



# Irreducible Alterity? Violence and Activism Surrounding Oculocutaneous Albinism Type II in Tanzania, 1880-2022

Jane L. Saffitz, PhD

Right: Posters in Swahili and English show the conference's theme—"Our goal: to make attacks, stigma, and discrimination a faint memory."

KONGAMANO LA PAN-AFRIKA LA WATU WENYE ALBINISM - 2015



**"Lengo letu"**

**Kuufanya ukatili,  
ubaguzi na unyanyapaa  
kuwa kumbukumbu  
iliyofifia!"**

PAN AFRICAN ALBINISM CONFERENCE 2015



**"Our goal"**  
**To make attacks,  
stigma and  
discrimination a  
faint memory"**

# Another Albino Child Is Murdered and Mutilated in Tanzania

## *Albinos, Long Shunned, Face Threat in Tanzania*



NEWS

### UN demands investigation into albino girl abduction

Tanzania must find an albino girl kidnapped in December, the country's top UN official said. At least 74 albinos have been murdered in the east African country since 2000 with only 10 convictions for the crime.



AFRICA

### Tanzania's Albinos Face Constant Threat Of Attack

Morning Mix

### Where albino body parts fetch big money, albinos still get butchered

### Albinism in Tanzania: slow progress in combatting violence and discrimination

### Four charged over albino murder in Tanzania amid growing calls for action

Above: A collection of headlines from mainstream media sources describe the violence committed against people with albinism in Tanzania, East Africa.

THE LAKE ZONE, where practices of “albinocide” have been most acute.



Above: A map of Tanzania with the Lake Zone highlighted in the northwest corner.





American geneticist Murray Brilliant stands at a podium with the conference theme behind him, speaking about the evolution and inheritance patterns of Oculocutaneous Albinism Type II (OCA2) in Africa.

# *Key Terms*

## *Oculocutaneous Albinism Type II (OCA2)—*

- Caused by a deletion on the P gene; possibly offers protection against leprosy.

## *Fetish—*

- The over-valuation of a thing, usually by attributing to it a power it does not “really” have.

## *Dawa—*

- Swahili word usually translated as ‘medicine.’



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## New Independent Expert on Albinism Takes Up Post

21 August 2015

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Left: A headline from the UN website reads, “New Independent Expert on Albinism Takes up Post.” Right: Expert IK Ero speaks at the UN in front of logos of sponsoring organizations.



“For my brothers and sisters with albinism in Africa, their biggest problems aren’t bodily; they are bogus spiritual beliefs and the fact that African traditions don’t understand albinism.”

– Peter Ash

Left: Peter Ash of Under the Same Sun speaks at the Pan-African Albinism Conference.





Above: Hair pedigree from an 'albinotic family.' In Pearson et al. 1911. *A Monograph on Albinism in Man*.  
Right: A photograph of a black woman, Margaret Atkins, and her son, Alfred, who had albinism. In 'Observations and Researches on Albinism in the Negro.' *Transactions of the American Medical Association*, vol 20. 1869. p. 690.



DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED MATHEMATICS  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

DRAPERS' COMPANY RESEARCH  
MEMOIRS

BIOMETRIC SERIES VI

A MONOGRAPH ON ALBINISM IN MAN

BY  
KARL PEARSON, F.R.S., E. NETTLESHIP, F.R.C.S.,  
AND  
G. H. USHER, M.B., B.C. CAMB.

TEXT

PART I

WITH FRONTISPIECE AND FACING PLATE

PROVISIONAL PREFACE AND PAGES 1-266

*Issued to Subscribers only*

LONDON:  
PUBLISHED BY DULAU AND CO., LIMITED, 37, SOHO SQUARE, W.  
1911

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“The natives, Dr. Stannus says, have no special word for albino... They are not accounted for in any way; they say they have been sent by mlunga—a word which embraces known powers. Probably they were killed from time to time at birth” (147).

Left: The title page of Pearson et al. 1911. *A Monograph on Albinism in Man.*



## Albinism in the Great Lakes

### Advocacy highlights

Worldwide the International Federation is committed to engaging with its member National Societies to promote a culture of non-violence and fight discrimination wherever it arises. In the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Federation sees the immediate priorities for humanitarian advocacy as these:

Governments must...

- Ensure effective legal protection for people with albinism.
- Use local administrative structures to locate albino people in hiding.
- Conduct public anti-discrimination campaigns and extend medical services to albinos in need.

Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies need support to...

- Partner with government agencies to eliminate discrimination against people with albinism.
- Provide health education for the prevention of skin cancer.
- Provide psycho-social support and vocational training.

The International Federation will...

- Provide technical support to National Societies already working with albinos in distress or in hiding.
- Assist the safe reintegration of albinos into society.
- Mobilize international support for the long-term alleviation of the plight of albinos in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

A Red Cross volunteer takes an albino child to a picnic at the Kabanga school. (IFRC)

## Introduction

The occult-based killings of albinos in eastern parts of Burundi and several regions of north-west Tanzania – the general area between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victoria – were first brought to light by journalists, initially from Africa then from the global news media. In October 2009, at a ceremony in Stockholm, the Tanzanian journalist Richard Mgamba was awarded the Lorenzo Natali Journalism Prize for Africa for his coverage of the Great Lakes albino emergency.

Perhaps most famously, the outside world's attention was drawn to the albinos' plight by the undercover reports, produced at great risk to her life, by the BBC's Dar es Salaam bureau chief, Vicky Ntetema, herself a Tanzanian. (See box: *The reporter's story*.) Most recently, at the time of writing, the story was featured by the US ABC network in its *20/20* programme.

As this report was being drafted, a three-month lull in the albino killings in Tanzania came to an end with a brutal attack on a family in the Geita district of Mwanza region. A 10-year-old albino boy, Gasper Elikana, was killed on 21 October by hunters who fled with his leg, which they hacked off in front of his family having first beheaded him to stop him screaming. His neighbours and his black father, who was left fighting for his life in hospital, had tried bravely but unsuccessfully to protect him.

The last reported killing of an albino had been on 18 July, and the whole of Tanzania had hoped that the firm action taken – including the sentences passed on three albino hunters from the Shinyanga region convicted of the murder of 13-year-old albino schoolboy Matatizo Dunia – had finally put an end to the killings. The news of Gasper's murder caused dismay nationwide.

The official death toll now stands at 44 albinos killed in Tanzania and 12 in the eastern Burundian provinces of Cankuzo, Kirundo, Muyinga and Ruyigi – on or near the border with Tanzania. This figure for Tanzania is the

### Thousands of albinos are no longer able to move around for fear of the hunters

one given by police to the special parliamentary committee investigating the killings. Private organizations and some media in Tanzania have put the number higher, at more than 50 deaths.

Burundians – no less shocked by the killings than their Tanzanian neighbours – believe the market for albino body parts exists mainly if not exclusively in Tanzania, generated by big-money buyers who use them as talismans to bring luck and above all wealth. Senior police officers in Dar es Salaam said a complete set of albino body parts – including all four limbs, genitals, ears, tongue and nose – was fetching the equivalent of 75,000 US dollars.

Left: The first page of the 2009 Red Cross report on albinism. A black hand and a white hand are interlaced with text beside it. Below: An inset of text from the report is highlighted, showing the flimsy claim that a “full set” of albino body parts is worth 75,000 US dollars.

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Above: Well known albinism rights activist sit behind a long table, each before a microphone and taking notes. The audience watches on as Kenyan Justice Grace Ngugi speaks into a microphone.



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