

Program of African Studies

NEWS AND EVENTS

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Message from PAS director Chris Abani

“All that you touch you change, all that you change changes you.”
— Octavia Butler, **Parable of the Sower**

Spring, as clichéd as it sounds, is the season of change, and at PAS, we are embracing that spirit to change and reinvent ourselves to create a more robust center for research into the African Humanities and Social Sciences that will withstand the rigors of the future. As the quote above from an African American pioneering speculative writer demonstrates, change has changed us. First, in choosing a quote from Octavia Butler, we are formally stating that the future for us lies in collaborative, expansive,

and lasting dialogue with the entire African diaspora (one can argue that the scope of difference, even on the continent, is suggestive of an internal diaspora, but that is for another conversation) and possibly even to a global Blackness that

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would include many new partners in the global south including the Dalit intellectual, artistic, and lived communities.

So, change. The pandemic and lockdown have shadowed my directorship from the beginning as I took over the helm of PAS right as the lockdown began. We are barely a year from that experience and are all slowly recalibrating. One of the things that the pandemic revealed to us is that there will never be a return to normal or the prior way of doing things. Whatever operated prior to the shutdown did not translate into the shutdown. Moreover, even a year on, we are only now measuring the complete and lasting impacts that will continue to reveal themselves as we move forward.

We learned that the old model of balkanized research units (centers, programs, and departments alike) would not survive into the future. More than ever, we must develop and implement fundamental interdisciplinary practices. This has led us to clean house and relinquish legacy parts that no longer serve us, retool the ones that do but need adjustment and, in many cases, create innovative approaches. It has taken us three years, but we are finally ready to embark on the next three years with a clear multiyear strategic plan called Reclamation.

We are grateful to all community members, constituents, and stakeholders for adapting with us and staying supportive through it all. We have much to share very soon. Stay tuned.

Named director of the Program of African Studies in 2020, Chris Abani is the Board of Trustees Professor of English at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences and director of graduate studies for the Litowitz Creative Writing Graduate Program.

Upcoming events

MAY 5, 8:30am- 6pm

7th Annual Graduate Student Conference: Built Environment with guest panelist Ojok Okello, founder and CEO of Okere City, an

“embodiment of a rural futur-

ist vision.” It takes place at the Program of African Studies, online and in person. See Africanstudies.northwestern.edu for more details.



Panofsky predissertation awardees report on research activities

Austin Bryan (anthropology): The Panofsky predissertation award supported my ethnographic fieldwork in Kampala, Uganda, from March-April and July-August 2022. I mapped the multinational institutions, government agencies, NGOs, faith-based organizations, and foreign assistance that assemble the responses to Uganda’s HIV epidemic. My work included participant observation in community-led monitoring with HIV activists, taking part in the preparations for the launch of the strategic plan of a national network of community-based organizations, legal advocacy at the Kampala City Court, and meetings with relevant government workers at the Uganda AIDS Commission, Ministry of Health, and the CDC-Uganda. In addition, I established a formal research affiliation at the Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR), where I met with anthropology faculty and other graduate students. I presented my preliminary research findings at the African Studies Association (Africa) conference in Cape Town in April 2022 and at the Northwestern University - Qatar Institute for Advanced Study of the Global South in September 2022.

Nnaemeka Ekwelum (African American studies): During August 4-12, 2022, I participated in a research design workshop on applying (local) non-Western knowledge frameworks within K-12 education. This workshop took place at Universidade Pungue (Pungue University) in Chimoio, Mozambique, where education researchers, practitioners, and artists from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Brazil, and the United States convened to discuss the coloniality of global education and the possibilities for decolonial teaching methods within academia. During the workshop, I codesigned and cofacilitated an interactive arts intervention on emotional capacity building via Black diasporic art and artmaking theories and techniques. Drawing on critical lessons from our overlapping fields of study, my friend/collaborator Noor Jones-Bey (PhD candidate in Urban Education at New York University) and I explored the emotional terrain of Black politics through performance theory, ethnography, and call and response methodology. After the workshop, I spent five additional days (August 12-17, 2022) conducting studio visits and interviews with contemporary artists and artisans in Maputo, Mozambique.

Shelby Mohrs (anthropology): I conducted my predissertation fieldwork in Stonetown, Zanzibar, in August-September 2022, investigating the uses of ancient plant remains at archaeological sites to understand the impact of urbanization on Swahili cuisine and identity during the medieval period. During this field season, I conducted informal interviews on historic foodways and undertook preliminary excavation at the Old Fort in Stonetown. I completed a small collection of modern comparative plant samples and did labwork at the archaeobotanical lab at the University of Dar es Salaam. The Panofsky award also supported my attendance at the 16th Annual Pan-African Archaeological Congress, where I made valuable connections with local officials of the Offices of Museums and Antiquities and established research partnerships with Tanzanian archaeologists. My preliminary research findings were presented to the Africa Seminar and will be incorporated into my dissertation proposal, which I will defend this Spring.

Olabanke Oyinkansola Goriola (performance studies): Grounded in Alice Walker’s definition of Colorism as “the prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color,” my fieldwork in Nigeria investigated the explicit and implicit sacrifices dark-skinned female dancers offer in compliance with the dance industry’s conceptions of beauty in the Nigerian entertainment industry. In the Nigerian context, colorism is visible through bleaching skin, through which dark-skinned women aim to enhance their “attractiveness” and secure economic advantage like their light-skinned colleagues. This ideology and the reward for being light-skinned have brought about the thirst for whiteness, seen through the proliferation in the consumption of skin-bleaching products in Nigeria. My research engages in a discourse that intersects Black feminist theory, dance, media, performance, gender, and African studies and explores the labor of dark-skinned female dancers to attain national and cultural belonging within the entertainment industry. This perpetuates Eurocentric beauty standards as the “Ideal” in various media platforms.

Artist BeBe Zahara Benet discusses his evolution as a female illusionist in a new documentary

By Kathirine Leggette

On March 9, 2023, the Block Museum screened the documentary *Being Bebe*, followed by a Q&A with the film’s director and star. Directed by Emily Branham, the doc features Cameroonian artist Marshall Kudi Ngwa, widely known as performer BeBe Zahara Benet, and his artistic evolution as a female illusionist. Although widely regarded as a drag superstar, Ngwa prefers “female illusionist” to describe his art.

Born in Duala, Cameroon, according to Ngwa, he was not the most masculine boy in school, but became the star of the class, whose name everyone knew. He made friends with many female classmates, and through these friendships he found the space to be his own person without fear of repercussions. When he came to the US to finish schooling, Ngwa found that school was not for him and began performing in the drag circuit, which let him express another side of himself.

Ngwa forged a career in Minneapolis, Minnesota as the female illusionist Bebe Zahara Benet, entertaining at a well-known club called The Gay 90s (the center of gay nightlife in the city), and in pride parades and shows. In 2009, Bebe’s career took off after winning the first season of the U.S. TV show *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. Since then, he has become a successful television personality, singer, actor, and producer.

When Bebe’s father died, filmmaker Emily Branham, who had been documenting BeBe’s life for fifteen years, decided to go to Cameroon to acquaint herself with the complexity of queer life there. This decision was not taken lightly because Cameroonian society is hostile to the LGBTQ community, and the government has criminalized consensual gay sexual relations. Moreover, the overall political climate



Ngwa as Bebe Zahra Benet on the right, Emily Branham on the left.

is undemocratic and often violent. In the film, BeBe and his friends recount a well-known story in which a police officer imprisons two men for drinking Bailey’s Irish Cream, categorized as a woman’s drink due to the liqueur’s lightness and sweetness. These men were arrested, fined, and sentenced to five years in prison.

Ngwa and Branham’s film documents the vicissitudes of BeBe’s career, as well as explores the experience of many Cameroonians in the LGBTQ community. After watching this documentary, I realized that although it may be hard to live your truth, having the freedom to do so is a privilege. It is important to be humble and kind while not losing who you are. Success is more than money and fame. It is about being proud of where you have come from, where you are going, and having faith in your unknown future.

If you missed *Being Bebe* at the Block, find it on Peacock, Vudu, Apple TV, or Amazon Prime Video. For more on BeBe, see the website: bebezaharabenet.net.

Kathirine Leggette is the program assistant at the Program of African Studies.

Rebecca Rwakabukoza (history): Over the summer of 2022, I started collecting linguistic evidence for my research on reproductive health practices before the 16th century across different parts of western and southwestern Uganda. In different places, I collected the translations of words for the 100-word list that historical linguists use, as well as the reproduction of specific words like menstruation, pregnancy, first child, uterus, midwife, placenta, new mother, and newborn. My research sites were Hoima, Bugungu, Kkooki, Kabale, Kasese, Kyankwanzi, and Kampala. In conducting this research, I was referred to more men than I liked, but my community consultants claimed that these men knew more of the language than others. All the conversations, however, were interesting, and in my field trip next summer, I hope to spend more time in the gardens with traditional birth attendants learning about the names and uses of plant medicines used in pregnancy and postpartum.

US-Africa leaders' summit: A postscript

By Musifiky Mwanasali

Background

United States (US) President Joe Biden hosted the second summit between US officials and their African counterparts in Washington, DC, on 15 December 2022. Initiated by President Obama in August 2014, the US-Africa Summit (hereafter the Washington Summit) serves as a cooperation forum to strengthen the US partnership with African leaders under the auspices of the African Union (AU) and expand opportunities around areas of common interest. In announcing the meeting, President Biden "underscored the importance of US-Africa relations and increased cooperation on shared global priorities" (AU press release, 2 December 2022).

Why Africa matters

In his opening remarks, President Biden stated, "African voices, African leadership, African innovation all are critical to addressing the most pressing global challenges and (to) realizing the vision we all share: a world that is free, a world that is open, prosperous, and secure." The global challenges President Biden referred to relate to US irritation over the growing footprint of Russia and China on the African continent, also expressed in the Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act (HR 7311, April 2022).

Africa also matters because of its historical links with the United States. Thus, President Biden announced the establishment of the President's Advisory Council on the African Diaspora Engagement in the United States "to tap the enormous strength of the diaspora communities here in the United States and make sure their insight and experiences are reflected in our work." However, the US conception of the African Diaspora (people of native African origin living outside the continent) is restrictive and contrary to the general acceptance of the term by people of African descent. For the AU, the African diaspora consists of peoples of African origin, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality, who live

outside the continent and are willing to contribute to Africa's development and the building of the AU.

The US-Africa relationship

The United States still enjoys a reservoir of goodwill and influence in Africa; however, it has also lost much soft power. Relations improved after the Cold War, healing painful memories and allaying suspicions about the US appetite to foment regime change. Nonetheless, the ripples of NATO's destruction of Libya still rattle many people in West Africa and beyond, not to mention the memory of the US involvement in the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia and the African Great Lakes region (Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

There is also concern about the upsurge of racism in the US, even at the highest level of the federal government, following President Donald Trump's crude characterization of African countries. At the time, few African leaders went on public record against President Trump; however, they let their feelings loose during the AU summit in Addis Ababa in February 2018. Even the letter of encouragement on US-AU cooperation that President Trump later sent to the AU summit swayed no one. Had it not been for the plea of the AU Commission chairperson to avoid polemicizing on the issue, African leaders would have adopted a decision calling the president of the United States a racist.

Summit takeaways

Overall, there was a convergence of views on joint priorities, notably food security and public health. These two sectors, long neglected by African leaders, are critical to reducing the continent's vulnerability to exogenous factors.

On food security, the Washington Summit decided to boost the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), the blueprint for agricultural transformation. Using performance criteria in seven thematic areas, the CAADP evaluates governmental progress on agricultural growth and food security, nutrition, and food safety (aflatoxin prevention, among other issues). The AU's second biennial review (2015–2018) of CAADP implementation reported an overall positive trend toward agricultural transformation and growing efforts by

governments to address persistent bottlenecks. The report also noted that much remained to achieve the target date of 2025.

While a few African governments appreciated the generosity of some world leaders in sending them free grain or wheat flour, such gestures may ultimately defeat the ambitions of CAADP. They may even increase dependence on food aid, thus profoundly changing the diets of communities that hitherto depend on locally grown staple foods and destroying small farmers' livelihoods and resilience to climatic variations.

The Washington Summit also focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic but not enough on the prevalence of other, more devastating infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, measles, and the Ebola virus, on which the AU has sometimes adopted a leading eradication approach. Such was the case of the AU Support to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA). At its peak in September 2014, ASEOWA deployed 855 African health workers and volunteers in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in response to the Ebola outbreak. ASEOWA withdrew in September 2015 after the three countries had been declared free of Ebola transmission without losing a single volunteer.

Before ASEOWA deployment, the chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, invited leading African businesspeople to Addis Ababa to solicit their contribution to Africa Against Ebola Solidarity Trust Fund. At the end of the two-hour meeting, the AU Commission raised \$30 million that, among other things, served to finance ASEOWA.

Going forward

Intentions to move forward with this cooperation seem genuine on both the US and African sides (the AU appointed former Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn as its point person.) Implementation of the summit's outcomes should be smooth if the parties maintain the spirit of cooperation in which they conceived their partnership. However, there are lingering doubts about how far the US would go in the current global context.

To be sure, the parties' strategic priorities are not necessarily compatible. For the US, it is to out-compete China and constrain Russia militarily (US National Security Strategy, October 2022.) Africa only matters if it serves US national

security interests (US Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, August 2022); otherwise, the US House of Representatives has vowed to punish recalcitrant African leaders (H.R. 7311, 2021-22). For their part, African leaders want to work with China, Russia, Turkey, India, and any other foreign partner willing to help the AU to implement its Agenda 2063.

China, for one, has entrenched its partnership. Africa-China trade will soon exceed \$360 billion. China imports more from Africa than it exports. Meanwhile, Chinese companies are building essential infrastructure projects like the just inaugurated Africa CDC headquarters in Addis Ababa or the ECOWAS seat now under construction in Abuja. Fifty-two African countries and the AU Commission have signed Belt and Road agreements. The new Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang continued the tradition set by his predecessors in traveling to Africa on their first overseas trip, delivering debt relief and duty-free facilities for African exports to China.

Russia, too, is expanding bilateral military cooperation. Mali received new fighter jets and combat helicopters. Algeria is finalizing a multibillion-dollar arms purchase and, like Sudan and some countries in Africa's southern region, mulls the possibility of hosting a Russian military base on its soil. To further strengthen ties, Russia will host a summit with African leaders in St. Petersburg and join the BRICS summit in South Africa later this year.

At the Washington Summit, AU chairperson and Senegal's President Macky Sall asked his host about the fairness of the US intent to punish Africans for cooperating with China and Russia. In January 2023, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) renewed its criticism of US threats against African cooperation with Russia and China. Eventually, the US will have to find a way out of this dilemma and ponder President Macky Sall's warning that continued threats against Africans could seriously jeopardize the future of US-Africa cooperation.

Musifiky Mwanasali holds a PhD in political science from Northwestern University (1994). A former academic in Africa and the United States, Dr. Mwanasali spent over two decades working for the African Union and the United Nations. He is presently a Pius Okigbo Fellow at Northwestern's Program of African Studies, focusing on the challenges and opportunities of Africa's transformation amidst current global uncertainties.

ISITA cosponsors translation symposium

ISITA was the cosponsor of the January 27 symposium “Translation Practices across Institutional Borders: from the Scholar to the Public.” Organized by Xena Amro, PhD student in Comparative Literary Studies and ISITA’s graduate assistant, the primary sponsors were Comparative Literary Studies, the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, and the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities. The day-long symposium brought together Northwestern faculty and graduate students, as well as scholars, translators, and editors/publishers from outside Northwestern for a day of discussion.

Translation was inclusively defined to consider the interdisciplinary methodologies of translation beyond linguistic transformations. Participants thought together about the scholarly, ethical, practical, and emotional imperatives of translating within academic institutions to reach the broader public. Lively panels involving Northwestern faculty and graduate students engaged the audience with their own experiences with translation. The symposium brought forth topics including the ethical implications of translating South

Asian Dalit literature; the acts of translation involved when musical and visual artists collaborate; the metaphysics of translating Sufi texts; exploration of how long-term personal relationships between authors and translators impact the act of translation; the development of a translators “Adda,” or meeting place, to encourage community involvement in translation, and others.

Other symposium participants were publishers and editors. For instance, Susan Harris discussed her editorial role in *Words without Borders*, a magazine dedicated to international exchange through translation practices. She discussed how they select translations, assess their linguistic and aesthetic quality, and promote their circulations. Yopie Prins, professor of comparative literature at the University of Michigan, shared her initiative on “Translating Michigan,” a multidisciplinary research project that works against clichés of the midwest as a monolingual, racially homogeneous, rural heartland.

The Maktaba project, a joint initiative between ISITA and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, was featured on the panel titled “Bridging the Divide between Academia and the Public.” Mauro Nobili, project lead at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, highlighted the battle for sources in African history and how historians’ focus on the colonial library has obscured the “Islamic library,” produced by Africans in Arabic and ‘Ajami. The Maktaba project endeavors to open that Islamic library to nonspecialist audiences by creating an online collection displaying images of selected manuscripts from the UIUC and Northwestern University libraries alongside English translations and contextual essays. Paul Naylor (cataloger of West African manuscripts at Hill Museum and Manuscript Library), one of a group of international scholars producing translations for Maktaba, discussed *(continued)*



ISITA visiting scholar Paul Naylor presents at the conference.

(continued from page 6) the challenges of translating fā'idahs—a genre of texts offering specific recipes, ritual practices, or physical actions that promise to afford the user assistance in times of need (e.g., in health, finance, and relationships). Fā'idahs Naylor explained, are important sociocultural documents that are prevalent in West African collections and provide a nonelite perspective on the struggles and concerns of daily life.

According to organizer Xena Amro, “Reflecting on the translation symposium, which proved the urgency for these interdisciplinary conversations to take place, I believe it succeeded in advancing the recognition and influence of translation practices at the university level. We often find ourselves translating as part of our intellectual project, and we are engaging with theories or avoiding them for a reason. We need to build a culture of prestige around translation and support practitioners who are devoted to creating a space where there is a necessary intersection between the academic world and the public.”

ISITA welcomes visiting scholar Seiji Nakao

By Rebecca Shereikis

Seiji Nakao is assistant professor in the Division of African Area Studies at the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies at Kyoto University. A historical anthropologist, he is interested in the socioeconomic history and the history of Islam in Burkina Faso and the greater Voltaic region. His past research explored Islamic reform and renewal movements in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Burkina Faso through oral history and archival research.

Nakao’s current project, which he will pursue as a visiting scholar with ISITA from April 2023 to March 2024, explores how historical accounts of Islam in West Africa were created in the mid-twentieth century by local intellectuals and historians from the Western academy. Central to Nakao’s study is al-Hajj Muhammad Marhaba al-Umawi al-Saghanughu (1896-1981), an exceptional scholar, author, and historian from the Greater Volta region.

Al-Hajj Marhaba collected Arabic manuscripts and oral traditions, which he drew upon to write his histories of West Africa in Arabic. At the same time, Al-Hajj Marhaba was a key interlocutor of historian (and Northwestern professor emeritus) Ivor Wilks during Wilks’ tenure at the University of Ghana from 1953 to 1966. Encounters with Al-Hajj Marhaba and other scholars from the region shaped the historical narratives that Wilks constructed, which then



became seminal works in the emerging academic field of African history. Nakao will consider Al-Hajj Marhaba as a historian in his own right, not simply the “informant” to which he has been reduced in Western historical accounts. He will investigate the interplay between oral and written Arabic sources and the dynamics of informant-researcher relationships to reevaluate how the history of this region has been told. At the Herskovits Library, Nakao will consult the writings of al-Hajj Marhaba, the field notes of Ivor Wilks, and the collection of Arabic manuscripts from the Greater Volta region (photocopies of the collection at the University of Ghana).

Nakao’s research stay is funded by an award from the Global Young Scholars into the Future International Joint Research Program at Kyoto University.

Community News

Chris Abani (English and PAS director) was a finalist for the 2023 PEN/Voelcker Award for Poetry Collection.

Chad J. Achenbach (Feinberg School of Medicine) coauthored “Accelerated Epigenetic Age among Women with Invasive Cervical Cancer and HIB Infection in Nigeria,” *Frontiers in Public Health* 10, April 29, 2022, 834800; and “Analyses of Kaposi Sarcoma Trends among Adults Establishing Initial Outpatient HIV Care in Nigeria: 2006–2017,” *Infectious Agents and Cancer* 17(1): 10.

History alumni **Marcos Leitão de Almeida** (2020) and **Andrea Rosengarten** (2022) received Chabraja History Department Postdoctoral Teaching Fellowships for 2022/23. In the fall quarter, Almeida taught the seminar “Black Atlantic: Slavery and Diaspora in the Modern World,” and in the spring will teach a course called “The Global History of Slavery.” Rosengarten will engage comparatively with work on land management transformation under capitalism across world regions while paying particular attention to dryland areas.

Bimbola Akinbola (performance studies) published “#African Aunties: Performing Diasporic Digital Disbelongings on Tik Tok,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 42(3), 2022: 284–297.

Karen J. Alter (political science) published four articles: “The Contested Authority and Legitimacy

of International Law: The State Strikes Back,” an SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY), April 1, 2022, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3204382; “How to Change the Operating System of Global Capitalism: A Rejoinder,” *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 20(1), 2022: 73–81; “The Promise and Perils of Theorizing International Regime Complexity in an Evolving World,” *Review of International Organizations* 17, 2022: 375–396; “The Future of Embedded International Law: Democratic and Authoritarian Trajectories,” SSRN Scholarly Paper, Rochester, NY, March 28, 2022, doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4068506.

Chernoh Bah (history graduate student) coauthored “Sierra Leone: Opposition MPs Supported Judiciary’s Hatchet Man against Democracy,” *Africanist Press*, March 21, 2023. He was recently interviewed about the debate on the origin of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa by Ryan Grim on the Counterpoint Show, which can be viewed at youtube/tfaUJMgAQ6A.

Dil Singh Basanti (anthropology graduate student) was awarded an NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant in 2022.

Adia Benton (anthropology) coauthored “Intersectionality and Syndemics: A Commentary,” *Social Science and Medicine* 295, February 2022: 113783.

Alumna **Krista Johnson** (political science 2002) published a blog post, “It

Matters How We Define the African Diaspora,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, 5 April 2023.

Richard Joseph (professor emeritus, political science), published an opinion piece, “Nigeria’s Electoral Democracy Seeks to Find Its Footing after Contentious Election,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 15, 2023.

Robert Launay (anthropology) will be a fellow at the Leibniz Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin for the months of May and June. He will give talks in Geneva and Bayreuth. He has published “50 Years After: Reflections on the Manding Conference of 1972” in *Mansa Kibaru*, no.74, 2002. *Mansa Kibaru* is the newsletter of the Mande Studies Association. He also published “The Qur’an School and Trajectories of Islamic Education” in the *Routledge Handbook on Islam in Africa*, edited by Terje Ostebo. 92–103, (New York: Routledge, 2022).

In February, **Peter Mwangi** (Swahili) teamed up with his colleague from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to present the final project of their Mellon-funded elementary Swahili listening and writing curricula online at the Mellon Curriculum Design Forum organized by the University of Chicago’s Language Center on February 9. That same month he presented a paper, “Thriving Linguistically in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Foreign language Apps,” at the 2023 Contemporary and International Education Society (CIES)

annual conference in Washington, DC.

Alumna **Vanessa Watters Opalo** published “Credible Risk: Private Credit Bureaus and the Work of Loan Officers in West Africa,” in *Africa* 92(4), 2023: 625–643. doi:10.1017/S0001972022000353.

Zekeria Ahmed Salem (ISITA and political science) presented a seminar on the “Mauritanian Scholars on the World Stage: from ‘Desert Archive’ to Global Islamic Authority at Humanities Research Fellowships for the Study of the Arab World,” New York University/ Abu Dhabi in February.

Alumna **Rhiannon Stephens** (2007) participated in a conversation on “Seasons of Honor and Deceit: Language, Climate, and Social Difference in East African History” at the University of Chicago, in February.

David Schoenbrun (history) and coauthor Rebecca Grollemund featured in the February 17 episode of the *Journal of African History* podcast to discuss the interpretation of Bantu language expansions. Their article “Moving Histories: Bantu Language Expansions, Eclectic Economies, and Mobilities,” coauthored with the late Jan Vansina, was published online by Cambridge University Press in January 2023 and will appear in the first issue of the 2023 volume of the *Journal of African History*.

Craig Stevens (anthropology graduate student) has joined Northwestern’s Information Technology as Innovator in Residence.

Economists **Chris Udry, Dean Karlan**, and others have coauthored several articles, including “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy among Ghana’s Rural Poor is Effective Regardless of

Baseline Mental Distress,” *American Economic Review: Insights* 4(4), December 2022: 527–545; “Tackling Psychosocial and Capital Constraints Opens Pathways Out of Poverty,” *Nature* 603/7903, 2022: 291–297; and “Machine Learning and Phone Data Can Improve Targeting of Humanitarian Aid,” *Nature* 603/7903, 2022: 864–870. In addition, Udry has coauthored “Agricultural Technology in Africa,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 36(1), 2022: 33–56.

Zachary Wright (Northwestern-Qatar) published “Islam, Blackness, and African Cultural Distinction: The Islamic Négritude of Shaykh Ibrahim Miasse,” *Journal of African Religions* 10(2), 2022: 237–265; and “Spiritual Training across the Sahara: Debating the Need for the Living Sufi Master in the Tijaniyya,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 33(3), 2022: 352–387.

African studies PhDs awarded in 2022

Ashley Ngozi Agbasoga, “We Dance with Existence: Black-Indigenous Placemaking in the Land Known as México and Beyond,” anthropology. Advisor: Adia Benton.

Antawan Byrd, “Interferences: Sound, Technology, and the Politics of Listening in Afro-Atlantic Art,” art history. Advisor: Krista A. Thompson.

Grace Deveney, “News, Weather, and Sports: Televisual Tactics and Black Art, 1970–1995,” art history. Advisor: Krista A. Thompson.

Christa Kuntzelman, “Refugees’ Understanding of Rights and Governance Structures: A Study of Urban Refugees in Uganda,” political science. Advisor: Wendy Pearlman.

Caitlin Cooke Monroe, “Making History: Women’s Knowledge and the Creation of a Historical Discipline in Western Uganda,” history. Advisor: Jonathan Glassman.

Vanessa Watters Opalo, “Credit Worthy: Pentecostal Finance in West Africa,” anthropology. Advisor: Robert Launay. **Patrick Mbullo Owuor**, “Dams and Displacement: Biosocial Impacts of the Thwako Multipurpose Dam Construction among Women in Makuani County, Kenya,” anthropology. Advisor: Sera Young.

Ayodeji Kamau Perrin, “LGBTQ Human Rights Mobilizations in Domestic and International Courts: A Transnational Perspective on the Judicialized Decriminalization of Homosexual Sex,” sociology. Advisor: Karen Alter.

Andrea Daniel Rosengarten, “Remapping Namaqualand: Negotiating Ethnicity and Territoriality in a Southern African Borderland,” history. Advisor: Jonathan Glassman.

New acquisitions to the Herskovits Library

By Esmeralda Kale, the George & Mary LeCron Foster Curator of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies



The Homily of the Archangel Michael. 1880.

Place of production not identified.

This Ethiopian manuscript, written in Geez, tells the story of St Michael's fight against Satan. St Michael's role as Prince of the heavenly army was to fight against Satan, rescue God's people, and defend souls. The vibrant illustrations depict these battles and bring this manuscript to life. "Bound in Ethiopia; square-cut wooden boards covered in goat leather (as well as spine), stained deep red; 6 nested panels tooled in blind on each cover with a blind Coptic design at center. Floral-pattern cotton fabric doublures visible at center of inside covers. Sewn on 4 sewing stations in the Ethiopian manner; knotted leather thong sewn on as end-bands." it is a beautiful addition to the Herskovits Library.



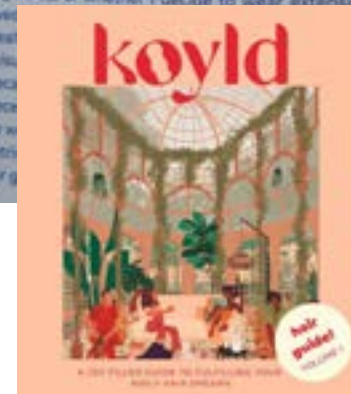
EXTINCT - THE WESTERN BLACK RHINOCEROS

From left: The spine of *Extinct: The Western Black Rhinoceros*; illustration from its small booklet titled "All That's Left;" Stamps and printed etchings featuring rhinos.

Rorer, Abigail, and Don McKay. *Extinct: The Western Black Rhinoceros.* Petersham, Massachusetts: The Lone Oak Press, 2022.

The Lone Oak Press, 2022.

In memory of an animal that no longer walks the earth, this book is beautiful from cover to cover. The black-and-white engravings of the western black rhinoceros capture the reader's attention.



Clockwise from Top: A page from *Koyld*; the cover of *Koyld*.

Abegunde, Ayinoluwa. *The Koyld Hair Guide: A Joy Filled Guide to Fulfilling Your Koily Hair Dreams.* Place of publication not identified: [Independently published], 2023.

This new publication on hair is the work of NU alum Ayinoluwa Abegunde and compliments her recent exhibit in the Herskovits Library. Full of current and yet familiar hairstyles, this guide provides practical advice on how to look after koily hair. QR codes point to online videos created by the author that provide additional support. This guide allows the reader to identify their hair goals and document and track their individual hair journey.

Swahili corner



Why Swahili?

By Declan Shaughnessy

When I tell people I am taking Swahili, they often ask first: Why? I wonder if they are unaware of the importance of the language, do not see the practicality in learning Swahili, or are genuinely interested in my motivations. Either way, I enjoy telling people about my experiences in Swahili and my

connection with the language that pushed me to take it in the first place.

Ninatoka mji wa Syracuse. I was born and raised in Syracuse, New York, a sanctuary city in upstate New York. Spread across the city are immigrants from various countries ranging from Nepal to Burundi to Honduras. My mom is an ENL teacher for the Syracuse City School District, so I have interacted with many of these kids in and out of school and gotten to know them personally. I also played soccer for an organization called Tillie's Touch, which focuses on helping kids, primarily immigrants from underprivileged backgrounds, both athletically and academically. Many kids I went to school with and played soccer with were from places like Kenya, Tanzania, the DRC, and South Sudan and spoke Swahili.

Before coming to Northwestern, I had never considered learning Swahili, perhaps out of lack of opportunity or just genuine laziness. However, when given the opportunity, I wanted to seize it to gain a unique skill that could be very helpful in both my life and those within my community. I know firsthand the issues that can arise from communication barriers, especially with children who arrive here speaking little to no English. My mom says once a week how she wishes she knew how to speak Swahili to speak to her students. I am privileged to have this opportunity and hope to discover new ways to use this skill to benefit the community around me.

Declan Shaughnessy is an undergraduate at Northwestern University.

Congratulations to Swahili students who won prestigious study abroad scholarships

Three Swahili students have won prestigious language scholarships to study Swahili this summer. **Shelby Mohrs** (anthropology PhD candidate) has won the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program for study in Arusha, Tanzania, awarded by the US Department of State's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs; **Chelsea Angwenyi** (social policy), a third-year student, and **Nicholas Bucciarelle**, a first-year student, have been awarded Fulbright-Hays Swahili Group Project Abroad scholarships to study in Kenya. In addition, **Barak Tucker**, a first-year student, has been accepted into the Howard University Swahili Study Abroad (HUSSA). **Beckett Sands** (sophomore psychology major and elementary Swahili student) and **Gideon Pardo** (sophomore studying journalism) were awarded scholarships by the Undergraduate Research Office to travel to Rwanda this summer to explore the impact of the new mathematics curriculum on Rwandan high school learners.

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