

Christopher Tounsel, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of History
 Walker Family Endowed Professor in History
 Director, African Studies Program
 Director of Graduate Studies
 University of Washington
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INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

University of Washington
 Associate Professor, Department of History

Seattle, WA
 2022-present

The Pennsylvania State University
 Assistant Professor, Department of History and African Studies Program
 Promoted to tenure May 2022

University Park, PA
 2016-2022

Macalester College
 Visiting Assistant Professor of African History, Department of History

St. Paul, MN
 2015-2016

EDUCATION

University of Michigan Ann Arbor, MI
Ph.D., History 2015

Dissertation: *“God will crown us”: The Construction of Religious Nationalism in Southern Sudan, 1898-2011*

Committee: Derek Peterson (chair), Rudolph Ware, Amal Fadlalla, and Brandi Hughes

M.A., History December 2011

Duke University Durham, NC
B.A., History; minor in religion 2009
 Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Research Fellow, Dean’s List, Honors Thesis High Distinction

BOOKS

Chosen Peoples: Christianity and Political Imagination in South Sudan. Duke University Press. 2021

- Reviewed in the *Journal of African History*, *Journal of Religion*, *Journal of Africana Religions*, *Studies in World Christianity*, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, *African Studies Quarterly*, *The Christian Century*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Reading Religion*, *Religion*, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, *Sudan Studies for Sudan and South Sudan*, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, *Journal of Global South Studies*, *Fellowship Magazine*, *Missiology: An International Review*
- Accolades:
 - o Finalist, 2022 Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora Outstanding First Book Prize
 - o *Christianity Today* 2022 Book Award Finalist (History/Biography)
 - o Listed in *The Christian Century* as one of Philip Jenkins’s picks for “best books of the year on Global Christianity” (October 20, 2021)

Bounds of Blackness: African Americans, Sudan, and the Politics of Solidarity. Cornell University Press. 2024

- Accolades:

- Finalist, 2025 P. Sterling Stuckey Book Prize (Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora)
- Honorable Mention, 2025 International Studies Association Book Award (Diplomatic Studies Section)

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

‘A Tale of Two Divestments: South Africa, Sudan, and Howard University’ *African Studies Review* 67, no. 3 (September 2024): 590-609.

- Honorable Mention, 2025 *African Studies Review* Best Article Prize

“Lord Come to Our Aid”: Islamisation, Civil War, and the Pastoral Letters of the Sudan Catholic Bishops’ Conference’ *Journal of Religious History* Vol. 44, no. 2 (June 2020: Christianity and Politics in 20th-Century Africa, ed. J.J. Carney): 168-186.

‘Negro Canaan: Tuskegee, Cotton, and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan’ *Journal of African American History* Vol. 105, no. 1 (February 2020): 28-55.

‘Before the Bright Star: Football in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan’ *Journal of Eastern African Studies* Vol. 12, no. 4 (2018): 735-753.

“Render to Caesar”: Missionary Thought and the Sudanese State, 1946-1964’ *Social Sciences and Missions* Vol. 31, Iss. 3-4 (2018): 341-374.

‘Race, religion and resistance: revelations from the Juba archive’ *Journal of Eastern African Studies* Vol. 11, No. 2 (2017): 249-265.

‘Khartoum Goliath: SPLM/SPLA Update and Martial Theology during the Second Sudanese Civil War’ *Journal of Africana Religions* Vol. 4, No. 2 (2016): 129-153.

BOOK CHAPTERS

‘Two Sudans, Human Rights, and the Afterlives of St. Josephine Bakhita’ in *Christianity and Human Rights Reconsidered*, ed. Daniel Jenkins-Steinmetz and Sarah Shortall. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020; pp. 261-275.

ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES

‘Women in South Sudan’ In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. Oxford University Press. Article published September 28, 2020.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS IN SCHOLARLY VENUES

‘Religion and National Integration in Sudan and India’ *Political Theology* 24, no. 8 (2023): 844-850.

‘Religion, Gender, and the Question of Nation’ *Religious Studies Review* 49, no. 1 (March 2023): 33-36.

‘Christianity in (South) Sudan: historical backgrounds, contemporary contestations, and future directions’ *Religion Compass*, e12460 (2023).

‘Army Chaplains in the Mahdist War’, *Sudan Studies Association Bulletin* 34 (2016): 27-32.

SELECTED GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Themed Summer Fellowship on Religious Cultures/Sacred Practices/Spiritual Teachings, Walter C. Simpson Center for the Humanities	2024
Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, Career Enhancement Fellowship	2019
African Studies Program Travel Grant, Pennsylvania State University	2017, 2019
Doris G. Quinn Fellowship [for Spring/Summer 2015], Doris G. Quinn Foundation and UM Dept. of History	2014-2015
Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellows Dissertation Grant, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation	2014-2015
Rackham Humanities Candidacy Fellowship, University of Michigan	2013
UM Radcliffe-Ramsdell Fellowship	2013
Predoctoral Research Grant, Social Science Research Council and Mellon-Mays Foundation	2012
Multi-Country Fellowship, Council of American Overseas Research Centers	2012
UM Rackham International Research Award	2012
SSRC-Mellon Mays Graduate Studies Enhancement Grant	2011

MEDIA CITATIONS/APPEARANCES

Al Jazeera English, live interview	1/2026
“Sudan’s civil war: A visual guide to the brutal conflict.” The Conversation	12/2025
BBC, live interview	12/2025
Interview, The Black Studies Podcast	11/2025
Global News Canada , “UN urges countries to stop funding Sudan war amid reports of shaky humanitarian truce”	11/2025
Al Jazeera English , live interview	11/2025
“Sudan’s cultural heritage becomes a casualty in its civil war” PBS News Hour	10/2025
Deborah Lohse and Preston Carmack, “Belling the Cat: As warring parties in South Sudan ran roughshod over the country, religious leaders turned to a unique idea to make peace” Santa Clara Magazine .	4/2025
“Religious Elements of the Sudanese Civil War” Canopy Forum , Center for the Study of Law and Religion, Emory University.	4/2025
“Sudan’s civil war: what military advances mean, and where the country could be headed next,” The Conversation	3/2025
Mia Kirch, “The Overlooked Expanding Disaster in Sudan: Why the International	12/2024

Community Needs To Do More,” [*Fordham Political Review*](#)

Amina Wase and Helen Katz, “Willfully overlooked conflict’: Speakers spotlight humanitarian crisis in Sudan,” [*Stanford Daily*](#) 10/2024

[Interview](#) with Gerald Horne on Freedom Now (KPFK 90.7FM) 8/2024

“[The Creeping Coup](#)” Throughline podcast, National Public Radio 7/2024

“[Protesting a Dictatorship in a Dictatorship](#)” Rights & Wrongs podcast, Human Rights Watch 7/2024

Daniel Beekman, “WA’s Sudanese community suffering amid war that’s displaced Millions,” [*Seattle Times*](#) 1/2024

Reem Kirja and Jane Lam, “[Sudan’s struggle](#)” West Side Story, Iowa City West High School 10/2023

Melissa Chemam, “[Egypt and Sudan’s international partners try to stop the civil war](#)” 7/2023
Radio France International

Melissa Chemam, “[Fighting spreads in Sudan after 72-hour truce expires](#)” 6/2023
Radio France International

Melissa Chemam, “[Sudan’s conflict enters third month amid escalation of violence](#)” 6/2023
Radio France International

Melissa Chemam, “[US and Saudi mediators reach a ceasefire agreement in Sudan](#)” 6/2023
Radio France International

Nick Perry, “[Pope’s push for peace in South Sudan Faces Tough Hurdles](#)” AFP 2/2023

Elliott Almond, “[Soccer leaders deserve blame for putting World Cup in Qatar](#)” Cascadia Daily, 11/2022

Jen Kirby, “[The coup in Sudan, explained](#)” Vox 10/2021

OTHER MEDIA

[Interview](#), New Books Network 5/2024

[Interview](#), The US in the World series podcast (Cornell University Press) 5/2024

[Interview](#), History Behind News podcast 7/2023

[Interview](#), National Security This Week with Jon Olson 6/2023

‘Sudan’s war is wrecking a lot, including its central bank—a legacy of trailblazing African American economist and banker Andrew Brimmer’ [*The Conversation*](#) 6/2023

“ Q&A: Christians Worry About Getting Trampled Like Grass in Sudan Conflict ” <i>Christianity Today</i>	5/2023
‘ The Global Impact of Sudan’s Current Crisis ’ The Doorstep podcast, Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs	5/5023
‘Sudan’s plunge into chaos has geopolitical implications near and far—including for US strategic goals’ The Conversation	4/2023
Interview, BBC World Service (Newsday)	4/2023
‘ Conflict in Sudan: Power Perspective with Denzil Taylor ’ Power 98.7 (South Africa)	4/2023
‘ What Is Happening in Sudan, Explained ’ The Quicky Podcast (Australia)	4/2023
Interview , BeFM Morning Wave [Busan, South Korea]	4/2023
‘Sudan crisis explained: What’s behind the latest fighting, and how it fits nation’s troubled past’ The Conversation	4/2023
Interview , KNKX Public Radio (Seattle, Tacoma)	2/2023
Interview , Al Jazeera English	2/2023
Interview , University of Washington News	2/2023
Interview , New Books Network Africa podcast	5/2022
Interview , Obehi Podcast	4/2022
Interview, United Nations Mission in South Sudan Radio Miraya (South Sudan)	12/2021
Interview, “This Morning with Henry Shinn,” TBS eFM Radio (Seoul, South Korea)	11/2021
Interview, BBC Radio 5 Live’s “Up All Night” with Dotun Adebayo	10/2021
Interview , ‘Reclaiming History Segment,’ Media Sanctuary Program, WOOC 105.3FM	8/2021
Interview , Jude 3 Project Podcast	8/2021
‘ Religion in the Making of South Sudan ’ Duke University Press Blog	7/2021
‘As South Sudan turns 10, questions over the role of the church emerge amid anti-clerical Violence,’ The Conversation	7/2021
‘ Chosen Peoples: Christianity and Political Imagination in South Sudan ’ Patheos, Anxious Bench,	4/2021
‘South Sudanese football: colonial legacy sheds light on present day fortunes’	9/2018

The Conversation

‘America needs Africa,’ *Centre Daily Times* (State College, Pennsylvania) 1/2018

BOOK REVIEWS

Review for Kimberly D. Hill, *A Higher Mission: The Careers of Alonzo and Althea Brown Edmiston in Central Africa* in *Reading Religion* (July 1, 2022) 2022

Review for Douglas H. Johnson, *South Sudan: A New History for a New Nation in Africa: The International Journal of the International African Institute* 90, no. 2 (February 2020): 422-423. 2020

‘Fragile States: Nation-building in Sudan’ Review of Alden H. Young’s *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization, Economic Development, and State Formation*. Cambridge University Press, 2017. Published in *Books & ideas*. 2018

PRESENTATIONS

“Global Politics and the Sudanese Civil Conflict” at Sudan: Beyond the Silence, hosted by the University of Washington Muslim Students Association. In-person. 2026

“Rendering to Caesar: Lessons from Wartime Sudan” Frederick Neumann Memorial Lecture, Princeton Theological Seminary. In-person. 2025

“Media, Race, and the Sudanese Civil War” Global Africa Transcontinental Seminar Series, Sponsored by UW African Studies, Cheikh Anta Diop University History Department, and SciencesPo Africa Program.

“Negro Canaan? Tuskegee, Cotton, and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan” Global Virtual Forum, African Studies Program, Pennsylvania State University.

“The Conflict in Sudan: Background, Realities and Possible Futures” Webinar hosted by the Department of African American Studies, University of Detroit Mercy.

“The Sudan Conflict: Background, Present, and Futures” Lecture, University of Washington Faculty Auxiliary, University of Washington.

“Bounds of Blackness: African Americans, Sudan, and the Politics of Solidarity” Seminar, Andrew Hook Centre for American Studies, University of Glasgow. Virtual.

“Bounds of Blackness: African Americans, Sudan, and the Politics of Solidarity” Black FUTURE Month Diaspora Studies Series, sponsored by the Taft Research Center and Department of History, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio.

“The Civil War and South Sudan: Impacts and Implications.” Presentation at “Sudan: In the Eye of the Storm” symposium sponsored by the African Studies Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. 2024

“Silent Crimes: Atrocities in Sudan and the International Response” Panel sponsored by the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies, Center for African Studies, Middle Eastern Studies Forum,

and Center for Human Rights and International Justice, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

“Call to Brotherhood: The Nation of Islam and the Sudan.” Council on African Studies Lecture Series, Yale University.

“Understanding the Wagner Group” Presentation for the Boston University Frederick S. 2023
Pardee School of Global Studies African Studies Center, Unpacking Foreign Military Presences in Africa Webinar Series for 6-12 teachers.

“Chosenness, Providence and Political Theology in South Sudan” Presentation at Global Studies Outreach Workshop on Religious Nationalism in a Global Context, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

“When Caesar Ruled Khartoum: The Hermeneutics of Church-State Relations in Wartime Sudan” Paper at the American Historical Association Meeting, Philadelphia.

“Call to Brotherhood: the Nation of Islam and the Sudan” Paper at the African Studies 2022
Association Meeting, Philadelphia.

“Reorienting Africa in the Classroom: Religion and Politics in South Sudan.” Presentation with the World Affairs Council, Seattle.

“Christianity is now your tribe: Christian and Ethnic Politics in South Sudan.” Presentation at the African Studies Centre, Leiden University. Virtual.

“After the Exodus: Political Theology in South Sudan.” Presentation at the African Studies Center Eye on Africa speaker series, Michigan State University.

“The Troubled Promised Land: Political Theology in South Sudan.” Presentation at the Council of African Studies Lecture Series, Yale University.

“After the Exodus: Political Theology in South Sudan.” Presentation at the Studies in Contemporary Africa Seminar, Columbia University. Virtual.

“Two Sudans, Human Rights, and the Afterlives of St. Josephine Bakhita.” Presentation at the Faith and History Conference, Baylor University.

“Christianity is now your tribe: Christian and Ethnic Politics in South Sudan.” Presentation at the Center for Political Theology, Villanova University.

“Christianity is now your tribe: Christian and Ethnic Politics in South Sudan.” Presentation hosted By the Sudan Studies Society UK and the Durham University Centre for Contemporary African History. Virtual.

“Christianity is now your tribe: Christian and Ethnic Politics in South Sudan.” Presentation at Fordham University. Virtual.

“Two Sudans, Human Rights, and the Afterlives of St. Josephine Bakhita.” Presentation at 2021
African Studies Association meeting.

“Christianity is now your tribe: Mission, Education and Ethnicity in Colonial South Sudan.” Presentation at the Vanderbilt History Seminar, Vanderbilt University.

“Christianity is now your tribe: Christian and Ethnic Politics in South Sudan.” Presentation at Stanford University Africa Research Workshop. Virtual.

“Christianity and Political Imagination in South Sudan.” Roundtable at the American Academy of Religions annual meeting. Virtual.

“Christianity is now your tribe: Christian and Ethnic Politics in South Sudan.” Presentation at Makerere History Seminar, Makerere University. Virtual.

Discussant for panel concerning “The Moral Empire at Large: Religion and the Diplomacy of Colonialism and Decolonization in Central Africa.” Meeting of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. Virtual.

“The Troubled Promised Land: Political Theology in South Sudan.” Presentation at the Wits Interdisciplinary Seminar in the Humanities. Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the Witwatersrand. Virtual.

“Political Theology in South Sudan.” Presentation at the Edinburgh Centre for Global History. University of Edinburgh. Virtual.

“After the Exodus: Political Theology in South Sudan.” Presentation at the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs. Boston University.

“The Troubled Promised Land: Political Theology in Independent South Sudan.” Presentation at the Penn State African Studies Brown Bag Seminar Series. Virtual.

“Negro Canaan: Tuskegee, Leigh Hunt, and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan” Northwestern University Department of African American Studies Virtual Lecture Series

“Lord Come to Our Aid”: Islamization, Civil War, and the Pastoral Letters of the Sudan Catholic Bishops’ Conference, 1983-1991.” African Studies Association meeting. 2020

“Black America and the Sudanese Mahdi” Presentation at the Association for the Worldwide Study of the African Diaspora Conference, Williamsburg, Virginia. 2019

“Negro Canaan: Tuskegee, Leigh Hunt, and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan” Presentation at the Association for the Study of African American Life and History Meeting, North Charleston, South Carolina.

“The Religious Auspices of the Torit Mutiny” public lecture at the Symposium on Religious Minorities in Muslim Africa, sponsored by the Islam in Africa Working Group (Center for African Studies) at the University of Florida.

“Before the Bright Star: Football in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan” African Studies Conference, Atlanta. 2018

“Colonial Past, Present Meaning: Football in South Sudan” Center for the Study of Sports in Society, Pennsylvania State University.

“Theologians in Exile: War, Refugees, and Religious Thought during the First Sudanese Civil War” Paper presentation at the Rethinking Migration: African Perspectives Conference hosted by the African Studies Program, Pennsylvania State University

“The Construction of Religious Nationalism in Southern Sudan” Public lecture co-sponsored by the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Georgetown University.

“Religion, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Identity in Southern Sudan” Presentation at the Paterno Fellows Lunch with Honors, Pennsylvania State University.

“You are not a Dinka”: Christianity, Ethnicity, and Mission Print Culture in South Sudan, 1930-1955” Paper delivered at African Studies Association Conference, Chicago. 2017

“Khartoum Goliath: The Martial Theology of SPLM/SPLA Update” Presentation at the African Studies Program Open Seminar, Pennsylvania State University. 2016

“Propaganda, Theology, and Resistance in Sudan” Presentation at the Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, Macalester College.

“The Troubled Promised Land: The Politics of Religious Thought in Southern Sudan Since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement” Paper delivered at African Studies Association Conference, San Diego. 2015

“Propaganda, Theology, and Resistance in Sudan” Paper delivered at Center for Scholarship and Learning, Conversations about Our Scholarly Lives Series. Macalester College.

“Khartoum Goliath: The Martial Theology of the *SPLM/SPLA Update*” Paper delivered at African Studies Association Conference, Indianapolis. 2014

“‘I clearly see the finger of God’: Providence and the Construction of South Sudanese Religious Thought in the First Civil War”. Paper delivered at Graduate Students in African Studies Symposium, Indiana University.

“‘Persecution and Exile’: F. Angelo Tutuo and Revelations from the South Sudan National Archive” Paper delivered at African Studies Association Conference, Baltimore. 2013

“‘Ye are a Chosen People’: Biblical Rhetoric and National Liberation in Southern Sudan, 1955-1967” Paper delivered at Sudan Studies Association Conference, University of Pennsylvania.

“When Caesar Ruled Khartoum: The Hermeneutics of Church and State in Southern Sudan.” Paper delivered at African Studies Group, Durham University (UK).

“The Construction of Christian Nationalism in South Sudan.” Presentation at Black 2012

Humanities Collective, University of Michigan.

“Religion, Militarism, and the Seeds of Southern Sudanese Separatism, 1899-1914.”
Paper delivered at Graduate History Conference, Louisiana State University.

“Building Stronger Peer Relationship to Improve Our Retention in Graduate School.”
Panelist at Students of Color of Rackham Conference, University of Michigan.

“Missionaries, Prophecy, and Southern Sudanese Nationalism.” Paper delivered at Eisenberg 2011 Institute for Historical Studies, University of Michigan.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES AND SERVICE

Associate Editor, <i>Global Black Thought</i>	2025-present
Bethwell A. Ogot Book Prize Committee Member, African Studies Association	2023-present
Executive Board Member, Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities	2023-present
Director of Graduate Studies, UW Department of History	2023-present
Director, UW African Studies Program	2023-present
Interim Director, UW African Studies Program	2022-23
Member, UW History Undergraduate Studies Committee	2022-23
Web development and public relations committee, PSU African Studies Program	2021-22
Outreach Committee, Religious Studies	2021-22
Committee is working on building a new website, starting a regular newsletter, facilitating the RLST Book Club, and developing outreach programs to increase awareness of the RLST minor on campus and engagement in RLST more broadly.	
Chair, Promotion Committee for faculty member under review	2021
PSU Presidential Commission Truth and Reconciliation Process Subcommittee	2021
Tasked with identifying Penn State expertise, locate models, articulate challenges, and create goals for an institutional "Truth and Reconciliation Process."	
Faculty Adviser, PSU Organization for the Development of Africa	2020-21
Presidential Commission on Racism, Bias and Community Policing	2020-21
Tasked with examining the deployment of Penn State's resources to address social issues related to racism and bias that are pervasive in the country and specifically at Penn State. Tasked with making recommendations that will promote and support the safety of faculty, staff and students who are confronted by racism and bias on Penn State campuses.	
Graduate Committee, PSU African Studies Program	2018-20

Policy Committee, PSU History Department	2017-18
SSRC-Mellon PhD Professional Development Conference	2018
Attended three-day event that provided useful information for alumni of the Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellowship who are currently on the tenure-track.	
Emerging Scholars Summer Mentoring Program for Doctoral Study in History	2017-18
Organized by the George and Ann Richards Civil War Center and Department of History, I served on panels about pursuing a PhD and succeeding in graduate school.	
Minority Rights Group International	2017
Reviewed 6,000 word updates on the profile on South Sudan for MRGI's World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples.	
Awards Committee Member, Penn State Center for the Study of Sport in Society	
Reviewed undergraduate essays that outlined proposed research projects. Assessed their relative quality for the purpose of providing input for the awarding decision.	
Member of History Prize Committee, Macalester College Department of History	2016
Reviewed undergraduate essays for the purpose of selecting prize recipients for essays in areas that included US, European, and Women's and Gender History.	
Co-Coordinator, UM African History and Anthropology Workshop	2014-15
Organized regular workshops for graduate students and faculty interested in African studies, invite University and external scholars to present their work.	
Cataloging Intern, South Sudan National Archive	2012
Served on six-week project coordinated by the Rift Valley Institute. Worked with members of the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Culture to preserve, catalog, and digitize documents held in the South Sudan National Archives in Juba.	
Co-Chair, UM Black Humanities Collective	2010-12
Organized bi-weekly meetings and workshops of graduate students interested in various aspects of the African Diaspora, planned a panel discussion entitled "Who's in Charge? Deconstructing Black Leadership in America", and a film screening and discussion of Vincent Brown's documentary "Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness".	
Research Assistant for Professor Amal Fadlalla	2012, 2013
Conducted research about the historical conflict between Northern and Southern Sudan (events and historiography) and African-American attention given to Southern Sudan/Sudanese slavery.	
Research and Writing Assistant, William L. Clements Library	2010
Participated in project funded by the National Institute for the Humanities; conducted research to be used to supplement online finding aids for the William L. Clements Library, edited existent finding aids, and deciphered handwritten manuscripts dating back to the eighteenth century.	