

Prof Francis Beng Nyamnjoh

Nominated by Prof F. C. Ross

I begin with a caveat: It is impossible to do justice to Professor Nyamnjoh's many accomplishments in so short a citation. Here, I draw out some of the most salient, at the risk of doing grave injustice to an internationally renowned scholar.

Francis B. Nyamnjoh holds a BA and an MA from the University of Yaounde, Cameroon, and a PhD (1990), from the University of Leicester, UK. He joined the University of Cape Town in August 2009 as Professor of Social Anthropology from the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), where he served as Head of Publications from July 2003 to July 2009. He had previously held positions in universities in Cameroon and Botswana.

That he is held in high regard internationally and at home is clear from Prof Nyamnjoh's CV and evidenced in his many Fellowships, awards and accolades. He holds a B1 rating from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and is already a Fellow of the Cameroon Academy of Science (2011), the African Academy of Science (2014), and, since 2016, the Academy of Science of South Africa. In 2012, he was recognised with an Exceptional Merit award by the Faculty of Humanities at UCT, an honour he has continued to hold. In 2013, he was elected as the Ohio University African Students Union 'African Hero'. This was followed in 2014 by the Eko Prize for Literature for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts in Cameroon and globally. In 2018, he was awarded the African Studies Association of the UK Fage & Oliver Prize for the best monograph for *#RhodesMustFall: Nibbling at Resilient Colonialism in South Africa*. His work has been translated into Korean and Japanese, and at least two students have successfully their PhDs on his fiction, one of them on a translation of his novel, *A Nose for Money*, into French, at Wits

Prof Nyamnjoh's nimble thought centres on questions of belonging and the conditions of the world that endanger it, including social and physical boundaries, failures of recognition, and hierarchies that create exclusion. He is especially concerned with forms of theorising that ossify thought and limit potential. He has an extraordinary ability to generate invigorating ideas about how and why our world is shaped as it is – and how it might be different if we were to look outside of EuroAmerican norms and canons for ideas. Most recently, his work on popular epistemologies, the thought of p'Bitek, Tutuola and others, and the intransigence of colonial thought in education systems has been influential in decolonisation debates. Key here are his ideas about our need to recognise the impacts of history; the ways that theory shapes representation; the unfinished, incomplete nature of human being and sociality; the human capacity for flexible and creative relations, and our need for conviviality as a condition of being human. His notions of conviviality and incompleteness are original and important concepts, particularly in the current moment which is defined by what he calls 'ever diminishing circles of inclusion'. To use his own words, his intellectual project "speaks to the frontier African at the crossroads and junctions of encounters, facilitating creative conversations and challenging regressive logics of exclusionary identities".

Professor Nyamnjoh's research output is prodigious. To date he has published 10 monographs, 10 edited volumes, 8 novels, a book of poetry and a play. He has also published 68 book chapters and 74 journal articles. Alongside these are prefaces, commentaries, editorials and an extensive list of keynote addresses and invited talks.

These facts should give you the beginnings of a sense of Prof Nyamnjoh's accomplishments. To extend them, let us look at some citation indices. As a general rule, such indices do not give the full measure of Humanities scholarship, and in Francis's case they are merely indicative rather than truly authoritative on his output and its impact. Nevertheless, using citation sources from Google Scholar, he has accumulated more than 8000 citations and has an overall h-index of 40 and an i10 index of 111. His RG Score on ResearchGate is 25.10. These data do not do justice for they exclude the far wider ambit reached by guest lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences across the world, particularly on the Continent and increasingly in Asia.

Prof Nyamnjoh has an outsized influence in publication on and about the Continent and thence in global scholarship concerned with Continental matters. In addition to serving as Publications Director for CODESRIA (2003-2009), he has founded and Chaired the Board of Langaa Research and Publishing Centre in Bamenda, Cameroon (2005-present); the Editorial Board of the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Press (2011 to 2019); is presently on the Editorial Board of nine journals and on the Academic Advisory Board of three Research Institutes. In these capacities, he has championed careful, imaginative scholarship and the foregrounding of African voices. His impact on young African scholars is extraordinary; students describe his work as both life and world-changing. His CV and scholarly history indicate that their assessment is correct.

Finally, Francis Beng Nyamnjoh lives by his philosophy. He is globally renowned for his convivial and inclusive scholarship. His lively scholarly relations extend a generous and capacious network from which many of us and the University have benefitted. And he is deeply loved and respected by his colleagues and students, whom he has enfolded in an ever-widening circle of inclusion.