

### Message from the director



The start of a new year is often an occasion for showcasing the preceding year's achievements. But 2020 was at best a turbulent year, and I do not want to talk about tangible, programmatic accomplish-

ments; rather, I write from a place of gratitude and towards the gift of service. This message is in fact my chance to shine the spotlight on the people behind the scenes who generously offer their unique gifts to shape what we can then celebrate.

The Program of African Studies is driven and sustained by a highly productive and efficient team of four: Zen-like and laser-focused associate director Meagan Isabel Keefe; marketing and programming genius Kelly Lynn Coffey, business coordinator; exceptional front-of-house and community charmer Tiffany Williams-Cobleigh, program assistant; and the remarkable, wise, and living archive of instructional knowledge LaRay Denzer, curator of this newsletter. They work so well together and individually that they achieve what a much larger group might not be able to do—and they make it look easy. Until I became director, I did not have a true understanding of all the heavy lifting they do. I would like to commend them on their excellent service and the generosity and commitment to the long-term ideals of PAS that drive them. In these times, it is understandably harder to bring

the same level of quality to one's work, but this remarkable team has not faltered.

I also am blessed to work with a most generous and thoughtful steering committee. Comprising

distinguished faculty from the humanities, history, art history, the social sciences, medicine, and health; Esmeralda Kale, our esteemed George and Mary LeCron Foster Curator of the Herskovits Library; and Kathleen Bickford Berzock, associate director of curatorial affairs at the Block Museum (to mention only a few), the committee brings a wealth of wisdom and guidance that helps shape PAS's programming and strategic plan.

The same gratitude goes out to the many affiliate programs and faculty that I have the joy of working with, the graduate and undergraduate students, the expansive and loyal community we have created, our language faculty, and the many people it takes to build a program. All of these people have committed wholeheartedly to PAS's mission.

I am mentored by all of you as I step into the role of director amidst this particularly challenging political climate and the COVID-19 pandemic. Charged as I am to uphold our strong tradition as the first program of African studies in the US, I also seek to achieve new visions and modes of working that may very well become permanent. This service is possible only because of these wonderful wellsprings of help and insight, whom I hope you will celebrate with me. You all have my deepest gratitude and admiration.

Finally, whatever your joy consists of, may you have it in abundance in 2021.

*Named director of the Program of African Studies in 2020, Chris Abani is a 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.*

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## Akbar Mohamed Virmani (1956–2020)



Akbar Virmani, former associate director of the Program of African Studies and a cherished member of Northwestern's African studies community for more than two decades, suffered a fatal heart attack at his suburban Chicago home on December 1. He was 64.

Born in Masaka, Uganda, Akbar belonged to a family whose forebears had come to East Africa from the Indian subcontinent at the turn of the last century. He, his five younger siblings, and his parents resided in Lukaya, a town on the Masaka-Kampala highway, and prospered there until 1972—the year Ugandan despot Idi Amin ordered all South Asians to leave the country. Forcibly displaced, Akbar (then 16 years old) and his family became refugees in Austria; they secured permission to enter the United States in 1973, eventually settling permanently in the Chicago area.

Akbar studied international relations and political science at Pennsylvania State University, receiving his BA in 1979. His engagement with PAS began in 1980, when he arrived at Northwestern to pursue his MA and PhD in political science. While a full-time graduate student, he edited the PAS newsletter, hosted weekly lunchtime talks, and coordinated a refugee studies research cluster. In 1983–84, on his first return trip to Africa, Akbar did a year of research and fieldwork in Sudan for his dissertation, “The Resettlement of Ugandan Refugees in Southern Sudan: The Dynamics of Exodus, Asylum, and Forced Repatriation.” His research also took him to Oxford University's renowned Refugee Studies Centre, where founding director Barbara Harrell-Bond was a mentor.

With his fieldwork experience and a network of connections both in and outside academia, Akbar could have pursued a Foreign Service career. Instead, he chose to stay at Northwestern, accepting a position as PAS assistant director in 1986. Over the next 17 years he would become indispensable to the program's success, eventually rising to associate

director and advancing the goals of a succession of directors, including John Paden, David William Cohen, and Jane Guyer; administering major foundation-funded research programs on international cooperation in Africa, the African humanities, and Islamic thought in Africa, among others; and diligently maintaining PAS's ties to its alumni and Africanist programs, departments, and research centers at universities around the globe. Amid his full-time administrative work, Akbar took time to finish his own dissertation, completing his doctorate in 1996.

In addition to managing PAS's daily operations, Akbar taught graduate and undergraduate courses in political science and advised scores of students earning minors or advanced degrees in African studies or preparing for study abroad in Africa. He also traveled in the US and overseas for PAS, attending annual meetings of the African Studies Association, visiting Senegal and Ghana in the late 1990s, and joining legal educators from Northwestern on trips to Ethiopia and Eritrea. In 2004 PAS established the Guyer-Virmani Awards, which to this day provide funds for graduate student travel to Africa for research or fieldwork.

Among students, faculty, and staff at Northwestern—as well as visiting scholars and other guests—Akbar had a reputation for acuity and unstinting attention to detail; for boundless tact, graciousness, and good humor; and, most of all, for selflessness and sincerity.

According to PAS newsletter editor LaRay Denzer, “Akbar's office door was always open. He lent a sympathetic ear to students, staff, faculty, and visitors alike, offering sage advice when needed.”

Former Herskovits Library of African Studies curator David Easterbrook said he will remember Akbar for the “ongoing welcome” he extended to Easterbrook and for being “such a great help in so many ways.”

Plans for a virtual memorial will be announced. To make a gift to the Guyer-Virmani Awards or another fund that supports Africanist graduate students at Northwestern, please contact PAS associate director Meagan Keefe (meagan.keefe@northwestern.edu); memorial donations to the UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency, would also be appropriate.

## Northwestern Africanists participate in annual ASA meeting

“The Hour of Decision: Power, Persistence, Purpose, and Possibility in African Studies” was the theme of last November’s meeting of the African Studies Association, which was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Northwestern faculty, graduate student, and alumni participation was significant.

Adia Benton (anthropology faculty) chaired two panels, “Coronavirus on the Continent: Government and Citizen Responses” and “Mental Health and Healing in Africa.”

Visiting scholar Abdulbasit Kassim presented the paper “Holy Defiance and Faith Skepticism: COVID-19, Science, and the Palliative Force of History and Religion in Nigeria.”

Florence Nthiira Mugambi (Herskovits Library) participated in the roundtable “Persistent Collecting: Building and Supporting African Studies Collections in the 21st Century.”

Five graduate students presented papers:

- Colin Bos (history), “The Owner of All Antique Work: Antiquities and Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1930–1970”
- Andrew Kim (anthropology), “Evaluating the Mental Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Urban South Africa: Perceived Risk of COVID-19 Infection and Childhood Trauma Predict Adult Depressive Symptoms”
- Moritz Nagel (history), “African Trade Policy during the Establishment of Colonial Rule: Debt, Port Fees, and Prices in Cameroon, 1884–1897”
- David Peyton (political science), “Beating the Odds: Strategies of Property Protection in Eastern Congo’s Urban Areas”

- Andrea Rosengarten (history), “Gathering the ‘[Haohâb]: Territory in Translation on the Mission Stations of Southern Namibia, ca. 1830–1880.” Rosengarten also chaired the panel “Reconsidering German Colonialism in Africa: Timelines, Comparisons, Legacies.”

PAS alumni presenting papers included

- Nana Akua Anyidoho (University of Ghana), “Social Difference and Individual Agency in the School-to-Work Transitions of Ghanaian Tertiary Graduates”
- James Brennan (University of Illinois), “Passing Familiarity: Leo C. Aldridge Jr., Mozambique, and the Politics of Mimesis in 1950s Los Angeles”
- Catherine Cole (University of Washington), “The Credibility of Performance and the Postcolonial Incredible”
- Moses Khisa (North Carolina State University), “Africa’s Global Security Regionalism: Pushing Up from the Bottom Tier”
- Susanna Sacks (College of Wooster), “The Poet and the University: The Malawi Writers’ Group and the Contestation of National Identities”



## PAS welcomes new graduate students

**Michael England** (anthropology) researches funerary rituals and death, reflexivity, and national identity in France and North Africa.

**Charina Herrera** (African American studies) studies the construction of Black identity in the Dominican Republic and how slavery is remembered or forgotten in the country's education system.

**Shelby Mohrs** (anthropology) is interested in archaeobotany and ethnoarchaeology in colonial West Africa, cash cropping, and everyday life in Senegal during the Atlantic slave trade.

**Natalia Molebatsi** (performance studies) is interested in feminist media inquiry, Black queer and feminist performance, and poetry in theatre as radical (intersectional) feminist intervention. She is the author of *Sardo Dance* (Ge'ko 2009), *Elephant Woman Song* (Forum 2017), and several articles.

In addition, she is the editor of *We Are: A Poetry Anthology* (Penguin 2008) and *Wild Imperfections: An Anthology of Womanist Poems* (forthcoming from Penguin Random House and Cassava Republic Press).

**Jesús C. Muñoz** (Middle East and North African studies) is a Mellon Cluster Fellow in the MENA cluster. His research interests include decolonial theory, Chicana feminist philosophy and literature, critical Muslim studies, feminist epistemology, spirituality, magic, and mysticism.

**Rebecca Rwakabukoza** (history) is interested in East African history.

**Raven Schwam-Curtis** (African American studies) graduated from Cornell University with majors in Asian studies and feminist, gender, and sexuality studies and minors in Africana studies and inequality studies. Her research critiques traditionally

masculinist understandings of Afro-Asian histories and demonstrates the power of (auto)ethnography.

**Craig Stevens** (anthropology) is interested in transcultural Black identity formation in the back-to-Africa movement and in African and African-diasporic solidarity through expressive and material cultures, especially in Liberia.

**Elijah Watson** (anthropology), a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow, studies factors shaping maternal and child health in the first 1,000 days of life, with a particular interest in food and water insecurity. He coauthored "Water, Food, and the Dual Burden of Disease in Galápagos, Ecuador," *American Journal of Human Biology* 32(1), 2020, and "Social Determinants of Household Diet Quality in Galápagos, Ecuador," *American Journal of Human Biology* 31(2), 2019.

## Block Museum's *Caravans of Gold* viewable online

The Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington, DC, has made the Block Museum's *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa* available online. To view the exhibit, visit [africa.si.edu/exhibitions/current-exhibitions](http://africa.si.edu/exhibitions/current-exhibitions).



# Grad students' AfriSem conference continues to adapt

by Austin Bryan

Northwestern graduate students continue to build on insights gained from hosting the 2020 Africa Seminar (AfriSem) conference virtually, asserting the relevance of African studies at the critical juncture of the multiple crises in which we work and live. I can report that we are working to develop new opportunities to build community. As AfriSem coorganizer Sasha Artamonova observed in the fall 2020 PAS newsletter, our virtual conference made it easier to preserve the presentations of graduate students, which are now publicly available via Northwestern University Libraries' research and data repository, ARCH.

AfriSem has continued to adapt and to create opportunities for collaboration at Northwestern and around the globe. We now convene online twice a month. In the fall quarter, AfriSem gatherings included a town hall, presentations from librarians, a workshop on adapting research methodology during the global pandemic, and a screening and discussion of a Kenyan film.

In addition to these regular meetings, AfriSem members have established three committees dedicated to our major projects for this academic year:

- The committee for the AfriSem annual conference has scheduled this year's virtual event for June 10–12. The theme of the conference will center on capital, sociality, and knowledge production. The committee is recruiting keynote speakers and finalizing a call for submissions.
- A committee has formed to relaunch *The Pan-Africanist*, a journal published from 1971 to 1988 by PAS graduate students, which included essays by notable thinkers such as Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Ali Mazrui, Sterling Stuckey, Alma Stuckey, and Dennis Brutus. The relaunch is slated for the AfriSem 2021 conference in June. The publication will be renamed *The Africanist* to expand the question

We are asserting the relevance of African studies at the critical juncture of the multiple crises in which we work and live.

of what it means to produce knowledge on Africa beyond the response to Pan-Africanism in which the journal was first developed. The committee is also developing a two-day workshop, to be held in June, for invited contributors to convene, build community, and receive feedback on their papers.

- The committee for the digital future of AfriSem has been working on a proposal to launch a website that will host a digital archive for AfriSem, its history, its alumni, and *The Africanist* journal.

AfriSem extends a warm invitation to all PAS alumni to join our virtual meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. We regularly hold presentations, film screenings, and informal discussions that have proven to be a great way for graduate students to connect across Northwestern. To join us, sign up for the AfriSem listserv at [afriSem@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:afriSem@u.northwestern.edu).

*Austin Bryan, an anthropology graduate student, is coorganizer of the 2020–21 Africa Seminar.*

## Swahili corner

by Brandon Joseph



I initially joined the Swahili program because one of my football teammates recommended it. I did not know much about Swahili beyond that it was spoken in Africa.

From the first day of class, I saw Professor Mwangi's passion for teaching Swahili as well as the energy and happiness that he brought to class. He wants to actively learn about his students through his material. He doesn't just give lectures and then make students go home and teach themselves. He holds discussions where the whole class participates. He makes sure that everyone is involved, and this allows us to really absorb and understand the material.

One of the more surprising aspects of this class is that you learn more than just a language; you



learn about East Africa and all the countries where people speak Swahili. I also really enjoyed the out-of-class activities, like PAS lectures about current events in East Africa. There was also the option to converse at language tables with other first- and second-year Swahili students.

I decided to continue with Swahili my sophomore year, even though I didn't need it for my language requirement. The second year has all the same positives that the first year did. We still connect the language to East Africa and study the culture. At the language tables, we get to lead discussions and help the first-years. Professor Mwangi teaches with the same love and passion for Swahili that I saw in the first-year class.

I would recommend Swahili to any student who wants to learn a new language and would like to know more about East Africa and its culture.

*Sophomore Brandon Joseph is the first Northwestern rookie football player since 2003 to have five interceptions in a season.*

## Help us document Black student experiences

by Florence Mugambi and Charla Wilson

Like many other universities, Northwestern recruited Black students domestically and internationally in the 1960s in response to the civil rights movement and the independence of many African nations. To do so, the University participated in the African Scholarship Program of American Universities and developed the Northwestern University Chicago Action Project.

The Herskovits Library of African Studies and Northwestern University Archives are interested in documenting the experiences of the participants in these programs and, in general, of Black students who attended Northwestern in the 1960s and '70s. We turn to oral history as a means of capturing various perspectives and filling in gaps to help us better understand this history and to support future research.

If you would like to be interviewed or to refer us to a Black alum from the 1960s or '70s, please contact us.

*Florence Mugambi (florence.mugambi@northwestern.edu) is the African studies librarian. Charla Wilson (charla.wilson@northwestern.edu) is the archivist for the Black experience.*



## Esmeralda Kale named to CRL leadership post



The Center for Research Libraries' Collections and Services Policy Committee has named Esmeralda Kale to the International Collections and Content Group. Kale, the George and Mary LeCron Foster Curator of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, is one of 10 leaders appointed to the new group.

The CSPC is a key standing body of CRL's governance structure and acts as a working group to offer advice and guidance and to implement strategies related to CRL's international collections, services, programs, and partnerships. According to CSPC chair David Magier (scholarly collections and research services, Princeton University), "This new International Collections and Content Group will be a powerhouse resource of expertise for the CSPC and will dramatically enhance our ability to bolster CRL's strategic and pragmatic leadership in the sphere of international collections." For more information, including a list of the other participating librarians, visit [crl.edu/news/cspc-appoints-ten-leaders-international-collections-and-content-group](http://crl.edu/news/cspc-appoints-ten-leaders-international-collections-and-content-group).

## Africana librarians collaborate to preserve primary sources

by Esmeralda M. Kale

Cooperative Africana Materials Project librarians met November 12 to discuss collaborative projects. CAMP members are engaged in preserving primary source material that is then made available to member institutions via interlibrary loan from the Center for Research Libraries. CRL administers all CAMP projects.

Quite often, collaborative projects focus on the microfilming of newspapers held at member institutions, but other forms of preservation are considered and other source materials are digitized. Filming is still the most stable and cost-effective way of preserving print newspapers.

A brief summary of some of CAMP's recent projects follows. Materials held at CRL are available to users of Northwestern University Libraries.

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### Lesotho newspapers

**Description** Titles: *Informative, Voice of Free Democrats, Sunday Express, Shoeshoe, Sechaba, Mohlanka, Maddhouse Weekly, Lesotho Monitor, Leseli ka sepelesa, Lesotho News.* **Contributing institutions** Yale, with additional issues contributed from Northwestern, Harvard, and Stanford. **Currently held at CRL** 37 reels of film.

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### Vanguard (Apapa, Nigeria)

**Description** January 2017–December 2018. **Contributing institutions** Northwestern. **Currently held at CRL** 24 reels of film.

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### Addis Zemen (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

**Description** 2000–2016. **Contributing institutions** Northwestern. **Currently held at CRL** In process.

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### Anambra State documents

**Description** All holdings in our collections. **Contributing institutions** Boston University; University of California, Berkeley; Northwestern. **Currently held at CRL** 11 reels of film.

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### Kenya historical botanical collection

**Description** Rare and unique historical botanical illustrations hold crucial information about plant species found in East Africa. Preserved at East African Herbarium, Nairobi, Kenya. Priceless heritage collections are endangered due to poor storage conditions. **Contributing institutions** East African Herbarium, Nairobi, Kenya. **Currently held at CRL** Digital files ingest in process.

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*Esmeralda M. Kale is the George and Mary LeCron Foster Curator of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies.*



## Community news

**Chernoh Alpha M. Bah** (history graduate student) coauthored a series of 14 articles in *The Africanist Press* that investigated systemic corruption in the Sierra Leone government. He was interviewed about his reporting on the Sierra Gem Media website in both October and November.

**Marco Bocchese** (political science '18) published "Justice Denied: Making Sense of State Noncooperation with International Prosecutions" in *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 21 (2020): 195–200.

**LaRay Denzer** (PAS) authored "Casely-Hayford, Adelaide and Gladys," an article published in the online *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.475>).

**Chad Benito Infante** (English '19) published "Murder and Metaphysics: Leslie Marmon Silko's 'Tony's Story' and Audre Lorde's 'Power'" in the anthology *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness*, edited by T. L. King, J. Navarro, and Andrea Smith (Duke University Press, 2020). Infante is an assistant professor of English at the University of Maryland, College Park. As a graduate student at Northwestern, he helped create the Center for Native American and Indigenous Research.

**F. Delali Kumavie** (English '20) is a postdoctoral fellow at the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard University. This year she will join Syracuse University as assistant professor of African and African diasporic literature.

**Amanda Logan** (anthropology) authored the article "Africa Manages COVID-19; Why Can't It Manage Food Security?" in *The Africa Report*, October 14, 2020 ([theafricareport.com/45878/africas-food-security-begins-by-undoing-the-wrongs-of-history](https://theafricareport.com/45878/africas-food-security-begins-by-undoing-the-wrongs-of-history)).

**Mbongeni N. Mtshali** (performance studies '19) coauthored "'This Shit Is Political; Shit Is Real.' The Politics of Sanitation, Protest, and the Neoliberal, Post-apartheid City," published in *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 40(1), 2020: 70–82. He also authored "Hottentot Venus Redux: Nelisiwe Xaba's Critical Moves of Resistance," *TDR/The Drama Review* 64(2), 2020: 28–37. Mtshali teaches in the Centre for Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of Cape Town. He is also founder and creative director of Shortened Tongue Contemporary Art+Lab in Cape Town.

**Florence Nthiira Mugambi** (Herskovits Library) is the 2020–21 chair of the Africana Librarians Council.

The American Educational Studies Association honored *How Girls Achieve* (Harvard University Press, 2019) by alumna **Sally A. Nuamah** (political science and School of Education and Social Policy) with a Critics' Choice Book Award.

**Patrick Mbullo Owuor** (anthropology graduate student) was the guest host for an Ufahamu podcast conversation with anthropologist Denielle Elliott (York University) about her research with the Kenya Medical Research Institute ([ufahamuafrika.com/2020/10/24/ep-98-a-conversation-between-patrick-mbullo-owuor-and-denielle-elliott](https://ufahamuafrika.com/2020/10/24/ep-98-a-conversation-between-patrick-mbullo-owuor-and-denielle-elliott)).

**Tyrone S. Palmer** (African American studies '19) has published the poem "Ungrief" in the spring 2020 issue of *Muzzle Magazine* ([muzzlemagazine.com/tyrone-palmer.html](https://muzzlemagazine.com/tyrone-palmer.html)). He is a lecturer in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies at Columbia University, cofounder of the publishing collective True Leap Press, and coeditor of its journal *Propter Nos*.



**Jessica Pouchet** (anthropology '19) published "The Circulation, Durability, and Erasure of Brands in a Biodiversity Hotspot" in *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 30(2), 2020: 213-32. Pouchet is assistant professor of environmental studies at Bucknell University.

**Kritish Rajbhandari** (comparative literature '19) published "Beyond the Ethics of Nationalism and Betrayal: Silence, Secrecy, and the Subaltern in Ngugi wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat*," *Research in African Literatures* 50(4), 2019: 158-76. Rajbhandari is assistant professor of English and humanities at Reed College.

**Will Reno** (political science) published a book chapter, "Field Research and Security in a Collapsed State," in *Stories from the Field: A Guide to Navigating Fieldwork in Political Science*, edited by Peter Krause and Ora Szekely (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020). Last October he and **Maj Jesse Humpal** (political science graduate student) coauthored "As the US Slumps Away, China Subsumes African Security Arrangements," an article in *Defense One* ([defenseone.com/ideas/2020/10/us-slumps-away-china-subsumes-african-security-arrangements/169431](https://defenseone.com/ideas/2020/10/us-slumps-away-china-subsumes-african-security-arrangements/169431)). Last May Reno presented

"Problems of Building Effective Nonpolitical Security Forces in Weak States" at a conference on foreign assistance and political development in fragile states at the Pearson Institute, University of Chicago. He also participated in several panels at the online American Political Science Association meeting in mid-September.

**Susanna Sacks** (English '19) published "The Poetics of Dictatorship: Speech, Song, and Sound in H. K. Banda's 'Tenth Republic Anniversary Tour'" in *Research in African Literatures* 50(4), 2020: 55-71.

**Zekeria Ahmed Salem** (ISITA and political science) presented "Global Shinqit: How a Saharan Islamic Discursive Tradition Went Global (19th-21st Centuries)" at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in October.

**Benjamin Soares** (anthropology '97) published "Religiosity and Its Others: Lived Islam in West Africa and South India," an article in *Social Anthropology* [*Crossing Religious and Ethnographic Boundaries: The Case for Comparative Reflection*] 28 (2020): 466-81.

**Amy Swanson** (theater and drama '19) published "Ambiguous Masculinities: Gender and Sexual Transgression in Contemporary Dance Works by Senegalese Men" in *Dance Research Journal* 51(3), 2019: 47-65 and "Codifying African Dance: The Germaine Acogny Technique and Antinomies of Postcolonial Cultural Production" in *Critical African Studies* 11(1), 2019: 48-62. Swanson is assistant professor of dance at Colgate University.

**Leila Tayeb** (performance studies '18) is a humanities research fellow at New York University Abu Dhabi. She is a founding member of the editorial collective of *Lamma: A Journal of Libyan Studies*, an open-source academic journal launched in 2020 that centers methods and frameworks hitherto underutilized in the extant scholarship on Libya. At NYUAD, she is working on a book manuscript tentatively titled "Producing Authority in Post-Gaddafi Libya: Sound, Space, and Performativity."

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

## Funding opportunities for Africanist students



Kampala, Uganda. Photo by Chris LaMountain '20.

### **African Research Leadership**

**Awards** of up to \$4,000 are granted for students who wish to develop and lead a research project related to African studies. The project may build on the African studies adjunct major's research/immersion experience or extend research done in a past course. Open to all first- through third-year undergraduates; African studies adjunct majors and minors receive preference. *Applications are due April 15.*

### **Morris Goodman Language Awards**

of up to \$3,000 help enable graduate students to study an African language taught outside Northwestern. Students may learn from a qualified Chicago-area tutor or travel for language study through programs such as Fulbright-Hays Language Group Projects Abroad and the Summer Cooperative African Language Institute. The grant normally supports 60 hours of tutoring; for other types of study, students must provide a syllabus, evaluations, and other course information. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

### **Hans E. Panofsky Predissertation**

**Research Awards** of up to \$2,000 are granted to graduate students to evaluate research opportunities, conduct predissertation fieldwork, arrange institutional affiliation, or conduct archival research in Africa. Doctoral students who have completed their second year of coursework and will seek candidacy the following year are eligible to apply. Students who completed a master's degree before studying at Northwestern and are ready for predissertation fieldwork after their first year may also apply. Applicants must be enrolled at Northwestern both when they apply and in the quarter immediately following their research trips. Participants in AfriSem and other PAS activities receive preference. Applicants must concurrently seek predissertation research support from other sources. *Application deadline is April 2.*

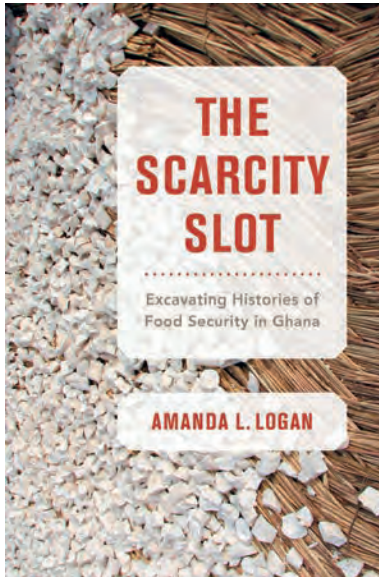
**Guyer-Virmani Awards** of \$200–\$400 help enable graduate students in their third year or beyond to travel to archives or participate in conferences. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

### **The John Hunwick Research Fund**

supports faculty and graduate student research on Islam in Africa. Awards may be used for travel to archives, fieldwork sites, or conferences or to organize a campus visit or lecture by a scholar of Islam and Africa. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

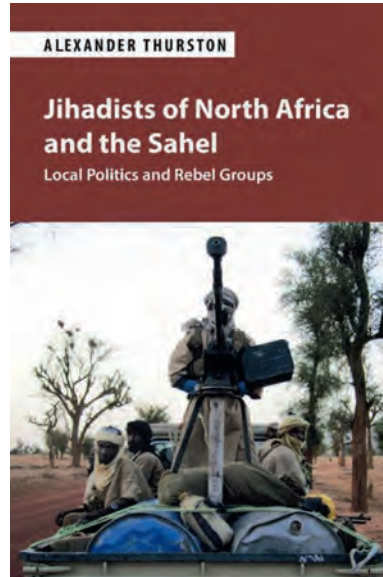
**PAS Travel Awards** offer graduate and undergraduate students up to \$250 to defray the costs of participating in an Africa-related conference, usually to present a paper. Students must apply in advance of the conference, but funds may be released at a later date. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

*Complete application instructions for all awards can be found at [africanstudies.northwestern.edu/research/funding/index.html](http://africanstudies.northwestern.edu/research/funding/index.html). Questions? Please email [african-studies@northwestern.edu](mailto:african-studies@northwestern.edu) or call 847-491-7323.*



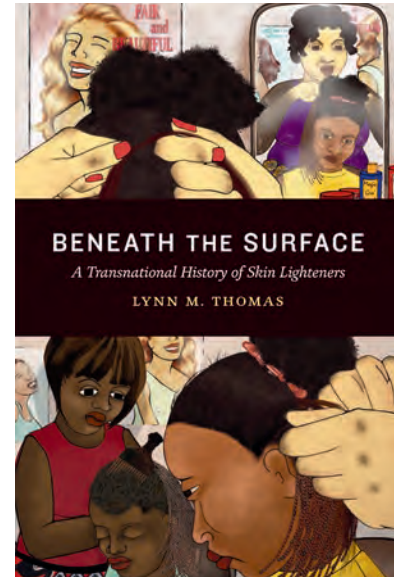
***The Scarcity Slot: Excavating Histories of Food Security in Ghana*** (University of California Press, 2020)

*The Scarcity Slot* is the first study to critically examine food security in Africa's deep past. Author **Amanda L. Logan** (anthropology) contends that African foodways have been viewed through the lens of "the scarcity slot," a kind of othering based on presumed differences in resources. Logan focuses on a case study in Banda, Ghana, spanning the past six centuries, revealing that people thrived during a severe, centuries-long drought just as Europeans arrived on the coast, with a major decline in food security emerging only recently. This narrative radically challenges how we think about African foodways in the past with major implications for the future. It challenges the idea that Columbian exchange crop introductions rescued a continent long shaped by hunger.



***Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel: Local Politics and Rebel Groups*** (Cambridge University Press, 2020)

Drawing on case studies from Algeria, Libya, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania, **Alexander Thurston** (religious studies, 2013) examines jihadist movements from the inside, uncovering their activities and internal struggles over the past three decades. Highlighting the calculations that jihadist field commanders and clerics make, Thurston shows how leaders improvise, both politically and religiously, as they adjust to fast-moving conflicts. Featuring critical analysis of Arabic-language jihadist statements, this book offers unique insights into the inner workings of jihadist organizations and sheds new light on the phenomenon of mass-based jihadist movements and proto-states.



***Beneath the Surface: A Transnational History of Skin Lighteners*** (Duke University Press, 2020)

**Lynn M. Thomas's** (MA history, 1993) history of skin lighteners in South Africa and beyond traces the changing meanings of skin color from precolonial times to the postcolonial present, analyzing a wide range of archival, popular culture, and oral history sources. This study examines the layered history of how skin lighteners and experiences of skin color have been shaped by slavery, colonialism, and segregation as well as by consumer capitalism, visual media, notions of beauty, and protest politics. Thomas theorizes skin as a site for antiracist struggle and lighteners as a technology of visibility that both challenges and entrenches racial and gender hierarchies.

## Speaker series announced

ISITA's virtual speaker series showcases new books and innovative research about Islam and Africa. The live online talks take place on selected Wednesdays at 1 p.m. Central Time during winter and spring quarters. The events are free and open to everyone, but registration is required. Details and registration links can be found at [isita.northwestern.edu/events-programming/calendar.html](http://isita.northwestern.edu/events-programming/calendar.html).

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### February 24

(cosponsored by the Department of History)

"Africanization: The Bridge to Edward Blyden's Final Intellectual Transformation"

**Harry Nii Koney Odamtten**

(Santa Clara University)

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### March 10

"Black Literary Islam in the Caribbean: Autobiographical Writings of Enslaved Sufi West Africans in Nineteenth-Century Jamaica, and Sufi Poetry in Guyana"

**Aliyah Khan** (University of Michigan)

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### April 7

"The Khōjā of Tanzania: Discontinuities of a Postcolonial Religious Identity"

**Iqbal Akhtar** (Florida International University)

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### April 21

"Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel: Local Politics and Rebel Groups"

**Alexander Thurston** (University of Cincinnati)

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### May 5

"Ajami Archives of Muslim Africa: Their Significance in African Studies"

**Fallou Ngom** (Boston University)

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### May 19

"Remaking Islam in African Portugal: Lisbon-Mecca-Bissau"

**Michelle Johnson** (Bucknell University)

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