

Program Description:

TEACHING THE HISTORY OF THE SLAVE TRADE ROUTES OF GHANA AND BENIN

Purpose: This interdisciplinary seminar is designed to enable high school, college and university educators to teach about the history and legacy of the slave routes in the interior of West Africa. Participants will gather curriculum materials and develop teaching units for use in their home institutions and can be used to satisfy the requirements of the New Jersey Amistad Act. They will interact with the guardians of memory and learn to appreciate how the legacy of slavery resides in both material and immaterial culture. They will participate in seminars, workshops, and fieldtrips conducted by Ghanaian, Beninise and Rutgers faculty.

Educators in all fields, including literature, language and culture, history, French, anthropology, sociology, social studies, archeology, art, and architecture are highly encouraged to apply.

There will be a pre-trip orientation at Rutgers University in June 2005 and a series of follow up events throughout the academic year 2005-2006.

Week I : Orientation Seminars at the University of Ghana, Legon and Cultural Activities in Accra and Surrounding Area

Participants will visit those parts of the capital city related to the history of slavery and have discussion sessions with Ghanaian faculty and officials who will address the impact of the slave trade on the city and in contemporary Ghana.

Week II : Travel to Northern Ghana and Kumasi

Northern Ghana was a major arena of slave raiders and a key supply source for enslaved people who were subsequently marched to the coast and sold to European and American traders. In the north of Ghana there are ancient markets, holding areas and camp sites for the enslaved, walled villages dating back to the 16th century, caves for protection, and the graves of resisters. School children to this day sing "if you want to be safe come to Gwellu" in honor of the memory of that northern city's fabled protective walls. Sites in the north will include:

- Salaga, a leading commercial center linked historically with northern Nigeria
- Gwellu, the site of defensive walls nearly two centuries old, and
- Paku where oral histories about resistance to enslavement have been collected.

The historic city of Kumasi, capital of the Asante kingdom and empire, which was deeply involved in slave trading in the 18th and 19th centuries. There are numerous places of importance to visit in and around Kumasi, and meetings with local notables will also be arranged.

Week III : Travel to the Coastal Castles and Forts

Local curators and scholars will give lectures on the slave trade, forts, and surrounding communities. Participants then follow other routes to the south that captured peoples were forced to walk. Thus participants will experience the entry into the castles after twice traveling the length of the country, and after witnessing sites of great historical importance [including the site of the slaves' last bath before confinement] and after meeting with descendants of those who in one way or another were caught up in the trade.

Week IV : Trip to the Republic of Benin

Leaving Ghana the group will travel to the Volta Lake, eastward along the coast to Keta, and then to the Republic of Benin, where they will attend lectures and participate in other events. In particular they will meet with staff, hear talks, and participate in other activities at the Ecole du Patrimoine Africain in Porto Novo. Last they will reach Abomey, capital of the former kingdom of Dahomey, which also was much involved in the slave trade. En route both directions they will follow the roads and visit sites connected with the interior slave trade including the main port, Ouidah, through which the vast number of Yoruba slaves who helped to shape the New World from Brazil to Brooklyn were dispersed.

Week V : Return to Ghana

Educators will spend five days at the University of Ghana and other sites in the Accra area doing research and joining documentation workshops. They will use available archives, libraries, and other facilities, as well as materials prepared by local experts, to begin developing their curricular projects. We expect that secondary and tertiary educators will form teams around areas of common interest and we intend to invite Ghanaian teachers to join. This period will also be very important in enabling participants to discuss on a more personal level their thoughts about the trip overall and to share their images of places and responses to events and experiences.