

## ASA News, Spring 2021

### Pandemic Publishing Interview: Africa World Press, Inc. & The Red Sea Press, Inc.'s Kassahun Checole

**1. How has the pandemic and the broad suspension of in person events impacted publishing?**

The impact of the pandemic has been both in the operational process (staff, global editorial team, warehouse, sales etc.) and in the qualitative uptake and demand for the books that we publish. On the first level, we have been encumbered by reduced staff and shifting most of our work from in-house to outsourced process of some key people working from home, and, most problematic was the fact that our warehouses both in the US and in London had to close for long stretches of days.

However, after the initial shock (March & April), we have quickly recovered and are able to produce more books, to market and sell a whole of them via the Web, and be able to collaborate with many bookstores to launch new books via zoom.

**2. What have been the publishing trends that you've seen over the last year? What trends are you most excited about?**

At Africa World Press, we reacted quickly to the killing of Mr. Floyd to produce books related to human and civil rights, to republish many of the books of similar tenure, to upgrade the quality of our books both editorially and in production quality. For example, we have produced more books that are artistically designed and printed in full color.

The global movement of Black Lives Matter has shown our books are relevant and increased the demand for books

**3. Since we still aren't able to get together, how have book pitches changed and what should our members know about the process?**

I think the most revolutionary thing that has happened in the last 11 months is both the effective use of the internet and new communications instruments like Zoom, to reach to readers globally and bring our authors and their books closer to their readers.

**4. What new projects are you working on that the African Studies community should be on the lookout for?**

Four on-going projects come to mind:

COVID 19 has forced us to rethink how we work. We have made changes that is making it easier to reach a larger readership.



A series of successful production of smaller pocket book size on Africa in the global context. These are mainly on topical issues. We are projecting at least 16 books in the initial stage and five of these are already out.

Two, a series of books by and about Women scholar activists on a variety of subjects. Many of these are on the impact of Contemporary art and the expressions of women artists as it relates to African life and conditions. We project at least 10 books on these lines, and four of these are already out.

Third, equally exciting for us are the multiple of books that we have and are now publishing related to significant autobiographical, memoirs and biographies of important African personalities.

Finally, we have revived our “African Writers Library” series with a variety of fiction and literary works being produced. In 2020, we published 5 poets and several works of fiction. And we have a number of these scheduled for 2021.