

VIEW to the U transcribed
Season 3: Global Perspectives; Episode #1
Professor Julie MacArthur
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[Intro Music comes in and fades out]

Julie MacArthur (JM): Back in 2008, I wrote an article on the recent election in Kenya, which happened in 2007. That election led to a lot of violence, violence that was painted in ethnic terms.

My name is Julie MacArthur. I'm an assistant professor at the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Toronto Mississauga as well as cross listed with the Department of History at the University of Toronto St. George campus.

JM: It was one of my first publications, and I was sort of making an argument about why certain patterns of violence and why certain patterns of voting mobilization were occurring in Western Kenya. I wrote this article to try to unpack this and explain this.

About six months later, a good friend of mine who works for NGOs that work with the Kenyan government was at a big conference on inter-ethnic violence. One member of Parliament got up, started shaking my article and saying, "We're talking about ethnicity all wrong. This isn't actually the issue that we should be focusing on." My friend starts texting me and telling me this is happening. I'm terrified because I have no idea what they've taken away from the article. I have no idea what direction, and I certainly didn't expect that MPs in Kenya would be reading this article, so you can't always predict. You can't predict the ways they might use it.

[Theme song fades in]

Carla DeMarco (CD): **Destination: Africa.**

On today's episode of the *VIEW to the U* podcast, we're talking mapping borders and territories and its impact on identities in Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with Professor Julie MacArthur.

We also cover a range of other topics that relate to her work, such as aesthetic education and African cinema, as well as a special event she is participating in with Masai Ujiri, President of the Toronto Raptors in relation to Black History Month as it draws to a close for 2019.

With this new third season of the *VIEW to the U* highlighting UTM's global perspectives, Julie will discuss her research, which focuses on the role of geographic borders, and local practices of space representation and memories shaping constructions of community, power, and descent in modern Africa.

CD: Hello and welcome to *VIEW to the U: An Eye on UTM Research*. I'm Carla DeMarco at U of T Mississauga. *VIEW to the U* is a monthly podcast that will feature UTM faculty members from a range of disciplines, who will illuminate some of the inner workings of the science labs and enlighten the social sciences and humanities hubs at UTM.

[Theme music fades out]

CD: Julie MacArthur is an assistant professor in the Department of Historical Studies at U of T Mississauga with a cross appointment in the Department of History in the faculty of Arts and Science on the U of T St. George campus. She is also a fellow with the Jackman Humanities Institute at U of T. In her research, she has investigated electoral politics, linguistic history, and the making of political communities. Her first book, *Cartography and the Political Imagination in Colonial Kenya*, published in 2016 explores mapping and descenting politics in Kenya. In 2017, she edited and served as primary author on the book *Dedan Kimathi on Trial: Colonial Justice and Popular Memory in Kenya's Mau Mau Rebellion*.

Her new research project, "Radical Cartographies," investigates the alternative mappings of decolonization, sovereignty, and citizenship across Eastern Africa from 1950 to 1976.

CD: In addition, her work in African representation extends to the field of African cinema, where Julie has worked as both a curator and an academic. Her project, "African Cinema and the Historical Imagination," explores the ways in which Africans tell their stories through the technology of film. She has also worked as a programming associate with the Toronto International Film Festival and Film Africa in London, as well as serving as the director of the Cambridge African Film Festival for several years. Julie regularly curates film programs and participates in film forums and festivals around the world.

CD: I know that your research interest covers several areas, including, and this is taken from your website, the role of cartography and geographic imaginations, borders and local practices of space, memory, and representation and constructions of community, power, and descent in modern Africa.

I was just wondering if you would unpack this statement and tell me a bit more about your research with, perhaps, some examples of current projects that you are working on.

JM: Absolutely. My original research interests revolved around questions of how the impact of cartography, in specific mapping borders, the creation of colonial states in the late 19th century and early 20th century impacted African communities, their own understandings of space, their own organizations of community, their feelings of belonging to certain communities, their abilities to move and to migrate. This kind of spiraled into my first book, which looked at the ways in which the creation of boundaries actually produced new identities, produced new kinds of ways of imagining themselves within the colonial space, but also within the nation. It looked at a variety of different angles. It looked at language and the attempts to create one language among a group of people that were quite diverse. It looked at the ways in which borders were used to police women's identities and women's bodies, particularly trying to control their movements, and also the spaces in which they were allowed to inhabit in the colonial and early post-colonial period.

JM: It also looked at the ways in which local communities took up the practices of cartography and of mapping in order to make claims, in order to say, "We are a people. We have rights to this history, to control our resources." Indeed, in the period of decolonization, two actually claim an independence to say, "We should actually be an independent state with our own sovereignty," based on these kind of maps that they were drawing. You sort of see the influence that these new cartographic images had on people and how they were able to take them up as tools of resistance. To link it to my new project, my most recent project is looking much more regionally. It's looking at the period of decolonization and looking at what I like to call the alternative mappings of decolonization.

Between 1958 and 1964, all of the Pan African organizations that existed, all of those that had preceded it, argued that all boundaries on the continent of Africa were artificial, were arbitrary, were created by colonial powers and therefore had to be either changed or abolished.

JM: By 1964, the organization of African Unity, which becomes the current African Union says, "No. We're not changing any boundaries." Up to 1964, everyone believed they really would be changing boundaries to reflect more local ideas about what these nations should look like to actually change the colonial relations that had been established by those boundaries. 1964 sort of suppressed all of those alternative imaginings. Before that, you see a number of different groups mapping alternative nations and making arguments about why they should have sovereignty, about why post-colonial Africa should look very different from colonial Africa. One of the things that intrigued me about this topic was the kind of nationalist historiography across Eastern Africa, and indeed the continent at large, tells you that these projects were failed or that they were completely buried.

JM: Yet, in the past 1015 years, most of them have come back up as secessionist movements, as movements claiming different forms of autonomy or agitating for actual new boundaries to be drawn. The failure argument in the

contemporary moment doesn't really match the really strong emotional and affective and political ties that people feel to these imagined alternative nations. I'm trying to look at the ways in which people continued to actually envision, but also live, these alternative nations without political recognition, so continue to cross borders, continue to exchange across borders, continue to make families and kinship networks across these borders. In order to understand what the nature of these borders actually are, and questions of globalization, of mobility, of alternative notions of sovereignty, might actually be already in practice, whether or not they have international recognition.

CD: Maybe this isn't a fair question for you, but I'm wondering since there were other countries that were colonized, do you feel that Africa was treated differently than other countries?

JM: Right. It's always a tricky question, the kind of comparative grievances, who's colonization was worse? Who's form of slavery was worse? I tend not to think about historical comparison in that. Even within the continent, you have people who will argue colonization was worse in the British colonies and in the French colonies, or Portuguese colonization was more benign. All of those kind of deny the different levels on which you can find oppression within the colonial system. You can have very physical forms of oppression in terms of massive violence, in terms of genocide, in terms of dispossession of land, but you can have other forms as well. You can have psychological forms of colonization. You can have colonization of resources, of global systems in terms of the way in which those countries can interact, economically and their ability to sustain on those levels. There is actually a common trope that Africa's borders are more arbitrary than anywhere else in the world.

JM: I completely disagree with this. I think all borders are arbitrary. Arbitrary not in the sense that they're not real. They're actually incredibly real for some people. They have very dire consequence in some contexts, but arbitrary in the sense that they're all invented. They're all part of a process of historical invention. That is a process done by people. I disagree with the argument that there are any natural borders. The image of European leaders sitting around the conference table at Berlin in 1884/1885, drawing on this big blank map, there's lots of cartoons that show these old white men in Europe drawing lines on a blank map of Africa, that actually didn't happen. There were no borders decided at that conference. Indeed, many of the borders that come to emerge in Africa are done with a very complex process of administrators on the ground having to work with local African populations.

If you ask the African Union now, I've worked with the African Union's border program, only a very small percentage of the borders you see on a map actually exist in any form on the ground. Did colonialism create these boundaries or did they convince us that these boundaries exist? My first book was on the border between Kenya and Uganda, which does cut through many communities, which was changed in 1902. There's a lot of elements that intersect with my interests in terms of how that boundary was constructed and the impact that it had on

the communities that live in and around it. My second project on the alternative mappings, you could do that continentally. I'm having enough trouble trying to do it just in East Africa, because there is so much material and there are so many examples of people making alternative arguments about what decolonization should mean, what it should look like. That project is focusing on Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and some of the Somali territories.

JM: What I realized even in my first project is that I couldn't understand really what was happening unless I took that kind of regional approach. There's sort of multiple levels and scales that people are talking about in terms of what this kind of sovereignty and what boundaries can mean in an independent Africa. It has been one of the main challenges that every time you sort of start pushing, you end up on the boundary of another country that has its own history and its own interests in terms of how it interacts with those systems. I've tried to create something a little bit more manageable by looking at Eastern Africa. Luckily, the East African Federation provides for a model, or a basis, for where some of those debates were happening and the limits of those debates.

CD: You really have described the nature of research, though, to me because I think sometimes people set out on a certain path and the more you chip away, you find this other piece that you didn't even think you'd be going down that route.

JM: Absolutely. The joke with the historians is that ... I made this joke when I was in masters at the University of Cambridge to one of the senior fellows. I said, "I'm trying to focus on the 1930s but I keep realizing there's more as I go back and back. No one's written on this and I keep going back." He said, "Welcome to history."

CD: I know your work also explores African cinema. You've been involved with film programming both at U of T Mississauga's Blackwood Gallery, as well as the celebrated Toronto International Film Festival and that you've worked with the Jackman Humanities Institute and the University of Western Cape South Africa on a collaboration called Aesthetic Education. I was wondering if you could tell me a bit more about these affiliations with cinema and the notion of what is aesthetic education.

JM: Absolutely. I started at the Toronto International Film Festival when I was 18, which is about as young as you can start at the Toronto International Film Festival. I worked there for over a decade. I really consider myself to have grown up in the film world in that way. I worked there throughout my entire masters and PhD. In Cambridge, I ran an African film festival. That love of programming and of working with African film makers has continued throughout my career. It's sort of been a dual path that's now starting to come together a little bit more. I was sort of raised on African cinema and in that world and have always loved the potential of bringing programs, especially of curating a program, that can make an argument through film to audiences and

then being the intermediary and helping the audience engage with the film makers.

JM:

One of the things I was able to do in my last job at the University of British Columbia and then I brought it here to Toronto when I arrived a few years ago was I had a program on ... a Shirk funded program called New Wave in African Cinema. We brought film makers from across the continent to Vancouver and to Toronto to show their films and to talk to audiences, to do workshops with students. This links into the new collaboration between the Jackman Humanities Institute and the Center for Humanities Research at the University of Western Cape in South Africa. The project is called Aesthetic Education. Most people sort of raise an eyebrow 'cause it does seem like a term that doesn't have a lot of concrete meaning. It actually does.

It's really about the ways in which the arts, in particular, create knowledge and how can we use the arts and engage with the arts in a way that helps us to explore different kinds of research topics to engage different audiences, but also to actually produce research, to produce research through these artistic means, to open up the creativity, which I believe is at the basis of all research, regardless of your discipline. A kind of creative mind and a creative thinking is what is required in order to innovate and to explore new regions. This is really bringing the artistic realm and the artists themselves into dialogue and into conversations with those working in more classically defined research areas, to broaden out how we engage with questions of knowledge production and with questions of the impact that knowledge production has.

I teach a course on history and film, which is not the history of film. It's all about how historians can use and engage with film as a historical source, as one of their sources in their historical investigation. One of the things I try to bring out in that course is the fact that more people are going to see *Black Hawk Down* than are going to read a book written by a historian about a conflict in Somalia. That's sort of a fact. I teach a course on the Rwandan genocide. Most of my students have seen *Hotel Rwanda* or there's a new Netflix series, I believe, that's out right now. That will be the more common access point for a lot of people to historical narratives.

That's a huge responsibility. That is going to have, possibly, a bigger impact on the collective historical imagination than anything we are ever able to write. We are almost obliged and required, I believe, to engage with the kinds of narratives that are being produced in popular culture, but also in other artistic forms. That can only deepen our engagement, but also our own research questions. I'm not a fan of the historians who go on TV and kind of shake their finger and point out inaccuracies, 'cause inaccuracies aren't really the point. We don't do that with each other's work, either. It's rather to see, "Well, what kind of argument does the film make? What does it leave you with? How does it produce certain sentiments or ideas or imaginings of what the past was and why it still matters or what it means in the present?"

JM: I think this aesthetic collaboration is great, not only because it's the south/north collaboration. It allows us to collaborate with colleagues that we don't often get a chance to collaborate with on the South African side as well as on the North American side, but also it allows us to bring into conversation questions of production, of artistic production, and also the practitioners into that dialogue to see where the disjunctures are, where the kind of commonalities are, and where we could possibly build new forms of knowledge and also with public engagement.

CD: I am totally with you on the idea of using cinema as a teaching tool. Then I can't help but think about, say, when film has been used for propaganda purposes and I'm thinking about Leni Riefenstahl and things like that in Berlin. Then, how do you draw the line? Because sometimes films can be made also inaccurate but to promote a certain idea. How do you reconcile that?

JM: That is exactly why I teach the course. Leni Riefenstahl is one of the first films we watched. The point is to develop filmic literacy. If you empower people with the ability to read those kinds of sources ... I always say this in history, we're all about our sources, our primary sources. The big question is, "Can you read the source?" Whether the source is an oral tradition, whether it's a written document, whether it's a document written in another language, whether it's a novel, whether it's a film, it's not ... I don't mean read in the literal sense, I mean the ability to actually deconstruct the text and what the text is trying to produce. Building up those skills allows you to actually ask deeper questions about all the media that's around you. It's about building up a literacy that ... the example I always use and it's always to my great shame, is that I love 24. I always loved 24. I can tell you all the things that are wrong with 24 ideologically and socially and politically, but as a piece of entertainment I quite loved it.

CD: You're talking about the TV series, though, with-

JM: With Kiefer Sutherland.

It's similar to a show like *Homeland*, where there are similar issues that I can note and could talk about for hours. The connections between pleasure in viewing and still remaining critical and aware of the kind of complex messaging that might be being out there is something that we all have to grapple with. You can't even begin to grapple with it if you don't have the tools to be able to analyze it. When I showed Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, this was a year and a half ago I guess, it was soon enough after the inauguration, the inauguration of President Donald Trump, it was soon enough after that that the students ... it didn't take much to figure out where the cameras were exaggerating crowd size, where there was staging.

Certainly Leni Riefenstahl has been referenced in many films, including Star Wars, so thinking about what that means about power and about the kinds of iconography and warnings that were put into a movie like Star Wars through referencing Leni Riefenstahl. You can only kind of make those connections if you

gain that literacy and that familiarity with the techniques. I think it's actually more dangerous to not engage with that kind of material than to expose and try to come up with skills that can allow you to read it in a more conscious and historically grounded and rigorous analytical way.

CD: It totally makes sense to me. It's almost like when you're talking about reading a text, it's developing that critical eye. I was also wondering, because you have spoken a lot about cinema, is that ... can you speak about the power of cinema and storytelling and the ways in which it helps to further convey and enrich ideas, narratives, and movements?

JM: Certainly. Yes. I think I talked about the negative side a little bit more than the positive side, but there is a positive side as well. I take a big responsibility when I'm curating or when I'm programming African cinema. You have the power to be able to expose communities, audiences, the public to different ways of seeing, ways of knowing, ways of approaching something like, in my case, African history, African societies, African cultures. That can have amazingly positive effects. It can also have negative effects. You have to come to that kind of work with a great amount of humility and a great amount of understanding and what you're trying to put out there. I have been so amazed with the response. One example would be I put together a program of short films for the Toronto International Film Festival.

One of the things I tried to do was not only have a kind of balance across the continent, but I put together short films that specifically played with genres that audiences might not expect in Canada. There was a post-apocalyptic, post-climate change apocalyptic samurai film from West Africa, where the director invented an entire new language using Bambara, which is a language from Mali, and also using Asian languages, particularly Japanese, and mixing it together. Everyone had to read subtitles 'cause it was a completely new language. There was a comedy from Cameroon that all takes place in a little taxi. There was a vampire Nollywood story from Nigeria. There was a magical realist story about a boy kind of trying to connect with his father who had passed away in Malawi.

The conversations I had with people afterwards was just sort of bemused, shock, that they almost sort of caught themselves when they'd say, "Well, we didn't think they were making films like this." I said, "Well, why not?" They said, "Yeah, completely. Why wouldn't they be making films like this?" Part of it has to do with what we're given access to. There's sort of a narrow range of stories that we expect. I find this happens with a lot of communities and cinematic traditions that are sort of marginalized. There becomes a kind of stereotyped, "What is an African film? What is an indigenous film?" And the kinds of issues you're allowed to tackle or allowed to access. I think that's certainly starting to break down now. You see the success of Black Panther. You see the success of Roma. There's a lot of different kinds of narratives that are starting to come out, but there still is this idea that there's a certain kind of way in which global audiences want to see the African continent. A lot of African film makers are saying, "We have lots of stories to tell."

JM: There's a great film out right now called *Rafiki*, which is a love story between two Kenyan women. It was banned in Kenya and then they unbanned it for a week and a half so that it could show. Then it was re-banned. Very complicated story, but basically it's a love story. At its heart, it's a Romeo and Juliet love story. Everyone in the world, I think, can resonate with that kind of story. I think a lot of African film makers ... especially when I did this program on the New Wave in African Cinema, it was about this.

It was about throwing off the restraints of having to be what we call castor oil films, which is films you might not enjoy but they're good for you so you should have to watch them, and films that are about ... for a long time, there was a trope around African films that they were all about AIDS orphans. Not that that's not a story and a huge problem and something people are grappling with, but it's not the only story. Certainly even for people who are grappling with those issues, it's not the story they might tell of themselves. It's about opening up the space to allow for these different kinds of stories. I find cinema to be one of the most inviting forms. There's not the literary jump. There's a way in which cinema invites people in through sound, through image, and then through character as well, that I think breaks down some of the barriers that sometimes people have when they're feeling less comfortable with another culture or another tradition. Film can invite them into that dialogue and therefore expose them to a greater range.

CD: Very well said. You made me think about, too, other examples, but I remember Deepa Mehta that, *Fire* I think it was called.

Julie MacArthur: *Fire, Water-*

Carla DeMarco: Yeah.

JM: There was a series of them.

CD: Yeah. They all showed something maybe you wouldn't necessarily expect because that was also a love story between two women and seeing this other side of people's existence. The other one was I saw a movie when I was doing my undergrad, *I am Cuba*, or *Soy Cuba*, but that was another one that kind of threw you off-

JM: Yeah. Absolutely.

CD: You find out at the end that you got tricked. You've been duped.

JM: You've been duped the whole time.

CD: I love that because it's playing with-

JM: Playing with your trust.

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CD: And your expectations-

JM: Yeah. Yeah.

CD: Of what a documentary is.

JM: Absolutely.

CD: I think, to an extent, *This is Spinal Tap* does that as well-

JM: Yep.

CD: It kind of sets you up. It's a farce.

JM: Absolutely. Then there's films that do it and don't ever tell you they're a farce. It takes a long time before people realize that they've been duped. That, again, speaks to the power of cinema, that it can be both potentially revelatory and can be very, very dangerous.

CD: Yes.

JM: The recent film *Vice* does that very well. It creates a whole alternative narrative for the ending and then says, "Nope. Sorry. That's not-" Nope.

JM: "What happens." It's very self-reflexive in terms of its own bias and its own ... the way it's depicting these characters, Janie and Rumsfeld and others. Yeah. No. It's a tricky line. That's again why I think all forms of media are. How do we create engaged critical citizens who are able to ... this whole conversation about fake news or not fake news, to me it's about can you critically assess the kinds of arguments that are being presented to you? The most dangerous arguments are the ones that are incredibly convincing, because they sometimes do shut off your capacity to notice where the fault lines, or where the suspicious use of sources might be.

That's why I believe in what I teach is most of my students will forget all of African history in 10 years. I know I forgot a lot of my Latin American history 10 years later and I'm still a historian. You take a course and you put it away. What I hope they don't put away is those skills, those abilities to assess different kinds of sources, to ask questions about, "Well, what are you basing that argument on? Okay. You're basing it on this study. Well, this study seems to be basing it on a very small sample size." All of those kinds of questions are the way we're going to build much more critically informed and critically active citizens.

CD: I wondered if you could tell me how you got interested in this area in the first place.

JM: Yes. I always expect this question. As anyone who looks like I do should, I am from Canada. I am of Scottish, Irish, and English background. I'm not a natural blonde, but I am blonde. This question is one that comes up often because there's not a natural sort of connection that people can assume. Sometimes when people assume the natural connection it's not there, either. In my case, there is a definite answer that needs to be provided. The truth is that I did not have any connections to the continent in terms of physical continents. I'd never been to the continent before I started doing my graduate work. It was really an intellectual engagement.

The earliest memories, for me, come more from my interest in music, and particular in Caribbean and African music. It's something I can't explain, but from a very young age I was drawn to music from the Caribbean, from reggae and dance hall to music from the African continent, which I was exposed to. I was part of a professional choir called the Toronto Children's Chorus. We sang music from across the world. I was very much so drawn to a lot of the African music that we would do through that. There was always a curiosity, a kind of cultural curiosity with some of things I'd been exposed to. I grew up in Toronto, so I had friends from all over the world and talked to them and their parents about different places that I hadn't had the privilege of traveling to at a young age.

It was really through my undergraduate at the University of Toronto that I became exposed to different areas of the world through studying history and became obsessed, really, with post ... colonial and post-colonial histories. At that point, there wasn't a lot of African history being offered. We did have African historians who are still teaching today, both on sabbatical at the exact same time so I actually didn't ... they're now my colleagues, but I didn't have the privilege of studying under them. I was taking any course I could, colonial Latin America, Caribbean courses, Southeast Asian course. Then I was also taking courses in African cinema, in Latin American cinema, and what was, at the time, called third world cinema.

I was very fascinated by colonial and post-colonial histories. I started to realize that my interests were sort of coalescing around particular questions and just started emailing the professors who wrote the articles that were inspiring me. Now looking back, I can't believe they answered me. One of the people that I emailed, because I was interested in these questions of mapping and ethnicity and sort of the making of identity and the making of communities, one of them was who, again, at the time did not realize this, but he was ... has been one of the foremost African historians since the 1960s at the University of Cambridge, John Lonsdale. I emailed him and he was so excited that someone else was excited by these same topics that we kind of developed my first project together by email and sent it out.

That's what led me to my first trip, particularly to learn Swahili, to Kenya. That was at the end of my undergraduate career. Ever since then, I've spent four to six months a year, depending on my teaching schedule, on the continent in

some way, shape, or form. There was no sort of pre-existing relationship. It really was born out of this intense intellectual curiosity. Now, particularly Kenya, I've traveled to a lot of places, but particularly Kenya and Nairobi, in particular, feels like a second home.

[interlude music fades in]

CD: Coming up: Global Perspectives.

Julie talks about the work she's done in Africa and the impact she's had both abroad and at home, including some of the damage she's inflicted on students' film viewing practices.

[interlude music fades out]

CD: I think you've touched on this quite a bit, but I was wondering if you could speak to what do you feel is the biggest impact of your work?

JM: Yeah. The biggest impact, it's always difficult to assess. I always warn students when they're producing research, you can't always predict what the impacts are going to be. I wrote an article back in 2008. I wrote an article on the recent election in Kenya, which happened in 2007. That election led to a lot of violence, violence that was painted in ethnic terms, which was a very simplistic reading of the motivations and issues that were at stake in this election. It was one of my first publications. I was sort of making an argument about why certain patterns of violence, and why certain patterns of voting mobilization were occurring in Western Kenya, which Western Kenya happened to have the largest voting ethnic block ... the second largest voting ethnic block. Yet they don't vote together. They don't vote along the lines of political tribalism as is often suspected. I wrote this article to try to unpack this and explain this.

Then, about six months later, a good friend of mine who works for NGOs that work with the Kenyan government was at a big conference on inter-ethnic violence. One member of Parliament got up and said ... started shaking my article and saying, "We're talking about ethnicity all wrong. This isn't actually the issue that we should be focusing on." My friend starts texting me and telling me this is happening. I'm terrified, because I have no idea what they've taken away from the article. I have no idea what direction. I certainly didn't expect that MPs in Kenya would be reading this article. You can't always predict. You can't predict the ways they might use it.

JM: Another example would be in my book. I write a lot about a kingdom called the Kingdom of the Wanga, who existed in the early colonial period and who the colonial government used to kind of rule over the area, a much larger area than the Wanga Kingdom had ever controlled previously. When I did interviews with the royal family, who still exist in Western Kenya, they really thought my project was to reestablish the kingdom and to gain it legitimacy and to be a kind of

political proper tool for their kinds of claims to sovereignty or to independence. I said, "Well, that's not my intention, but however you use my results will be up to you. I doubt my results will support that kind of conclusion." They really had expectations of what that impact might be. I've always been very wary of what kinds of impact I might have.

JM: Similarly, in the film world, the impact is very clear. A lot of time in academia, you can feel very cloistered, very as if you're speaking only to a very small group of people. My work with film, as well as on my second book, which was a book that very much so made public a big archive that is very important to people in East Africa, both, to me, allowed me to engage more directly with the public and to get people excited about learning different aspects of African history, of engaging with the African continent, even contemporarily, in a different way. That impact is always one that I think is at the forefront of my mind, how can I get people excited about these topics and about studying and thinking about and seeing these histories in new ways. That's true from my mom to my students to everyone in between.

I think there always is the ambition that you will be able to produce something that will influence the way people think. I always say not necessarily towards a particular conclusion, but to enliven their own sense of intellectual curiosity so that they, themselves, can come to a conclusion. If they were to look at your material and they would come to a conclusion it might be the same. It might be different. We're engaging in the process of mobilizing that kind of knowledge and that kind of ownership over our own abilities to become the intellectuals. I don't think being an intellectual is the domain of academics alone. I think that if we open up the doors a little bit wider and think about impact in terms of ... not in terms of measurable, quantifiable outcomes, but rather in terms of what it inspires that actually we've done a pretty good job if we can get there.

CD: I was thinking, too, some of the things you were mentioning earlier about with the students and cinema and just having that more sort of critical discerning eye about the information that they're taking in. I think that's a huge impact, too.

JM: Absolutely. I've been told I ruined films for many students. In my mapping history course, I've been told I ruin maps. I had a student on the subway going, "But it's not just a map of where the subway stops are. There's privilege. There's where people can access things. It's where they think we should be moving around the city." I do think part of my role is just destroying things for people by opening up their critical lens. No longer can you just enjoy 24 or Homeland. You actually have to critically think about it. You can still enjoy it. That's always the point I get to at the end is that you can still enjoy it. Hopefully your enjoyment is deepened by it. Yes. I do think just opening up that critical apparatus is most, not only in the humanities, but in all fields in a university, that that's their main goal is to teach you the skills of how to critically engage with whatever material and whatever focus you're looking at.

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CD: This new season of the podcast is focused on global perspectives, looking at UTM researchers who have global impact or explore other nations in the course of their work. I wondered if you could speak to this impact and interest. I guess I was thinking and we discussed this a little bit earlier, that February is Black History Month. There's something you would like to speak about in relation to that.

JM: Yeah. Black History Month is a great month for celebrating different forms of black culture, black history. In North America, it tends to be much more North American focused. Indeed, in most African countries they don't know it's Black History Month because there is a disconnect between black history and African history. You also find a lot of events in North America that will focus on the connections because black communities in Canada or in the U.S. and the continent. I'm often involved in a lot of programming around that, whether it's putting together a film series or whether it's supporting a speaker series or an event such as an event that will be happening at the end of the month with the general manager of the Toronto Raptors, Masai Ujiri, who is the, I believe, first African owner ... or manager of any professional team in any league. I think it's quite a coup for Toronto to have that and certainly reflective of some of our internationalism.

He is quite an inspirational figure, not only in the work he's doing with the Toronto Raptors itself, but also with a program he runs called Giants of Africa, which works closely with NBA Africa setting up training camps across the African continent to build the next generation and to open up access to the next generation of African basketball players. We're in an exciting moment for basketball players from the continent because there's been such a growth. Indeed, some people who've come out of the camps have actually ended up in the NBA which is quite rare even for the NCAA to lead to the NBA. The work that Masai is doing, I think, is really inspirational and speaks to black history and African history as not being geographically confined, as being really transnational, really global in its reach and in its influence.

I mentioned it before, but Black Panther also speaks to that kind of global reach and the ways in which that can bring in different kinds of communities to think about a multiplicity of experiences and of cultures. Black History Month, for me, is really a chance to spotlight and to highlight those interconnections. I hope through my work I can help to facilitate making those connections.

CD: That's great. Those are all the questions I have. I wanted to thank you so much-

JM: Yes. Of course.

Carla DeMarco: For taking the time to tell me about your research. Thank you.

JM: No. Thank you for the opportunity. It's always fun. My door is always open to talk about anything African film, African history.

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CD: Thank you.

JM: No problem. Thank you.

[Closing theme song fades in]

CD: I would like to thank everyone for listening to today's show.

I would like to thank my guest, Julie MacArthur, for telling us about her research in the Department of Historical Studies at U of T Mississauga.

Please feel free to drop me a line at car.demarco@utoronto.ca if you have feedback about the *VIEW to the U* podcast, or if you would like to see a particular researcher or topic get covered.

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Lastly, and as always, thank you to Tim Lane for his tunes and support.

Thank you!