

Symposium marks 50-year collaboration advancing access to justice in Ethiopia

by Thomas F. Geraghty

On February 19, Northwestern Pritzker School of Law hosted the symposium “Human Rights and Access to Justice in Ethiopia,” sponsored by the school’s *Journal of Human Rights* and Addis Ababa University College of Law and Governance Studies’ *Journal of Ethiopian Law*. The journals will publish the symposium’s presentations by leading Ethiopian legal scholars. The event built on the two law schools’ long and fruitful partnership and their mutual dedication to legal education’s critical role in preparing future leaders committed to justice and the rule of law.

The collaboration began in 1969 when Northwestern professor John “Jack” Beckstrom received a grant from the Ford Foundation’s Staffing of African Institutions of Legal Education and Research program to support faculty and student exchange between Northwestern and Addis Ababa University (then Haile Selassie University). Professor Abraham Demoz, who later served as director of Northwestern’s Program of African Studies from 1974 to 1980, provided the Northwestern team with basic instruction in Amharic. Professor Beckstrom spent two years in Ethiopia, teaching and conducting research on Ethiopian family law. The 1970 issue of the *Journal of Ethiopian Law* published articles by his class of 1969 students Lynn Morehouse and me. In another significant product of Professor Beckstrom’s work, AAU’s first Ethiopian law dean, Worku Tafara, received his LLM degree from Northwestern in 1972.

When the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia (the Derg) seized power from Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, working in Ethiopia became difficult for US and western European academics because of the Derg’s reliance on the



Symposium speakers (from left) Solomon Negussie, assistant professor, College of Law and Governance Studies, Addis Ababa University; Northwestern Pritzker School of Law third-year student Ajinkya Joshi; and Thomas Geraghty, the Class of 1967 James B. Haddad Professor of Law at Northwestern

Soviet bloc, China, Cuba, and North Korea for assistance. Political repression, violence, and the devastating famine of the mid-1980s destabilized governance and society.

After the fall of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam’s government in 1991, Northwestern reestablished ties with AAU. In 1993, I, with the support of the American Bar Association’s African Law Initiative, organized a clinical legal education workshop in Addis Ababa that was attended by delegates from throughout East Africa. In 1995, I traveled to Ethiopia with my colleague Cynthia Bowman to confer with AAU faculty about a new curriculum for AAU’s law school. This work led to a series of consultations between Northwestern and the AAU College of Law and Governance Studies on issues ranging from curriculum implementation to human rights and access to justice.

In 2008 the American Bar Association’s Rule of Law Initiative asked me to conduct a three-year assessment of legal education in Ethiopia. During this time, the number of Ethiopian law schools increased from 3 to 25. The project enabled Northwestern faculty and students to work with legal educators throughout Ethiopia

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Message from the interim director



Despite gentle but increasingly urgent nudging from newsletter editor LaRay Denzer, I kept putting off writing this message; the spring quarter at PAS was to be so full of activity, I didn't know where to start.

It is now late March as I sit down to write, and as the whole world

knows, COVID-19 has come roaring in, turning everything upside down. Northwestern has gone into an all-virtual mode, and PAS has had to cancel—no, let's say *postpone*—most spring activities.

- **AfriSem conference**

Spring quarter was to open with the annual AfriSem conference, organized by Patrick Mbullo and the rest of our talented and enterprising doctoral students. This year's theme was to be "Africa's Place in a Globalizing World: Reimagining Governance, Science, Technology, Art, and Culture." Graduate students from all over the world were to present papers, and alumnus Godwin Murunga (history PhD '06), executive secretary of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, was to be the keynote speaker. PAS planned to take advantage of his visit to discuss expanding ties and collaborations with the council.

- **Visit by Goretti Kyomuhendo**

PAS was to host a mid-April visit by Ugandan novelist Goretti Kyomuhendo. In anticipation, faculty member Evan Mwangi (English) had organized a reading group to discuss Kyomuhendo's 2007 novel, *Waiting*, an extraordinary portrait of a Ugandan village violently disrupted by the civil war of the late 1970s.

- **D. Soyini Madison's retirement celebration**

A joyous two-day celebration honoring retiring professor, alumna, and one-time PAS interim director D. Soyini Madison (performance studies PhD '89) was planned for mid-April. Organized by the Department of Performance Studies, the event would have brought in

many of her former students to present papers and join festivities featuring music and dance. A performance of Madison's own composition *Seahorse & MarketWorld*, an allegorical "choreopoem" inspired by our changing climate from the perspective of a variety of ocean and forest animals, was to be a highlight.

- **Avant-Garde Africa symposium**

The two-day May symposium "Global and Local Strategies of 21st-Century African Artists" would have convened international scholars and artists to consider the relationship between contemporary African artists and the challenges posed by a world that is increasingly both interconnected and particularistic. Funded by the Northwestern Alumni Association, the gathering was expected to give rise to ideas for both scholarly and creative collaborations and grant applications.

- **Visit by Richard Lobban and Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban**

Sudan Studies Association cofounders Richard Lobban (anthropology PhD '72) and Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (anthropology PhD '73) were to visit in mid-May to share their recent work and discuss their gifts of manuscripts to the Herskovits Library. LaRay Denzer was planning to meet with the couple to record their recollections of PAS in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of a retrospective she is compiling for PAS's upcoming 75th anniversary.

We intend to reschedule many of these activities during the 2020–21 academic year. In the meantime, the work of our faculty, staff, and students continues, albeit under challenging conditions. We are all learning to teach and meet online, and efforts such as the partnership with the University of Ghana and the search for a permanent PAS director are ongoing. PAS has endured for close to three-quarters of a century, and we will endure this.

Best wishes for health, safety, and a return to better days,
Wendy Griswold



Swahili students and their instructors singing “Malaika”
(photo by Tiffany Williams-Cobleigh)

Swahili students join Jabulani Festival

by Peter Mwangi

Northwestern’s Swahili students participated in the African Student Association’s annual Jabulani Festival, held this year on February 15. They promoted the spirit of Valentine’s Day weekend by singing the popular Swahili love song “Malaika” (Angel), first recorded in the 1960s by Fadhil Williams and later translated into many languages. They also danced to the popular Kenyan gospel song “Taunet nelel,” which is sung in Kalenjin, a language spoken in Kenya. After the performances, students had a rare opportunity to sample delicacies from various African regions as well as view a spectacular cross-continental fashion show. *Jabulani* is a Zulu word meaning “joyful.”

Peter Mwangi is assistant professor of Swahili.

Symposium *(continued from page 1)*

on a range of issues, including the need for greatly expanded professional development programming, increased resources, and expansion of graduate law programs to prepare legal academics to teach in the nation’s increasingly numerous law schools.

In the past decade, Northwestern’s Bluhm Legal Clinic has focused its Ethiopian work on various law school and government initiatives to support access to justice and legal aid. The clinic’s faculty and AAU have planned and led trainings for over 200 professors responsible for clinical legal education throughout the country. In addition, Northwestern has hosted scores of Ethiopian law professors, enabling them to observe firsthand the work of Bluhm Legal Clinic faculty and students.

The recent symposium is the latest example of how two educational institutions committed to promoting human rights, access to justice, and the rule of law can work together on a sustained basis to advance these important objectives. It also provides an opportunity for a new generation of students and faculty to reflect on and continue the work begun by Professor Beckstrom and his Ethiopian colleagues over 50 years ago.

For more information on the history of this partnership, see “Ethiopia: An Enduring Collaboration” by Tracy Marks in the spring 2013 issue of Northwestern Law Reporter.

Thomas F. Geraghty is the Class of 1967 James B. Haddad Professor of Law at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law.

VIEWPOINT

“Rendre à ces arts ce qui appartient à ces arts...”

by Moussa Seck

In their 2018 report *Restitution of African Cultural Heritage*, Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy raise an important question about the reappropriation of African cultural heritage to its rightful owners. For the authors, the decision to return “stolen cultural artifacts” should result in their reintroduction into the community or to the initial owner in question. The report’s recommendations highlight the role African states and cultural institutions should play in the process, from requesting restitution to elaborating on these objects’ necessary conditioning.

Senegalese scholar Amadou Makhtar Mbow pioneered similar concerns in his 1978 UNESCO speech “A Plea for the Return of an Irreplaceable Cultural Heritage to Those Who Created It” (www.unesco.org/culture/laws/pdf/PealforReturn_DG_1978.pdf). Identifying the importance of this plundered heritage to the African collective memory and the role it must play in the reconstitution of an African identity, he declared, “The people who have been victims of this plunder have not [only] been despoiled of irreplaceable masterpieces but also robbed of a *memory* which would have helped them to greater self-knowledge. . . . The men and women of these countries have the right to recover these cultural assets, which are part of their being.”

While the case for the necessity of return is important, my concern—one that is as complicated as the return’s logistics—is the place of the so-called returned heritage in the African community, its rightful owner. This raises questions of ownership and the need to



Murals depicting Amazons—fierce female fighters of the 19th-century kingdom of Dahomey—have appeared in a few cities south of Dakar, Senegal, as part of the “Amazone” series by French street artist YZ Yseult (photos ©YZ; www.brooklynstreetart.com/2015/01/14/yz-and-her-amazone-women-on-senegalese-walls).

“[African cultural legacies] . . . should no longer be subject to Western museological ideologies nor considered the private luxury of a certain European elite with the prerogative to grant access.”

redefine the relationship that we Africans should have with our artistic and cultural inheritance. I contend that part of the problem is the symptomatic obsession of artistic and cultural experts with maintaining and retaining Western structuration of works of art.

African cultural legacies are part of our identity because they include the trajectories, histories, and intellectual achievements of our ancestors. They should no longer be subject to Western museological ideologies nor considered the private luxury of a certain European elite with the prerogative to grant access. What I advocate is an approach to universalize access to arts in Africa. Although restitution efforts focus on colonial African artistic heritages, I am convinced that they can be an opportunity to redefine our relationship with the concepts of both the museum and art in general. Beyond the clear obligation to return these masterpieces to their rightful heirs, there is a need to decolonize the museological ideologies that alienate African intellectual and artistic property for the profit of Western outsiders.

This is what local artists understood when they initiated an “open sky museum” in a street of Médina, a working-class neighborhood in Dakar—bringing color to “usually drab cement walls and adding to the international art scene in Dakar,” as described by Anemona Hartocollis in the *New York Times* (“Who needs canvas?” November 23, 2019). Spearheaded by Médina-born Mamadou Boye Diallo, who is passionate about street art and fashion, the initiative

transformed these depressing, unpainted walls to protest against the inaccessibility of art. He and his collaborators have turned the walls near downtown Dakar into canvases adorned with images that tell stories about the population, their occupations, and their religious and traditional leaders. Diallo began the movement in 2010 when he launched Yataal Art, a collective that takes its name from the Wolof expression meaning “expanding art.” Its mission is to provide a platform for neighborhood youths to express their talent and to erase the distance between the community and the arts.

Another artist with a similar conception of art is the famous graffitist and slam poet Amadou Lamine Ngom, popularly known as Docta, one of the pioneers of West Africa’s urban art movement. His works reflect an engaged and socially conscious artistry devoted to promoting unity, diversity, and equality. Like Diallo, he also believes in expanding art to the less privileged part of the community.

These artists, intellectuals, and activists show us that if restitution is an obligation, it should also be an occasion to redefine our relationship with the community’s artistic creations, a decolonized turn from the museum and its ideology.

Moussa Seck is a graduate student in the Department of French and Italian.

Hamza Yusuf speaks on Mauritanian scholastic tradition

by Rebecca Shereikis

Speaking at Northwestern in January, scholar Shaykh Hamza Yusuf paid tribute to Mauritania’s institutions of Islamic learning—the nomadic schools known as *mahadir* (singular *mahadra*). Flourishing in the Sahara since the 1600s, these “college caravans” have a rich Islamic scholastic tradition, of which Yusuf himself is a product.

One of the Western world’s most influential Islamic scholars, Yusuf is cofounder and president of Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California—the first accredited Muslim liberal arts college in the US. In addition to his scholarly publications, Yusuf’s online sermons and talks have a robust following. In introducing him, Zekeria Ahmed Salem, direc-



Hamza Yusuf (second from left) with librarian Florence Mugambi, ISITA director Zekeria Ahmed Salem, and ISITA visiting scholar Abdulbasit Kassim

tor of the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa, noted that the visit supported ISITA’s mission of engaging Muslim scholars and religious figures as interlocutors, not simply as informants.

Yusuf began his talk by setting a historical context for the emergence of the Mauritanian scholastic tradition, highlighting the significance of debates about Islamic knowledge and authority in the Saharan region’s history. The Almoravid empire, for example, which covered northwest Africa and

Muslim Spain in the 11th and 12th centuries, originated from a movement led by Maliki scholar Abd Allah ibn Yasin to bring religious teaching to the Sanhaja Berbers. In the 1600s Berber religious leader Nasir al-Din sought to establish a state based on Islamic law, leading to protracted armed conflict with the Arab groups and, ultimately, to a class division between warriors and Islamic scholars that has profoundly shaped Mauritanian society and politics.

Yusuf recounted his own experiences as a *mahadra* student in Mauritania. Traveling in the 1980s, he was told by a scholar in Timbuktu that Mauritania was the last remaining place where one could find “real” Islamic knowledge. That advice stuck with him; later, while studying in the United Arab Emirates, he met a Mauritanian mufti in a bookstore, initiating connections that eventually led Yusuf to study with Shaykh Murabit al-Hajj at a famous *mahadra* in Mauritania’s Tagent region. Yusuf described living in tents made from tree branches and rice sacks, moving with the larger pastoralist group as the seasons dictated, completing lessons on a wooden board, and learning astronomy from a teacher who could tell the time from the position of the stars.

Among the elements of *mahadra* pedagogy that Yusuf most appreciated were the use of poetry and memorization and the emphasis on grammar and word meanings. “Law and grammar are profoundly associated,” he said. “Because Mauritania is a law-based tradition, they focus immensely on grammar and word meanings. This is lost on most modern people. . . . Mauritians read dictionaries for enjoyment.”

Yusuf described his teacher Shaykh Murabit al-Hajj, who died in 2018 at age 112, as an extraordinary scholar and person who was never heard to speak ill of others. Erudition and humility, said Yusuf, characterize many Mauritians who pass through the *mahadra* system.

“The product of the *mahadra* tradition is a human being,” said Yusuf. “It’s not the knowledge that is so much the focus, but it’s actually the transformative power of the knowledge. You don’t study to earn a living, but you study to actually learn how to live.”

Paul Naylor returns as visiting scholar



The ISITA and PAS communities welcome Paul Naylor as a returning visiting scholar this spring. Naylor is the

West African manuscripts cataloger at the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library in Collegeville, Minnesota, where he works with digitized manuscripts from Bamako and Timbuktu, Mali. He received his BA in Arabic from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies in 2010 and his PhD in African studies from the University of Birmingham in 2018. While completing his PhD, Naylor took part in a collaborative doctoral partnership between the University of Birmingham and the British Library, combining his own research with cataloging and curatorial work on the British Library's West African manuscripts and its 2016 exhibit *West Africa: Word, Symbol, Song*. He also spent a quarter at Northwestern as a visiting predoctoral scholar with ISITA. Naylor has taught courses on Islamic history and Islam in Africa at Tulane University and Loyola University Chicago. As an ISITA visiting scholar this spring, Naylor will continue to adapt his dissertation into a book, provisionally titled "From Rebels to Rulers: Writing Legitimacy in the Sokoto State, 1803-1837," and begin two new projects based around the Herskovits archives.

Zachary Wright presents research at ISITA meeting

by Hazim Mohamed

At one of ISITA's winter-quarter meetings for scholars and researchers, Zachary Wright, associate professor at Northwestern University in Qatar, delivered the lecture "Intellectual Networks and Islamic Realization in 18th-Century North Africa."

Wright traced the global networks that linked Muslim scholars in the 1700s, highlighting the influence of West African and North African intellectual exchanges during that period. "The research pushes against the narrative that the Sahara Desert definitively divides Arab Islam from black African Islam," Wright explained.

"I argue that black African Muslim scholars were very influential—sometimes the teachers of their so-called white counterparts—and that many of the 18th century's ideological or doctrinal developments were rooted in West African scholarly traditions," he added.

Wright cited numerous examples, including the emergence of one of the most popular Sufi orders today, the Tijaniyya, and its promotion of traditions well known throughout the 18th-century Islamic world.

"The Tijaniyya movement originated in Morocco or Algeria around the 1780s and then spread to Indonesia and elsewhere. That development, I argue, is rooted in a West African tradition, which explains why the Tijaniyya's primary base today is in sub-Saharan Africa," he said.

Wright's lecture drew on his recently completed book manuscript—soon to be published by the University of North Carolina Press—called *Realizing Islam: The Tijaniyya in North Africa in the 18th-Century Muslim World*.

"The Tijaniyya is a very large Muslim network—maybe 100 million strong, dwarfing the Muslim Brotherhood—with unapologetic black African leadership on the world stage," Wright said. "To me, that's an interesting story."

Hazim Mohamed is a writer and editor in Northwestern University in Qatar's communications and public affairs office.

Blazing a trail: Women Africanist PhDs

by Florence Mugambi

As part of Northwestern's celebration of 150 years of admitting women students, a Herskovits Library winter exhibition highlighted five of the many women who have earned PhDs in African studies. In addition, the University Libraries' exhibition *On the Same Terms: The Beginnings of Women's Education at Northwestern* has been on display in Deering Library since the fall quarter.

Hannah Abeodu Bowen Jones (history PhD '62) came to Northwestern on a Liberian government scholarship to study history. She was the first person to obtain a PhD in African history at Northwestern and Liberia's first woman PhD. Returning home to join the faculty of the University of Liberia, Jones reported that she was "referred to as 'the Department of History'" because she was the staff's only Liberian with a doctorate and its only professor of history. As the only woman in Liberian president William Tubman's cabinet, she served as minister of postal affairs (1975-76) and then of health and social welfare (1977-78). From 1981 to 1984 she was Liberia's permanent representative and ambassador to the United Nations. Jones founded the Liberian Historical Society and participated in designing the eight-volume *UNESCO History of Africa*, serving as director of UNESCO oral history research on Liberia (1968-72). She coedited *The Official Papers of William V. S. Tubman, President of the Republic of Liberia: Covering Addresses, Messages, Speeches, and Statements 1960-1967* (1968). During the Liberian civil war she returned to the US, where she taught history at Chicago State University.

Enid Rosamund Ayodele Forde (geography PhD '66) was the first Sierra Leonean woman to obtain a PhD. Her dissertation, "The Population of Ghana: A Study of the Spatial Relationships of Its Sociocultural and Economic Characteristics," contributed to the study of West African geography. On her return to Sierra Leone, she chaired

the Department of Geography at Fourah Bay College. She authored a number of published articles on land use, economic development, and modernization in Sierra Leone. In addition, she assisted in carrying out the Sierra Leone national population census in 1986 and participated in the family planning program.

Thandekile Ruth Mason Mvusi (history PhD '85) is an educator and social historian. She taught at several colleges and universities, including Spelman College and Drake University, where she cofounded the women's studies program. In 1997 she cofounded the Fannie Lou Hamer National Institute on Citizenship and Democracy, a coalition of friends who shared a belief in the transformative potential of education. The Hamer Institute conducted seminars and workshops for K-12 teachers and students that highlighted the role of the Civil Rights movement in promoting citizenship and democracy in America; Mvusi went on to serve as core faculty and vice chair. From 1999 to 2001 she was a Fulbright scholar to the Kingdom of Eswatini and later served as a consultant to the International Training in Women and Development Project. Her publications include *The African Diaspora and the World* (1998), *The Poverty of Femaleness and Blackness in Swaziland* (2003), and *The Fannie Lou Hamer National Institute on Citizenship and Democracy: Engaging Curricula and Pedagogy* (2005).

Una Osili (economics PhD '99) is associate dean of research and international programs and director of research in the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, where she is professor of economics and philanthropic studies, a position she also holds at Purdue University at Indianapolis. Osili serves as a consultant for numerous national and global institutions, including the World Bank, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, the United Nations Development Program, the African Development Bank,



Mshai Salome Mwangola (performance studies PhD '09) is an oratorist, director, and performer active in theater and storytelling. She has taught and contributed to policy processes engaging different aspects of culture, arts, theater, and performance for over three decades. Her research explores Kenyan cultural history and actors as critical reflectors of the Kenyan nation. She has facilitated programs as research and communication officer for the African Peacebuilding Network Hub of the African Leadership Centre, based in Nairobi, where she also teaches. Her recent research focuses on women's participation in peace building and leadership from the African perspective. She has chaired the board of trustees of the Uraia Trust (a civic education program) and the Kenya Cultural Centre Governing Council (2009–12).

Florence Mugambi is the African studies librarian at the Herskovits Library.

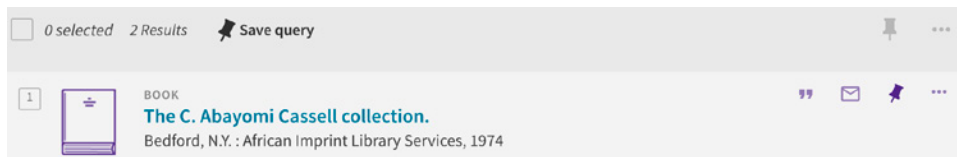
the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and other agencies. In addition to providing expert testimony on economic development to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, she has authored or coauthored many working papers for national and international agencies as well as many articles in leading academic journals and global media, including National Public Radio, the *New York Times*, Reuters, and the *Wall Street Journal*. A founding officer of the Association for the Advancement of African Women Economists, she established Generosity for Life, a digital platform that provides new data tools for financial decision-making in philanthropy and social impact.

NUSearch provides easy access to Center for Research Libraries materials

by Esmeralda Kale

Have you noticed that Africa-related records housed at the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) are now visible in NUSearch? This feature provides access to collections that Africana librarians across the country and around the world have preserved for research purposes. We recently incorporated these records into NUSearch to provide easier access to the materials and raise their visibility.

Say you are doing research about former Liberian attorney general C. Abayomi Cassell. A quick look on NUSearch yields the following result:



Clicking on the title brings up several options: you can initiate a request for the microfilm of the book from another library via interlibrary loan; another option allows you to see detailed information about the publication to complete the loan request form; and a third option allows you to see the original record within the CRL catalog:



For some items, a link below the source record will allow you to view a digitized version of the item online. CRL has various membership models; for digitization-on-request members, full text access is often available. *The C. Abayomi Cassell Collection* has already been digitized and so can easily be read online.

None of this would be possible without the collaboration within Northwestern University Libraries of colleagues John Blosser, Geoff Morse, Alice Tippet, and Kurt Munson and with the Center for Research Libraries.

Esmeralda Kale is the George and Mary LeCron Foster Curator of the Herskovits Library.

Community news

Kofi Takyi Asante (political science PhD 2016) is now a research fellow at the University of Ghana's Institute of Statistical, Social, and Economic Research. His article "Imagining Citizenship and Belonging in Ghana" was published in *Development* (2019), doi.org/10.1057/s41301-019-00231-2.

Chernoh Bah (history graduate student) has coauthored the article "Payroll Corruption in Sierra Leone: The Ministry of Finance's Scandalous Wage Bill," published in *African Press* (March 1, 2020).

Karen Tranberg Hansen (emerita, anthropology) is the author of a number of recently published articles: "Postscript: Domestic Service as Politics" in the special "Domestic Service in Africa" issue of *Politique Africaine* 154 (2019): 145–147; "'Our Dress': *Chitenge* as Zambia's National Fabric" in *Fashion and Materiality: Cultural Practices in Global Contexts* (Bloomsbury, 2019): 140–156; "Global Fashion Encounters and Africa: Affective Materialities in Zambia" in *Dressing Global Bodies: The Political Power of Dress in World History* (Routledge, 2019), 289–305; "'Not African Enough?' Global Dynamics and Local Contestations over Dress Practice and Fashion Design in Zambia," in the special "Global Fashion" issue of *ZoneModa* 9(2),

2019: 1–15; and "L'échange de fripe en Zambie: débats globaux, marchandises, et histoires locales (translated from an article published in English in 1999) and "Post-scriptum. Économies des fripes: défis locaux et globaux" in *La fripe du Nord au Sud: Production globale, commerce transfrontalier, et marches informels de vêtements usages* (2019): 41–82 and 259–268.

Congratulations to **Florence Mugambi** (Herskovits Library), who has been named one of this year's Leadership and Career Development Program Fellows by the Association of Research Libraries. In February she participated in an outreach event at Evanston's Dawes Elementary School in celebration of Black History month.

Congratulations to **Leah Neubauer** (Feinberg School of Medicine), recipient of the Association of Schools of Programs of Public Health's Early Career Public Health Teaching Award in recognition of her teaching, research, and mentorship.

Sally A. Nuamah (education and social policy PhD '16), a faculty member in the School of Education and Social Policy, was interviewed for the Northwestern Careers Intersections podcast's episode 67, "Educational Equity for All." Nuamah's career was highlighted in the article "Alumna's

Global Mission: Better Schools for Girls," posted on November 14 at columbian.gwu.edu/alumnas-global-mission-better-schools-girls by George Washington University's Columbian College of Arts and Sciences.

Zekeria Ahmed Salem (ISITA director and political science) presented the paper "Rethinking the Weak States Paradigm in Light of the Expansion of Jihadism in North Africa and the Sahel: Evidence from the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (2009–2019)" in late February at the international workshop "Africa and the Middle East," organized by George Washington University's Project on Middle East Political Science and Columbia University's School for International and Public Affairs. The book *Democratic Struggle, Institutional Reform, and State Resilience in the African Sahel* (Lexington Books), edited by Leonardo Villalon and Rahmane Idrissa, includes his chapter "Controlled Democratization, Political (In)stability, and Institutional Reforms in Mauritania."

Send your news updates to laray.denzer@northwestern.edu so that PAS can share word with the Africanist community at Northwestern and beyond.

One of the best decisions I have made at Northwestern

by Adoria Randolph



At the beginning of my first year at Northwestern, I met with my adviser to decide which language to take to fulfill my language requirement. I am not going to lie; I was dreading this conversation. I had taken two years of Spanish in high school and had been miserable. I could not learn the language, and it did not interest me, but I had limited myself to learning either Spanish or French, since those were popularly deemed the most useful languages. I was prepared to accept taking another two years of Spanish and just dealing with it.

When my adviser asked which language I would like to take, I elaborated on my past difficulty with Spanish but told her that I did not want to take French either. She asked why I would take either of them when I had other options. I realized that she had a good point. Why would I confine myself to two languages I was not interested in at all? She started naming other languages and eventually made it to Swahili. I had never even heard of Swahili before, but it piqued my interest. My adviser only knew that it was an East African language. At that moment, I decided that I wanted to

learn Swahili. I do not know what drew me to it exactly, but I am glad I chose it.

Over the past two years, I have learned not just about Swahili as a language but about the culture of various East African countries as well. At our every-other-week language tables, beginning and intermediate students meet to speak Swahili and learn songs or dances over *chai*, *mandazi*, and *sambusa*. I have had the opportunity of attending AfriSem to hear graduate students present their African studies research. Professor Mwangi hosts dinners where students come together and learn how to cook traditional East African dishes. I have had so many new experiences through the Swahili program that I would not have encountered otherwise. I suspect that many students find themselves in the same place I was at the start of my first year, deciding between two popular languages that really don't interest them.

Every time I meet someone new and say I am learning Swahili, they ask similar questions: "Why? Does it have something to do with your career? When are you going to use it?" None of my friends learning French have experienced this, and in my time at Northwestern, I have met more Swahili speakers than French speakers. Students should be encouraged to learn languages that genuinely interest them, regardless of how "popular"

they are. I am so grateful for my first-year adviser's encouragement to take Swahili, because it turned out to be one of the best decisions I have made at Northwestern.

Adoria Randolph is sophomore majoring in political science.

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