

Habari

Faculty News

Professor Valerie Hoffman (U of I Dept. of Religion) writes that she is was in Ghardaia, the main town of the Wadi Mزاب in Algeria. The Wadi Mزاب, a desert valley 375 miles south of Algiers, is one of the few places in the world where most of the Muslims belong to the Ibadi sect. She arrived February 2 and stayed until February 16. Then She went to Tunisia, where the island of Djerba was also a center of Ibadism. On March 1, Profes-

sor Hoffman flew to the Sultanate of Oman, where Ibadis are the dominant Muslim

community.



Valerie Hoffman standing in front of the library of the most influential Ibadi scholar of the modern period, Muhammad Atfiyyash (1820-1914).

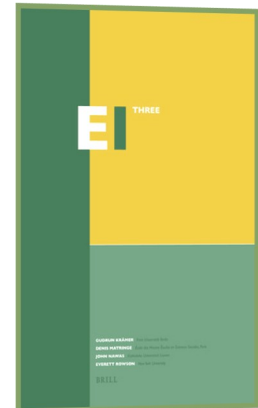
This is right next to the house where he lived.



New contents for The Encyclopaedia of Islam Three

Professor Ken Cuno (U of I Dept. of History) published "Ismā'īl Pasha," in The Encyclopaedia of Islam Three. He was nominated for the Illinois Student Government Teaching Excellence Award. (The award ceremony is delayed indefinitely due to the pandemic.) During a spring sabbatical and over the summer, he finished an article and two more chapters of a short history of Egypt and

attended the Online Teaching Academy to prepare for the fall semester.



Special issue of Studies in Comparative International Development

Professor Matthew S. Winters (U of I Dept of Political Science) coedited a special issue of Studies in Comparative International Development with Rob Blair (Brown University). The issue was titled "Foreign Aid, Service Delivery, and State-Society Relations in the Developing World" (<https://link.springer.com/journal/12116/volumes-and-issues/55-2>). In addition to

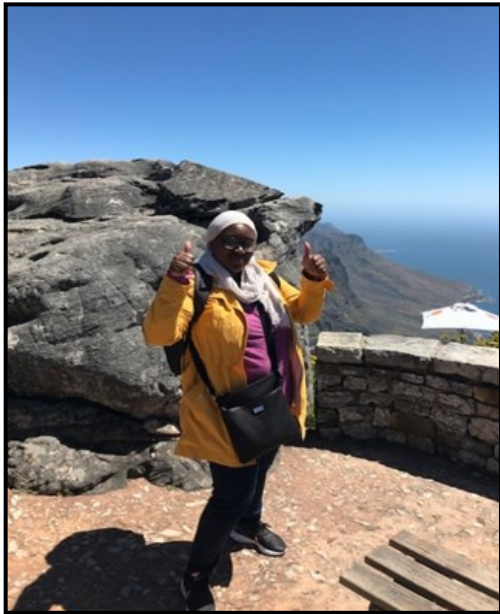
the introductory essay with Blair, Winters contributed an empirical chapter, coauthored with Kate Baldwin (Yale University), titled "How Do Different Forms of Foreign Aid Affect Government Legitimacy? Evidence from an Informational Experiment in Uganda." This chapter greatly benefitted from feedback received during a presentation in the CAS speaker series.



ACES Faculty-Led Service Learning Program – Student Experiences

This winter break I participated in the ACES Faculty-Led Service Learning, Child, Family, Health, and Agriculture program led by Jan Brooks. This study abroad program was focused on community service at a community garden, vet clinic, and medical and social services agencies. Even though the purpose of the trip was community service, we had the opportunity to incorporate some tourism into our schedule. The tourism week consisted of visiting sites like Table Mountain (picture on the right), Cape of Good Hope, the Slave Lodge museum, and Cape Town's Second New Year Carnival parades as well as traveling to Johannesburg to the Apartheid Museum and Soweto. The beauty of South Africa amazed me. It was great to go to different parts of Cape Town and explore. This filled me with fun and excitement and a little bit of fear. I also enjoyed the opportunity to make friends with individuals from South Africa and in my own travel group.

I choose to volunteer in a health setting since my career interest is in Public Health, I and was placed at a clinic named Heideveld Clinic in Athlone, near Cape Town. We did two weeks of volunteering and observation, and I had the opportunity to learn and have hands on experiences in the medical field. During the first two days I was placed in the Emergency Department, which exposed me to a medical scene that was different than in America. I did not expect to witness and actively be a part of something so real and graphic. One of the nurses I worked with was Nurse Eric, who is in the picture on the left. He was the first person who encouraged me to shadow him and be hands on when working with him. He was kind enough to welcome me and teach me about the clinic, his work experiences, and how he supported patients experiencing trauma. At first, I was planning to just shadow doctors, but I also gravitated toward nurses and was amazed at how supportive and interactive they were with the patients .



Deffa Barro at Table Mountain
in South Africa

The clinic was overpopulated with desperate patients in need of help, understaffed, and had a lack of resources, but even though the resources and ways of practice were different from those in America, I could find some similarities to the American health care system. Universally, the South African healthcare system is something that needs to be improved and that is something that must include discussion on equity, inequality, generational privilege, racism, discrimination, and the history of the nation. I noticed that the clinic at which I was placed was in an impoverished neighborhood, and used by patients who had no access to the historically white private medical care system. This clinic also reminded me of the reality that South African people who were classified as black, colored, and Indian under the apartheid system often continue to face diminished circumstances, and made me aware of the amount of privilege I had as a visitor and volunteer. It made me aware of the public health issues that I write papers on for classes, yet did not have the emotional connection with prior to the trip. After my volunteer experience, I would say my eyes have been opened and my attitude changed about healthcare systems. I still do not know what type of career I prefer in the medical field but I know I intend to work in the field of Public Health or International Health, and, I hope, will be able to teach it to others in the future. This is an experience I will never forget.

Deffa Barro

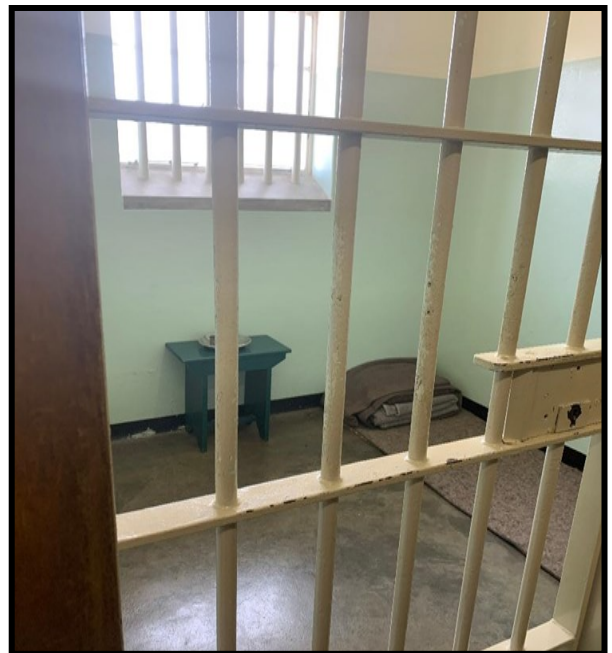


Habari

LaSienna Burton

I participated in the ACES Faculty Led Service Program to Cape Town, South Africa during the winter break. One of the places we visited was Robben Island. We were able to see and tour the outside of the prison as well as the inside. During the tour we came to the prison cell that Nelson Mandela was assigned to in jail. This was such a shocking moment for me. I had chills run through my body as I came to the realization that I was standing in the building where Nelson Mandela spent twenty seven years of his life enduring hardship. Our tour was led by an individual who himself was once an inmate in that exact prison on Robben Island. Once finding out this news, I immediately began to think to myself on how strong he must be to be able to come back to a place and dig into the past of such dark times. While on the tour we were able to learn about how some of the inmates were treated and the kind of work they had to do while in the prison. We learned that the dress code was not the same for everyone as your race determined the type of clothes you were given. One interesting thing that stuck out to me was learning that not everyone ate the same foods also due to race. Overall it seemed as though your race determined how fairly or poorly you were treated. The tour guide informed us on a time when some inmates went on a food strike in order to bring to light how they were poorly fed and demanded to have more nourishing meals.

Because of the strike those inmates needs and wants were able to be met as they were finally given better food than what they usually had. While on Robben Island, we *were* able to see areas where houses, schools, and churches used to be. Towards the end of the tour the bus drove us to an area where we had a great visual of looking out onto the water. The scenery was beautiful. It was a bit windy that day so the waves were coming in strong and back to back. Watching the water hit the rocks and catching light of the clouds surrounding the mountains towards the back was a moment to remember. That exact moment allowed me to reminisce on all the amazing things I was able to see so far in South Africa and reflect on how grateful I was for the opportunity. This trip allowed me to leave with a strong sense of humbleness and inspiration to continue to go after my goals. Through volunteering at the shelter I was able to confirm even more within myself that working with women and children and giving back is my passion and is something that I want to continue doing in the future. I was able to realize that when I'm helping others I'm not only impacting them but they're also impacting me and building positive growth within myself.



Robben Island Prison Cell



Andrea Farfan

During winter break, I participated in the ACES Faculty Led Service Program to Cape Town, South Africa. Every student was able to choose a volunteer site that best fit their field of study. Someday I hope to become a child psychologist, so I chose to volunteer at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. My main task was to facilitate different activities that could minimize the anxiety a child might feel from the hospital setting. As cliché as this may sound, my experience at the hospital was life changing. I met some children with the most beautiful souls. Each child showed resilience and positivity regardless of their situation. I felt empowered by their strength. The children reminded me that time is precious, so it is imperative that everyone makes the most of it. However, one child in particular changed the way I wish to approach my future career.

I had met him on the first day of volunteering and was shocked by his knowledge of the hospital. He knew more about each room than some of the nurses did! At one point, we were drawing and he asked if I spoke anything other than English. I identify as Latina, and have spoken Spanish since I could talk. I mentioned that to him, and he was quick to ask if I could teach him some words in Spanish. I agreed, but only if he would teach me words in Afrikaans. Afrikaans is one of the main languages spoken in South Africa. We ended up spending the remainder of our time together teaching each other new words. I will always hold that experience dear to my heart. It was a beautiful moment between two people of different backgrounds. We were able to share an aspect of our cultures without judgement. I never thought someone so young could be almost like a teacher to me. He taught me to never underestimate the brain of a child. He was wise beyond his years because he had to grow up faster than most children. I know his time at the hospital took a part of his childhood that he can never get back. It is difficult for me to process that idea, but I was happy he still kept a smile on his face every day. I now will go into my career reminding myself that children are capable of so much more than we think. I am grateful to have participated in this program and hope that others take advantage of this opportunity.



Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital

Cape Town



Habari

Sonja O'Donnell

This past winter break, I participated in the ACES Faculty Led Service Program to Cape Town. Going into the program I did not have many expectations, I just knew that I was going to be able to experience the culture and do some volunteer work, but it ended up being so much more than that. I did not just experience the culture, I was immersed in it. I did not just do some volunteer work, I found my passion and figured out what I would like to do as a career. I did not expect to leave a piece of my heart in South Africa, but that is exactly what happened when I was volunteering at Sive Nathi, a home for kids with cognitive and physical disability. I have never felt more loved than every morning when I walked into Sive Nathi. When I would walk into the room and say good morning to all the kids they would start jumping in their chairs and yelling because of how excited they were to see us. The best part of my day was always going on walks with the kids around the neighborhood. I loved being able to see the kids' reactions to different things around the neighborhood like the train, dogs, people, and flowers. Many of the kids at Sive Nathi are non-verbal, so being able to learn what they like and dislike just by their reactions on our walks was a blessing. On our first walk around the neighborhood we learned that the one little boy really hated dogs and lizards, so it was always a game on how we could distract him when we were walking past the dogs so he would not get scared. The hardest and one of the most impactful learning experiences I had was snack and lunch time with the kids. Given a spoon, bowl of food, and a towel to feed one of the kids thirty-minutes into being at Sive Nathi on the first day felt like a daunting task to me, but little did I know that it would be one of the most impactful moments of the trip. See the workers feed the kids taught me patience and unconditional love. No matter how long it took and how much spit they got on them, the workers fed the kids with a smile on their faces .



Children, staff and volunteers at Sive Nathi Home for children with disabilities.

Going into winter break, I was stuck not knowing what I wanted to do after I graduate. While in South Africa, I found my passion and figured out what I want to do post-graduation. I now aspire to be a physical therapist for kids with disabilities. I have never had such an impactful experience as I did in Cape Town. If it was not for Sive Nathi, my heart would not have been touched and I would not have found my passion.



Workers at Sive Nathi take children for a neighborhood stroll.

Winter Break Study Abroad: South Africa

Tanner Scherer

I participated in the ACES Faculty Led Service Program to Cape Town, South Africa over the 2019 winter break. The trip had two main portions to it. The first portion was getting to see the area and getting to know the local people as well as experience the townships and other common tourism sites. The second portion of the trip was focused around service work in community areas. The service project I assisted with was a local community garden that grows food for community members to purchase inexpensively. The garden also conducts cooking classes and sewing lessons for local individuals. While working in the garden a group of six students including myself weeded the greenhouses, planted new seedlings, conducted plant counts of current inventory, and repaired the irrigation system used to water the greenhouses and seedlings. I was most involved with the repairing of the sprinkler system which initially involved tracking down all the existing wiring, solenoids, and pumps. Once the existing equipment was found I began the troubleshooting process to narrow down the possible failed equipment. I was able to narrow the issue down to the wiring which then led to the challenge of finding a hardware store with replacement wire. After going to the fourth hardware store we were successful in finding the needed supplies and then began wiring up the system. One of the major challenges was working with very limited tools which led to improvising many of them. After the wiring was complete, we programmed the system to water the garden three times a day seven days a week and the local people were thrilled. It was very rewarding to be able to make an impact that will help even after we made it home. In addition to getting to help the people in the community it was also really enjoyable to get to know 40 other people from the University of Illinois who were on the trip that I had not crossed paths with before and who came from such different backgrounds.



Flashing the Block I in South Africa



Zebra sighting – Kruger National Park

My favorite experience during the sight-seeing portion of the trip was getting to go on a safari through Kruger National Park and seeing so many animals in their natural habitat that are typically only seen in zoos. Overall, I can honestly say this trip was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity where I was able to see such unique perspectives on life across the globe as well as getting to see how many similarities there are worldwide.



Habari

A Bright Béninois Future

Tyler Funk

A nation like Benin has finite resources that it can allocate for investment. Should policy makers focus on accumulation of tangible assets or improve the quality of labor? Where will you reduce spending to expand your economic program? Can such programs be evaluated through a randomized control trial? These are the types of questions Professor Akresh asked our class to consider throughout our experiences in Benin.

Among countless other events, the two-week economic development course in Benin featured visits to a number of agricultural enterprises, health centers, the International Voodoo Festival, and a meeting with the US Ambassador. We also had the opportunity to visit a Peace Corps health services volunteer, Lexie, and esteemed professors Dr. Enoch Achigan-Dako and Dr. Brice Sinsin at the University of Abomey-Calavi. Immediately upon entering the country, our group was thoroughly engaged with Benin, and more importantly the Béninois.

It was Benin's human capital that was most impressive as I think about our time there. Beyond the intelligence and skill our economic development class would appreciate, we found the Béninois to be generous and rich in culture. We attended so many welcoming ceremonies and celebrations, we were all connoisseurs of Béninois dance by the end of the trip. Apart from their welcoming nature, there was a magnetism in the way the people spoke. The seamless transition between French and Fon exemplifies the beauty of the Béninois patois. The opportunity to appreciate Béninois food, culture, and people was ever present. This was particularly true when we had the good fortune to meet Béninois university students.

Our interactions with students at the University of Abomey-Calavi and African School of Economics were certainly the most cherished experiences of the trip. Meeting these students transcended the Béninois youth from components in a productivity growth function into what I hope are lifelong friends. The motivations and passions that fuel Benin's development became apparent through our interactions. Some students aspire to research the usefulness of monetary independence while others are committed to improving the nation's constitution and justice system. We were introduced to several graduate students dedicated to advancements in agricultural science and undergrads at the Titi Gweti English Club I am confident will author great works of Béninois literature. The students and their motivations are diverse and unique. In meeting them, one grows confident in Benin's future.

The Benin trip gave our group the unique opportunity to experience the mechanics of development firsthand. Moreover, Professor Akresh successfully reinforced the human element in economic development. We met students our age who have only experienced modern Benin and older individuals who lived through French colonization, post-colonial instability, a socialist republic, and now a government based on constitutional liberalism. We sought to learn about the diverse experiences of the Béninois and recognized a hunger for economic, educational, and political growth in their country.

Professor Akresh has spent much of his adult life researching the economics of developing countries and clearly has a deep affection for West Africa. After the two weeks we spent together in Benin, I am confident in speaking for the class when I say that the course has instilled in us the early stages of similar sentiments. We gained an appreciation for developing countries' need for investment in infrastructure, early childhood education, and public health. The prospect of a career engaged in these concerns was presented as an attractive proposition.

I will forever treasure the time our group spent bouncing down dirt roads in the sixteen-seater with our trusted chauffeur Bienvenu, who we all grew quite fond of, and our debates on the superiority of Togolaise or Béninoise beer.



News of Note



Summer Arabic Study Application to Qatar Foundation International will receive funding for the amount of \$32,535.00. The money will be used to support a Summer Intensive Arabic Course for High School Students here at UIUC. This is a two-week residential program which will happen concurrently with SILMW (Summer Institute for Languages of the Muslim World).



Habari

Recognizing Students

Social distancing, due to covid 19, had us, and much of the world under heavy manners from March – May. Nonetheless we managed a meaningful student appreciation lunchtime gathering on May 22, via zoom, in lieu of face-to-face encounters. Here are a few memories shared.



Abi Asangba



Fabulous MA students



Name??????????



Anne Lutomi



Mor Gueye



Susan Ogwal



CAS Soccer Team



Prof. Barnes and ???



Amber Scarborough





ALUMNI NEWS

Abi Asangba



Abi Asangba



My time in the Biological Anthropology Ph.D. program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was spent in Dr. Rebecca Stumpf's Microbiome Laboratory better understanding the factors that influence the human and non-human primate microbiome. My interest in the primate microbiome grew and evolved over time to include understanding and exploring the role of the microbiome in the primate health.

My evolving interest in the role of the microbiome in the host led me to seek and apply for a summer internship with Dr. Marina Walther-Antonio at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. Dr. Walther-Antonio whose research interests include the role of the human microbiome in women's health, in particular gynecologic cancers, made her laboratory a great fit for me to learn more about the microbiome and host health. During my time in the Marina Walther-Antonio Lab, I had the opportunity to work with the amazing team of brilliant minds in the lab. Specifically, I worked with Dr. Liu Yuguang, a postdoctoral research fellow, on the detection of *Porphyromonas Somerae* (a potential microbial cause of endometrial cancer) in endometrial cells using a microfluidic device.

Following the completion of my Ph.D. program, I got the opportunity to return to Mayo Clinic to continue working with the team in the Walther-Antonio laboratory as a postdoctoral research fellow. I am currently working on elucidating the role of the reproductive microbiome in cause and progression of ovarian cancer. I am also part of a team of researchers and physicians working on using microbiome data among others to

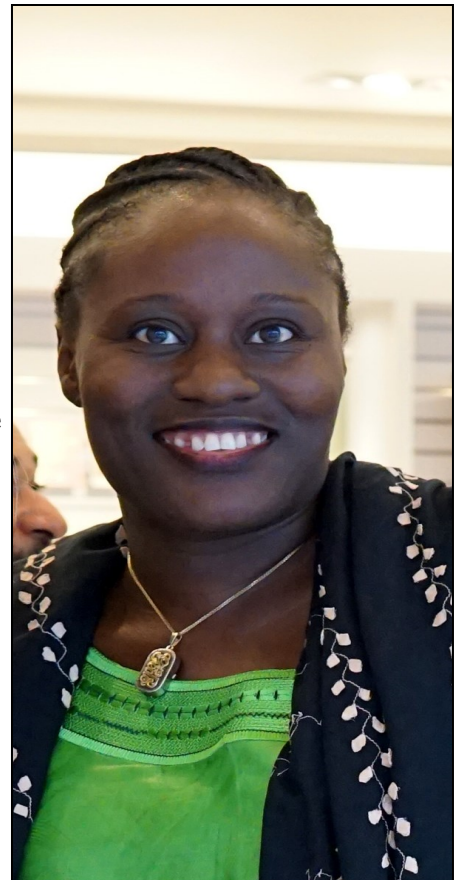
After a year or two in my current postdoctoral research fellow position, I intend to begin my journey to a faculty position in a research institution expanding my research focus into elucidating the effect of factors such as race/ethnicity, geographic location, diet, host genetics, and others on the microbiome. I am especially interested in better characterizing the vaginal microbiome composition and function of women from different races/ethnicities. I hope to be able to advance research in the microbiome field even more by including women of color, especially from sub-Saharan Africa, to aid in better understanding the composition of the reproductive microbiome of women of color and their possible role in the reported higher preterm birth rates in these women among others.

ALUMNI NEWS

Esailama Artry-Diouf, PhD is a proud mother and wife who graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2016. She began her professional career as a performing artist with Diamano Coura West African Dance Company in 1989 based in Oakland, California. As an artist and scholar she earned her masters in African Studies from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and doctorate in Performance Studies from Northwestern University. Esailama has lectured throughout the United States and conducted long-term teaching and performance residencies in Barbados, Trinidad-Tobago, South Africa and India. She cofounded two nonprofits, Nfungotah Inc. and Bisemi Foundation, both supporting African-derived cultural artists and with the understanding African-based cultural arts is vital in strengthening cultural identity, healing trauma, and fostering shared vision for community that have been historically marginalized and underresourced.

Esailama has served on the Board of Directors for the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) and the Silicon Valley African Film Festival. She is also a former board member of Good Work Network, an organization helping minority- and women-owned businesses start, grow, and succeed by providing business development services. Much of Esailama's work is as an arts administrator, scholar and advocate exploring challenges and solutions for cultural artists as critical stakeholders in policy conversations around economic and housing displacement, restorative justice, and community development. Esailama's recent publication *Hot Feet and Social Change: African Dance and Diaspora Communities*, is an edited volume that concentrates on eight major cities in the United States and presents artists, teachers, and scholars telling stories lived and learned by people in the field. Situated within The International Decade for People of African Descent, the volume lends symmetry to Africa and the Diaspora in our discourses and reminds us that at a philosophical level, African dance has much to contribute to recent political discussions about restorative justice, economic immobility, and intractable social divides in American societies.

One of her favorite quotes is by Maya Angelou, that "all great artists draw from the same resource: the human heart, which tells us that we are all more alike than we are unlike." What better builder of bridges is there than the human heart when responding to homelessness, gentrification, racism, misogyny, bigotry, or homophobia? It is often through artistic connections, speaking directly from the human heart, that we can cultivate change and transform the cultural narrative, perceptions, and even policies.



Esailama Artry-Diouf



Tarnjeet K. Kang



Tarnjeet Kang

I first came to South Sudan in 2014, as PhD student researching community self-determination in the country's education system. As a part of my degree program, I also completed minors in African Studies and Gender Relations in International Development. Taking an inter-disciplinary approach to my dissertation allowed me to approach the project in a more holistic way that encouraged me to better understand the context in which I was collecting my data. I was also fortunate to have a committee that provided me with the freedom and flexibility to create an approach that was locally responsive and accommodating for the unique research environment that South Sudan provides. Within a week of arriving in the country, I found that I had to adapt my methodology to collect data that was essential to the context of my project. This included interviewing South Sudanese organizations that had been established to support educational access, but was not included in any of the on-going data collection in the country.

Since leaving UIUC, I have held a few different positions in South Sudan. As a Research Analyst for the International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix unit, I was responsible for providing additional contextual and conflict analysis to the organization's work. I have also worked as a Research Program Manager for a private research firm in the country, as well as a consultant for a World Bank project that sought to document the cultural practices and histories of the country's different ethnic groups.

Wanting more freedom in how I used my skills and learned through research, I chose to become a consultant early last year. This gives me the opportunity to work for a variety of organizations in South Sudan, get back to conducting hands on research in the field, learn new skills, visit new locations in the country, and also use my spare time for ad hoc personal projects that better align with my values.

Knowledge production in South Sudan has presented a moral dilemma for me. Currently, because of the lack of infrastructure and development, the majority of knowledge produced is both funded and created by international aid organizations. As a result, there is often a lack of autonomy and contributions on the part of South Sudanese organizations. Additionally, participatory methods are rare, which further silences their voices. Because much of the knowledge produced seeks to inform the work of humanitarian organizations, it creates surface level descriptive statistics that dominate the reports produced, leaving out the more nuanced and in-depth lived experience of the South Sudanese people. I am currently in the process of collaborating with national counterparts to counteract this. This includes advocating for more rigorous and inclusive methodologies in the work that I do for international organizations, providing pro bono services to national organizations, as well as initiating research projects that seek to fill the current gaps in knowledge production. The formation of the new government in South Sudan in February of 2020 provides the potential for the dynamics of knowledge production to radically change in South Sudan, in a manner that is more favorable and inclusive towards its citizens. I am excited to witness this process, and hope to document it in my future work.

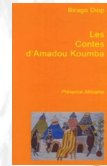


Outreach

If you were stranded on a deserted island and could read only ONE book in African Studies what would it be?

Les Contes d'Amadou Coumba - Birago Diop
(Maimouna)

Cultural Unity of Black Africa— Cheick Anta Diop
(Inka)



Staff Picks

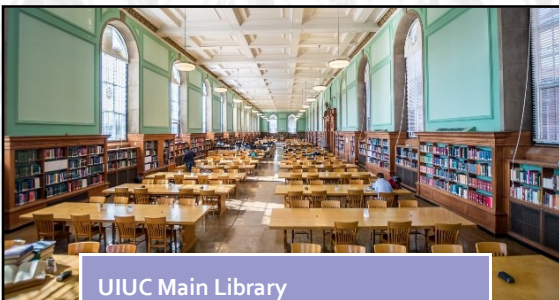
Send us your favorite African Studies title so that we can put it in the calabash in the next Habari!



tdavis5@illinois.edu

AFRICAN STUDIES LIBRARY

The Africana collections of the University of Illinois Library are among the finest in the world. The University Library has made a serious commitment to acquire Africa-related materials since 1969. The collection covers all African countries and includes materials in more than 80 African languages; Swahili, Arabic, and Amharic are its most heavily collected languages. The collections are interdisciplinary, in all formats, and concentrated mainly in the humanities, social sciences, human rights, law, and agriculture. The Library has an extraordinary collection of primary source materials for Africana in print and microform. Faculty and graduate students that need extensive assistance are encouraged to make an appointment in advance with the African Studies Bibliographer, Atoma Batoma. The Bibliographer also teaches a full-semester graduate-level course, "Bibliography of Africa" (LIS 530M).



UIUC Main Library



CAS 50 Years. Photos from



Victor Uchendu



Ibulaima Kakoma



Ezekiel Kalipeni



Vera Mitchell

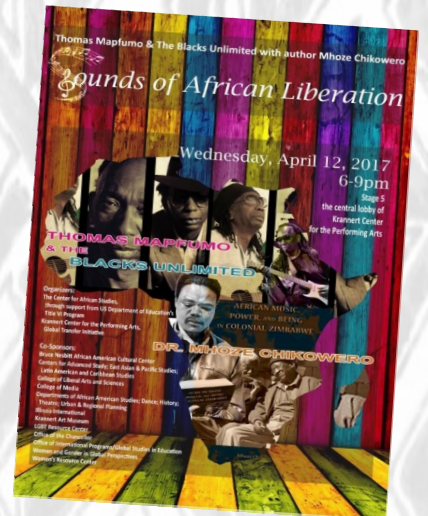


Don Crummey

Friends we lost



CAS in more recent years



Best Wishes to all of our friends in 2021



**Center for African
Studies
910 S. Fifth Street
Champaign, Illinois
61820**

<https://afrst.illinois.edu/>



In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now.

-Wangari Maathai