

Charles Quist-Adade, PhD,  
Kwantlen Polytechnic University  
Surrey, BC

### **Africa and the Canadian Gaze: From Distance and Close-up**

Canadian eyes see what Canadian eyes want to see in Africa. The horrific, demonizing and dehumanizing stereotypes of “darkest” and “unknown” Africa remain unbroken in the collective Western psyche, in spite of Africa’s entrance into the world political arena after African countries gained independence in the 1960’s. There is a “treasure trove” of history behind this. European explorers and Christian missionaries created the image of a “Dark Continent” populated by ignoble savage, bestial, cannibalistic, ape-like men and women. The picture was that of the “fallen brethren” and the White man whose burden was to save the heathenish African through Western civilizing missions. The picture is no different [today](#). You have seen it over and over again: Emaciated children with protruding eyes, flies feasting in the gaping mouths; frail, barefoot mothers barely able to look after their dying children. And a Westerner, well-fed, rosy cheeked, well-dressed and apparently driven by compassion, helping out the poor African victims of one of Africa’s many scourges – AIDS, famine or drought. In my paper, I intend to explore the historical sources of contemporary omissions, distortions and marginalization of Black Studies in Canadian knowledge industry, including academia, media and popular culture.