

Renowned Kenyan dissident Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Leeds 29-30 June

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Two hundred years on from the parliamentary abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, the celebrated Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o will headline two major public events on today's struggles in Africa and beyond for global social justice in late June being organised by the University of Leeds and the World Development Movement.

The award winning Kenyan writer and academic is currently Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the International Centre for Writing and Translation at the University of California. A pivotal figure in colonial independence movements, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's writing centres on the crisis of post colonial Africa and the function of language in the emancipatory process.

On Friday 29 June, 6pm, at the Rupert Beckett Lecture Theatre, Ngugi will speak alongside British journalist and campaigner, George Monbiot, about the role of education and the university in achieving social and environmental justice at the public launch of the Geography department's brand new Masters programme in Activism and Social Change.

The MA launch begins at 4pm on Friday 29 June in Geography's East Building Lecture Theatre with a talk by speakers from the Six Nations of the Grand River (a Haudenosaunee reserve in Ontario, Canada) who in February 2006 reclaimed a piece of land sold by the Canadian government to a development company. The Haudenosaunee are reasserting their traditional ways, which include their surviving system of direct, consensus based democracy (dating from 1142). The speakers plan to talk about their experience of reclaiming the land, their traditional ways of government and their struggle to reassert sovereignty, maintain culture and identity as nations

Then, on Saturday 30 June, the pair will join South African development economist Mohau Pheko and African reparations activist Esther Stanford to speak at WDM's Whose Rules Rule? Conference (12.30-6pm), which this year will explore activism past, present and future – by celebrating and learning from global justice campaigns.

The annual summer event of global justice campaigners the World Development Movement is renowned as the setting for the most challenging debates on problems as wide-ranging as trade, poverty, aid and climate change.

The WDM event is built around keynote speakers giving their own perspectives on activism, highly focussed sessions led by experienced campaigners and activists, a striking exhibition by photographer Katharina Mouratidi on the theme 'The other Globalisation' and a wide range of campaign stalls. Sessions topics include: climate justice, struggles against privatisation, music and protest, the legacy of enslavement, apartheid, women's rights and migration.

----- FULL DETAILS OF EVENTS 29 AND 30 JUNE IN LEEDS

Friday 29 June - Launch of MA in Activism and Social Change

4pm: 'Enclosures and Indigenous Resistance': Speakers from the Six Nations of the Grand River Haudenosaunee reserve in Ontario, Canada'

VENUE Geography Lecture Theatre, East Building, School of Geography, University of Leeds 6pm Public lecture: 'Activism and the Academy: Challenging neoliberalism inside, outside and against the university'

Speakers include: George Monbiot, journalist / campaigner; Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, educator, novelist, former Kenyan political prisoner

VENUE Rupert Beckett Lecture Theatre, Michael Sadler Building, University of Leeds (followed by wine reception)

Six Nations of the Grand River (a Haudenosaunee reserve in Ontario, Canada) reclaimed a piece of land sold by the Canadian government to a development company on the 28th of February 2006. The land is part of the Haldimand Tract (1784) granted by the British in return for some of the Haudenosaunee fighting against the soon to be United States, and thereby losing their lands. Led by the Clan Mothers, (their traditional female leadership) they set up camp on the burial ground and stopped the bulldozers' work. A year later the land reclamation still stands and the Six Nations community is asserting their sovereignty; not only by taking back land that was sold by the government without title to do so, but by practising their right to govern themselves and their community.

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Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan writer and academic. He is currently Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the International Centre for Writing and Translation at the University of California. A pivotal figure in the assertion of colonial independence his writing centres on the crisis of post colonial Africa and the function of language in the emancipatory process. He ceased using English to write in his native Gikuyu. He is recipient of the 2001 Nonino International Prize for Literature and is shortlisted for the 2007 Commonwealth Writers' Prize Biography: <http://www.ngugiwathiongo.com/bio/bio-home.htm>

For further information and booking a free place for these events contact Andrew Poole in the School of Geography on a.t.poole@leeds.ac.uk / 0113 343 6755

Saturday 30 June: WDM Annual Conference

The World Development Movement's conference this year is at the University of Leeds in association with the School of Geography.

The conference will use the 2007 bicentenary of the parliamentary abolition of the transatlantic slave trade as an opportunity to explore the lessons to be learned from the struggle to end the slave trade and share our vision of how today's inequality is built on past abuses of power. And we will celebrate the unsung heroes of the fight against historical and contemporary injustice.

The day will involve keynote speakers addressing attendees in a plenary session as well as a wide variety of smaller sessions focussing on issues ranging from apartheid to climate justice, and women's rights to anti-water privatisation campaigns.

We have an excellent line-up of keynote speakers, including journalist George Monbiot, Kenyan writer and educator, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, political economist, and Mohau Pheko (coordinator of the African Gender and Trade Network).

The conference opens from 12.30pm with registration, stalls and a striking exhibition by photographer Katharina Mouratidi on the theme 'The Other Globalisation' in the Parkinson Court. The smaller sessions will be led by experienced campaigners and activists, to explore topics including:

- Reparations and the legacy of enslavement
- Apartheid
- Climate justice
- Struggles against privatisation
- Music and protest
- Women's rights
- Migration

After a tea break and further opportunity to browse the campaign stalls, the plenary will take place in the Conference Auditorium, ending at 6pm.

For full details and to book your free place, go to:

www.wdm.org.uk/wrr or call 0800 328 2153

<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/06/373452.shtml>