

Obituary

HELEN KIMBLE, 1925–2019



The editors of *The Journal of Modern African Studies* wish to pay tribute to Helen Kimble (née Rankin), who passed away on 4 December 2019, aged 94.

Helen belonged to the first generation of British scholars who took Africa seriously and who helped develop the academic study of the continent. From 1947 to 1949, she was a tutor at the University of London. Indeed, she was the first tutor trainee of Thomas Hodgkin. After moving with her husband, David Kimble, to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1949, she served as editor of *West African Affairs* and in 1951, she became the joint founder of the hugely influential Penguin series of books on Africa. This was one of the first efforts to popularise Africa to a wider audience.

Helen lectured in Economics at the University in Ghana from 1949 to 1962, an exceptionally important period in African history, where she witnessed several momentous events: the rise to power of Kwame Nkrumah, the independence of the first tropical African country in 1957 and the struggles for freedom across the continent. After moving to East Africa, from 1964 to 1968 Helen taught Economics at the University of East Africa in Dar es Salaam. Again, this was a critical period in African history with Julius Nyerere leading the unification of Zanzibar with Tanganyika in April 1964 to form the United Republic of Tanzania. The university at this time was a centre for radical thinking about Africa's future, attracting great academics from across Africa and the world and creating an exciting intellectual atmosphere that still resonates today. Helen was in the thick of this ferment, teaching several future leaders of the continent, not least Yoweri Museveni, current president of Uganda, who took Economics under her.

In 1962, Helen and David founded *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. This rapidly became one of the premier academic journals on African matters and is now proudly in its 58th year. Helen helped with the editing of the journal through its first 11 years, before becoming a member of the Editorial Board

and contributing to the journal after that. Upon returning to England, she became an active member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and an advocate for the rights of refugees.

In 2019, the David and Helen Kimble Prize for the best article published in the journal in the previous year was introduced in honour of David and Helen's efforts. Future generations of students of Africa will thus become aware of the pioneering role that Helen Kimble played in the study of the continent and in the founding of this journal.

The editorial team were privileged to get in contact with Helen's surviving daughters, Joy and Jenny (Jane and Judy predeceased Helen) and thrilled to receive photos of Helen still going strong and reading the journal.

We were so sad to hear about Helen's passing, but very grateful that Helen knew about the prize in her honour.

Helen's funeral in Oxford ended, fittingly, with a rendition of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* – God Bless Africa.

Hamba kahle, Helen.