

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, especially its Managing Director, Winston Agaba, and the former chairman of the board, Mr. Simon Kaheru, for their willingness to share these important images with the public.

We would like to acknowledge the support of the University of Michigan, and The University of Western Australia, which provided technical and financial support to make this project possible.

We thank Malachi Kabaale, Jimmy Kikwata, Edmund Mulindwa and Jacob Noowe for their sterling work in digitizing and preserving these photos. We also thank Tom Bray, Laura de Becker, Rebecca Peterson, and Ray Silverman of the University of Michigan, and Natalie Hewlett and Vanessa Russ of The University of Western Australia for their logistical support.

We particularly thank the photographers—many of whom remain unknown to us—who devoted themselves to the creation of this lasting record of the Amin government. This exhibition is presented in their honour.

ISBN 978-1-74052-414-8

Design and print by UniPrint 158562, The University of Western Australia

# The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin

Photographs from the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation





'Black Americans meet H.E.'  
11 August 1975 UBC 4867-011



President Amin christens Queens Road as 'Lumumba Avenue'  
18 January 1973 UBC 3456-017



H.E. celebrates 50th birthday at Nile Mansion  
1 January 1978 UBC 5948-2-030

# The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin

Photographs from the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation

**Over the course of his eight years as president of Uganda Idi Amin was the subject of hundreds of thousands of photographs. A dedicated and talented team of photographers under the Ministry of Information followed Amin, taking pictures of the many occasions when he appeared before a public. It was a perilous job. We know of one government photographer—Jimmy Parmar—who was executed by Amin's men as punishment for his pursuit of unapproved photographic subjects.**

For decades it was thought that photographs that the men of the Ministry of Information had made were lost to posterity, destroyed during the tumult of the early 1980s or misplaced during subsequent relocations of the Ministry's archives. In 2015, though, researchers and archivists at the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation uncovered a filing cabinet full of thousands of photographic negatives. Each envelope was carefully labeled with information about

the date and subject of the photograph. In all, there are 70,000 negatives, dating from the late 1950s to the mid-1980s.

So far as we know, none of the photographic negatives in the U.B.C. archive have been published or displayed in any public venue. The vast majority of the negatives were never printed. This is, until now, an unseen archive.

In January 2018 the U.B.C. launched a project to digitize this important collection. With funding and technical support from Makerere University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Western Australia, the dedicated team of archivists has digitized 25,000 images to date.

'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin' consists of 200 photographs drawn from the much larger collection held by the U.B.C. All of these photographs were made to glorify President Amin, elevate the accomplishments of his presidency, and make visible the iniquities of the enemies – both real and imagined – that his government pursued. These photographs testify to the passions and enthusiasms that his government cultivated. The archive also includes many pictures of everyday public and cultural life

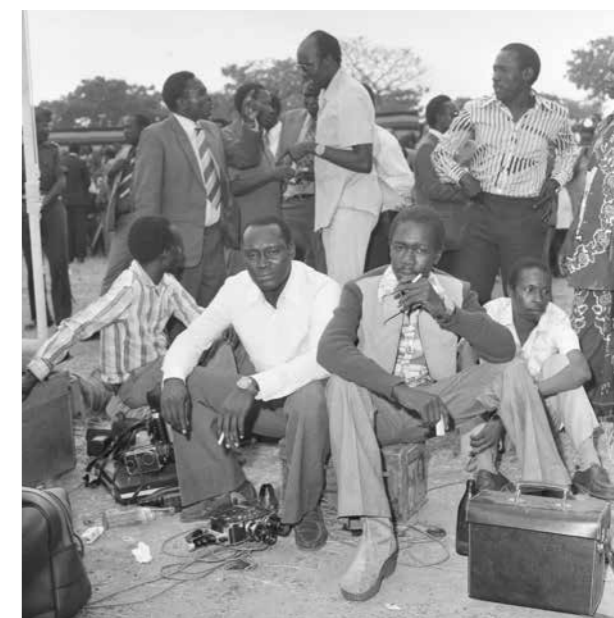
in 1970s Uganda. It provides a unique insight into how the Amin years were experienced by ordinary Ugandans, how people worked, played, and loved during this time.

The images displayed here are unaltered and unedited. Where possible, the curators have titled the photographs using the same titles assigned by the photographers at the time the negatives were developed.

There is very little in the U.B.C. photo archive that directly illustrates the awful history of violence and inhumanity in the 1970s. A great many people—as many as 300,000—died in the hands of men serving Amin's government. This violence—the torture and murder of dissidents, criminals, and others who innocently fell afoul of the state—largely took place out of public view. It leaves no trace in the U.B.C. archive. The positive and uplifting photos in this collection mask the harsh realities of public life at this time: unaccountable violence; a collapsing infrastructure, and shortages of the most basic commodities. As curators, we have made efforts throughout this exhibition to remind you, the viewer, that for many Ugandans the 1970s were a violent, perilous time. But this archive cannot tell that story with any fluency.

So we see this exhibition as a starting point, and a work-in-progress, not a final product. In future years, we hope to develop a more fully representative exhibition about the experience of ordinary Ugandans in the 1970s. If you have objects or photographs that ought to be part of an exhibition like this—or if you recognize the people or occasions pictured here—please let us know.

Please email us at: [amin.exhibition.2019@gmail.com](mailto:amin.exhibition.2019@gmail.com)



Military takeover celebrations at Koboko  
25 January 1978 UBC 5980c-2-037



H.E. inspects guard of honour mounted by Marines Unit to mark OAU Liberation Day at command post Kololo  
25 May 1974 UBC 3987-002