

CENTER FOR AFRICAN STUDIES

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

NEWSLETTER: SPRING 2007, VOLUME IX

THE BATTLE OF THE SACRED TREE

Dinner, Movie and Dialogue presented by

The Center for African Studies and Rutgers College Student Development and College Affairs

Date: Tuesday, February 6, 2007

Time: 7pm Dinner (International Lounge) and 8pm Film (Center Hall)

Place: Busch Campus Center



Battle of the Sacred Tree still; photo credit Birne-Film



Battle of the Sacred Tree still; photo credit Birne-Film



Filmmaker Wanjiru Kinyanjui; photo credit Artmatters

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Editor.....Abena P.A. Busia
Content, Layout, Design.....Renée DeLancey

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Considering what we all feared about our survival at the start of this fiscal year, we, as a center, seem to have arrived at the holiday season with relative equanimity. I say often that one of the wonderful things about Rutgers University is the way it manages to endure as an institution, despite the Byzantine nature of its organization; we are a true testament to the fact that institutions survive through inertia, or perhaps it is just that being hydra headed has real advantages in times of crisis. Like the wondrous institution of which we are a part, we have survived New Jersey's fiscal crisis of last Spring - the state did not close our doors, and we continue to forge forward with continued determination. This determination has been evident in a number of ways, the most absorbing of which was the energy so many units spent preparing proposals for the university-wide capital campaign. We prepared two about which we feel very encouraged; an inspired one for a new African Gender Institute, and the other for Experiential Learning in African Area Studies, which would guarantee the sustainability of our core programs and activities. My thanks to the Executive Committee and Al Howard for the effort made to put these proposals through.

Until such windfalls actually materialize, tribute must be paid to our many friends with whom we are continuing fruitful programming collaborations. We are grateful, for example, for the continuing support of the Department of History, the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Center for Cultural Analysis through whom we were enabled to invite Francis Wilson (Professor School of Economics, University of Cape Town). We are also grateful to the Center for Women's Global Leadership and the Institute for Women's Leadership whose sponsorship made it possible for Bene Madunagu (Nigerian feminist activist and General Coordinator for "Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era") to visit Rutgers as a CWGL Visiting Global Associate for two weeks this Fall. CAS was delighted when Ms. Madunagu shared her DAWN experiences with CAS member Professor Meredith Turshen's class and other guests.

Thanks to the indefatigable work of William Kramer in Labor Studies Mariam Sissoko, a leader for family farmer activism in Mali, will participate in a grassroots program to explore how globalization has altered peasant farming. I would also like to thank Barbara Lewis for so kindly offering to host Ms. Sissoko in her home. A multitude of both internal and external sponsors enabled these Campesino leaders from different world regions to convene on our College Avenue campus. Such collective efforts result in the fulfillment of our mission to our students, so it has been gratifying that the women of TWESE have endorsed our efforts by enthusiastically identifying opportunities for closer collaborative programming. As one of the women who accompanied Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi to TWESE's Annual African Pride Banquet (see page 10) I can testify to what fun we had just dancing together!

We are also excited about future collaborations with CCA for our spring seminar and our preparations for the 2007 double celebration of both the independence of Ghana and the abolition of the slave trade in the former British Colonies. I am truly pleased to report that the New Jersey Council for the Humanities has agreed to award CAS a grant in support of this program the details of which will be posted on our website in the Spring. The work required to do this would not be possible without the wonderful support team led, of course, by Renée DeLancey. This year we have a number of students, both graduate and undergraduate, working with us in various capacities. Thank you Araba Kumi, David Kuranga, Sophonie Joseph, Mumah Tawe and, as always, Holly Fanning for your wonderful work!

I wish you all the best for the Holiday Season, see you next year.

Photos below taken at Rutgers by Renée DeLancey

With Best Wishes,



Abena P.A. Busia
Acting Director



W. Johnson; F. Wilson; A. Howard; E. Ramsamy

Bene Madunagu

Mariam Sissoko; William Kramer

EVENTS OF NOTE

Pearl Robinson, President, African Studies Association, will visit Rutgers March 21-22, 2007 for the Second Annual African Studies Association Presidential Lecture at Rutgers. The ASA Vice President, Aliko Songolo, will also attend. Please join us on Wednesday, March 21, 2007 from 12pm-2pm at Rutgers Student Center room 411 for "A Conversation with Pearl T. Robinson" where the importance of African Studies will be explored. We also invite you to attend the Presidential lecture entitled, "Ralph Bunche the Africanist" on Thursday, March 22 at 7pm in Alexander Library.

CAS Faculty Book Publications

Ousseina Alidou

(Director, Program in African Languages and Literatures)
Postconflict Reconstruction in Africa (co-editor; Africa World Press; 2006)

Barbara M. Cooper

(CAS Director, Associate Professor, History Department)
Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel (author; Indiana University Press; 2006)

David McDermott Hughes

(Assistant Professor, Human Ecology)
From Enslavement to Environmentalism: Politics on a Southern African Frontier (author; University of Washington Press; 2006)

Renée Larrier

(Associate Professor, French Department)
Autofiction and Advocacy in the Francophone Caribbean (author; University Press of Florida; 2006)

Carolyn Brown (CAS member and Associate Professor, History Department) will teach a new course in Spring 2007 entitled, "African Immigrants in New Jersey: An Oral History of the 'New' Diaspora" (History 512:392). The course is designed to train students in oral history techniques that can be used to document the history of specific African communities in New Jersey. Students will study the experiences of these immigrants prior to their departure from the continent as a perspective on African history and here, in New Jersey, as a narrative on the immigrant experience. Interviews will be videotaped and deposited in the Rutgers Library.

David Kuranga has identified many internship opportunities at Africa-related businesses and organizations for his graduate work study project. He asserts, "I believe that students who wish to become successful need to explore ways to do what they want to do in the future, today." Please visit the CAS website for more details: <http://ruafrica.rutgers.edu>.

PALL (Program in African Languages and Literatures) welcomes several new staff members: **Moha Ennaji** (Director, Arabic Program; see page 16), **Alamin Mazrui** (Visiting Professor, Kiswahili; see page 17) **John Soueid** (Part-Time Lecturer, Arabic) and **Nurudeen Ali** (Part-Time Lecturer, Yoruba). **Tsanangurayi Tongesayi** will join Rutgers CAS as an affiliate member from Monmouth University to support Shona instruction.

STAFF NEWS

Abena P. A. Busia, Acting Director



This first semester has been challenging and exhilarating; I look forward to the rest of the year!

Photo credit: Mardey Ohui Ofoe, Foundation for Female Photojournalists (Ghana)

Renée DeLancey, Assistant to the Director



I've had a terrific time working with students this semester! They were all so enthusiastic when I asked them to contribute to this issue. I hope that you enjoy their pieces as much as I have. Happy New Year to all.

Araba Kumi, Graduate Work Study



Pursuing my Masters in Social Work is like a dream come true for me. As a native of Ghana, West Africa, it means a lot to me to be part of the CAS team. I feel right at home anytime I am at the center. Thanks for giving me this great opportunity!

Holly Fanning, Administrative Assistant



This school year is going really well. I am doing much more voice and piano teaching and look forward to the spring semester. If all goes according to plan, I will graduate with my MM in May, at last!

LIBRARY NEWS

By Lourdes Vazquez

The new African focus databases cover a multitude of aspects of African culture, history, and society, ranging from law to literature, from periodicals to politics, and much more.

Africa-Wide: NiPAD is a comprehensive database that covers African and South African studies and has more than 2 million records of information from Africa, Europe and the USA. The subject areas covered include politics, history, economics, business, mining, natural sciences, environment, development, social issues, anthropology, literature, language, law, music, and tourism. The African databases included in this database are: IBISCUS (1970 to 2001), School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) Library Catalogue: Africa (1989 to current), NAMLIT (19th century to current), Natural & Cultural Heritage of Africa (NATCHA) (1960-current), Afro-Tropical Bird Information Retrieval Database (20th century to current), African Periodicals Exhibit (APEX), Bibliography on Contemporary African Politics and Development (1981 to 1992), Don Africana Collection (16th Century to current), The Campbell Collections of the University of Natal, Killie Campbell Africana Library Bibliography (19th Century to current), International Library of African Music (ILAM), Database of Swiss Theses and Dissertation (1897 to current), African Development Database, Media Africa, African Journals OnLine, Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA)- BIDOC current catalogue, African Books Collective. The South African Databases included are: Index to South African Periodicals (1987 to current), South African National Bibliography (1988 to current), The Southern African Database (Sardius) (1961 to 1997), National English Literary Museum (1990 to current), KnipKat, NEXUS, Witwatersrand University Management Research Reports (1970 to current), The Centre for Rural Legal Studies Database (1987 and earlier to current), South African Legal Abbreviations, Political Information and Monitoring Service Database (PIMS).

The Database of African Theses and Dissertations (DATAD) is a unique resource for scholarly research. Made available by the Association of African Universities, this database may be searched by author, title, degree, supervisor, university, department, year of submission, and keywords.

SA ePublications Social Sciences & Humanities Collection is a comprehensive, searchable collection of full-text electronic journals from South Africa with broad multidisciplinary coverage of the social sciences and humanities. The database includes journals in the fields of communications, education, history, library and information science, linguistics, literature, music, political science, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines.

Specific to Literatures in English

Literature Online is a searchable database with the full-text of more than 350,000 literary works in the English language- poetry, drama, and prose; 175 full-text literary journals; the *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature*; and reference sources including bibliographies, biographies, and Dictionaries. Individual units run from Anglo-Saxon literature, through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the 18th and 19th centuries right up to the late 20th Century. The geographical span includes England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the West Indies, Africa, and South Asia.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE CRISIS IN DARFUR

RU National Stand Coalition

By Sakina Namazi

The United Nations estimates about 1.65 million residents of Darfur, Sudan are internally displaced, more than 200,000 refugees from Darfur are in neighboring Chad, and a large scale of villages have been destroyed. These numbers for many mean a lifetime of agony, for others they are arbitrary numbers. Activism can change this divide.

Activists are advocates for change. The job of the student activist is to spread awareness about atrocities that are occurring around the world. Awareness is a precursor to change. The Rutgers University National STAND Coalition's (NSC-RU) purpose is to educate and encourage the public to provide support and get involved. We host events every semester with the hope of enlightening at least one person on the current situation in Darfur, Sudan.

The questions I receive most often are "what will my knowing about Darfur do?" and "what will change?" The truth is that things can change. We need to rally our senators and our congressmen to get more involved. As Mr. Abdelgabr Adam, a Sudanese refugee, said to members of NSC-RU and students at the University, "As we are sitting here talking, people are dying. They are dying from bullets, from disease, from malnutrition and more. Students like you can help." Words can make a difference but actions speak louder than words.

The Sudan and the Crisis in Darfur

By Larry Wiggins and Noma Ndlovu

Stephen Bronner, a professor of Political Science here at Rutgers University, gave a talk entitled, "The Sudan and the Crisis in Darfur" for the Center for African Studies on October 24th 2006 to a packed room. Students, faculty and staff listened attentively as Bronner discussed his travels to the region for a small gathering of scholars and intellectuals brought together by a relief agency in order to examine the situation. In the speech, Bronner stressed a need to approach Darfur from a different angle bringing in the nine surrounding governments and emphasizing that the region could implode if the Sudan does not come to peace.

The conflict in Darfur has worsened due to the escalation of several conflicts. First is class, land ownership in particular. Second is religion: the Animists are in conflict with the Christians who are in conflict with the Muslims. The government backed militia, called the Janjaweed, and the rebels of the south are "fighting a conflict over shrinking resources" said Bronner.

A significant part of the speech given by Professor Bronner was his description of the environment of the Sudan and Darfur. Noting that it took association with certain individuals and special permission from the government to enter into the Sudan and then into the area of Darfur, Bronner was given the rare opportunity to see an Internally Displaced People's (IDPs) camp. "It was just a sea of thatched huts" said Bronner. Many of the people suffer from malnourishment, live with stagnant water, mud dividers in the road, and minimum health services provided by too few relief workers. "People just wanted to go home" he said.

The obvious desire of people to leave the refugee camps and return to their normal lives was one of the main focuses of the proposal that Bronner issued for suspending the violence in Darfur. The professor does not believe sending 22,000 UN soldiers to a country roughly the size of Western Europe will work. Instead, Bronner proposed different objectives: first, support for African Union troops with financial backing, weapon outfitting and logistical support. The regional interest in the matter is critical to the solution because for Bronner, surrounding governments must get involved in the process in order to maintain legitimacy. Second, achieve a balance of discourse and influence in the rebuilding of Sudan including "the beliefs of the IDPs, national self-determination of the government and the regional interest made clear." Third, an independent analysis of the situation by a team of scholars without a stake in the outcome.

To Bronner and many examining the Sudan, it is clear that human relief agencies cannot correct the problem on their own; the impartial cooperation of outside forces and internal initiatives are required to restore the nation. A different approach to the entire situation may quell the violence and allow for people to begin rebuilding the Sudan.

The Moral Maze

By Stephen Eric Bronner

On September 17 Global Darfur Day saw a coordinated media effort, spearheaded by movie stars George Clooney and Mia Farrow, to raise public awareness about what was billed as the coming genocide in western Sudan. Tens of thousands marched in cities across the world. Among the core recommendations of the organizations behind the day was that the undermanned and poorly funded African Union force, which was failing to protect civilians in Darfur, be replaced by a multinational UN peacekeeping force that would comprise 22,000 soldiers. There was also talk of sanctions if the Khartoum government, widely thought to be behind the Janjaweed attacks on unarmed civilians in the region, refused to co-operate. The stage was set for a classic confrontation between good- the UN, George Clooney, global public opinion – and evil – the authoritarian government of Omar Hassan Al-Bashir and the anti-western Islamic forces that support him.

It would probably be bad taste to point out that a similarly glitzy public outcry was conspicuously absent as 4 million died in the civil war in the Congo, 1.6 million dead and displaced in Uganda or the 1 in 3 Malawians living below subsistence. Failure to prevent previous outrages does not mean we shouldn't try, and the memory of Rwanda hangs heavy on all of us. Cynicism is misplaced. No doubt the motives of the marchers and the celebrities were entirely honorable. But the inevitable simplification involved in turning Darfur – like Live Aid before it – into a designer crisis, risks being part of the problem it is trying to fix. Neither pious pronouncements from celebrities, sending in the UN, nor sanctions, can bring about a solution to a situation as long-running, as intractable and as complex, as that which is unfolding in the Western half of Africa's largest country.

Perhaps I would have been more sympathetic to the Clooney message if I hadn't, on September 3rd, stepped onto the tarmac at Khartoum airport, into an atmosphere of palpable crisis. I was traveling with thirteen academic colleagues as part of a delegation from Conscience International, a non-profit volunteer group dedicated to implementing humanitarian relief programmes through cooperation, led by the archeologist and humanitarian activist Dr. Jim Jennings. Because the group is non-governmental and non-partisan we are often able to gain access and initiate dialogue in a way that diplomats are not (the condescension of US diplomats, we were told, was one of the most severe stumbling blocks to progress). We were in the Sudan to participate in a two-day conference that would be attended by a host of leading Sudanese politicians and academics, on the subject of Darfur. Our aim was, of course, to build bridges and offer some suggestions to end the crisis, but we were not acting as emissaries for the US government, the UN or any other body. Our independence, and willingness to listen to the points of view of the many different players, we hoped, might make us useful. In addition to the conference in Khartoum, our itinerary included a visit to the pyramids of the long-vanished Kush civilization, the pharmaceutical factory mistakenly bombed under the orders of President Bill Clinton, a Sufi religious ritual, and a trip out to the large Darfurian refugee camp in El Fasher.

What we found defied easy categorization, or judgment. A global foreign policy, or humanitarian ideology, based on a simple division between goodies and baddies would have absolutely no purchase whatever in this vast, harsh, welcoming, confusing country. Sudan is roughly the size of Western Europe with, often contested, borders with nine other African states. It is where the Islamic-Arab world intersects with Africa. Independent since 1955, Sudan has been governed from the north, by the Islamic Front government under Omar Hassan Al-Bashir, since 1989. For decades the oil and resource rich provinces in the South, whose citizens mostly embrace Christianity or Animism, have been resisting the authoritarian government of the north. Since 2003 this has escalated into a slow burning war. Overlapping traditional religious tensions are the roving groups of armed bandits, blood feuds, tribal hatreds, conflicts between cattle herders and farmers, availability of weapons, and an ongoing competition over shrinking natural resources, livestock, and water. This is the landscape for the civil conflict, taking place off and on since the early 1950s, which has convulsed Sudan.

Darfur, which constitutes the western part of the Sudan, is nearly the size of France, and currently houses 153 squalid refugee camps for what amounts to millions of 'internally displaced persons'. These people fled their villages to escape the Sudanese military and the armed Muslim bandits on horseback -- known as the

Janjaweed – organized, it is plausibly alleged, by the Al-Bashir government to quell the ongoing rebellion in the region. The camps are hellish. Hunger, thirst, disease, filth, threats of rape and violence, and a stultifying idleness abound, with their sea of thatched huts, flimsy tents, and mud streets. The refugees wish only to return to their villages. But repatriating them, rebuilding their homes, and compensating the victims for what they have undergone will prove a huge and expensive undertaking. Along with the unwillingness of the government to disarm the Janjaweed, issues of this sort are at the root of the controversy concerning implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement of May 2006.

A new bombing campaign by Khartoum against Darfur, which started while we were still in Sudan, has driven tens of thousands more villagers into the camps and there is the ever present threat that the government might deploy the tens of thousands of troops they have on standby to drive the refugees over the border into Chad (some 200,000 have already crossed the border). Since the peace deal, when the Government promised to disarm the Janjaweed, 7000 African Union troops had been stationed in Darfur. But they had been harshly criticized for their incompetence and inexperience, and had not been able to stem the violence.

When we arrived in Khartoum there was less than a month to go before the AU mandate expired. On 31 August, the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for the ‘re-hatting’ of some of them, adding a few thousand civilian police, and mixing them with roughly 17,000 troops sent by the UN. Under the auspices of the United Nations, this force would be used to protect the refugees from the Janjaweed and the Sudanese military in the future. But, President Al-Bashir was adamant in his refusal either to extend the mandate of troops from the African Union or allow the UN the right to intervene in Sudanese affairs.

For many outside Africa this must have appeared straightforward – an authoritarian Islamic dictatorship refusing a reasonable and humanitarian proposal by the UN. But this is to overlook both the impracticality of the proposal that the UN sort it out, and the justifiable concerns in Africa about the UN. In Khartoum no less than in Tehran or Tripoli anti-western radicals argue that the UN is nothing more than a front for ‘imperialist powers’ intent upon ‘re-colonising’ the Sudan. Such charges are mostly self-serving propaganda. But the toppling of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the American occupation of Iraq, and the generally bellicose policy of the Bush Administration lent credence to such charges.

Because it has often been a tool of western “‘great power’ interests, and also because vetoes on so many resolutions have been made by the United States on behalf of Israel, the political intentions of the United Nations are still generally greeted with suspicion in much of the previously colonised world. They may not be the whole story but to proceed as if such assumptions don’t exist, or are irrelevant, is arrogant in the extreme. It is surely a western conceit to believe that UN troops will somehow prove more competent than those of the African Union. Such a substitution would surely insult African sensibilities. And alongside the question of diplomatic sensitivity come the harder edged practical considerations.

Little thought has been given to the logistics and the realistic mandate of a UN force, even 22,000 strong as proposed, alien to the terrain and the culture of Darfur, patrolling an area of 290,00 square kilometers. Neither has there been consideration of the parlous state of the UN coffers or the precise mission of these troops. Many refugees would undoubtedly welcome the UN. That is also true of some of the rebel groups like the Justice and Equality Movement led by Khalil Ibrahim, and Abdelwahid Mohamed al-Nur’s Sudanese Liberation Movement. But on our visit we met representatives from many of the tribes – including those from the politically powerful Zagawa and Rizgat tribes – who candidly informed us that their people would resist any ‘invading’ force, peacekeeping or not.

It is not impossible to imagine that, were a UN force parachuted in, a national resistance will take shape and that refugees living in the camps might well find themselves caught in the middle of a maelstrom far worse than that in Iraq. Eighty tribes in the Sudan have their own militias, previous peace agreements are in doubt, Islamic fundamentalists loyal to al Qaeda are training in the Jebel Marra Mountains, and the country seems set to implode. Neither UN intervention, nor ramping up sanctions, is the solution. What’s more, in spite of all the hard-line public rhetoric, I was told again and again that Khartoum was looking for an exit – “with honor” – from the crisis its leaders had unconscionably created.

I did my best, in the meetings I had, to explore what this might be. In panels which included former Sudanese Ambassador to the United States, Charles Manyang, and government minister Dr. El-Tijani Mustafa - I employed a calculatedly conciliatory tone – which perforce played down the notion of ‘genocide’ and argued that the African Union rather than the UN should decide which humanitarian agencies should be allowed entry into Darfur. I even argued that charges of war crimes against government figures should not be pursued. The need to cooperate with Khartoum to address the humanitarian crisis, in my view, outweighs the requirements of international justice, at least for now.

With these softeners on the table I argued that the mandate of the AU should be extended and its role strengthened. I tried to make clear that the UN was not synonymous with the Security Council – which is stacked in the West’s favour – and outlined a way forward where the UN, Sudan and the AU could cooperate to end the violence. And now? The number of “internally displaced people” continues to grow. Death and disease remain rampant, and armed militias continue to prevent the work of humanitarian agencies.

Yet, in an interview with South Africa News on October 26, Sudan’s president Omar al-Bashir, while steadfastly refusing to concede to the UN Security Council’s request to let 20,000 UN troops into Darfur, said he is willing to accept an increase in the number of foreign peacekeepers in Darfur, as long as they stay under African Union control. Perhaps there is an opening for a new approach that might foster investment, which could be linked to sustained funding for the repatriation of refugees, a strengthened African Union, and the Sudan integrated into the world community. Unless proposals of this sort are embraced the wretched of the earth will wind up – again – bearing the consequences of “action” by their supposed allies who will surely forget about them once the costs rise or the next crisis comes along.

Stephen Eric Bronner is Professor (II) of Political Science at Rutgers University. His most recent book is *Blood in the Sand: Imperial Fantasies, Right-Wing Ambitions, and the Erosion of American Democracy* (University Press of Kentucky: 2005). This article first appeared in the British magazine, *The New Humanist*.



Abena P. A. Busia, Noma Ndlovu and Stephen Eric Bronner

“Lost Boys of Sudan”

By Sophonie Joseph

I am an Urban Studies major and I attended a screening of “The Lost Boys of Sudan,” a documentary by Megan Mylan & Jon Shenk, that invites the viewer to look into the lives of two survivors. Santino Majok Choor and Peter Nyarol Dut are two teenage members of the Southern Sudanese Dinka tribe. However, they no longer reside in Sudan. In the beginning of the film their home is a one room shack that characterizes the refugee camp located in Kenya. This relocation is a major part of their designation as the Lost Boys of Sudan. When these young men were boys they involuntarily gained first hand experience with civil war. Orphaned by the Arabian soldiers of Northern Sudan with their sisters and mothers abducted as sex slaves, these boys wandered neighboring African countries in search of somewhere safe to call home. They found this new home at the Kakame refugee Camp in Kenya. Some of these young men were offered opportunities to build a new life for themselves in member countries of the United Nations. In 2001, the United States government granted asylum to nearly 4,000 Lost Boys. Santino and Peter happened to be two of that crowd and that is how the story begins in Houston (or Hawston—if you ask Santino or Peter), Texas.

In Houston, these boys begin a journey that they were not prepared for by their United States Refugee Program immigration interviews and training in Kenya. During the intake process, they had been informed of the potential for economic and educational improvement that their new nation would offer them. Yet the grim reality is that the boys find themselves among America's working poor. The U.S. officials deliver on half of their promise, economic improvement. But the improvement only seems significant with respect to their standard of living in Kenya. Regarding the cost of living in America, the job training and advice provided to these boys seems to be nothing but a pittance to keep them from complete destitution. In reality these boys needed federal aid in obtaining a quality education which would have permitted them to truly advance their standing in America and Africa. Sadly this topic seems to be completely forgotten by American officials and caseworkers once these young men land on American soil.

Towards the end of the film we see these young men being forced into the wisdom that age would usually bring. But in their case it is a rough life filled with misery that has forced these Lost Boys to grow up long before their time. They come to realize the conundrum that the U.S. government has left them in. Do they send their hard earned dollars back home to their needy family members and friends or do they try to save their money to get themselves out of the American rat race? The situation becomes so difficult for both young men that they wonder whether life was better in Africa where they did not have financial stability but did have the support and appreciation of their makeshift familial networks, or in America where they had some finances but did not have the comfort of social support? Neither young man is able to reach a conclusive decision.

From my perspective, this film displayed a very important story that is ignored by American society. I recognize the benefits that the program offers to those permitted to immigrate, however the negative consequences are many. The ill prepared social service programs that attempt to provide proper social and educational support to refugees seriously brings into question the appropriateness of this endeavor in the first place. My heart really felt for these young men as they dealt with issues such as racism, colorism, acculturation, integration, and poverty (working poor status). What made it worse for Santino and Peter was the culture shock that ensued when their homogenous backgrounds were suddenly faced with America's cultural diversity and negative stereotypes. What hurt me the most is the way in which African-Americans did and did not treat them. Colorism continues to be a deadly disease that separates the African Diaspora. In the film, African-Americans seem to achieve some sort of personal gain from teasing other Blacks who are of a darker skin tone. The other issue that frustrated me was that the film repeatedly displayed the Lost Boys receiving aid, home furnishings, advice, monetary aid, etc. from White churches. Although I am very happy at their willingness to help others, the one question that kept running through my head was “Where are the Black people?” Whether they were African-American, Africans, Jamaican, etc., I unfortunately cannot say that I viewed one predominantly Black organization providing aid to these young men. Why is that?

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS FOCUS ON AFRICA

Engineering Students Help Bring Clean Water to Eastern Kenya

By Carla Cantor

Originally Published in Focus, Rutgers' Faculty/Staff Newspaper, November 8, 2006

Four undergraduate students from the Rutgers chapter of Engineers Without Borders spent three weeks this summer in arid Eastern Kenya alongside local engineers building a rain water harvesting system. The project will supply healthy water to 200 families that survive as subsistence farmers.

"It's tremendous to think that our efforts will help provide clean drinking water to a village in Kenya, a country experiencing its worst drought in 20 years," said chemical-biochemical engineering junior Reema Shah, whose personal and professional ambition is "to spread the wealth that we Americans take for granted."

Rutgers' Engineers Without Borders (EWB) was founded last year by engineering students Kevin Tevis (SOE '07) and Dorothy Morillos (SOE '06). The chapter is part of a national network that partners with developing communities worldwide to improve the quality of life, while training a new kind of internationally responsible engineering student.

"There is a growing interest among today's students to make an impact on people's lives and to do something active and useful with their degrees," said Donald M. Brown, associate dean of the School of Engineering, who helped launch the Rutgers EWB chapter. The group's first project: Six members traveled to New Orleans last year to clean up and help rehabilitate several buildings devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

The Kenya project came via a connection between an EWB student member and Olubayi Olubayi, an instructor in the Department of Africana Studies in New Brunswick. Olubayi's brother, Barnabas Inyaaa, an engineer in the village of Isungulini, arranged for EWB students to get involved with the water harvesting project. The students spent two weeks laying a concrete foundation to support the rain water catchment system: two cement storage tanks – each with a holding capacity of 25,000 liters – that connect to a series of gutters that allow rain water to be harvested from the roof.

While in Kenya, the EWB students also ran workshops to introduce Kenyan high school students to engineering, and designed and built a solar-powered oven, which consists of a foil-covered box, transparent glass, and a mirror that reflects sunlight into the box. The oven works on the same principles as a greenhouse, reaching high temperatures quickly. "It allows the villagers to cook with the sun, rather than exhausting what little resources they have," Tevis said. The demonstration was especially interesting for the Kenyan school children, who study physics, but seldom get to see real-life applications. "Now that they've been introduced to the concept, EWB challenged the students to improve on our design and build a more efficient solar oven," Tevis said.

EWB students also lent their expertise to a project in Western Kenya, supported by the Global Literacy Project, Inc., which they learned of through Denniston Bonadie, another Rutgers Africana studies instructor. There, the students collected data necessary for designing and building a bridge to connect two villages so that agricultural goods can be transported across a small river that is often impassable during the long rainy season. The students hope to return to collaborate with Kenyan engineering student-volunteers in building the bridge.

Brown said that the School of Engineering is seeking funds from professional societies and other organizations to send the students back to Kenya next summer. This year, the students paid the cost of their airfare, although the host country covered the in-country ground costs, including food and lodging.

Tevis, who plans to enter the engineering workforce after graduating, would like to see Rutgers' EWB grow – there are now 50-plus members – and attract more students from other disciplines. "EWB is open to all majors," Tevis said. "It's important for the chapter to have more than one perspective. Psychology majors look at problems very differently than engineers."

For more information on Engineers Without Borders visit: <http://www.ewb-usa.org/modules/content/index.php?id=2>

Hello from TWESE

By Jessica Akunna

TWESE (An Association of Africans and Friends of Africa) means unity in kinyarwanda. As the only African student organization here at Rutgers University, New Brunswick we want to emphasize that this is a rebuilding year. We hope to further develop a dynamic political, economical, social, and health conscious atmosphere focused on the current issues in Africa. Another crucial objective is to celebrate the undeniably diverse and vibrant cultures that make Africa such a rich continent.

On October 27, 2006 we celebrated our Annual Royal African Pride Banquet at the Rutgers Student Center. The banquet is a terrific platform for the organization to share TWESE with the Rutgers community. The event was entitled, "Building a Generation of Leaders" which included a mini fashion show, "adawat" which is a cultural dance, as well as a tribute to great leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikwe, and the current president of Liberia Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. We also honored several non-political figures of Africa including singer Miriam Makeba and Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Muta Maathai from Kenya. Thanks to the support of the Center of African Studies, our keynote speaker was Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, Executive Director of the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) headquartered in Accra, Ghana. She illustrated to the guests how the AWDF raised millions of dollars to support a myriad of women's organizations across the vast African continent since its inception in 2000. Furthermore, our event included authentic West African cuisine, live entertainment, and dancing!

Our programming for Fall includes an AIDS and cultural awareness benefit and a film viewing and discussion of "Invisible Children" which centers on child abduction in Uganda. We will also have our annual fashion show in the Spring 2007 semester to showcase Africa's unique cultural fashions.

Lastly, TWESE welcomes all Africa enthusiasts, both African and non-African alike. If you are interested in learning more about Africa we invite you to attend our weekly meeting. TWESE meets every Wednesday night from 8:30 to 9:30pm at the Paul Robeson Cultural Center on Busch Campus. Hope to see you there!



From left to right: Bridgette Forson (Vice President), Roseline Akintunde (Treasurer), Jessica Akunna (Cultural Coordinator), and Idayat Adewumni (President)

ODASIS

By Kamal Khan

The Office of Diversity and Academic Success in the Sciences (ODASIS) at the New Brunswick/Piscataway campus of Rutgers University encourages the active, increased participation, success, and advancement of underrepresented minority (URM) and economically or educationally disadvantaged students at Rutgers in courses and majors related to the sciences. One of ODASIS' major missions is to increase the number of African American and Hispanic doctors in New Jersey. In the past two years alone, 65 out of 76 qualified ODASIS participating students were accepted into medical school, and 25 students have received their M.D.'s. In the process of serving over 300 students per year, ODASIS has been providing a supportive environment that optimizes the opportunities for our students to excel academically. Students from minority groups will pursue careers in which they will put their scientific knowledge to use in the medical and allied health fields, in biomedical research, or other related fields. This is a program that shows results! Nigerian students embrace the program in their testimonials, below.

"As a student at a large school it is easy to feel like a small fish in a vast ocean. ODASIS gave me a much needed family where I was no longer a faceless number, but a person. They equipped me with the necessary tools to succeed, which included study skills, networking, mentorship, academic support and most of all people who were my coaches and cheerleaders. As I stand on the first pillar of my success, I know that ODASIS provided me with the bricks and mortar."

- Angelique Ridore

"I came to Rutgers two years ago as a strong academic student, but my first semester here (without Success in the Sciences) proved otherwise as I did not reach the academic goals that I had held at my previous college. However, with the assistance of S.I.S. during the spring semester of 2003 and on, I have been able to achieve the high academic standards of Rutgers University but most importantly myself. With great leadership, advising and tutoring for students like me there will always be an avenue in which one could achieve nothing less than academic excellence." - Chidubem Okafor

"What on earth would I do without Success in the Sciences???? Thank God I don't have to find out...Thanks!" - Anne Mbui

STUDENTS RESEARCH AFRICA

Aspiring MPA's Learn Overseas

For many years the Department of Public Policy and Administration at Rutgers Camden and the U.S. Peace Corps have offered a joint program leading to the Masters in Public Administration (MPA) degree and an overseas assignment as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Developed by Professor Michael Lang (Department of Public Administration, Rutgers-Camden), it was the first of Peace Corps' Masters International Programs now widely replicated at other universities. The idea was to prepare Peace Corps Volunteers by offering them rigorous professional training in public administration in preparation for their overseas assignments assisting governmental and non-governmental organizations. The graduate training that the volunteers received at Rutgers meant that host countries were prepared to offer them positions of greater influence and authority than was typical of most Peace Corps placements. After their stint in the Peace Corps, most of our graduates secured full time employment with major international development agencies.

At Rutgers, students are enrolled in the Department's 42 credit International Public Service and Development track, coordinated by Professor Jainaba Kah. Students are able to use their two year Peace Corps experience as the basis of an intensive 9 credit directed study. Rutgers-Camden MPA students have served in many developing countries including several African nations.

Jessica DeVreeze Reports from Morocco

Upon enrolling in the Peace Corps Masters International Program to earn a Masters degree in the development field, I knew that the Peace Corps service element of my program was one of the best reputed forums for career training. My permanent site for the next two years is the small city of Berkane, Morocco. People in the Berkane region are impacted by many of the same social problems effecting the general population in Morocco. Issues include apathy and corruption in government agencies, the secondary social status of women, lack of education about sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS, and insufficient social assistance for the poor. Berkane is located in the corner of North Africa where Algeria, Morocco, and the Mediterranean Sea meet. The city lies in a fertile farming valley at the foothills of the BenniesNessen Mountains with access to Spain and Oujda, the city named the "Capital of the Moroccan Orient". When I was first told that I would be stationed in Berkane I was a



Jessica with an artisan in his shop

bit daunted by how isolated my site is from the rest of the Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) community (the next closest PCV in my sector is 200 kilometers away by train in Taza), but now I am very happy to call Berkane my new home.

I work within the Small Business Development (SBD) sector of the Peace Corps Morocco program. My target populations are rural women who practice the artisanal handicrafts that have been a part of Morocco's cultural tradition for centuries. The SBD program is partnered with the Moroccan Ministry of Artesiana, with which I worked to conduct a needs assessment for the artisans. We agreed that my initial projects would be to organize a craft fair in one of the local mountain *douars* (very small village), as well as an exposition room for tourists to display the region's artisanal products and information about the artisans who make them. The artisans as well as the government officials that work at my local artesiana tirelessly help me through providing me with information about their work, knowledge of community resources, and moral support to name but a few things.

Through cooperation and coordination with local associations, I now have a solid start in discovering and accessing the many rural artisans that could potentially benefit from my projects. For example, *Towieina Alif Lam*, the teaching cooperative where I receive my Arabic language tutoring, has a 5 year contract from USAID to combat illiteracy in the Berkane region. Association members invited me to sit in on a meeting with one of their literacy class beneficiaries, a women's association in a *douar* close to Berkane, because the women are also artisans. Along with hot tea, the women brought all of their artisanal products from their homes to the meeting in order for me to better know their individual talents and what types of products they specialize in making. I am now working directly with the women so that they can be involved in my current projects, and we plan to continue to work together in the future.

Acquiring sufficient language is one of my main challenges in living in Morocco. Esma, my host family member and friend, tirelessly explains and teaches me words in *Derishia* (Moroccan Arabic) as if it is a normal part of her already packed schedule. Esma's help exemplifies how my work as a Peace Corps Volunteer is facilitated by the people in the community of Berkane. Although I struggle just to communicate, I have a productive work environment that is enabled by my host family, my friends, and the people that I work with at the artesiana and the local associations. I cite these opportunities, along with the persistent motivation of the people, as my main facilitator in achieving the Peace Corps goals of cross-cultural learning/understanding and transference of technical skills. I feel confident about using my unique position as a PCV to reach beyond business development of artisanal products, and incorporate wider development issues into my service, such as education about sensitive social issues such as AIDS and equality between the sexes. I have faced many obstacles thus far and more are sure to come. I look forward to facing these challenges together with the people with whom I have come to deeply respect and love.

“Singing the Same Song”: Continuity in African Women’s Resistance

By Tayo Jolaosho

If you’ve been called by Africa then we’re singing the same song. [Freshlyground]

Her voice, their singing/ It chokes my spirit/ And lets it loose again. [Thandiswa Mazwai]

Every morning, I wake up to this music... there’s always this song and the person singing it...I’m telling you, our ancient walk among us in many guises. [Maria in *Savior From The Flood*]

Too often, Western feminists criticize African “tradition” as irredeemably patriarchal and oppressive. However, African women artists are increasingly exploring the link between emancipation and cultural continuity. In my work as a Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology, I propose to examine the work of three female artists who exemplify this trend. Two of the women, Zolani Mahola and Thandiswa Mazwai, were born into Xhosa legacy in South Africa. The third artist, myself, is finding meaning in Xhosa tradition through her native Yoruba heritage and experiences in the United States and South Africa. I will analyze the artists’ creative processes as well as their outputs.

- The process of forming Zolani Mahola’s band, Freshlyground, exemplifies cultural continuity across societal divides. In their coming together, the multi-racial members of Freshlyground transcend the hostilities of South Africa’s musical environment in which the distance between genres finds reinforcements in lingering societal divisions post-apartheid. This process of fusion is apparent in the band’s creative output. As the primary vocalist, Zolani Mahola’s singing is a mingling of tongues— English with her native Xhosa. In this way, Zolani Mahola and Freshlyground project a vision of being African in which there’s a continuous presence of the traditional, not as stigmatizing or divisive but progressive and legitimate.
- Claiming continuity across a temporal and spatial divide is an integral part of the process of creating Thandiswa Mazwai’s first solo album. Part of her preparation for recording was to take a pilgrimage to the Transkei, a Xhosa region in South Africa. She was accompanied by Madosini, a renowned Xhosa traditional musician, who imparted her cultural knowledge in this traditional setting. The result of this process is an advocacy for liberation through remembrance and return. Indeed the album’s title *Zabalaza*, a Xhosa imperative meaning *Revolt* is a literal return to Xhosa linguistic repertoire to advocate revolution.
- Across the Atlantic, my own work as a playwright, particularly in writing *Savior From The Flood*, puts a different spin on this issue of remembrance. For me, remembrance is not tied to a physical location or cultural moment that has been left behind and must hence be reclaimed. Instead remembrance is about recognition, seeing anew the continuities that have been there all along. I start with the understanding that in crossing the middle passage, African deities, and other manifestations of our cultures, made that journey with us and have since been “translated” into this new landscape, lending to their misrecognition. *Savior From The Flood* then intersects with continuity as a project to recover mutations of the past in this spatial present.

These three engagements with the traditional foster understandings of African resistance and liberation as tied to the continuity of its cultures. It is part of a larger project that I am currently co-editing, an anthology of contemporary writing by African women with a focus on resistance.

Dillon Mahoney Returns from Kenya

I returned to Rutgers in August after completing a year of my Department of Anthropology dissertation research (funded by Fulbright Hays) in Mombasa, Kenya. My focus was small-scale traders and exporters of tourist art, an interest I developed during an undergraduate study abroad program in 2001. My past year of research focused on the effects of cell phones and the internet on small-scale businesses, particularly the socio-economic networks for producing, selling, and exporting an evolving and diverse variety of Kenyan arts and crafts. From a U.S. perspective, the internet, E-Bay, and email alone give anyone with a computer or even access to a public library the ability to learn how to use a computer and potentially sell things over the internet. This is largely due to policies and initiatives to “bridge the digital divide” in the U.S. by putting computers in public schools and libraries. Kenya, however, has offered an interesting challenge, its means for “bridging the digital divide” guided from a different policy standpoint than that which aided the U.S. in the 1990s. The *Economist*, which frequently mentions Kenya as an example of the expansion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Sub-Saharan Africa, argued in their cover article of March 2005, titled “The Real Digital Divide,” that overcoming the gap between those connected to ICTs and those not is best done by the privatization of national telecoms markets. Underlying it all is the assumption that afterwards, “firms and customers, on their own and even in the poorest countries, will close the divide themselves.”

My findings link ICT connectivity not with security and independence, but insecurity, dependence, and competition. Privatization of ICTs creates rather than overcomes new digital divides, accentuating other structural inequalities. Mombasa, Kenya has been called “the most important port from Durban to Cairo” and is a crossroad of historical economic, social, and political systems. As a result, the city itself, its roadsides, markets, and public spaces, have become final crossroads to many, for life or death, success or failure, connection or isolation. The reality is that insecurities have increased with the use of ICTs, even as the commodities themselves and the “connection” they promise develop new and powerful meanings as symbols.

I am now back at Rutgers working on my dissertation, the story of kiosk and slum demolitions, political and economic change, Kenya’s “coming online,” and how, at times, buying tourist art in Mombasa works to subsidize the cheap production of clothes made in Kenyan export processing zones.

Laura Ann Pechacek Presents for CAS

As a doctoral student in the History Department researching Atlantic Cultures and the African Diaspora I presented my paper entitled, “[Mémoire de sang’: Re-presenting Africa in Crime Fiction” for CAS. The paper is an analysis of the themes of history and memory in the Malian thriller *Kouty, mémoire de sang* (1998) written by Aïda Mady Diallo. *Kouty* is the first novel written by an African woman published in the French collection Série Noire. Africa has been a topos, literal and literary, for violence in popular crime fiction. This new book’s representations of Africa, history, and memory beg examination. How does Diallo alter perceptions of the continent within this genre? By comparing her writing to the themes presented by such widely read Western writers as Georges Simenon in the Francophone world (*Le Coup de lune, Le blanc à lunette*), and Alexander McCall Smith (*The No.1 Ladies’ Detective Agency*) in the English speaking world, I examined how an African woman author writes violence out of Africa. At the narrative level, *Kouty*, the protagonist, is both victim and perpetrator of violence. As a young girl she witnesses the rape of her mother and massacre of her family. The memory of this event drives *Kouty*’s vengeance against the men who violated and murdered her family. Here, an African woman is at the center of the intrigue, and her revenge is a violent reclaiming of her lost family. How do we read it as a re-appropriation of women’s bodies and Africa, previously held captive by the genre? *Kouty*’s “mémoire de sang” is also an examination of inter-African violence that questions the meanings of unity in Africa. How does Diallo incorporate ethnic strife in the narrative? How do we read the complexities of inter-African violence? Finally, how can we interpret her protagonist’s righting wrongs in blood in relation to the author’s writing in this bloody genre? Could *Kouty* stand as a symbol: reclaiming violence in this Western genre and reinvesting it with new meaning, or an old one? Is it just vengeance? How do we situate *Kouty* within the canon of popular crime novels set in Africa and the author within African literature?



Mahriana Rofheart and Pechacek pose before talk for CAS

Wolof at CAS and Beyond

By Mahriana Rofheart

As a graduate student in the Comparative Literature Ph.D. program here at Rutgers, I have been studying Wolof for the past two years. From the standpoint of Comparative Literature, the importance of engaging with texts in their original language is paramount. For some, this means working simultaneously in a number of European languages. But given my interest in West African literature, I found that my comparative endeavors would be particularly enriched through the study of an African language. In the Fall of 2004, I was fortunate to take a seminar in the French department with novelist Boubacar Boris Diop. His decision to write in Wolof rather than French catalyzed my interest in the Wolof language. Taking advantage of the possibility to set up an African Language Tutorial through the Center for African Studies and with the help of Professor Ousseina Alidou, I thus began learning Wolof with a New York-based Senegalese Wolof speaker, Fallow Gueye. I continued with Instructor Gueye for two semesters and also had eight weeks of intensive language training at the Summer Cooperative African Languages Institute (SCALI), located at Indiana University, Bloomington.

There are many possibilities that Wolof offers to my research. The two primary writers in Wolof today are Boris Diop and Cheikh Aliou Ndao, both of whom have written in Wolof as well as French and favor the former over the latter. Furthermore, there are the numerous Wolof words present throughout canonical and contemporary Senegalese writing in European languages. I hope to examine how having Wolof as a first language influences authors who choose to write in other languages – French and, more recently, Italian. What literary strategies might these authors employ, and what difficulties might they face? Other directions for the study of literature in Wolof include oral songs and poetry and the increasing body of communication that appears in Wolof on the internet (whether from those located in Senegal or abroad). Although much communication via the internet among Senegalese at home and abroad does occur in French (www.senegalaisement.com and www.rewmi.com), Wolof can be found in forums and message boards. Where might such new technologies and possibilities for expression take the Wolof language as online language courses, Wolof dictionaries, and sites hosting poetry and essays proliferate? Hopefully towards continued Wolof literary production and research.

DIRECTOR ON PALL DEVELOPMENTS

By Ousseina Alidou

The Program in African Languages and Literatures may have entered a new phase in the U.S. academy since the tragedy of September 11, 2001. This is the period when the role of foreign languages and, more especially, the less commonly taught languages, in promoting understanding towards a more sustainable peaceful world order has become even more compelling. This understanding could be achieved through cross-cultural education and interaction, economic exchange, and political diplomacy, all fostered by the knowledge of each other's languages. As a result of this new awareness of the importance of foreign languages and less commonly taught languages, there has been a gradual growth of Arabic and African language programs in the U.S. within the last few years. With more than two hundred students, Rutgers takes a regional lead in Arabic instruction on the East Coast. The demand for Arabic and African languages has also been augmented by new waves of immigrant populations in the U.S. New Jersey has a large proportion of immigrant speakers of African languages from the Arabic speaking world (from North and sub Saharan Africa and the Middle East). This demographic growth has led to the rapid increase of students who are described as Heritage Language Learners, especially for Arabic and Yoruba.

Fortunately for PALL, the increasing demand of African languages has coincided with the program's recruitment of new faculty specialists of linguists and cultural studies. These include Dr. Moha Ennaji, a linguist and Arabist, Dr. Alamin Mazrui, a linguist and Swahilist and Mr. Nurudeen Ali, a native speaker of Yoruba from Nigeria with a degree in Arabic and Islamic studies from the International Islamic University of Islamad (Pakistan). Dr. Ennaji joins as the Director of Arabic, a program that has benefited immensely from its prior team of instructors including Mr. Mohamed A. Alsiadi, Mr. John Soueid and Mr. Rashid El Bouzidy. This core of faculty and instructors has positioned PALL to make strides in new directions including the introduction of higher levels of language courses, the establishment of a minor in African languages and literatures, the design of a language certification program for teachers in New Jersey schools and has inspired an "African Languages Night." Held each semester the evening has created both an African language community and a great opportunity for language students to display their achieved proficiency through language skits, poetry recitation, and other linguistic performances. By all indications PALL is poised for a great future!

Arabic Program Update

By Moha Ennaji

I am very pleased and very happy to join Rutgers University as Director of the Arabic program. I have been to this beautiful campus twice, first as a Fulbright scholar during the Summer of 2005 and then as a plenary speaker at the annual conference of the African Language Teachers Association which was held at Rutgers last March.

Having an Arabic program at Rutgers is both important and stimulating: it will expand students' minds, widen their horizons, provide them with an opportunity to learn Arabic and expose them to Arabic and Islamic culture. The program will surely contribute to the consolidation of Arab-American dialogue and to cultural understanding between religions and peoples.



I am determined to improve the Arabic program at Rutgers by ensuring more coordination between the various courses that are growing and flourishing on campus. At present, there are approximately two hundred students taking Arabic classes. These students come from different departments (Middle Eastern Studies, Africana Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, Chemistry, Medicine, Engineering, and more). Given that Arabic is also taught in many high schools and community colleges in New Jersey, we are planning to survey these institutions where Arabic is taught with the aim of ensuring coordination and avoiding repetition and overlap of course contents. As there is a large Arab community in New Jersey and New York it will be interesting to develop evening and weekend classes for students and people in general who are interested in Arabic language and culture, as an outreach activity and a service to the community.

On another level, we are in discussions with Dr. Paul Sprachman and Dr. Hooshang Amirahmadi (Center for Middle Eastern Studies), Dr. Walton Johnson (Chair of the Department of Africana Studies), and Dr. Ousseina Alidou (PALL Director) to organize a certificate in Arabic language teaching for those students who are interested in becoming Arabic teachers. We also hope to launch a Master in Arabic Studies in the future which will focus on language, culture, history, Islamic thought, democracy, politics, and gender in the Arab world. And starting from the Spring 2007 semester we will have two sections of every level of Arabic which will result in a total of six semesters in Arabic. The aim is to establish a minor in Arabic for Fall 2007 which will include content courses taught in Arabic. The program will in due course propose study abroad courses which will expose our students to more Arabic language and culture, and will help us establish links and exchange programs with Arab universities in the Middle East and North Africa, especially with my home University of Fez, Morocco.

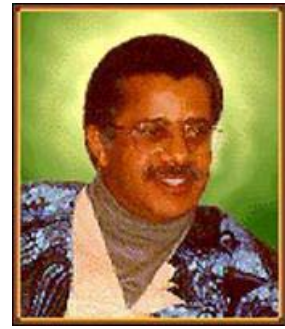
Professor Moha Ennaji is the Editor of the international journal "Languages and Linguistics" since 1998. His website address is <http://www.mohaennaji.tk> and e-mail address is mennaji@rci.rutgers.edu.

His ongoing research projects include:

- A new book coming out soon on Migration and Gender in Morocco, in co-authorship with Dr. Fatima Sadiqi
- Editing an issue of the International Journal of the Sociology of Language devoted to Language and Gender in the Mediterranean Region, to be published by Mouton de Gruyter in 2007
- Anthology of North African Women's Writings, to be published by the end of 2007 by Feminist Press, in collaboration with Florence Howe, Abena Busia, Marjorie Lightman, Fatima Sadiqi, Amira Noaira, and other North African scholars
- Applied Linguistics and Gender studies project in collaboration with the University of Oldenburg, Germany
- A research project on Governance and Literacy Issues in Morocco with Oregon State University
- Contribution of six entries about Moroccan writers and nationalist leaders to the New Encyclopedia of Africa (second edition, edited by John Middleton & John Miller)
- Africa Research Project and Education Program in collaboration with National Center on Adult Literacy/International Literacy Institute, University of Pennsylvania

Kiswahili at Rutgers

The Kiswahili leg of the Program in African Languages and Literatures (PALL) in the Department of Africana Studies is almost as old as Livingston College where it was first established. Its pioneering agent was the now retired Professor Ibrahim Noor Shariff of Tanzania. Over the years our Kiswahili offerings have attracted students from a wide range of majors, including Africana Studies, Comparative Literature, Public Health, Journalism, Criminology, Agricultural Extension, Linguistics, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Gender Studies and Social Work. Some have been graduate students with specific discipline-pegged, research interests in Kiswahili.



In spite of its long history at Rutgers, however, regular Kiswahili offerings have rarely extended beyond the elementary level. Under the directorship of Professor Ousseina Alidou, the first major objective of PALL, then, is to have a more systematic program of Kiswahili instruction that runs annually from the elementary to the advanced level. This development will give Rutgers students the opportunity — after two years of Kiswahili instruction — to enroll in the language-based study abroad program to East Africa funded by the Federal Department of Education and which is intended to foster advanced Kiswahili skills. There are also numerous other Kiswahili-based study abroad programs hosted by institutions like Yale University and St. Lawrence University which are open to Rutgers students.

PALL's second objective is to design content courses that will be taught exclusively in Kiswahili. Initially the focus will be on literature courses that will offer students an aesthetic and literary experience that is cross-cultural. In the early 1970's, Professor Ivan Van Sertima used to teach a course on Swahili literature in English translation; the objective now is to teach it in the Swahili language itself. We believe that the study of literature is one of the best ways of understanding society. In the words of Henry James, "it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature." Sometimes a command of the literature of another society may be a better guide to that society than many history books about it. In addition, the study of the literature of another society provides an opportunity to understand one's own society better. According to the great Kiswahili poet, Shaaban Robert, "Fasihi kioo cha Mngu" (Literature is God's mirror). We look at the creative mind in other societies in the hope that we will begin to understand our own society better.

We also tend to forget that studying the literature of some African languages is studying inter-culturalism and cultural hybridity at work. Literatures in languages such as Hausa and Kiswahili had for centuries been a conversation between Africanity and Islam. The influence of western India, especially on Swahili, goes back to the thirteenth century, first on its material culture and later on its popular song and musical tradition. The twentieth century added Islam, new Asian infusions, and the impact of the West on Swahili culture, modifying the cultural synthesis of preceding generations. Studying Kiswahili literature across time would clearly manifest these layers of the cultural geology and dynamics of Africa's artistic hybridity.

In spite of this initial bias towards Kiswahili literature, however, PALL hopes to work with a number of other units at Rutgers to offer professional language training in Kiswahili to students of Rutgers as well as to interested members of the wider professional community. Health workers, international studies functionaries, agricultural extension specialists etc. seeking to work in "Swahiliphone Africa" can all benefit from specialized professionally-targeted Kiswahili offerings to be run as part of PALL's individualized instructional track.

In these new efforts PALL will contribute directly to the mission of Rutgers' School of Arts and Sciences to broaden its existing globally focused programs and jumpstart new opportunities in international and area studies. In addition, through new courses like "African Immigrants in New Jersey" (offered by Professor Carolyn Brown) Kiswahili and other African language skills can be mobilized towards a better understanding of the dynamics and counter-dynamics of globalization as a human phenomenon. An important step in this direction has been the appointment of Professor Alamin Mazrui as a member of the faculty of the Program in African Languages and Literatures. A linguist by training with a rich publication record on African literature and the political sociology of language, Professor Mazrui is a leading specialist of Swahili studies. His long experience in Kiswahili-related programs in Africa, Europe and the USA will be of great value in providing direction to our Kiswahili offerings and in the fulfillment of the program's goals.

A Heart and Body Join on the Continent

By Senait Kassahun

As the airplane soars over the Red Sea, the Great Rift Valley, the Nile Valley, my anticipation rises to meet our altitude. Uganda is my destination tonight, but my body is only joining my heart, which is on the African continent waiting for the rest of me. I am here for a conference drawing participants from all over Africa and the world to discuss the essential role of ethics in international development. I will present a paper on my research on the role that cultural resources and strength of community play in the mental health of refugees. We reach terra firma just yards away from Lake Victoria. I feel different, full and light. In the U.S. I am a puzzle whose pieces do not quite join. Here, unsurprisingly, every piece of me touches the other.

At the conference I meet only warm-hearted people who embrace with their bright smiles, who make one feel instantly at ease. The friends I make here are graduate students like me. They too believe that a lifelong friendship can begin with a single conversation. Academics and practitioners are gathered to discuss equitable development, corruption, and wealth disparities. The intellectual engagement is absolutely enlightening, but it is the golden hearts of my fellow graduate students from Uganda and Burundi and the sweet feeling of belonging that I will never forget.

After the last day of the conference, I travel with three of these graduate students, Gladys, Marino and Esther to Northern Uganda, the conflict zone in the midst of peace talks, where Gladys and Marino are students at Gulu University. They know that I am conducting research on the mental health of those who live in refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. They are so kind and offer to translate for me at an IDP camp outside of Gulu Town. The four of us board a bus together from Kampala and pass through the lush countryside and small towns on the way to the North.

As we ride, the bus becomes a classroom. I am the pupil of my friends, the young security guard sitting to my right and the older gentleman sitting in front of us. They tell me the name and a little of the history of each town we pass. They talk about the war and the effect it has had on their communities. Their people, the Acholi, are caught between a rock and a hard place – a government that does not protect their lands, or value their cultural sovereignty, and a rebel army bred in their own backyard who terrorizes the North with their brutality and kidnapping of children to make them soldiers. We pass the Nile River! Everyone dictates to me when to take pictures of the powerful waters below us. “Now, now! Take another one! Now from this side!” We arrive in Gulu at dusk.

The next morning we drive to the IDP camp. Fortune smiles on us. Since Gladys has conducted a counseling group in this same camp, the camp leaders welcome us and allow me to interview them about their experiences. While we sit under a big tree the wind blows and the camp leaders speak of the hardships they have faced since moving to this camp in 2003. The food provided by the World Food Program runs out well before the next haphazard delivery. Faced with a lack of food and no money, young girls have begun prostituting themselves. Thousands live in this one camp. Fetching water means queuing for four hours at the camp’s single water pump. Latrines and houses are too close together. Fire rips through the camp destroying each house in its path during the dry season as the wind coaxes the fire on. There is no money to send the children to secondary school. All the while the fertile land of these expert farmers sits fallow at home, waiting on their return.

The interview finishes and the camp chairman has some words to share with the visitor who has come from so far to meet them. “You are carrying out research for an academic purpose, but you should also shoot two birds with one stone. Tell your people [in the United States] about our situation. Tell them that first and foremost, we should go back home. This war should end. But while we are in the camp, if there are other bodies that can help, they should come and help us with these problems, the problem of [school] fees, the problem of school dropouts, the problem of water and all these problems. That is the farewell word and the message you should carry with you from the Chairman.” I will carry this message with me. The suffering of war must end and we all must play our part. I will come back to this continent to be the complete puzzle of myself once again, the Chairman’s gift of great responsibility and the bright smiles of the friends I have made, illuminating each step through the continent I love.

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