

# CENTER FOR AFRICAN STUDIES

## RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

NEWSLETTER: JANUARY 2005, VOLUME V

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### UPCOMING 2005 EVENTS:

#### FEBRUARY

**3/4** RCHA Black Atlantic Conference  
**The African Diaspora in Modern Europe**  
Feb 3: 12:30pm - 5:30pm & Feb 4: 10:30am - 4:15pm,  
RCHA Seminar Room, 88 College Avenue  
For more information please contact RCHA.

**7** Lynn Thomas lecture "**The Modern Girl, Cosmetic Debates, and Racial Respectability in 1930s South Africa,**" 4:30pm, Van Dyck, 301 (CAC).

**17** Fred Cooper to present "**Imperial Citizenship: Unity, Difference and Nationality in Post-War French Africa,**" 4:30pm, Van Dyck, 301 (CAC).

#### MARCH

**4** Center For the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture presents "**Chance, Luck and Destiny: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Divination**" 1:30pm - 5pm, TLH at Alexander Library (CAC).  
For more information please contact CCACC.

**4** Outreach Workshop: "**Africa In World History,**" 9am - 3:30pm, venue tba.  
For more information please contact RCHA.

**5** NY Regional African Historians Symposium, 9am - 7pm, Van Dyck, 301 (CAC).

**29** Film screening of "**Moolaadé**" to be accompanied by dinner & discussion. 6pm - 10pm, Center Hall, Busch [promotional photo below].

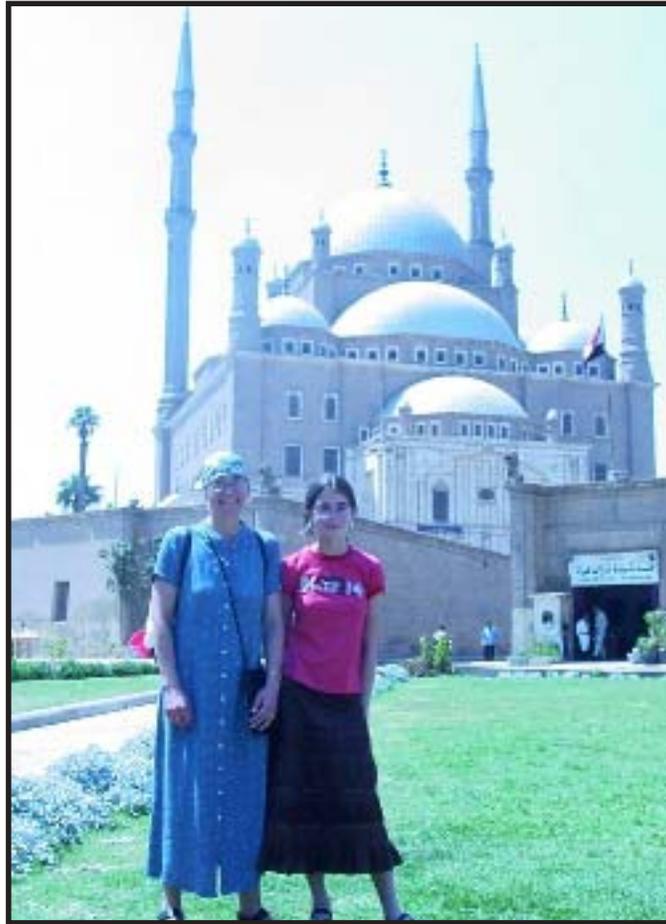


"Moolaadé" photo courtesy of New Yorker Films. Please join us at Rutgers screening 3/29/05.

## Good News for the New Year

by Barbara Cooper

I'm pleased to be able to begin the New Year by sharing some good news for the Center. The Center won a \$50,000. Academic Excellence Fund award to support our proposed "Collaborative Initiative to Promote Global/International Education at Rutgers." The proposal presents a series of programmatic components that would assist Rutgers faculty across the area studies and international studies units (Center for African Studies, Asian Studies, Center for Comparative European Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Latin American Studies, South Asian Studies) to build a community of researchers engaged in a genuinely global inquiry into the issues we as individual researchers study in more local contexts: ethnic conflict, integrating women in democracy, global migration, national and sub-national identity and so on. The goal is to both strengthen research collaboration and to build a coherent curricular program, particularly at the graduate level. This should provide the Center with much fruitful interaction with other international studies colleagues here at Rutgers in the upcoming years. We will begin meeting toward the end of January to develop a revised budget and put our heads together on where to begin this exciting initiative. Of course any and all are welcome to participate!



Barbara Cooper spent part of the summer of 2004 in Egypt working on a curriculum development project entitled "Passages East," funded through a Bildner Intercultural Fellows grant. She and her daughter, Cara, visited the Mohammed Ali mosque in Cairo in June.

December's Anthropogenic Environments conference brought together Princeton and Rutgers faculty to share work and ideas on how humans shape and imagine the African environment; the event was a tremendous success, drawing faculty and graduate students from a broad range of disciplines and from both universities. The joint conference with Princeton was so productive that Daniel Rubenstein, the Director of Princeton's Program in African Studies, has proposed that Princeton host a similar joint conference next year, in what we hope will become an ongoing tradition. So we can all look forward to another stimulating collaborative venture with our colleagues down the road next fall

on a theme to be determined later in the year.

Finally, the Center has entered into an arrangement with Associate Dean Marie Logue of Rutgers College to collaborate on an ongoing basis in the presentation of an African film combined with catered African dinner for students each semester on the model of the "dinner and a movie" events Rutgers College has sponsored in the past. CAS faculty regularly have exciting ideas about movies they would like to be able to show, and Rutgers College wants to provide a culturally enriched co-curricular environment for students. By combining forces

## “Good News” continued

we at the Center can reduce the amount of time we spend looking for funds, and her office will know well in advance that they can count on a truly unusual and interesting event with faculty involvement on a regular basis. To launch our cooperative venture we will be co-hosting the new Ousmane Sembene film, “Moolaadé,” on March 29, 2005 in celebration of Women’s History Month.

Happy New Year!  
Barbara M. Cooper

### **Professor Braga-Pinto: Fulbright Scholar’s Literary Adventure in Mozambique**

While a Fulbright Scholar in Mozambique in 2003 professor César Braga-Pinto was affiliated with the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo where he taught Brazilian literature courses and participated in the research group “Literary History of Mozambique.” He also gave talks in universities in Nampula and Quelimane, and was invited to talk at the “International Writers Conference” in Mauritius. According to Professor Braga-Pinto his conversations with Mozambican students, colleagues, journalists and scholars introduced him to a number of important intellectual debates and gave him the kind of knowledge he could never have acquired in U.S. libraries: “Teaching literature for Mozambican students was particularly stimulating. The students demonstrated a true passion for literature and organized study groups, poetry readings, plays and literary journals. Moreover, they seemed very free to read and discuss the literature of Brazil, another country colonized by Portugal and with a long tradition of texts written in Portuguese.”



Students of Advanced Arabic present at the Fall 2004 Open House



Advanced Swahili student performs a play by Mwalimu John Inniss Fall 2004 Open House



Prof. César Braga-Pinto and his students at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, Mozambique, where he taught literature courses from February to December, 2003. Professor Braga-Pinto was a Fulbright Scholar and undertook research on colonial Mozambique literature.

**Boubacar Boris Diop:  
Visiting Scholar Returns to Senegal**

Rutgers is delighted to have hosted literary scholar Boubacar Boris Diop, a visiting professor with the French department, in the Fall 2004 semester (end August – mid October). Professor Diop is one of the pre-eminent African novelists and public intellectuals of his time.



Boubacar Boris Diop

His many professional endeavors include: university professor of literature and philosophy at University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar; journalist for both the Senegalese paper, *Le Matin*, and the Swiss paper, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*; and esteemed novelist and playwright honored with several literary awards including: “*Prix du Bureau Sénégalais du Droit d’Auteur*”, “*Grand prix de la République du Sénégal pour les Lettres*” and “*Prix Tropiques*.”

Many thanks to Dr. Diop for visiting Rutgers and enriching our curriculum with his graduate course **Langues et Littérature en Afrique Noire Francophone**. We hope that Dr. Diop’s return trip to Senegal was a safe one and we wish him much success with his recent novel ***L’impossible innocence*** (Paris : Philippe Rey, October 2004). And very special thanks to Richard Serrano of the French Department and Comparative Literature for making this intellectual exchange possible.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO:**

***Chaunetta Jones!***

She has been awarded a \$2000 predoctoral research grant from the Social Science Research Council which she will use to support her research next summer as she continues to investigate how HIV/AIDS is contextualized locally among young women in Cape Town.

***and***

***Dorothy Hodgson!***

She has been awarded a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support her research in Tanzania in 2005-6 on the indigenous rights movement. See p. 5.

## A Student's View of the Model African Union

By Yacine Bio-Tchane

I am a senior majoring in economics with a minor in political science. I participated in the Second Annual Conference of the Model African Union in March 2004. It was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life and I encourage every student interested in understanding and shaping African politics to participate in the Model African Union (MAU).



Yacine Bio-Tchane presents on MAU at Fall Open House 2004

MAU, sponsored by Political Science and the Center for African Studies, is a two (2)-semester mini course yielding three (3) credits. This course, which meets weekly, prepares students to a general introduction to African politics so that they can participate in the Model African Union simulation held each March in Washington D.C.

MAU is a simulation of the proceedings of the African Union in which each university becomes the delegation of an African country. Each country-team presents resolutions they have prepared that will be debated, amended and voted on to one of five Commissions: Economic; Social; African Economic; Mechanism on Conflict Prevention; Management and Resolution; and the Council of Ministers. Each year, African delegates address and consider a "political crisis" that is not known in advance. Students seek coalitions by merging and passing their written resolutions that propose continent-wide solutions. I found this experience truly gratifying because it gave me



Rutgers MAU 2004 delegates Felicia Wright (voting) and Cecile Edwards

first hand experience in the performance and organization of the African Union, procedures of debate, and the writing of a resolution. Participating in MAU allowed me to take an active role in African politics. Moreover it enlightened me on not only the wide array of complex issues prevalent in the continent but also on the constraints and difficulties in solving these issues and in shaping domestic policies.

I believe that Africa's fate is in the hands of the youth, both

African and non- African, and if we do not pay close attention to these issues and devote our energy to resolving them then the continent as a whole will be in a state of emergency. MAU is a fun experience with both an educational and a cultural purpose. I invite all Rutgers students, regardless of their major, ethnic background or knowledge of Africa, to take part in this very worthwhile learning opportunity!

## Africa's Indigenous Rights Movement

by Dorothy Hodgson

As part of my new research project on the historical and contemporary dynamics of the indigenous rights movement in Africa, I spent two weeks this summer in New York observing the third annual meeting of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII), and one week in Geneva attending the UN Working Group on Indigenous People (WGIP). Although both groups are differently located within the UN bureaucratic hierarchy, they provide important political and social spaces for indigenous activists from all over the world to meet together with one another, and with participating representatives from various UN organizations, states, and donor and advocacy organizations. My interest is in understanding how Maasai and other African delegates represent themselves and their struggles in these international sites, and how they interact with one another and other participants in both formal settings (such as the official working sessions) and informal gatherings (such as meals and social events). I have also been exploring how the more recent incorporation of African indigenous activists and issues into the transnational indigenous rights movement has reshaped the contours and concerns of the movement itself. My primary research questions are to understand: 1) how and why Maasai have "become indigenous," and 2) how their involvement in the transnational indigenous rights movement has enabled or constrained their long-standing struggles for political, economic,



Ndinini Kimesera Sikar (Executive Director MWEDO, Tanzania) and Dorothy Hodgson at the U.N. NYC May 2004

and social rights and resources in Tanzania.

The research was fruitful and fascinating. I spent my time attending the formal working sessions of the PFII and WGIP, caucus meetings (of indigenous people, indigenous women, Africans, and others), special events, receptions, dinners, and parties. I also just "hung out" in the hallways and corridors to observe and chat with whoever walked by. I met and spoke with activists, advocates and donors, and interviewed several of them at length about their involvement in the indigenous rights movement. Some highlights include the intense debates in the PFII, where the theme this year was "Indigenous Women," over reconciling contradictions between the rights of indigenous women as women and as indigenous people, both of which have been derived from the same overarching human rights legal framework; translating between French, Swahili and English to facilitate a meeting between an activist and a donor; watching a group of Maasai delegates organize and carry out a press conference on an impending land case in Kenya; and clasping hands with hundreds

of other delegates and participants (including the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) in a circular dance of blessing on the grounds of the UN in Geneva in an (early) celebration of the "International Day of Indigenous Peoples" as a fellow anthropologist from Germany watched bemusedly from the sidelines. The UN cafeterias in New York and Geneva were fascinating "ethnographic experiences" in and of themselves...

The research this summer was part of a longer, multi-sited project that includes ethnographic research in Tanzania with Maasai NGOs and their communities, interviews and documentary research with donor and advocacy groups in the United States and Europe, and additional participant observation and interviews at the UN and other sites of transnational convergence. I hope to spend next year (2005-6) in Tanzania, and the following year completing the remainder of the research in the US and Europe and writing a book, tentatively entitled *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous: Transnational Advocacy and the Politics of Representation, Recognition, Rights and Resources*.



John Pavlik at South African game reserve



Southern African Large Telescope, Cape Town

### **Advancing Journalism in South Africa**

By John Pavlik

Following in its tradition of international journalism education, the Journalism Resources Institute at Rutgers University ([www.scils.rutgers.edu/jri](http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/jri)) in July 2004 launched a program of science journalism education for journalists in South Africa. Headed by JRI Director Dr. John V. Pavlik, Professor and Chair of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, SCILS, Rutgers, the program focused on advancing the quality of reporting on science and technology, particularly in relation to the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT), a science initiative in which Rutgers is a major partner. SALT, the largest single telescope in the Southern Hemisphere, is located north of Cape Town, near the town of Sutherland in the Karoo, Cape Province, and is an initiative of the South Africa Astronomical Observatory (SAAO).

During Pavlik's visit to South Africa in July he chaired a major science journalism workshop in Cape Town sponsored by SAAO. The workshop featured two dozen participants from across South Africa, including science journalists, scientists, educators and public officials. Based on the workshop, an electronic group was established, forming the basis for the first science journalism association in South Africa. Pavlik also met with journalists, educators and scientists in other parts of South Africa. He lectured on new media and their implications for journalism and society at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.

This initial visit laid the foundation for an ongoing initiative to work with journalists, educators and others to improve the quality of journalism in South Africa and elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa. Future steps will include digital video conferences linking scientists, journalists and other experts in the U.S. with journalists in South Africa. The program will include support from the U.S. Embassy in South Africa, which participated in the July workshop and offered use of its digital video conferencing facilities.

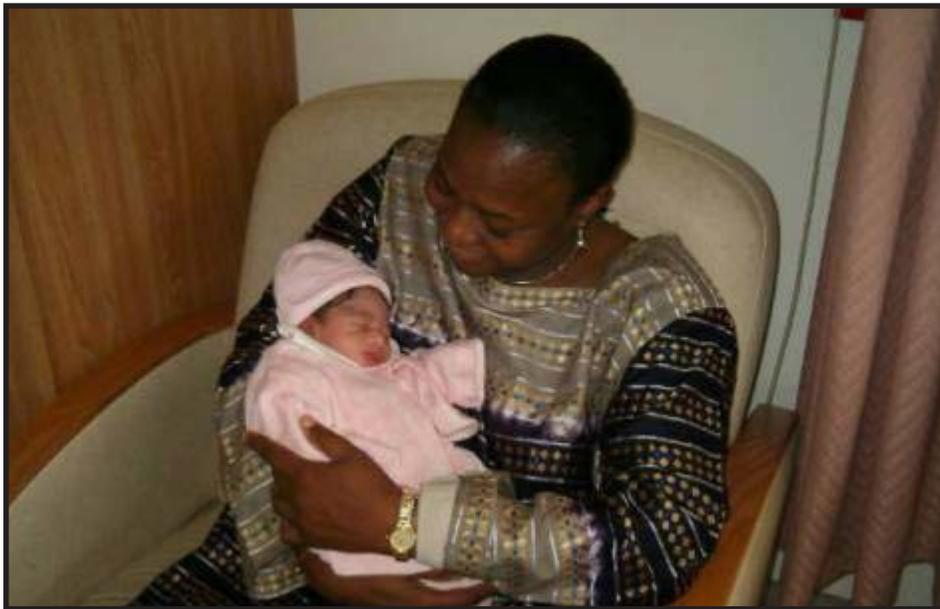
Professor Pavlik will make a presentation on this program for the African Studies Forum at 11:30 - 12:30 on April 6, 2005 at the Center for the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture, 8 Bishop Place, College Avenue Campus.

### **Sabbatical Highlights: Ousseina Alidou**

by Ousseina Alidou

Director, Program in African Languages and Literature  
Department of Africana Studies, Rutgers University

In the Spring 2004 I was awarded sabbatical leave to complete my book manuscript, entitled *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger*. The manuscript is completed and is under contract for publication in 2005 with the University of Wisconsin Press. Other publications since summer 2004 include: "Muslim Women in a Multilingual Context: Orality and Literacy in Postcolonial Niger" accepted for publication in *Issues in Political Discourse Analysis* (2005); and "Women, Gender and Freedom of Expression: Sub-Saharan Africa" in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* (2005). I presented a broad array of papers at the following universities: Northwestern, Ohio State, Harvard and Yale.

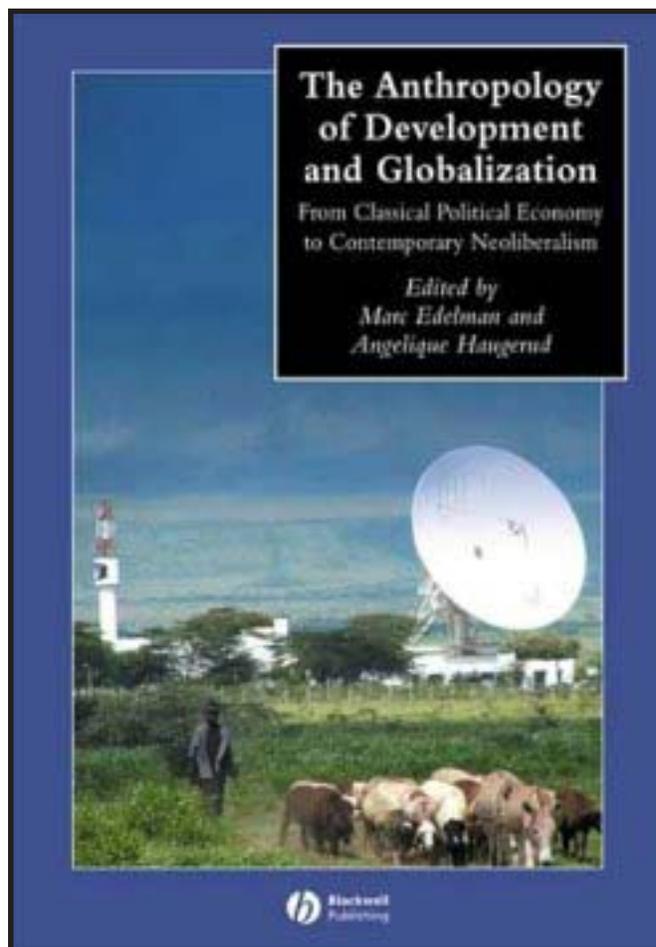


Ousseina Alidou holding her baby daughter Salma

From June 26 to August 6, 2004 I also represented Rutgers University at the Summer Cooperative African Language Institute (SCALI) hosted by Ohio University. My primary role at the Institute was to provide instruction in Intermediate Hausa. But the Institute also gave me the opportunity to network with other colleagues involved in African language instruction and coordination, and to exchange views with them about the latest developments in the study of less commonly taught languages in the American academy. In appreciation of my work in and contribution to the study of African languages in the USA I was honored by the African Languages Teachers Association when I was elected its Vice President during the annual general membership meeting in May 2004. While serving the association, I also consider this position a new opportunity for me to bring Rutgers University's Program in African Languages to national visibility.

## Sabbatical Highlights: Angelique Haugerud

Congratulations to Anquelique Haugerud of the Anthropology Department for her very productive 2003-2004 sabbatical! Here are some 2004 highlights. In May of 2004 she presented a paper called "In the Shadow of the State: Everyday Struggles Over Land in the Kenya Highlands" at the Oxford University conference "Political Economy of Kenya, Past and Present." She completed her work on a book to be published in November 2004 in Blackwell Publishers' highly visible series, "Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology," entitled *The Anthropology of Development and Globalization: From Classical Political Economy to Contemporary Neoliberalism*, a work that she co-edited with Marc Edelman. In 2004 Angelique also contributed an essay entitled "Globalization and Thomas Friedman" to *Why America's Top Pundits Are Wrong: Anthropologists Talk Back*. Angelique serves on the editorial boards of *Africa Contemporary Record* and *African Studies Quarterly*. Her research and teaching specialties include globalization, cultural politics, ethnicity, economic anthropology, political anthropology, agrarian ecology, research methods, and Africa.



### **The Anthropology of Development and Globalization**

**From Classical Political Economy to Contemporary Neoliberalism**

**Edited By:** Marc Edelman,

ANGELIQUE HAUGERUD, Rutgers University

Series: Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology

**Ghanaian Concert Pianist  
William Chapman Nyaho  
Performs Music By Composers  
of African Descent**  
by Renée DeLancey

The Center for African Studies is very pleased to have once again collaborated with the Mason Gross School of the Arts on a culturally enriching program for Rutgers. CAS co-sponsored a piano concert and workshop by accomplished pianist William H. Chapman Nyaho on October 22, 2004 with Mason Gross's Music Department and the Rutgers College Enhancement Programs and Multicultural Affairs office. Mr. Nyaho held a master class in Nanette DeJong's World Music class in the afternoon and a concert at Voorhees Chapel the same evening.

Nyaho's performance featured pieces from his CD **Senku: Piano Music by Composers of African Descent**. He introduced each piece with his commentary on the composer's intention and the moods and meanings behind the arrangements. This interpersonal approach gave the audience a deeper understanding of the music and created an intimate concert hall experience. Many students attended both the master class and the evening concert.



William Chapman Nyaho

He has studied with world-renowned musicians such as Henri Gautier (Conservatoire de Musique de Genève, Switzerland) and Barry Snyder (Eastman School of Music) as well as David Renner of the University of Texas at Austin. He has been recognized for his own teaching excellence by the University of Southern Louisiana's Distinguished Professor award. The Center for African Studies is delighted to have helped make this unique cultural experience possible. Special thanks to Abena Busia and Nanette DeJong for organizing this event. For more information on this captivating performer please visit <http://www.nyaho.com>.

## Kole Odutola Awarded the Egbe Omo Yoruba Award for Advancing Yoruba

Interview by Michelle Takyi

**MT:** What inspired you to teach Yoruba?

**KO:** My main inspiration is Dr. Carolyn Brown. She challenged me and made sure I had a supporting environment to teach my first class in 2001. The fact that Yoruba was introduced with another one and a half credit course, which looked at the popular culture of Africans through the lens of Yoruba people, also helped a great deal. That course has since not been reinstated. I make presentations about the language program at various functions where Yoruba people are gathered and once in a while where there are African-Americans who are interested in the worship of Ifa as a system of belief.

**MT:** Has it been difficult for students raised in America to grasp Yoruba?

**KO:** The answer is a yes and a no, in that learning any foreign language poses its own peculiar problems. The students have coped very well with learning a tonal language that is very different from the English language they are used to. I want to believe that offering more courses with Yoruba culture as content will make a big difference in learning the language. In addition, organizing extra activities on Yoruba culture, music and performances will enhance the learning and teaching of Yoruba.

**MT:** What kinds of ethnicities do you find in your class?

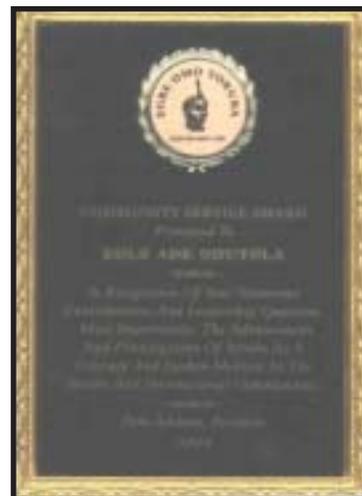
**KO:** I have had a very good mix of heritage speakers from Nigeria as well as African Americans, Haitians, Ghanaians, Caribbeans, Igbos from Nigeria and so on.

**MT:** Are there any dialects spoken within Yoruba or does everyone speak the same way?

**KO:** Luckily the Yoruba taught in most schools is what is called Standard Yoruba. This standard was created as a way of bringing order to the many contending dialects in contention. In answer to your question, yes there are many dialects spoken and written among the Yoruba people.

**MT:** What kind of advice would you give someone who is entirely new to the language and would like to learn it?

**KO:** My advice to first time learners is to be patient, diligent and consistent. You need to devote time to the language daily, not weekly. You cannot learn the basic principles and forget it as you learn newer things. In second language acquisitions, it has been determined that learners tend to attempt direct translations while constructing sentences. *Yoruba is not the English language and should not be mistaken in that regard.* As you learn the language you should be prepared to learn



Kole Odutola's  
Egbe Omo Yoruba Award

the cultural context as well. Some of the practices may be at variance with the learner's cultural belief system; the learner still needs to focus on the ways of Yoruba people in order to succeed in learning Yoruba.

**MT:** How do you say "Thank you for this terrific interview" in Yoruba?

**KO:** E se púpò fún omijomitoro òrò ti o kàmàmà.

## World Aids Day Event: Filmmaker Xoliswa Sithole presents her film, "Shouting Silent"

by Barbara Cooper

CAS sponsored the visit of prize-winning filmmaker Xoliswa Sithole for a screening of her documentary, "Shouting Silent," in observation of World Aids Day on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Every seat in the house was taken! This event was co-sponsored with the International Cultural Exchange Center and with St. Bart's church in Manhattan. Special thanks to Dr. Abena P.A. Busia, who organized the program.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region of the world that has been hit hardest by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Over 25 million people are living with the virus and over 3 million new infections occurred in 2004 alone. Some 2.3 million people have died in the past year. More than 12 million children have lost their parents to the epidemic.

Awareness of AIDS has been gradual in Africa, which means that the AIDS death toll is likely to continue rising before it peaks. The most devastating effects on African societies will be felt in the next decade, with consequences for every dimension of social, economic and political life. Of course, national HIV prevalence rates can vary tremendously—from something under 2% in a country like Gambia, to rates at or above 20% in the southern region of Africa.

The challenges facing Africa are multiple: bringing health care to a growing population of people with HIV-related illness; reducing new infections by



Xoliswa Sithole, Julie Livingston and Chantal Tetreault at Makeda Restaurant

encouraging individuals to protect themselves and others; and coping with the devastating effects of over 17 million AIDS deaths on orphans and other survivors.

Filmmaker and actress Xoliswa Sithole has devoted her energies to raising awareness about not only the impact of AIDS on AIDS patients, but also about the implications of the epidemic for the many orphans left behind. She graduated from the University of Zimbabwe in 1987 and went on to perform in Richard Attenborough's "Cry Freedom" and the HBO program "Nelson Mandela."

But by 1994 she had become interested in producing films herself. Under the mentorship of Charlayne Hunter-Gault of CNN, with whom she worked on covering the 1998 South African elections, she began putting her energies into researching and producing documentary films such as "Orphans of Inkandla" (BBC and Discovery Channel, 2003), which won a prize for the best documentary and

best children's rights documentary at the One World Media Awards in London 2004.

"Shouting Silent," then, carries forward her work on documentary filmmaking, her interest in the plight of orphans and children, and her deep concern with the AIDS crisis in South Africa. But it carries it into a far more intimate and deeply felt terrain—her own experience losing her mother to AIDS and the painful aftermath of that loss. "Losing your mother to AIDS has a certain stigma," she is quoted as saying in an *Essence* magazine piece on "Shouting Silent." (Elayne Fluker, "A Filmmaker Tackles a Taboo: 'Shouting Silent,'" *Essence*, August 2002) "People feel uncomfortable talking about it, so a child can't even grieve."

The Center for African Studies is very proud to have been able to present this film, and honored to have Xoliswa Sithole visit to share the grief of the many AIDS orphans in southern Africa and elsewhere struggling to raise themselves and their siblings.

## Successful Joint Conference on Humans and the African Environment

By Barbara Cooper

Rutgers Center for African Studies and Princeton's Program in African Studies came together on December 3<sup>rd</sup> to launch what we hope will be the first of many collaborative ventures. At a joint conference exploring "Anthropogenic Environments in Africa: Ecological, Medical, and Social Dynamics" (organized by David Hughes of Rutgers Human Ecology and Daniel Rubenstein, Director of Princeton's Program in African Studies), African Studies faculty and graduate students in history, geography, behavioral ecology, conservation and development studies, and population research shared current multi-disciplinary research on environmental instability in Africa and its disease, population, and policy implications.

The "problem" of the African environment tends to begin with an imaginary pristine "natural" environment untouched by human intervention. Yet Africans have shaped the landscape for millennia, opening up space for pastoralism by clearing foliage that supports the tsetse fly, for example. Living forms in Africa have been shaped by mutual interaction, and it is that interaction that must be at the center of any discussion of the environment. Any discussion of environmental instability in Africa will have to begin with a discussion of the basis for claims that instability has increased or that change caused by Africans has been merely destructive rather than generative.

Western governments have been quite reluctant to take seriously evidence for climate change originating with the side effects of industrial production outside of Africa. Increased instability in the African environment has implications for animal and plant life as well as human life, shaping not only human practices but also broader interventions in the realm of animal research and conservation, health and hygiene, agriculture and development. The ever-accelerating movement of populations in Africa (floral, faunal, microbial, and human) with globalization, regional instability, persistent warfare, and labor migration also contributes to the constantly shifting disease and population environments in Africa.

The Anthropogenic Environments conference explored the many complex ramifications of these issues for the analysis of the African environment in the domains of tourism, land management, disease management, and conservation.

Princeton's Program in African Studies, pleased with the success of the Anthropogenic Environments symposium, has offered to sponsor a similarly multi-disciplinary joint conference next year in what will no doubt become an exciting annual tradition.

## "Valley of the Innocent" Screened at Rutgers 12/3/04

CAS was very honored to have hosted award-winning filmmaker and director Branwen Okpako for a December 3, 2004 film screening of her film "Valley of the Innocent," an exploration of the complex identity and search for origins of a young, mixed race policewoman in post-communist East Germany. The film screening was one event in an ambitious graduate student conference, "Trading Cultures: Migration and Multiculturalism in Contemporary Europe" organized by graduate students in Comparative Literature with support from The Center for Comparative European Studies and many other units. Branwen Okpako is the winner of the Bavarian documentary film prize, The Young Lion, as well as the First Prize winner at the 2001 Dubrovnik Documentary Film Festival for her film "Dirt For Dinner." She was born in 1969 in Nigeria and studied Political Science and Economics in England, followed by studies in Film Direction at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin (dffb) from 1992-2000. Her feature films include: "Dirt For Dinner" (*Dreckfresser* 2000) and "Valley of the Innocent" (*Tal der Ahnungslosen* 2003). Thanks to Susan Martin-Marquez for helping to bring this about.



Nisma Cherrat in "Valley of the Innocent"  
(photo courtesy of teamWorx, Berlin)



Susan Martin-Marquez and Branwen Okpako at Makeda Restaurant

**Cydney Van Dyke, a Fall 2004 student in Susan Martin-Marquez's course, "Spain in Africa/Africa in Spain," composed an extra credit commentary in Spanish on "Valley of the Innocent":**

Me gusta mucho la película El valle de los inocentes de Branwen Okpako. El tema que me impresiona mucho es la búsqueda de Eva de su propia identidad. Durante la película se ven varias imágenes que representan esta lucha. Creo que las imágenes más conmovedoras tienen que ver con su niñez triste. Su tiempo en el orfanato como niña es muy solitario; Eva no tiene amigas ni una familia ni una historia. Intenta hacerse blanca como las otras niñas alemanas cuando lleva el sombrero amarillo como pelo rubio y largo. Otro momento que revela su lucha contra su propia identidad tiene lugar cuando visita como adulto el orfanato en que vivía en su niñez. Eva tiene un flashback de su pasado en que está gritando a una monja. Al final de este episodio Eva dice, "Your soup doesn't taste good to me." Creo que, con este pensamiento, Eva está afirmando que no se siente parte de la comunidad blanca de Alemania. Sin embargo, ella no tiene otra comunidad ni historia en que pueda formar una identidad.

Este sentimiento de alienación continúa durante su adultez cuando tiene lugar la mayoría de la película. Eva experimenta el prejuicio de varios personajes en la película, incluyendo sus vecinos en su apartamento nuevo y su propia hermana María. Su búsqueda de una identidad tiene que superar este racismo porque ella ya no quiere sentirse inferior a causa de su pasado oscuro ni su raza. Creo que este sentimiento constituye parte de su motivación de tener relaciones sexuales con el hombre nazi. En este momento de la película Eva ya está formando su nueva identidad, y por eso es posible tener relaciones con este hombre sin miedo ni vergüenza. Ella está formando una perspectiva nueva en que puede tener el control de su propia vida en vez de ser víctima como en su pasado.

Creo que es muy interesante la motivación de Branwen Okpako de nombrar al personaje central "Eva." Ella representa las primeras mujeres afro-alemanas que están buscando sus propias identidades dentro de una sociedad bastante racista y machista. Como la Eva de la Biblia, ella se ha establecido con una identidad definida, aunque su historia queda imperfecta. Su triunfo se puede ver en la cara de Eva como niña al final de la película en la escena del funeral de su padre Hans. La niña parece contenta finalmente porque Eva ha encontrado su lugar en la sociedad y en su propia mente. Creo que este fin da esperanza a muchas personas en el mundo hoy en día que están en la misma posición del limbo que Eva. No tiene que ser como esto; estas personas tienen una voz y una historia a que el mundo debe escuchar.

### **Africa In World History Teachers' Workshop, March 4, 2005**

Continuing a long history of exciting outreach collaborations with the Rutgers Institute For High School Teachers, Allen Howard of the Department of History at Rutgers will lead a conference on Friday, March 4 from 9am – 3:30pm entitled "Africa In World History" that will look at Sene-gambia and the Upper Guinea Coast, following the area through a chronological sequence moving from indigenous Africa, to Islam and Africa, Africa and the slave trade, colonialism and nationalism, and contemporary globalization. Linkages between Africa and the United States will also be discussed.

The conference will be structured to facilitate the inclusion of African history within the world history high school curriculum. Particular attention will be paid to the introduction of new audio-visual materials, such as CD-Roms, that can be ordered by schools to dramatically improve the ways in which students are taught about African history. An afternoon segment, that will use Hackensack High School as a model, will be devoted to curricular changes in World History that are being made in various school systems. Lou Moore, the Supervisor of Social Studies at Hackensack High School, will participate. This is a terrific opportunity that will encourage high schools to adequately address African history in a global history context. Thank you, Al, for organizing this workshop! For more details contact Lynn Shanko at RCHA.

### **Yale and Rutgers To Host African Language Teachers Association in 2005 and 2006**

Yale University will host the 9<sup>th</sup> annual ALTA meeting from March 17-20, 2005. The conference will explore African languages at home and abroad and the forming of new realities, new communities and new priorities. The Association will look at new realities in the US and in Sub-Saharan Africa that confront the field of African languages. In the US recent world events have given heightened attention to foreign language study, while in Africa languages struggle to compete with the dominance of colonial languages and what are considered more pressing priorities. New concerns about security in the US have affected the international movement of students and scholars, further restricting the participation of our African colleagues in US academia, while electronic communication has made contact between the US and Africa simpler and more efficient.

In US cities the growth of African diaspora communities has led to a rapid expansion of heritage learners of African languages, posing new challenges in African language classrooms. At the same time migration to African cities has brought new languages into the urban code mix, challenging the approach to language teaching. Globalization channeled through the power of the internet and other electronic media is changing the speech and language attitudes of African urban youth. The 9<sup>th</sup> ALTA

meeting will address these and related issues and will examine ways to respond cooperatively and constructively to new challenges.

Rutgers Deans have welcomed the proposal to host the ALTA 2006 conference. We are further delighted that Rutgers will also host a NERCPAL workshop on a date to be determined. Thank you Rutgers!

### **Spring Symposium April 29, 2005 African Immigrant Literature in the USA: Negotiating Identities and Imagining Homeland Post 9/11**

Rutgers faculty engaged in research on the literatures of Africa are organizing a one day symposium exploring the contributions of African immigrants in the (re)construction of American identities and citizenship before, during and in the aftermath of the tragedy of September 11, 2001. The multifaceted experiences of these new American Africans will be uncovered through dialogue with African immigrant writers in the United States. Six guest speakers, reflecting Africa's religious, regional and linguistic diversity, will be asked to rethink the immigrant experiences depicted in their literary works in light of the post-9/11 dispensation. Students, academics, New Jersey high school and college teachers and the wider community are all welcome to attend this engaging literary study of the African immigrant experience and the impact of 9/11/2001. Many thanks to Common Purposes for the financial contribution in support of this symposium.

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