice, and to benefit from discussion with colleagues from a wide range of disciplines. We also welcome guest speakers, like Lionel Zevounou, AfaLab Board Member, researcher at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), and Assistant Professor in Public Law at Paris Nanterre, who presented a talk on December 1, 2022 titled *“Racial discrimination that does not say its name.”* The presentation was drawn from Dr. Zevounou’s current book project, on the discrimination incurred by North African railway workers in France’s national railway company since the 1950s. Through these exchanges, opportunities for collaboration among Fellows and with the Lab emerge, as was the case in 2022 with Aymar Bisoka, who joined the reparations research team as researcher for the Great Lakes region.

Hear from our Fellows in their own words - check out the [Fellows Spotlights](#) on our website!

Menna Agha



Architect & Assistant Professor, University of Carleton (Nubia, Canada)

Noureddine Amara



Historian & Research Fellow, Abdallah S. Kamel Center, Yale Law School (Algeria)

Sihem Bensedrine



Writer & Journalist, Former President of the Truth and Dignity Instance (Tunisia)

Magali Bessone



Professor of Political Philosophy, Panthéon-Sorbonne Université (France)

Michel DeGraff



Professor of Linguistics & Co-Founder of the MIT-Haiti Initiative, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Haiti, USA)

Liepollo Lebohang Pheko



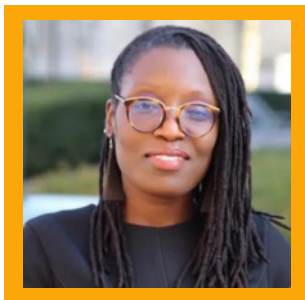
Decolonial Afrikan Feminist & Senior Research Fellow, Trade Collective (South Africa)

Kenda Mutongi



Professor of History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA)

Mame-Fatou Niang



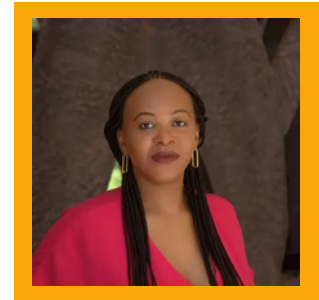
Associate Professor of French and Francophone Studies, Carnegie Mellon University (France, USA)

Eva Njoki Munyiri



Documentary Filmmaker & Producer (Kenya, France)

Fania Noel



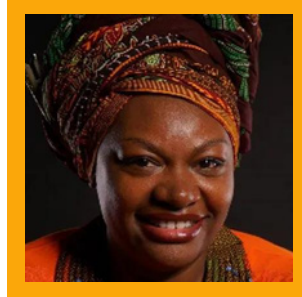
Afro-Feminist Organizer, Writer & PhD Candidate, The New School for Social Research (Haiti, USA)

Aymar Nyenyezi Bisoka



Lawyer, Political Scientist & Assistant Professor, University of Mons (Belgium)

Mireille-Tsheusi Robert



Decolonial & Feminist Trainer, Author, President of Bamko (Belgium)

Bettina Stoetzer



Associate Professor of Anthropology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Germany, USA)

WHO DID WE PARTNER WITH IN 2022?

- **Open Society-Africa** has partnered with the Lab since November 2022, by funding our research project “Advancing the reparations agenda for the colonial crimes and slavery in Africa.”
- **MIT OpenCourseWare**, a free and open collection of material from thousands of courses from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), made it possible for us to share our first Mobilization Lab with a wider public and to make the curriculum and materials for the related course freely open and accessible beyond MIT.
- Brussels-based UI and web designer, **Amélie Umuherezi**, created the beautiful logo for our podcast!
- **Seun Anikulapo Kuti** generously granted us the rights to use clips of his track, "African Dreams," for the podcast.
- **Noesya**, a France-based web developer co-operative committed to creating high-quality, green, aesthetic, ethical, and sustainable digital spaces, created AfaLab’s website pro-bono!
- **Data Pop Alliance**: Data-Pop Alliance is a non-profit “think-and-do-tank” created in 2013 by partners from the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, MIT Connection Science, and ODI that brings together researchers, practitioners, and activists who want to “Change the World with Data.” AfaLab and DPA launched a collaboration in 2022 to develop the “Global Racial Inequality Dashboard” project.
- **The University of Victoria’s EU Study Tour and Internship Program**, which offers an experiential learning opportunity for university students across Canada through a program of guided visits to the major institutions of the European Union and internship placements in various institutions, connected us with our first intern!

5. 2023-2024 OUTLOOK

If 2021 was the spark that ignited the vision for the African Futures Lab, 2022 was a year of building and consolidating our vision as an organization, and of launching many initiatives. We're excited to see the seeds we planted throughout this year continue to bloom in 2023-2024. We are particularly looking forward to:

- The publication of **research findings** (research reports and policy briefs) from our Africa-wide research on the reparations agenda for colonial and slavery-related crimes. The topics examined in this research include reparations for human rights violations committed during the colonial era in Central Africa and for climate injustices in East Africa, as well as the reform of global institutions of economic governance with civil society actors in Southern Africa.
- **Mobilization Labs** (MobLabs): We will be building on this research and the ensuing policy recommendations to build a coalition of civil society actors from Africa's five regions engaged in reparations demands through MobLabs. During this series of workshops, technical experts such as lawyers or advocacy experts will bring targeted support to the development of a coordinated strategy for these civil society actors to bring forward their reparations claims.
- The publication of research reports on the **métis case** in Belgium from the Sciences Po Legal clinic.
- **More engagement with the public**, through our podcast, Future Perfect | Futur Antérieur, and a new monthly series of live Twitter discussion, the AfaLives, where we will continue to highlight actions that advance the struggle for racial justice for Africans and Afro-descendants across Europe, Africa, and the Americas.
- Continuing to build an organization that actively fights against the invisibilization of historical and contemporary racial violence across Europe and Africa and that offers a path towards justice for African and Afro-descendants everywhere. **Continuing to do this work with integrity and care for one another, never forgetting that while the journey may be long, creating more just futures for the next generations is its own reward.**

Annual report credits:

- Writing: Amah Edoh, Shaany N'sondé, Liliane Umubyeyi
- Editing: Amah Edoh
- Layout and graphics: Anita Munyaneza