

# **Guidelines of the African Studies Association for Members Ethical Conduct in Research and Other Professional Undertakings in Africa**

**Adopted June 23, 2005 by the ASA Board of Directors**

---

These guidelines for ethical conduct in scholarly and professional activities in Africa are designed to orient members to the issues involved in research and other professional endeavors across cultures and nations and especially where there is highly unequal access to the means for engaging in them. These ASA guidelines may be superseded in some cases by requirements, guidelines, or ethical codes of federal and local governments, universities, funding agencies, professional organizations, and other bodies with supervisory responsibility.

The African Studies Association represents a diverse group of people interested in Africa and its people. The Association has a long history of commitment to fostering the study of Africa, to supporting research by Africans, and of promoting collaboration among Africanists. No guidelines for conduct can presume to be comprehensive or universally applicable because the range of activities conducted by our members is vast and the contexts in which they carry out their work change constantly. Nonetheless, several principles are enduring foundations for ethical conduct of research and other professional endeavors across cultures, international boundaries, and especially among those with uneven access to financial and professional resources. These principles are not separate but form an interlinked framework for responsible conduct of research.

## 1. Do No Harm

## 2. Open and Full Disclosure of Objectives, Sources of Funding, Methods, and Anticipated Outcomes

## 3. Informed Consent and Confidentiality

## 4. Reciprocity and Equity

## 5. Deposition of Data and Publications

## 6. Professional Misconduct

## 7. Preservation of Cultural Heritage

## 8. Academic Freedom

## Policy Statement Concerning Human Rights

## Policy Statement Concerning Academic Freedom

### **1. Do No Harm**

When conducting research or pursuing professional activities in Africa, members of the Association shall seek to be conscious of and to minimize the potential risks in the present and future which their endeavors may pose for those who

participate or who are being studied. Responsible conduct necessitates that the researcher be well-informed about possible wider political, cultural, economic, religious, and social contexts of the work in order to ensure that the research will not put collaborators, research subjects, students, or assistants at risks that they do not have the information to assess.

Africanists should commit themselves to those practices of responsible conduct in research, teaching, or other professional activity that follow the ethical imperatives of do no harm (nonmaleficence) and do good (beneficence). Africanists should commit themselves, as far as possible, to respect, in these terms, prevailing local practices of collaborating, hiring, training, and using assistants and subjects. Africanists also should commit themselves to pursue non-discriminatory practices whenever possible.

## **2. Open and Full Disclosure of Objectives, Sources of Funding, Methods, and Anticipated Outcomes**

Members of the Association are committed to open and full disclosure of their work to all cooperating African colleagues and institutions, all graduate and field assistants, and the subjects with whom we work and whom we study. Each of these should have full access to information about the objectives of the work, the sources of institutional support, sponsorship, other funding, the methods to be employed, and the anticipated outcomes of the research or professional endeavors.

Because the findings of our research or recommendations or conclusions drawn from it may affect the interests of the peoples and communities we study, members of the Association should be conscious of the interests of the sponsors and funders of the research or professional endeavors, as well as any third parties who may have access to the findings or data, and anticipate their potential uses and abuses of the research data. Further, we shall notify our African colleagues of the sponsors, funders, and their potential uses of the information to be collected.

We shall not engage in any research which we know or believe to be funded secretly, is likely to be used for covert purposes, or to have potentially negative consequences for our African colleagues. Africanists should not accept funds or sponsorship that benefit a sponsoring organization or government in self-aggrandizing ways that compromise the integrity of Africanists' scholarly endeavors by influencing results of research, professional work, or the content of presentations. We shall be particularly sensitive to participation in projects which could be reasonably construed as sustaining or strengthening the powers of political leaders or states guilty of violations of human rights. Furthermore, we are committed to keeping in the public domain all research and publications completed under sponsorship of any government.

## **3. Informed Consent and Confidentiality**

We shall seek to obtain the fully voluntary and informed consent of all the people

participating in our research or other work before it is undertaken. Researchers should develop instruments of informed consent that are appropriate to the cultural context of their research. Such instruments should not only inform the subjects of the nature of the research and its potential risks but also should guarantee to subjects that, if they wish, their confidentiality will be fully respected. Researchers should be cognizant of the real difficulties of securing informed consent in contexts of uneven power relations and should develop strategies or techniques for ensuring that such consent be entirely voluntary. Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols should also be followed, as appropriate to Africanists' home institutions and host countries.

#### **4. Reciprocity and Equity**

Members of the Association have a responsibility to support and encourage the professional activities of African collaborators and colleagues and, when appropriate, to build collaborative research and other professional programs with them. Our endeavors should build the capacity of our collaborators and their institutions through research programs, training, and professional development.

All Africanists engaged in collaborative research or other professional endeavors should explain fully the nature of such collaboration, including issues of authorship, access to data collected, intellectual property rights, rights to inventions and copyrights with African colleagues, professionals, and graduate students.

#### **5. Deposition of Data and Publications**

Researchers should return the results of scholarly activities to the communities and the country in which research was conducted, including preliminary reports, papers, dissertations, and all forms of publication. The communities studied or engaged in the research should receive at least a summary of the research and its findings in a form and language they can understand.

Eventually and to the extent feasible, the researcher also should return copies of primary data sets and relevant notes to a responsible archive or depository in the country of research so that the data and materials can be made available to indigenous researchers. In both the research reports and the data sets, the identities of the persons who provided information should be kept confidential or disguised unless they have given permission for their identities to be revealed. Scholars and professional Africanists should make every effort to see that their publications or reports are not exploited for inordinate profit and that they are made available at charges that are reasonable to scholars, libraries, and higher education institutions in the appropriate African country/ies.

#### **6. Professional Misconduct**

Members should observe the Definition of Research Misconduct contained in the Research Misconduct Policy statement of the National Endowment for the

Humanities [<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/researchmisconduct.html>] in that:

- Research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.
- Fabrication is making up data or results and recoding or reporting them.
- Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion or analytical conclusions.
- The ASA also follows the Findings of Research Misconduct put forth by the NEH in that a finding of misconduct requires that:
  - there be a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community
  - the misconduct be committed intentionally, or knowingly, or recklessly; and
  - the allegation be proven by a preponderance of evidence.

Finally, the ASA follows NEH policy in that a home institution bears primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct and for the inquiry, investigation, and adjudication of research misconduct alleged to have occurred in association with their own institutions.

## **7. Preservation of Cultural Heritage**

Members of the African Studies Association have a particular responsibility to respect and protect the cultural heritage of the people in Africa, particularly in light of the growing illegal international trafficking in African art, archaeological artifacts, and other cultural materials. Members of ASA further have an obligation to inform themselves of the provisions, relevant to their research and other activities in Africa, of The Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of an Armed Conflict <http://www.icomos.org/hague/hague.convention.html>, the UNESCO Convention on Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Export, Import, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property [http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/1970/html\\_eng/page1.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/1970/html_eng/page1.shtml), the United States Cultural Property Implementation Act <http://exchanges.state.gov/culprop/97-446.html>, and bilateral measures taken by the United States and other governments to prohibit the illicit traffic in stolen art. Members may also wish to consult the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (U.S. Department of State) International Cultural Property Protection <http://exchanges.state.gov/culprop/>.

## **8. Academic Freedom**

As members of their communities, Africanists have the rights and obligations of other citizens. They measure the urgency of these obligations in light of their responsibilities to their subject, their professions, their students, their colleagues, and the university or professional associations to which they may belong. As citizens engaged in professions that depend upon freedom for their health and integrity, Africanists have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and the principles and public understanding of academic freedom.

### **Policy Statement Concerning Human Rights**

The African Studies Association is dedicated to the defense of human rights and to drawing attention to acts and events that violate the rights of people and their communities. In this respect the ASA follows the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which can be found at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>. A commitment to universal human rights requires an ethical commitment to the equal opportunity of all peoples, all communities, and all societies to the full realization of their humanity.

### **Policy Statement Concerning Academic Freedom**

The African Studies Association is dedicated to the promotion of teaching, research, and professional endeavors with respect to Africa with the widest possible freedom of inquiry and dissemination of findings to the wider public in the United States and abroad. Defense of academic freedom, as it impinges on the intellectual and professional interests of members, both individual and institutional, is a fundamental role of the Association.

Last revised 8/8/05

---

African Studies Association, Rutgers University, 132 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1400 USA  
T: 732-932-8173; F: 732-932-3394;  
Department E-mail addresses: [http://www.africanstudies.org/asa\\_departmentemailaccounts.html](http://www.africanstudies.org/asa_departmentemailaccounts.html)  
Web: [Http://www.africanstudies.org](http://www.africanstudies.org)