

CENTER FOR AFRICAN STUDIES

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

NEWSLETTER: SPRING 2006, VOLUME VII



Group photo above of Fulbright-Hays Group Abroad in Benin

Rear (standing) left to right: Renée Larrier, Rutgers Dept. of French, Allen Howard, Rutgers Dept. of History, Abena P. A. Busia, Rutgers Dept. of English; Sohe Kudjo, Meredjonou, Benin; Miriam Martin, Amistad Commission; Padi Akinocho, Meredjonou, Benin, Wanda Smith, Asbury Park Middle School; unknown person, Rosemarie Harris, Grandview Elementary School, Piscataway; Bienvenu Olory, École du Patrimoine Africaine, Porto Novo, Benin; Cheryl Wilson, Douglass College

Front (bent over or kneeling) left to right. Antoinette Alston, Hackensack High School; Anayra Calderone, Liberty High School, Jersey City; Brenda Nero, Liberty High School, Jersey City; Janice Kroposky, Monmouth High School; Joseph C. E. Adande, Université Nationale du Benin-Calavi; Alain Godonou, Director, École du Patrimoine Africaine, Porto Novo. Photo taken at Songhai Centre, Porto Novo, Benin, by Carol Bonilla-Bowman, Ramapo College

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"Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death"
Film photo courtesy of ArtMattan Productions



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PROFESSORS AL HOWARD AND ABENA BUSIA LEAD TEACHERS ON TRIP TO STUDY SLAVE TRADE IN GHANA AND BENIN

Reprinted: *Focus* Nov. 21, 2005/ Pam Orei



In Sandema, Ghana, dancers perform a ritual honoring the defeat of slave raiders. Front right, Professor Kofi Anyidoho, University of Ghana, Legon, who co-directs the project with the Rutgers team. Credit: Allen Howard

Few Americans know that some Africans organized the interior trade that supplied European slavers on the Atlantic coast, or that many Africans resisted slave trading and enslavement. A Rutgers research project aims to promote understanding of the interior routes and the legacy of slave trading by creating new teaching curricula for New Jersey schools and colleges.

Over the summer, a team of 12 people, including four Rutgers researchers, a faculty member at a state college, and seven primary, middle and high school teachers, toured areas of Ghana and Benin, from which millions of enslaved Africans were taken to the Americas. The participants were chosen from among 25 applicants who submitted essays describing how their research would be developed into teaching materials.

Funded by a \$65,000 Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Grant, the five-week tour included visits to cities, remote villages, markets and historic castles that once held captives. Researchers interacted with

prominent African scholars and spent time talking with urban and rural residents about the legacy of the slave trade and its impact on contemporary society.

“This initiative is designed to show the slave trade in a larger context, as it existed before and after the start of the trans-Atlantic sale of slaves,” said Associate Professor of English Abena Busia, co-director of the project with Allen Howard, Professor of History, and Carolyn Brown, Associate Professor of History in New Brunswick.

The research is part of efforts on both sides of the Atlantic to better understand the legacy of the slave trade, which may have removed approximately 12 million people from the continent. Complicating the picture are the widely varying roles that captive peoples held in different societies in the interior of Africa, Howard said.

For example, he said, female captives were sometimes bought by wealthy African men; these women could move on to hold considerable social status as wives in prominent families. Slave raiders were hated by the people on whom they preyed, but were wealthy and influential in their hometowns.

In New Jersey, residents will bring these complicated stories to life by creating new teaching materials geared to K-12 and college communities. The materials will be tested in classrooms and in collaboration with the state Department of Education’s social studies division.

“Americans teach African-American history from the ‘middle passage’ (trans-Atlantic voyage) but we saw much more that isn’t taught,” said Anayra Calderon of North Bergen, who teaches African-American literature in Jersey City.

”It was amazing to me, as an African-American

HOWARD AND BUSIA LEAD TEACHER... continued

and a history teacher, to see that slavery in America wasn't taught in some rural African schools," said Brenda Nero of Paterson, also a Jersey City teacher. "For many rural people, the captives disappeared. Nobody knew what happened to them."

The group also saw evidence that slave raiders met with considerable resistance. Researchers visited a settlement that residents had constructed over a large lake to keep the community safe from local slave raiders and attacking armies. In another place, occupants built a forbidding wall, part of which still stands, to prevent the kidnapping of residents who, if captured, would be sold into slavery.

The New Jersey contingent also traveled to a cemetery for captives in Salaga in northern Ghana, the site of a major slave market. Near a large old tree, religious ceremonies – held regularly for many generations – honored the memory of captives who died in Salaga or during the arduous forced marches to the coast. "It was long thought that these captive people were lost to history," Howard said. "But they aren't lost – they are remembered to this day."

PROJECT LEADER ABENA BUSIA REFLECTS ON TRIP

by Stacey Pontoriero,
for *Friends of Rutgers English*

As a result of the experience of leading the Ghana/Benin trip, Professor Busia is now developing a new course for graduate students in which she plans to focus on issues of memory and representation by comparing historical records, slave narratives, and oral recollections. She intends to use materials from both sides of the Atlantic, including oral histories collected on the trip. In addition, Professor Busia and her fellow travelers continue to meet regularly to discuss new curricula for use in classrooms at all grade levels, working toward their goal of making their lesson plans accessible to New Jersey

teachers through the state's Department of Education. They recorded over seventy hours of videotape while they were in Africa, including many interviews with Africans for whom slavery is part of living memory through family history. The footage will be edited into a documentary for classroom use.

Remnants of the painful past are very much a visible part of the present in Ghana and Benin. Screws used to shackle human beings to trees still rust in the bark. In Sandema, Ghana, a traditional festival and dance commemorates the defeat of a local slave trader. On the outskirts of Salaga, the former site of a large slave market, Professor Busia met a priestess who performed a ritual twice a week to honor those who died in the process of being sold, which she describes in a few lines of a long poem entitled "Ancestral Milk":

You of unnamable ancestors, and unknown
decendants, come
Here, after all, you are safe.
Here every Friday and every Monday
one woman at a time, through the centuries,
has prayed for you
has fed you milk under a baobab tree scarred
by your iron
and swathed in calico to greet you through
the centuries
unwitnessed, unacknowledged,
unmemorialized.

Professor Busia noted that even as a native Ghanaian, she discovered things about her country she could not have known on her own. "It's hard to convey the impact of making a journey like this and meeting people with a living memory, people who have shackles as family heirlooms."

The tremendous intellectual and personal impact of the experience on all of the participants encouraged Professor Busia to work to expand its reach. She now hopes to develop a year-round student exchange with Ghana and continuing summer seminars for high school teachers, to add to the programs already run by the Center for African Studies and Rutgers Study Abroad. Continuing to

ABENA BUSIA REFLECTS...

continued

uncover the untold stories of the slave trade will do more than just revitalize classroom lessons on the subject – it will ensure that those who perished will not remain “unwitnessed, unacknowledged, and unmemorialized” in the future.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS PUT THEIR EXPERIENCE TO WORK

by Al Howard

The participating educators were selected on the basis of proposals to develop and test new courses or new units for their classes. The group included seven K-12 teachers and three at the college level, including Professor Renee Larrier of the Rutgers Department of French, and Cheryl Wilson, Director of the Africana House at Douglass College.

The project began at Rutgers with two workshops led by the local directors and another by Professor Emmanuel Akyeampong, Department of History, Harvard University. Scholars in Ghana and Benin presented another eight sessions covering many dimensions of the subject. The group spent time in Accra, Kumasi, Salaga, Tamale, Wa, Cape Coast, Porto Novo, Cotonou, and Abomey, and visited numerous historic sites. They interviewed descendants of those who engaged in slave raiding and trading as well as descendants of resisters and relatives of those who were captured and enslaved. Especially memorable was meeting near Salaga the priestess who preserves a grave site and prays for the spirits of captives who died on the routes. The group also witnessed dances and songs commemorating the defeat of slavers, traveled to shrines memorializing enslavement and resistance, and toured defense sites, including the famous refugee village of Ganvie located on a lagoon in Benin. Other highlights included visits to the Royal Manhyia Palace Museum at Kumasi and the W. E. B. DuBois

Memorial Centre in Accra and participation in ceremonies of remembrance and reconciliation. Gathering information on the contested memories of the slave trade was an important component. The success of the project in many ways depended upon the connections and support provided by the Ghanaian and Benin colleagues. Dr. Africanus Aveh, a media specialist at the University of Ghana–Legon, recorded 70 hours of video tape.

The educators — in literature, social studies, and history — now are preparing and starting to test materials in their classrooms. Among them are a unit of music, art, and science created by Rose Harris of Grandview School in Piscataway, and a new course “Legacies of a Lost People, The Significance of Slavery,” taught by Cheryl Wilson. During the spring of 2006 educators will present the final versions of their curricular projects at workshops for teachers from throughout New Jersey. Some of the teaching units will be circulated more widely through the support of the Amistad Commission of the State of New Jersey. Dr. Aveh and the project leaders are in the process of creating several videos and a DVD-ROM. With the support of the Office of the Vice President of Continuous Education and Outreach these materials will be made available for classroom use in Rutgers and the larger community.

Project participant Brenda Nero comments, “from the beginning, I found the experience exciting, and rejuvenating. This would be my first trip abroad, and to Africa! My view of world affairs has broadened considerably, as well as my understanding of the slave trade - both past, and present.”

Anayra Calderon, another project participant, notes, “Being able to participate in the project has enhanced my teaching capabilities. Now I can incorporate some of the information that I learned firsthand into my lessons. In the United States the slave trade is usually taught as beginning with the trans-Atlantic slave trade; however, this trip has shown me that there is more to it than that. Slavery existed in Africa long before the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and this aspect of slavery needs to be incorporated into what we teach our students. “

PARTICIPANT PHOTOS OF GHANA/BENIN EXPERIENCE



Participants Renée Larrier, Rose Harris, Janice Kroposky and Antoinette Alston break for lunch



Anayra Calderon (left) and Janice Kroposky pictured at the defense wall built in Gwollu



Brenda Nero pictured at the Last Baths, Ghana

PROJECTED MOVE TO CORWIN RESIDENCE HALL

by Barbara Cooper

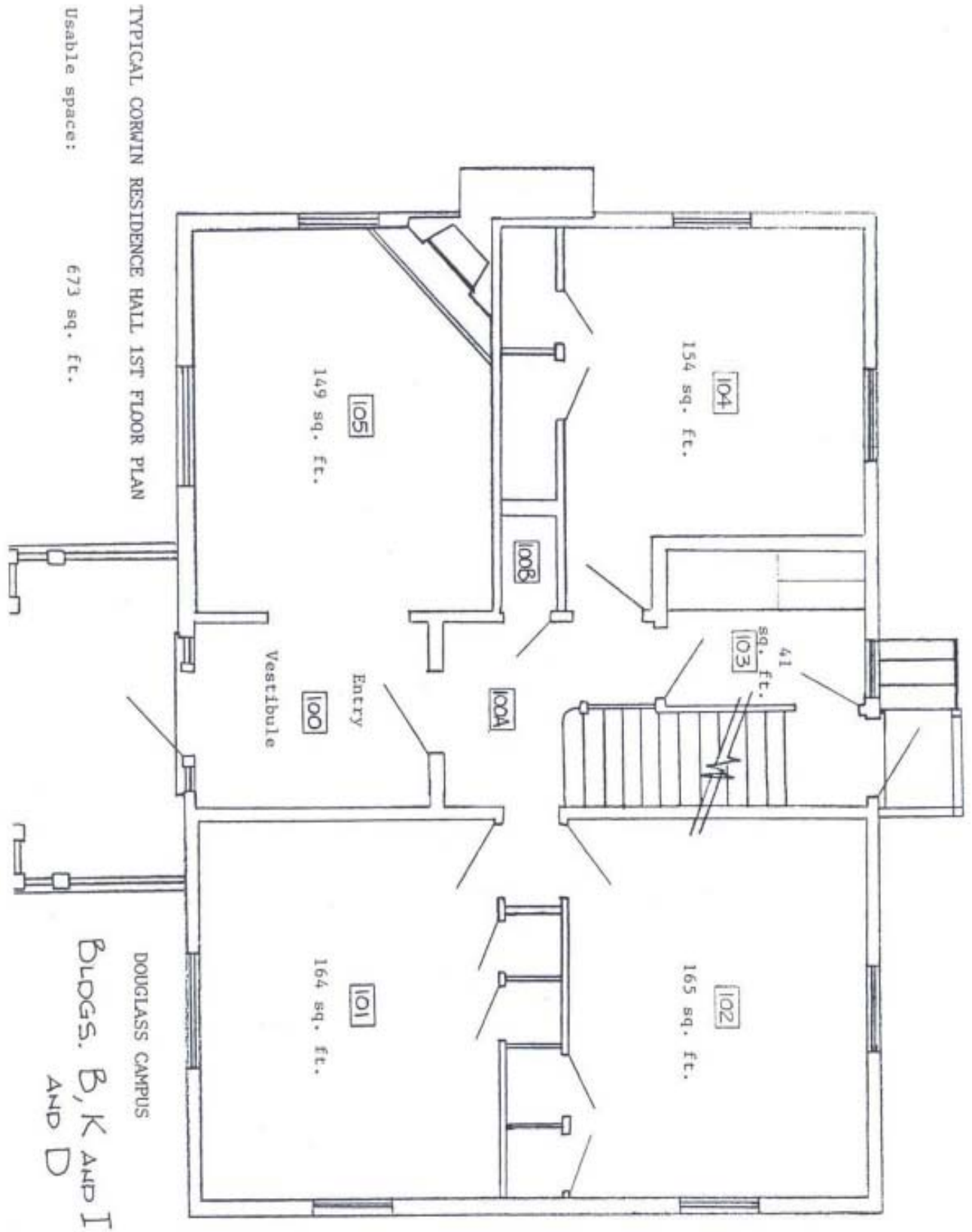
As part of a broader initiative to facilitate collaboration among the many Centers at Rutgers devoted to Global Studies, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences has drawn up a plan for moving the Center for African Studies out of Beck Hall and into Corwin D on Douglass Campus in mid-2006. Once there the Center will join the Center for Comparative European Studies, Global Programs (with Study Abroad), and eventually Middle Eastern Studies, Latin American Studies, South Asian Studies, and the Center for Global Security and Democracy. The new location will place us closer to some of our regular partners, including the African Studies Association, Women's and Gender Studies, the Institute for Research on Women, and the Department of Anthropology.

This move is very exciting for us at the Center because it will enable us to share ideas, students, resources, and energy with the many other units engaged in research and teaching on regions beyond the United States. Already the various area studies units and global research centers have been meeting as part of the Global Initiative, a collaborative project funded by an Academic Excellence Grant. The Global Initiative, which is coordinated through the Center for African Studies, promotes programming, courses, and debate around major thematic issues that cross regions (such as Human Rights, HIV/AIDS, migration, and global warming). The group also works to enhance global studies at Rutgers by inviting speakers who can address the future of global studies and can offer practical advice on building global studies based on their experiences at peer institutions such as the University of Michigan and the University of Minnesota. This spring Allen Issacman of the University of Minnesota will present a talk entitled, "Forging Transnational Knowledge Networks and Creating a Global University."

Corwin D, once a residence hall for Douglass College students, will become a multi-purpose space devoted to the promotion of African Studies. We have ambitious plans for making the most of our new building, including constructing a large conference room; furnishing and outfitting a lounge where visitors can read about grants, study programs, and current events; and equipping a language resource room for African language instruction with audio-visual equipment and a mini "library" of culturally appropriate objects and images for promoting conversation. The new offices will also make it possible for us to host visiting scholars. Our proximity with the other area studies centers will make it easier for us to promote one another's events and to share conference space and other resources.

This move is a wonderful opportunity for the Center to gain visibility and to advance to a new stage here at Rutgers. We hope to transform "Corwin D" so that it has a name, face, and interior that marks African Studies as one of the most dynamic and important units at Rutgers. As the pre-eminent institutional resource for work on Africa in the state of New Jersey, CAS deserves a distinctive and functional home. Friends of Africa interested in helping us make a mark with the new building should contact Darlene Lamourt at the Development Office (dlamourt@fas.rutgers.edu) or call 732-445-5354.

CORWIN LAYOUT



THE PROBLEM OF NAMING HOMOSEXUALITY: A STUDENT RESPONDS TO MARC EPPRECHT'S "QUEER MATTERS IN AFRICA"

by Ashley Platt

I attended Professor Marc Epprecht's talk "Queer Matters in Africa: an Intellectual History" on November 3, 2005. Epprecht was introduced by Cary Alan Johnson, the International Senior Specialist on Africa for the Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. The lecture was followed by commentary by Professor Abena Busia of the Rutgers English Department.

I question whether there really is an "international gay and lesbian movement" as mentioned by Johnson. There are certain dominant structures (like the State and Church) that oppress (in different ways) the LGBTQ community due to their sexuality. The structures have been at least partly responsible for the creation of these international organizations (like the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission). My frustration with this broad 'cause' comes from the fact that this 'movement' seems embedded in Eurocentric ideology that can create the idea of a universal gay and lesbian community.

I find this problematic since an international gay and lesbian movement is focused on the Western desire for visibility in the public sphere, acceptance from the wider society, and recognition of conjugal partnerships from the State. But is this necessarily a goal for individuals engaging in same-sex sexual activities outside Western societies? Sexuality is only one of many identities at issue for an individual; race, class, gender, religion, and nationality can be equally significant in affecting a person's reality and experience.

Epprecht did not stress this issue, focusing his talk instead on his own research in Southern Africa in response President Mugabe of Zimbabwe's claim that homosexuality is a Western import to Africa. Epprecht drew upon archives of court cases to argue that same-sex sexual behavior had occurred in Africa prior to European contact. I thought it would have been incredibly useful not to rely so heavily on Western documents. [Editor's note: Epprecht's book, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*, goes well beyond colonial documents for sources, but Epprecht did not emphasize that in his oral presentation.]

Ousseina Alidou of the Department of Africana Studies noted that in some cultures in Africa spirit possession is one way understanding homosexual behavior. She stated that spiritual traditions throughout Africa challenge the idea that 'heterosexuality' is a stable fact in Africa. Setting aside whether Africans seek lesbian or gay identity, it seems clear that Mugabe's notion that same sex sexual activity is a foreign import is proven false with even a general understanding of performance rituals.

Professor Busia's commentary afterwards included an anecdote involving the word "miscegenation" to point out that the term itself is a European creation. Europeans label an act that—without Eurocentric, racist ideology— would merely be viewed as consensual sex between two individuals. Similarly the word "homosexual" comes with significant baggage and is not just a neutral term. When someone like Mugabe sees Africa as a "homo-free zone" is that because the "act" does not happen, or is it because no one sees a need to name it?

The talk was overall quite interesting. I did however find Epprecht's work limited, especially regarding the archives he sought when conducting his research. The fact that there is very little written about same-sex sexuality on the continent seems to suggest that the written word should not be where we stop in attempting to find "the act/behavior."

RUTGERS GRADUATE YACINE BIO-TCHANE WRITES FROM TUNISIA

Only months after graduating from Rutgers University, with a B.A. in Economics, I flew to



Tunis for a six month internship at the African Development Bank (AfDB) in the Treasury Department working on the Bank's local currency initiative.

The initiative encompasses lending and borrowing in African currencies instead of hard currencies (Dollar, Euro, and Japanese Yen). AfDB is a multilateral development institution that is making a name for itself in the continent but also across the world. My background in Economics helped me understand the basics of my assignment but I have to admit that I did all the learning there. I am proud to say that I succeeded in mastering the financial jargon and completing my task efficiently. Dealing with capital markets and regulatory frameworks is complex in most African nations. Policy making is difficult, but I am glad that Africans are persistent and optimistic about it.

Working at the African Development Bank is interesting. While most of the staff is from Africa there is still a certain diversity within the workforce. I worked and interacted with people from various nations and backgrounds. I witnessed the election of the new president of the Bank, the replacement of key staff members, as well as all the politics and bureaucracy that exist in such institutions.

Tunisia almost has the statistics of a developed nation, in terms of GDP per capita. Tunis has provided the basic needs for its population: it has nice roads, electricity and running water. The country has very beautiful sites and it is amazing to visit other states. Because the Tunisian Dinar is a rather strong currency, life is

a bit expensive. Politics in the country is taboo and the current president silences his opposition. Tunisia is a Muslim country, however it is a very liberal one. Wearing the veil is forbidden. Tunisians make it known they are Muslims but, it seems to me, they do not really live an Islamic life. Muslim women can be harrassed by the police because they opt to wear the hijab or Islamic veil.

Tunisians, like most North Africans, do not consider themselves Africans; they seem to think of their country as an extension of Europe. The divide between North Africans and Sub-saharan African can lead to tension. Blacks are still sometimes viewed as 'slaves' that should be treated accordingly. Tunisians believe that Blacks somehow must have a high sex drive so they do not hesitate to come up to Blacks and make indecent proposals.

Despite all the ups and down, I am glad I went to Tunisia. I've learned a great deal both professionally and personally. I've survived by myself in an unfamiliar foreign nation, and I succeeded in making it a good experience. I've gained a certain independence I am both more open minded and more critical of things. I come out of it knowing what career path to undertake. I haven't given up on Africa; if anything, I am more than ever determined to make things happen for my continent and to contribute to its development.



LIBRARY NEWS

by Lourdes Vazquez

Dear African Studies Faculty:

There is a lot of good news for African Studies collections!

I. This semester I am lucky enough to have Melissa John, our SCILS/RUL Diversity Intern. She is working on updating our reference guide "Finding Aid for African Studies." A lot of evaluation, analysis, relocation of the collections and acquisitions of reference resources pertaining to African Studies has taken place.

II. The African Microfilms list is being updated. See: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/rr_gateway/research_guides/africana/microforms.shtml or go the African Studies Subject Research Guide. This guide is intended to serve as a sample of RUL materials regarding the history of Africa.

III. The first shipment of the LC/Nairobi resources arrived.

IV. Finally, please note that an improvement to the IRIS search engine now enables you to search all languages available in our collection (not only European languages). When I was working on the Title VI report for the libraries I discovered that IRIS did not have that capability. After I consulted with the appropriate team of people within the libraries they immediately improved the system. Cheers to them!

Next semester I will be on sabbatical. My colleague Triveni Kushi of the Kilmer Library will be in charge of African Studies during my absence. Triveni is working with East Asian Studies and is also the Sociology Librarian. You can contact Triveni at 732/445-5733(x2) kuchi@rci.rutgers.edu

EVENTS OF NOTE

OUSSEINA ALIDOU has been awarded a grant by the Ford Foundation's program in Human Rights and Social Justice to conduct research on "Muslim Women and Rights Discourse: Kenya in Comparative Perspective." As she describes the project, "The aim of my research is to investigate the gendered dimension of the discourse of political Islam in Kenya in relation to Muslim women's advocacy of their rights as women within the community of Muslims. To what extent have Muslim women in Kenya seized the political space opened up by the democratization momentum to re-read Islam in a way that empowers them to (re)claim their rights? The study itself will be comparative, drawing upon my previous work in West Africa and the lessons arising from it."

KATE BURLINGHAM reports, "I'll be doing research in Portugal and the Torre do Tombo archives looking at the archives of the Portuguese secret police (PIDE). Then in March I'll be flying to South Africa to look at the Department of Foreign Affairs papers at the Union Buildings and at the National Archives. I'm still waiting to see if my Angolan visa comes through. If it does, I'll spend 6-8 weeks in Luanda looking at very unorganized, though untapped, MPLA documents at the party offices. Keep your fingers crossed for me!"

ELIZABETH JORDAN of the Department of Anthropology successfully defended her dissertation, "From Time Immemorial: Washerwomen, Culture, and Community in Cape Town, South Africa," on December 16, 2005. Elizabeth's committee included Rutgers Anthropology faculty Dorothy Hodgson, Carmel Schrire, Laura Ahearn, History faculty member Jennifer Morgan, and Marley R. Brown III, Director of Archaeological Research, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia. **Congratulations Liz!**

STAFF NEWS

Barbara Cooper, Director



I have my hands full planning for the move to Corwin D, work with the Global Initiative, and preparations for my upcoming leave researching the history of discourses and debates about reproduction in French West Africa.

Renée DeLancey, Assistant to the Director



We are working on our house with the hopes of turning it into a shangri-la by summer 2006. I look forward to helping create yet another new space over at Corwin. The process that leads to loving one's scenery is such an enriching one.

Holly Fanning, Administrative Assistant



I am looking forward to another semester with CAS. We have some fantastic events scheduled for Spring 2006!

Onaji Jackson, Work Study



Working for CAS has made me aware that Africa is far more than a continent suffering from destitution. In addition to helping the center, I am working towards a degree in business in order to open a restaurant.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MONDAY, JANUARY 30

Pamela Scully, "Performance and Ethnopornography in Sara Baartman's Atlantic World"
4:30pm, RCHA Seminar Room (CAC)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Film "Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death"
7pm Dinner, International Lounge
8pm Film, Center Hall
Busch Student Center

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Crisis in Darfur, Sudan: A Panel Discussion
Jay Spaulding, "Historical Perspectives on a Land in Crisis"
Asma Abdel Halim, "War of Power and Wealth, Where Women Do Not Count"
Jemera Rone, "Darfur and Accountability for Crimes against Humanity"
Discussant: Manus Midlarsky
7pm, Trayes Hall A (Douglass)

THURSDAY-FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23-24

Allen Isaacman, "Forging Transnational Knowledge Networks and Creating a Global University"
Public lecture Thursday, 7pm
Teleconference Lecture Hall, Alexander Library (CAC)
Faculty Workshop Friday, 10am-12pm, CCES (CAC)

THURSDAY, MARCH 2

Joe Miller, "Life Begins at Fifty: African Studies Enters its Age of Awareness"
7pm, Teleconference Lecture Hall, Alexander Library (CAC)

TUESDAY, MARCH 21

Isabel Hofmeyr, "Reading in Heaven: The Circulation of Letters Between Heaven and Earth"
4:30pm-7pm, CCA (CAC)

THURSDAY-SATURDAY, MARCH 23-25

African Language Teachers Association
10th Annual Conference
University Inn and Conference Center
New Brunswick (Douglass)
For more info: <http://ruafrica.rutgers.edu/alta>

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12

Meredeth Turshen, "Academic Freedom After 9/11"
4:30pm, Rutgers Student Center Room 410 AB, (CAC)

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