

Chats from Peter da Costa Memorial Lecture

Comments and remarks from Participants

Peter's thinking was not just relevant to Africa. we are watching along from Peru. Peter was instrumental in how our work developed globally - how we sought to create a space for think tanks across the "global south" (is that is a term he would approve of?) to develop their own voice and set their own pathways -**Enrique Mendizaba**

The Community of Gambian Scholars also join the ALC in remembering Dr Da Costa. He was part of the email list of the community and had always been contributing to discussions on Gambia and Africa as a whole, especially relating to development challenges we are faced with. some members of the community are probably part of this webinar. on their behalf, best regards. – **Essa Njie**

Peter was a great mentor and generous with his contacts and knowledge. He was inspiring and I am grateful for his contribution to my career. He thought me a lot in my work and was a genuine and loyal friend. Peter will always visit me when in Dakar. We in the Gambia and Senegal miss him dearly. - **Fatou Jagne**

At the Open Institute, Peter guided us and gave us the principles that drive our ethos of development. He emphasised to us all the time that Africans can deliver on leadership and that that the lessons that we shared were valid and valuable. He said often, "Don't be afraid of white people with money." – **Al Caggs**

Peter had the ability to share clear messages and make complex ideas easy to understand for everyone and to inspire and convince others. Most especially the ability to turn information into action and a strong leadership vision. Peter was also a person who just naturally stepped forward and take more responsibility and more initiative. Peter lead by example and knew how to create unity. Peter had a clear vision and know how to effectively communicate to others and also recognized others' achievements. Peter would always be in our thoughts and prayers and may his gentle soul rest in eternal peace and Heaven continue to be his resting place. Amen. Peter definitely raised the standard for everybody and was caring and wanted people to excel at what they were doing so that they can aspire to be like him in the future and knew how to coach employees so they develop their skills and improve their performance. He had empathy and was able to enhance dialogues in a very articulate and eloquent manner. Peter has left a legacy for all Gambians to emulate – **Solomon Njie**

What people may overlook is that Peter's Intellectual prowess was balanced with tech savvy which displayed itself in his efforts to promote IT development throughout Africa. He was a huge advocate and proponent of getting Africa connected to the Internet and those efforts cannot be overlooked!!! – **Mad Marv**

Part of Peter's legacy is the Hewlett Foundation's grantmaking strategy on Evidence Informed Policymaking, which he helped shape and implement. As your speakers present

today, I am reminded of Peter's influence on our strategy -- the emphasis of supporting African policy research institutions, the centrality of evidence uptake and use by African policy actors, the effective communication and translation of evidence as a way to elevate African voices and perspectives. It is an honor to carry forward this work -- with more conviction than ever thanks to this wonderful memorial -- that he so heavily influenced. –

Sarah Lucas – Hewlett Foundation

Great lecture! Dede, you and all the speakers have summarised so beautifully the enduring generosity of spirit that Peter embodied. Peter was the sort of person you would want in any team - a natural leader - leading from the sidelines as Prof Funmi rightly said. Peter extended ideas - he could take an idea and take it to places that nobody thought of - he gave it meaning, texture, and purpose. He was able to see the big picture and once he got to this place of clarity, he was able to retail his ideas with eloquence and passion. Like Dede said, Peter made things happen quickly - I miss his speed at doing things, his assertiveness, his compassion and his kindness. Rest in God's embrace dear Peter. – **Fatima Denton**

Very inspired by Peter's powerful legacy and all those who have contributed here to relay his vision, life and work. Also feeling challenged about how to continue this work to above all liberate our minds from the tyranny of coloniality. May we continue to nurture that community of support and praxis. Much of the time as we go about this work, we are seen as troublesome, impractical and dismissed as uncooperative etc. It is so important therefore that we have spaces such as ALC in which we don't have to explain. Thank you Peter, Funmi, Gladwell, Dede, Muthoni, Shuvai and all who have put this extraordinary tribute together. My love and best wishes to Peter's family and all of his close friends. Long Live Peter! –

Sarah Mukasa

Peter had a very discrete way of influencing and exercising leadership. I met him during a difficult period. after a 3 hour lunch on a Saturday where he got me to deconstruct my thoughts to rebuild and refocus (including striking the balance between my professional and private lives). i ended up changing course and even had the privilege of working with him on an assignment. Peter left a legacy. it is upon us to carry that dream forward. to his daughter, you can be proud of your dad. he was one of a kind. – **Faten Aggad**

Thank you ALC for organising this fitting tribute to an extraordinary person who had the knack of inspiring those around him to excellence, and yet remained so humble, in a positive way, and always "zen" – **Kenneth Blackman**

Thank you so much to all of you for putting this memorial together. Will you make Funmi's lecture available for sharing? It's powerful -**Uduak Amimo**

Peter D's African Knowledge Revolution! I love it. Thanks Dr. O – **Zeedah**

Powerful key-note there, Prof. Olonisakin. It can't have been more solemn. Thanks - **Clement Sefa Nyarko**

Agree with you Muthoni on his generous spirit and big heart for mentoring - **Njoki Wamai**

Brilliant presentations about a wonderful fellow. Didn't get a chance to interact with him in person - what a loss -**Ronald Elly Wanda**

Thank you ALC for honoring Peter through this memorial. I am profoundly encouraged by your tributes, and value his contributions to the leadership world in Afrika. It is my ardent hope that ALC will strive to sustain Peter's vision, drive and dedication to Afrika's advancement - **OSS**

Thank you so much Comfort - you speak also for all of us - outside the Board - truly grateful - his legacy lives on - as long as we uphold it- **Kathryn Nwajiaku**

A perfect way to remember Peter da Costa. We all miss Peter's warmth and knowledge. May his soul rest in eternal peace - **Caroline Malinda**

He was brilliant research communicator - **Ibrahim Kasirye**

Befitting tribute, Dede. Thanks a lot- **Paul Okolo**

Thank you for organising this event and bringing so many brilliant minds to share and connect - Truly something Uncle Peter would be happy of- **Gabriele Verzier**

Thank you for this event and for the wonderful tributes. Words cannot quite express how we all miss him as a friend. Thank you Muthoni, Dede and everyone else who spoke. It's truly been special. He was truly generous of heart and through the various phases of his life, he remained thoughtful and curious - **Mercy**

Thank you ALC for this experience. During my final fellowship interview (2015) he made me dread that interview throughout. Then I had an opportunity to sit with him for a moment in London and I saw this person everybody just described. I am grateful to relate to these inspiring messages about him- **Mpho**

It has been a privilege. Many thanks to the organisers. Hopefully there will be more such opportunities. Heartfelt condolences to all the DaCosta family. You have indeed lost a great brother, uncle, cousin, father and husband. May his soul continue to rest in peace - **Christine deGraft-Hanson**

Although we were somehow related, Peter was my friend since nursery school. He really was there for you whenever you called on him. I was knocked out by the news of his passing, made worse by the fact that I couldn't attend his funeral due to my father's passing a few days later. My condolences to Ciru and the young ladies, and the rest of the family. I will always continue to pray for you till we meet again my brother- **Kawsu Jawara**

Thanks for organizing this moving memorial to our friend Peter Da Costa. He is sorely missed, and I have been moved to tears listening to these tributes that ring so true and reflect the Peter we all knew. Love and warmth to Ciru, Yassin, Jarra and all the family. Much love - **Ngillan Faal and family.**

Thank you all for organising such a befitting memorial. Peter my brother, I miss you terribly and the pain just doesn't go away- **Timnit Abraha**

I join the family in thanking the ALC for organising such a befitting lecture for a very fine human being and scholar. All the attributes I heard during the lecture mirror the person I knew and considered to be my best friend. May he continue to sleep in perfect peace -**Omar Ousman Jobe**

Remarks and comments from Dr da Costa's family

Thank you so much to all of you for putting this memorial together. Will you make Funmi's lecture available for sharing? It's powerful. – **Ciru Mwaura**

Fantastic and enlightening so far ! Great job and I'm proud to be Peter's cousin 🙏🙏-
V40ThinQ

Thank you Muthoni! That was lovely. You're right he would be embarrassed but proud! 🙏 –
Nanette

Thank you Dede that was really nice and such true words.- **Nanette**

Thanks to all the organizers for putting this together and to all the attendees for memorializing my dear brother in this way – **Chris Da Costa**

Remembering my dear brother Peter Fifi da Costa. Kind and selfless to all who knew him. He is forever in our hearts.- **Neneh Roberts**

Thank you Nayanka. That was touching and congratulations on your doctorate -**Nanette da Costa**

Thank you for remembering my cousin in this way. Indeed a truly great guy- **Tom Roberts**

Thank you for organising this memorial lecture. Fifi my dear cousin .. Peter will always remain in our hearts and lives. My family charity The Bansang Swiss Project set up a memorial fund for the Orphans in the Bansang region- rural town in the Gambia The Peter da Costa Orphans fund - is what we called it, *please use this contact@thebansangswissproject.org* - **Caroline**

Thanks for organizing this - **Jeggan Grey-Johnson**

Thanks everyone for putting this together- **Miranda Da Costa**

Thanks to all the organizers and speakers for a beautiful lecture. Such a wonderful way to remember Uncle Fifi -**Vanessa Da Costa**

Aunty Baby, Peter's Aunt, thanks you all for organising this memorial Event. Peter will always remain in our hearts- **Caroline**

ALC memorial lecture: A tribute to Peter da Costa

By Obi Anyadike

It's been a year, and the time has unspooled so fast.

It's been a strange period of adjustment for everyone, I imagine. That absence of Peter. There's the personal loss – what he meant to us individually – and then there's the impact within the so many varied groups of friends who claimed him. That altered dynamic because he's not there. No reminder to pour the libation; no injection of some impish controversy into the conversation – that oh so familiar chuckle – or the realization he's nodded off, quite implausibly, despite the hubbub surrounding him.

We went back a long way. I'd like to pay a small tribute to those earlier days. For many of us of a certain generation, it was a special period when we felt we were finally beginning to figure things out, and in much of that Peter's influence was profound.

The first time we made contact was over a telex machine – that far back. He was in Banjul and I was at West Africa magazine's Coldharbour Lane office in Camberwell. I remember meeting him for the first time at Inter Press Service's Africa headquarters in Harare in '91. Dede had hired Peter, Ruby and I as correspondents. We all turned up for an annual meeting, and that's where we also met Lamine, IPS's technical wizard. We all bonded over a happily dissident approach towards IPS's Rome-based management, and loud West African effrontery over Harare's still apartheid-tinged society.

Peter would later move into the policy world of think tanks and civic organisations in his determination for a better Africa. But his first tilt at trying to make a difference was through progressive journalism and that venerable notion of communications for development. As IPS Africa director, Peter was able to assemble a team of young dynamic African journalists – the likes of Muthoni, Gumisai, Bella. The polyglot Ken Blackman also joined IPS at this time, completing a Harare-based crew of close friends.

It was an exciting time. Suffocating state-owned news monopolies were falling. We, as Africa-focused news providers, could finally bypass national news agencies as well as challenge the northern news agenda. Through the revolutionary power of email – and we did think of it in those terms – we could connect directly to a burgeoning private and independent media, then seen as allies in pushing the bounds of democracy and free expression.

Peter was leading the charge. IPS Africa was collaborating with progressive communications networks – SangoNet, MISANET to name a few – to use “telematics” for issue-based advocacy. Sounds so arcane now but was cutting edge at the time: there was even a thing called the “super information highway”.

You had to see Peter then. Built like a rugby player, Timberland boots, untucked shirt, tiny specs adjusted when he was serious, possessor and flaunter of every new electronic gadget to hit the market. Intellectually curious, ferociously well organized, he dominated those meetings to build IPS Africa as a key voice in a network of development communicators.

That was the serious bit. The fun bit was in Harare it was open house. People drifted in from everywhere. They got a desk in the office, and if they were cool, stayed at whatever house or apartment Peter was inhabiting. Harpers, Circus, then the Sheraton at 6am for breakfast – a punishing routine. It was fun, but not totally hedonistic. Peter, even then, was ever so slightly prim in a most endearing way. Always incredibly warm and generous, razor sharp, unflappable – he was also a brother to all.

We stayed in contact – though often in different countries – over the next few stages of Peter's journey. Chief among those landmarks was Ciru, and then their two wonderful daughters, Yassine and Jara.

I'm looking forward to hearing everyone else's memories of Peter today – of a life lived so well, so meaningfully, and so richly consequential.

I'm now off to pour a libation.