

The Josephine Onoh Memorial Lecture 2024

Lindsay Moir*

The University of Hull has a long-standing and rich heritage in the field of international law. A key element of this particular strength – initially building upon it, and now proudly reflecting its enduring vitality – is the Josephine Onoh Memorial Lecture.

A graduate of the University, having received her LLB degree in 1982, Josephine Onoh had developed a keen interest in international law during her undergraduate studies. At the time of her death (28 November 1983, in an air accident at Enugu, Nigeria, along with 52 others), she was a PhD student in the Law School, researching questions regarding a possible right to hot pursuit on land in international law. In the aftermath of the tragedy, and with the support of the Onoh family, friends and staff in the Law School, a fund was created to honour her memory with the stated purpose of encouraging and supporting the study of international law at the University of Hull. Since its establishment in 1984, not only has the Josephine Onoh Memorial Fund facilitated an exceptional series of Annual Lectures, it has also been able to provide numerous scholarships and prizes to those undergraduate and postgraduate students excelling in international law.

The first Josephine Onoh Memorial Lecture was delivered on 29 January 1985 by HE Judge Taslim Elias, President of the International Court of Justice (also a compatriot of Josephine Onoh and the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate in Law from the University of Hull in 1980). His Lecture examined ‘New Trends in Contemporary International Law’ and, in introducing the Lecture, the Chancellor of the University, Lord Wilberforce, suggested that it would appeal to both students and experts in the subject, convincing both that ‘international law is a relevant, exacting and expanding discipline, the understanding of which is of vital importance for all who are concerned with the health of the world community’. The Lecture series has continued in a similar vein, with some of the most eminent names in international law delivering Lectures on a wide range of topics of relevance and interest to both scholars and practitioners, demonstrating not only the diversity of complex and controversial issues that international law has to grapple with, but also how it has sought to address the various challenges of the contemporary world.

An edited collection of Lectures from 1985-2000 was published in 2002 by Kluwer Law International (David Freestone, Surya Subedi and Scott Davidson (eds), *Contemporary Issues in International Law: A Collection of the Josephine Onoh Memorial Lectures*), containing the Lectures of such luminaries as HE Judge Sir Robert Jennings, Sir Ian Sinclair, Philip Allott, Dame Rosalyn Higgins, Sir Ian Brownlie and Martti Koskenniemi – accurately described by the editors in their Introduction as ‘a rich and multifaceted contribution to the scholarship of international law by some of the leading scholars and practitioners in the field.’

* Professor of International Law, University of Hull. Email: L.Moir@hull.ac.uk



The articles in this journal are published Open Access subject to Creative Commons 4.0. CC BY-NC license. The Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial (CC BY-NC) License allows others to use, adapt, remix, or redistribute a copyrighted work for non-commercial purposes only, while requiring attribution to the creator or author.

As Professor of International Law at the University of Hull since 2005, it has been my responsibility – and both a pleasure and a privilege – to carry the baton from that point on, arranging 18 of the 35 Lectures to date and working to continue the lasting legacy and memory of Josephine Onoh, maintaining the Law School's links with the Onoh family whilst ensuring that the quality and diversity of the Lecture series remains undiminished. Indeed, the Lecture is still an annual event of great distinction, and the University of Hull has been fortunate to continue to attract many of the most important and influential international lawyers of our time to deliver it. More recent speakers have included Vaughan Lowe, William Schabas, James Crawford, Sir Nigel Rodley, Philippe Sands, Malcolm Shaw, HE Judge Julia Sebutinde, Sir Iain Macleod, Sir Michael Wood and Phoebe Okowa, and topics discussed have included state responsibility, international criminal prosecutions, countermeasures, climate change and environmental law, maritime terrorism, peace-making and international security, several aspects of human rights, territorial disputes, the recognition and representation of governments, and the role of international law (and international lawyers) in UK foreign policy.

What follows below is the text of the most recent Josephine Onoh Memorial Lecture, delivered on 27 November 2024 by Rachel Murray, Professor of International Human Rights Law at the University of Bristol. Addressing the complex question of how best to ensure the implementation of decisions of international human rights monitoring and enforcement bodies (and specifically the African Court and Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights), Professor Murray outlines her ongoing research examining whether a model law on enabling legislation might serve as a practical tool to assist African States in this regard. The intention is to publish the text of future Lectures in subsequent issues of the Hull Law Review and, in the words of my former colleagues David Freestone, Surya Subedi and Scott Davidson, that these will represent a 'continuing and tangible monument to Josephine Onoh, whose passion for the subject of international law was so sadly curtailed.'