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MANBY, Bronwen. — *La nationalité en Afrique*. Paris, Karthala ; London, Open Society Foundations, 2011, 242 p., bibl.

- 1 In this volume, Bronwen Manby, previously the deputy director of the African branch of Human Rights Watch, and now a senior advisor for the Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project, offers a sobering account of stateless peoples on the African continent. This recent work, which compliments her earlier contributions on debates surrounding general issues of human rights, is an important and timely document that sheds light on one of postcolonial Africa's most pressing challenges: the difficulty in maintaining an accessible and equitable set of criteria for citizenship—whether by birth or naturalization—that would be free from ethnic and racial biases.
- 2 As part of a special investigative commission on citizenship undertaken by the Open Society Institute, this wide-ranging study attempts to explore the plight of the tens of millions of stateless people in Africa, including displaced persons, internal refugees, and political activists, who, because of their stateless condition, have had difficulty obtaining passports, providing official documentation of birth or state origin, and/or receiving access to basic education and sanitary conditions—not to mention gaining voting rights in their countries of residence.
- 3 The book covers, among other subjects, the multiple refugee populations in the Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo; the Dioualas in Ivory Coast; those who fall out of the so-called “black privilege” categories in Sierra Leone (mainly those of Lebanese descent, many of whom have dwelt there since the late 19th century); and Asians in Kenya and Uganda. It also offers an overview of nationality-based categories

and citizenship regulations in Africa from the colonial period through independence. Using both the life stories of select individuals and the histories of the various state systems in which they must function, Manby deftly demonstrates how political and/or ethnic-based discriminatory measures have been used to curb access to officially-recognized “belonging”.

- 4 Chapter 1 outlines the formation of the nationality and citizenship laws of modern African states in light of decisions made by, initially, colonial administrations, and later by neocolonial interest groups or governments. This chapter focuses on the arbitrary nature of the establishment of African borders and, after this fact, the necessity of creating, post-independence, the notion of what Benedict Anderson has famously termed the “imagined community”—the sense of a common history, purpose, or obligation among (in many cases) radically disparate populations that happen to live in close physical proximity to each other. She provides a background of the colonial systems of “direct” or “indirect” rule (mainly focusing on the French and British models), settler and “native” rights, and later constitutional aspects of citizenship. Although she writes briefly of Thabo Mbeki’s well-known declaration of himself as an “African” citizen, a discussion of Kwame Nkrumah’s pan-Africanist leanings (which only appear briefly in the last chapter), or the Afrocentrist movement in the African diaspora, might have given a bit more context to Mbeki’s identity politics, and helped to frame the discussion of the larger phenomenon in general (for instance, with respect to the Maafa Studies movement).
- 5 Chapters 2 and 3 deal more directly with the official transition from “colonial subjects” to “members of nations”. Moving beyond the standard ethnic definitions or paradigms of nationhood, Manby discusses the cases of Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Malawi, Mali, and Ghana to illustrate the racial preferences given post-independence. Also mentioned are the cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone, two states founded by freed slaves, which, in the interest of preserving black racial privilege, have mostly refused to grant citizenship to whites, even by way of naturalization. Patrilineal privilege in granting nationality is also discussed, as are the examples of dual citizenship and permanent residency without citizenship. The main case study is the treatment of dual-identity whites in Zimbabwe post-2002.
- 6 Chapters 4 and 5 deal with mass deportations and citizens’ rights in federal state systems. Manby delves into the devastating effects on ethnic minorities from both sides of the 30-year war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, focusing on civic disenfranchisement. She also details the discrimination against persons of non-Arab ethnicity in Mauritania, especially those of Senegalese background. These scenarios are contrasted with (mainly) the example of a federal African state that has attempted to deal with ethnic diversity by supporting local governance: Nigeria. Paradoxically, as she shows, this reliance on decentralized government has created a situation in which minority populations in autonomous zones possess full state citizenship, but are deprived of basic rights granted freely to the ethnic majority of regional states. This happens, for instance, in the cases of children born of mixed marriages, or of children of migrants born in their ethnic “zones” other than their own.
- 7 Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the ways in which destabilized states attempt to control ethnic or political dissent, whether by making it difficult for displaced persons to obtain official papers in countries to which they have fled, or by silencing political opponents by evoking an ethnic or national otherness. The main examples given here

are Somalis in Kenya, a population whose children are frequently not registered at birth (and who, as we have seen in the wake of the recent terror attack in Nairobi of September, 2013, are still viewed with great suspicion); and the strange case of Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia between 1964-1991. Kaunda, the child of Malawian missionary parents who settled in Lusaka, was accused of fomenting a coup and briefly deprived of his Zambian citizenship between 1999-2000, a decision which the Supreme Court of that country later struck down.

- 8 Chapters 8 and 9 deal with naturalization and immigration policies. These policies in the countries of the Maghreb are discussed at length, especially with respect to the plight of Saharan refugees, in the wake of Morocco's annexation of that former Spanish territory. This section of the book is interspersed with selections from popular music and poetry of displaced peoples, as well as with verbatim personal testimonies of individual refugees. While poignant, one has the impression that these last two short chapters could have been a bit broader, and the conclusion, at the end of Chapter 9, seems somewhat abrupt.
- 9 For instance, what about including the oft-discussed examples of the discrimination against the Karana in Madagascar, or the political privilege of the Zaghawa in Chad? Moreover, it is not until the end of the book that northern Africa is really discussed, which is unfortunate. From that perspective, one is also left to wonder why the question of the Christian-Muslim religious divide—so important to any understanding of inter-communal tension in that part of Africa—is not included. Not to mention, concerning inter-religious strife, the plight of Jewish refugees from North Africa after the birth of state of Israel, who were forced to leave the area after achieving unprecedented coexistence with their neighbors there for over a millennium. Recent attempts of those individuals and their descendents to return to North Africa would have been an interesting vignette to explore. The case of Jews demanding citizenship in post-revolutionary Tunisia would have been an especially fascinating subject, but, since the book was written prior to those events, we may hope that it appears in an updated version in the future.
- 10 In principal, the flow of the narrative throughout the book is very engaging, and Manby's scholarship is definitely rigorous. The author provides a systematic and much-needed overview of a broken series of citizenship laws that, based on rigid ethnic or tenuous political guidelines, do not allow for governments to adequately deal with many "exceptional" citizenship cases stemming from the natural or forced migration of peoples. One can only hope that the suggestions she offers will not fall on deaf ears.