

NIELS JAN BOENDER

AHRC-funded Postdoctoral Research Fellow in History at the University of Edinburgh

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Fellowships

- Postdoctoral Research Fellow, “Global Socio-Economic Rights, Local Contexts: Work in East Africa and Western Europe, 1880 to the Present” (AHRC-funded), School of History, Classics, and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh, October 2024-September 2027. Principal Investigators: Professors Emma Hunter and Julia Moses (University of Sheffield).
- Early Career Fellowship, Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Warwick, April–September 2024.
- Visiting Doctoral Fellowship at the The John W. Kluge Centre at The Library of Congress (Washington DC, USA), funded by the United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Research Council International Placement Scheme, June-September 2023.

Publications

- “Kenyan Politics and the Historical Imagination of the Mau Mau Uprising”, in *The Cambridge History of African Political Thought*, eds. Jon Earle, Emma Hunter, Harry Odamten, Ayesha Omar, and Nana Osei-Opare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2026). (Under Contract).
- (as editor) *Homecoming Veterans in Literature and Culture: Comparative and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Warwick Series in the Humanities, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2025) (Under Contract). [I will contribute the Introduction and a chapter entitled: “‘Have you forgotten that I am one of you?’: Mau Mau Homecomings in Late and Post-Colonial Kenya”]
- “‘Neo-Mau Mau’ and ex-Loyalists: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Central Kenya, 1960-69,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* [Accepted for Publication September 2024].
- “‘The dregs of the Mau Mau barrel’: Permanent Exile and the Remaking of Late Colonial Kenya, 1954-1961,” *Journal of Social History* 57:1 (Fall 2023): 128-155, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shad018>
- “From Federation to ‘White Redoubt’: Africa and the geographical imagination of Rhodesian propaganda, 1962-1970,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 51:6 (2023): 1200-1228, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2023.2166380>
- “Mau Mau at the Museum: (Re)narrating colonial insurgency at the IWM,” *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 36 (March 2023): 110-130.
- ‘Rotting among the tsetse’, *History Today* 71, no. 6 (June 2021): 90-93.
- Further articles are presently under review with the *The Journal of African History* and *Itinerario*.

Awards and Funding

- University of Warwick, Chancellor’s International Scholarship, 2021-2024 (55,040 GBP).
- Imperial War Museum & Arts and Humanities Research Council, Collaborative Doctoral Award, 2020-2024 (24,628 GBP).
- University of Cambridge, Cambridge Trust European Scholarship, 2019-2020 (10,000 GBP).

Education

- Doctor of Philosophy in History, University of Warwick – Global History and Culture Centre. 2020-2024. Supervised by Professors Daniel Branch and David Anderson. The examining committee comprised Professors Pierre Purseigle and Justin Willis (Durham University), who passed the thesis without corrections.
- Master of Philosophy in World History, University of Cambridge, with Distinction. 2019-2020. Supervised by Professor Saul Dubow.
- Bachelor of Arts in History, University of York, First Class Honours with Distinction. 2016-2019.

Doctoral Project

Coercive Reconciliation, Decolonisation, and the Local Politics of Central Kenya, 1956-1969

My PhD project, successfully examined in May 2024, concerns the aftermath of the Mau Mau insurgency in late- and post-colonial Kenya. The thesis takes the latter stages of Britain’s brutal counterinsurgency forward to a revitalised understanding of Kenya’s independence. The focus is post-war reconciliation and the simultaneous creation of Kenya’s post-colonial social contract. Grassroots activism and local politics are foregrounded, whereby radicalised ex-insurgents continued articulating alternative visions of independence. To achieve this, the thesis critiques and employs political science methodologies and takes full advantage of recently released archival documentation and primary testimony of the survivors of Kenya’s abortive anti-colonial struggle.

Selection of Recent Conference Papers

- ‘Grassroots Resistance, Resettlement Schemes, and the Making of International Development in Kenya’, (Historical Challenges to International Development Workshop, King’s College London, September 2024).
- ‘Peacebuilding as a Paradigm for Studying Historical Decolonisation: The Case of Kenya’, (British International History Group Annual Conference, King’s College London, September 2024).
- ‘The African Independent Pentecostal Church and the Politics of Kenya’s Decolonisation’, (African Studies Association of the UK Conference, Oxford Brookes University, August 2024).
- ‘Truth or Reconciliation?: Mau Mau and post-colonial state-making in Kenya, 1963-1969’, (Transnational and Global History Annual Conference, University of Oxford, June 2024).
- ‘Ethnicity, Memory and Reconciliation in a Decolonising State: The Case of Mau Mau in Kenya,’ (Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism Conference, University of Edinburgh, April 2024).
- ‘Resurrecting the African Independent Pentecostal Church: Land, Education and the Local Politics of Kenyan Decolonisation, 1952- 1978’, (African Studies Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, December 2023).
- ‘Counterinsurgent violence beyond war and independence: the case of Kenya’, (Society for the History of War Annual Conference, Lisbon, November 2023).
- ‘Uhuru Chiefs and Emergency Headmen: Local politics in postcolonial Central Kenya, 1963-9,’ (Africa: New Perspectives in Social, Political and Economic History Conference, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, Mexico City, November 2023)
- ‘Neo-Mau Mau’ and ex-loyalists: Oppositional politics in Central Kenya, 1960-69’, (Decolonization’s Discontents Workshop, Harvard University/Tufts University, Boston, September 2023)
- ‘Coercive Reconciliation: Rethinking the Kenya Emergency’, (European Conference on African Studies, Cologne, June 2023). Also presented for Fellows at the Kluge Centre of the Library of Congress, August 2023.
- ‘Heroes and Hooligans: Reframing *Mau Mau*’s legacies through a reconciliatory lens’, (International Conference on the 70th Anniversary of the British Declaration of State of Emergency in Kenya in 1952, University of Nairobi, October 2022).
- ‘The local politics of late colonialism: resistance and repression in Central Kenya, 1956-1963’, (Comparing ‘Late Colonialisms’ in Africa Conference, Northumbria University/University of Coimbra, September 2022).
- ‘A plethora of potentially subversive activity: Wanjohi Mungau, “neo-Mau Mau” and the local politics of *Uhuru* in Nyeri, 1959-1965’, (University of Nairobi Department of History Muted Histories Research Seminar, March 2022). [The link is available.](#)
- ‘Grassroots Politics in the Aftermath of the Mau Mau Rebellion’ (Kenyatta University (Nairobi), Department of History Staff Seminar, March 2022).

Conference Organisation

- Panel Convenor, “28: Logics of violence in insurgency and counterinsurgency”, Society for the History of War Annual Conference, Lisbon, November 2023.
- Conference Convenor (Doctoral Fellow), ‘[Homecoming](#)’ after war: [Comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives](#) (May 2023). Funded by Humanities Research Centre, University of Warwick. This involved individually organising a full-day inter-disciplinary conference for thirty delegates, all scholars across the Humanities. The conference received widespread acclaim from attendees. I also produced eight blogs to outline the theme fully.
- Panel Convenor, Hist02 “Colonial (counter)insurgency as African future-making”, European Conference on African Studies in Cologne, Germany (May 2023).
- Principal Organiser, Warwick History Department Postgraduate Conference (May 2022).

Teaching Experience

- Associate Fellowship (Reference: PR281764) in the United Kingdom Higher Education Academy (AdvanceHE) was awarded in January 2024 after completing a training course with material reflecting my personal teaching philosophy.
- Dissertation Supervisor, 2023-2024, for eight Third-Year undergraduate students at the University of Warwick on subjects related to colonial and post-colonial African History. One of my students won the Felix Dennis Dissertation Prize in Warwick’s History Department for this piece of work.
- Senior Graduate Teaching Assistant, 2023-2024, delivering weekly seminar/small-group teaching sessions of *How Did We Get to Where We Are Today? A Political History of the Contemporary World* (HI2K1) module for second-year history undergraduates at Warwick.
- Senior Graduate Teaching Assistant, 2022-2024, delivering a select number of seminar/small-group teaching sessions of *Kenya’s Mau Mau Rebellion, 1952-60* (HI32B) module for final-year history undergraduates at Warwick.

- Senior Graduate Teaching Assistant, 2022-2023, delivering weekly seminar/small-group teaching sessions on *Africa and the Cold War* (HI 277) module to second-year history undergraduates at Warwick. I also gave lectures for the module. For this teaching, I was nominated and, after a competitive process, highly commended for a ‘Warwick Award for Teaching Excellence’ in the Postgraduate Researcher category.
- Senior Graduate Teaching Assistant, 2022-3, delivered seminar/small-group teaching of *The Making of the Modern World* (HI 153) module to First-Year History Undergraduates at Warwick.

Public Engagement

Imperial War Museum, Collaborative Doctoral Project, 2020-2024. Since, 2024 Curatorial Consultant.

My PhD was a collaborative project with the Imperial War Museum in London. As part of this project, I am tasked with increasing the presence of African voices in a new global history of Britain’s post-WW2 military history. In this process, I have produced a podcast ([Conflict of Interest Season 2, Episode 3](#)), [blog posts](#), and have done a three-month placement in which I catalogued the present Kenya-related holdings. I am currently on the team planning the *Unmaking the Empire* exhibit as part of the 2025 Empire and Conflict Season, participating since the first brainstorming meetings, and now as a part-time consultant.

Later work has also involved producing an ‘ethical canvass’ on newly digitised photographic material and rewriting public content relating to the Mau Mau insurgency. I have also given well-attended staff seminars on subjects like ‘Imperial Perpetrators and the IWM’ to increase awareness of anti-colonial warfare within the Museum’s remit. An article in the *Journal of Museum Ethnography* has been a significant product of this engagement with the IWM.

Rogan Productions, Documentary Participation and Research, 2022

In 2022, I helped in the production of a documentary entitled ‘A Very British Way of Torture’, which used first-hand testimony from Kenyan survivors to represent new findings from the so-called Migrated Archive, files which were illegally removed from British colonies just before independence. I aided with archival research using these files and was interviewed for the documentary. It aired on Channel 4 on the 14th of August 2022 and Al Jazeera on the 8th of December 2022 (currently over one million views on YouTube). When spurious legal complaints were made against the program, I aided with additional historical research for the production company and its lawyers. An interview relating to the documentary was also featured in [The Guardian](#). As part of the project, I also participated in a series of public panels discussing the documentary at Oxford and Warwick.

Various blog contributions, 2020-Present

I have worked with various public history institutions, such as the British Library, Scottish Centre for Global History and Warwick Global History and Culture Centre (as a Postgraduate Fellow), on producing blogs and podcasts, making my research accessible to the broader public. As exemplars, I have created ‘The Trouble with The English’ and ‘The International Far-Right and White Supremacy in UDI-era Zimbabwe’. I have also written for the Museum of British Colonialism and the widely read radical Afro-centric journal [Africa is a Country](#).

Citizenship

- Author, Research Excellence Framework Impact Case Study, entitled ‘Raising Popular and Official Awareness of the British Government’s Colonial ‘Legacy’ Collections’, for Professor David Anderson.
- Convenor, weekly Work-in-Progress sessions for History Department Postgraduates, University of Warwick, 2022-23.
- Postgraduate Representative, Departmental Research Committee, Warwick History Department, 2021-2022.
- Postgraduate Representative, Student-Staff Liaison Committee, Warwick History Department, 2019-2020.

Languages and Skills

- English (Native)
- Dutch (Native)
- German (CEFR B2 – achieved by Intermediate Language Course at the University of York)
- Swahili (CEFR A2/B1 – achieved by Intensive Course with the British Institute in East Africa in Nairobi).