

### PAS welcomes new director Chris Abani



Chris Abani, the Board of Trustees Professor of English, became director of the Program of African Studies in September.

When he joined Northwestern in 2013, Abani was the first African to teach

creative writing at the University as a full-time faculty member. He previously taught at the University of California, Riverside.

One of Africa's most distinguished and multifaceted artists, Abani is a novelist, poet, theorist, essayist, playwright, and editor. He has won many international literary awards, among them a 2001 Prince Claus Award (the Netherlands), the 2002 Imbonge Yesizwe Poetry International Award (South Africa), a 2008 PEN Open Book Award (US), and a 2014 Edgar Allan Poe Award (US). He also received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2009.

Abani is a transnational writer respected across continents, but he is especially passionate about Africa. Born in 1966 in eastern Nigeria to an Igbo father and a British mother, he grew up during the Biafran War (also known as the Nigerian Civil War) of the late 1960s, a conflict that shaped his writing and sensitivity. Keenly aware of his heritage, Abani comes from an ancient minority culture (5000-3000 BCE), the Egu of the Afikpo region, believed to be the region's original settlers and famed for fearlessness and artistic prowess.

At age 16, Abani published his first novel, *Masters of the Board* (1985), a thriller about a failed coup d'état; two years later that achievement landed him in jail for six months on allegations that the novel had been a blueprint for the overthrow of the Nigerian government. After his release he

became involved in antigovernment guerrilla theater at Imo State University. He and many students of his generation saw themselves as part of the vanguard protesting against Nigeria's unpopular military regime. His theater activities led to a second arrest and detention, this time for a year, at the infamous Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison in Apapa, Lagos State. A fellow detainee was the musician Fela Kuti, who reportedly told Abani that "the truth is a risky business."

This second detention only hardened Abani's resolve. Not long after his release, he wrote the play *Song of a Broken Flute* for his convocation at Imo State, which led to his third imprisonment, in 1990. After 18 months his friends bribed prison officials to free him, and soon after he went into exile in England for several years. There he received an MA in English, gender, and culture from Birkbeck College, University of London. After relocating to California in 2001, he completed an MA and PhD in creative writing at the University of Southern California.

His most famous novel, *Graceland* (2005), is an experimental story about a boy who becomes an Elvis impersonator in a Nigerian slum. The novel depicts abject poverty and violence in Africa. Abani's other important novels include *The Virgin of Flames* (2007), set in Los Angeles, and *The Secret History of Las Vegas* (2013), a spy thriller that addresses the theme of identity in globalized urban spaces. He has written two novellas, seven books of poetry, a book of essays, and many articles. In addition, Abani is the founding editor of the Black Goat Poetry Series, launched in 2004, an imprint of Brooklyn-based publisher Akashic Books. Black Goat aims to publish aesthetically or thematically challenging work that mainstream publishers might find commercially unviable. The series promotes the work of emergent African and other non-American poets.

Abani's appointment as PAS director strengthens the stature of the program. He intends to reinforce areas of interest identified by former directors and build further awareness of African studies across disciplines and research clusters on campus, in Chicago, and at other Illinois universities.

#### Inside

<i>PAS</i> stories	2
<i>ISITA</i> news	8
<i>Herskovits</i> Library	9
<i>Community</i> news	10
<i>Swahili</i> corner	12

## Celebrating D. Soyini Madison

by Karen Tranberg Hansen

We all regret missing what would have been the most fabulous retirement party in recent memory: PAS's celebration of D. Soyini Madison, professor of performance studies (she is on the left in the picture, a favorite of mine). Expected to involve former students, colleagues, and friends in a mix of academic presentations, music, and dance, the celebration had been planned for mid-April 2020 but was cancelled because of the pandemic. A highlight was to be a performance of Soyini's composition *Seahorse and MarketWorld*, an allegorical choreo-poem about climate change and the market economy.

While we look forward to better times to allow a performance of her composition, let us not wait to honor and celebrate our friend and colleague. Wishing to share my deep intellectual admiration and personal affection for Soyini with Northwestern's Africanist community, I offer here a few observations about her uniqueness and the longtime friendship we share.

When I started teaching anthropology and African studies at Northwestern in 1982, Soyini was a student in my upper-level undergraduate anthropology course *People and Cultures of Africa*. She was a stunner in most regards, intellectually as well as in her ways of interacting with her fellow students; she also was at ease dealing with a rather insecure, newly appointed assistant professor. We began talking. She later added me to her PhD advisory committee in performance studies, chaired by an esteemed (and now much missed) colleague, the late Professor Dwight Conquergood. I have been privileged to learn about approaching research through performance, agency, and creativity from the two of them, and I would not want to be without that knowledge.

Completing her dissertation in 1989, Soyini moved on professionally. Not until the late 1990s did our paths (almost) cross again. When I had a fellowship at the National Humanities Center near Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in 1997–98, I discovered that she held a position at the nearby University of North Carolina. Wanting to reestablish contact,



I learned that she was in Ghana as a senior Fulbright scholar. It was not until 2008 that we actually connected again, this time at Northwestern, when Soyini was appointed professor of performance studies, succeeding her mentor Dwight.

Making time to involve herself with African studies colleagues, Soyini soon proved to be an invaluable asset. Serving as interim director of the Program of African Studies in 2008–09, she took on many initiatives. For me personally, she was a source of constant inspiration, with the ability to encourage, prod, and cajole me in creative directions.

As a result of our conversations across anthropology and performance studies, we launched two events focusing on dressed-body politics in Africa and the diaspora. In 2008 we organized the panel “Dress, Performance, and Social Action in Africa” at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, held in San Francisco. Next, in 2009, we used PAS's 60th anniversary celebration as an opportunity to organize and host the conference “Dress, Popular Culture, and Social Action in Africa.” Most of the chapters in the book we subsequently coedited, *African Dress: Fashion, Agency, Performance* (2013), were presented at these events.

In 2012 I retired from Northwestern, and I now live a quiet life in Copenhagen, Denmark, enlivened and invigorated by memorable collaborative experiences with stunning colleagues and special friends like D. Soyini Madison. I hope that our paths will cross again.

*Karen Tranberg Hansen is professor emerita of anthropology.*

# AfriSem conference explores Africa's place in a globalizing world

by Sasha Artamonova

Originally planned for early April, the AfriSem graduate student conference “Africa’s Place in a Globalizing World: Reimagining Governance, Science, Technology, Art, and Culture” was convened virtually on July 29–30.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the organizing committee faced the challenge of either postponing the conference or holding it in alternative formats; amid the crisis, organizers realized that the theme resonated well with the unfolding situation around the world.

The conference’s 10 speakers represented a range of academic fields including history, gender and sexuality studies, art and architectural history, and cultural studies. In her keynote address “Southern Expertise? Reconsidering the Planning of Abuja, Nigeria,” architectural historian Ayala Levin (art history) presented her new work about planning the relocation of Nigeria’s capital from Lagos to a more central place in the country.

Neither technical challenges nor time zones stopped other presenters from participating. In addition to Northwestern doctoral students Anisha Bhat (history) and Caitlin Monroe (history), presenters included Sela Kodjo Adjei (Accra, Ghana), Araba Dennis (Purdue University), Debbie Frempong (Brown University), Rachel Hodapp (University of Wisconsin–Madison), Abdulbasit Kassim (Rice University), Christopher Newman (Duke University), and Tony Yeboah (Yale University).

About 170 attendees from across Africa, the US, Europe, and Australia joined the conference’s panels,



participated in discussions after each presentation, and socialized during the virtual hangout.

Unlike an in-person event, the virtual conference was available to anyone with a reliable internet connection. Moreover, those who missed presentations or would like to revisit event highlights can access the conference recordings, which will be available via Northwestern University Libraries’ research and data repository, ARCH.

The organizers—doctoral students Mariam Taher, Alexandra (Sasha) Artamonova, Austin Bryan, and Patrick Mbullo—thank PAS staff, faculty, and especially Florence Mugambi (Herskovits Library) for their assistance and support. Thanks also to interim PAS director Wendy Griswold and Professor Zekeria Ahmed Salem for their guidance.

*Sasha Artamonova is an art history graduate student.*

## In memoriam

### Cosmas Magaya, Zimbabwean mbira master



COVID-19 claimed the life of mbira virtuoso Cosmas Magaya of Zimbabwe on July 10. He was 66 years old.

Magaya was a key player in the famous mbira ensemble Mhuri yekwaRwizi and performed for Shona

religious ceremonies as well as on the worldwide concert stage.

In the years following his first US visit (sponsored by the Oregon-based Kutsinhira Cultural Arts Center) in the early 1990s, Magaya made many return trips to the US for performances, workshops, and university residencies. He was a collaborator with ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner, who was a Northwestern faculty member for many years before moving to Duke University.

Magaya's first trip to Northwestern was in 1999 as a visiting scholar at the Institute for Advanced Study and Research in the African Humanities. In 2000 and 2001 he returned to take up a teaching and research residency and then a post as artist in residence, which led to a Zimbabwean music performance series on campus. During another stint

as artist in residence, in 2004, he participated in the Herskovits Library jubilee celebration.

Magaya performed several times at Chicago's World Music Festival. He was also a regular visitor at Duke, where he continued his collaboration with Berliner over two decades.

In Zimbabwe, Magaya farmed, served several times as village headman, and directed Nhimbe for Progress, a non-profit organization that focused on rural development and emergency relief.

Magaya first gained international recognition in the 1970s, appearing on the albums *The Soul of Mbira* and *Shona Mbira Music*, and later on *Afamba Apota* (2000, with singer and mbira player Beauler Dyoko) and *Anoyimba* (2002). In 1999 he was part of the first American tour of the Zimbabwe Group Leaders Mbira Ensemble. In the decades that followed, he was an influential figure in the annual North American Zimbabwe Music Festival (Zimfest).

Magaya was passionate about preserving and documenting Shona cultural knowledge. His life and artistry are celebrated in Paul Berliner's book *The Art of Mbira: Musical Inheritance and Legacy*, released shortly before Magaya's death; the players' method book *Mbira's Restless Dance: An Archive of Improvisation*, which grew out of Berliner and Magaya's collaborative research, came out in 2019.

## PAS is grateful to Wendy Griswold

PAS wishes to thank Wendy Griswold for stepping in as interim director after the departure of Rachel Riedl in June 2019. In addition to carrying out plans set forth by Riedl and the PAS executive committee—including the Young African Leaders Initiative, Herskovits Library and Block Museum collaborations, and three active research clusters—Griswold initiated a partnership between Northwestern and the University of Ghana that builds on almost 70 years of connections between the two institutions. PAS looks forward to continuing to work with Griswold, professor of sociology and Bergen Evans Professor in the Humanities, as a member of its core faculty.



*Malangatana Ngwenya, Remember Those Who Entered Bleeding? (Lembras-te daqueles que entravam a sangrar?), 1974–75. Malangatana Valente Ngwenya Foundation, Maputo, Mozambique.*

## African artists in Chicago

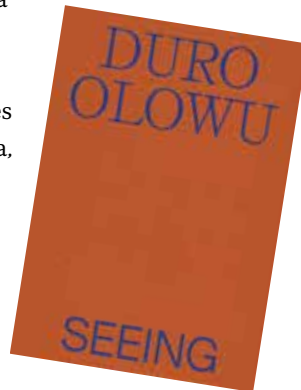
by Kathleen Bickford Berzock

The Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art put a spotlight on visual artists from Africa this fall.

At the AIC, *Malangatana: Mozambique Modern* (on view through November 16) focuses on the pioneering artist Malangatana Ngwenya, whose work powerfully reflected his experiences during the nation's fight for liberation and contributed to a global dialogue about modernisms. This is a rare opportunity to see unprecedented loans from the artist's estate in Mozambique and from key collections in Portugal and the United States.

At the MCA, *Duro Olowu: Seeing Chicago* (on view through September 27) drew from public collections across the city, including a number of works by artists with strong ties to Africa such as the ceramic artist Magdalene Odundo and photographer and conceptual artist Dawit Petros. Curated by Olowu, a Nigerian-born British fashion designer, the exhibition provided a glimpse into his highly personal and cosmopolitan aesthetic.

*Kathleen Bickford Berzock is the associate director of curatorial affairs at the Block Museum.*



## Students receive PhDs, dissertation grants, and pre-dissertation awards

Congratulations to summer quarter 2020 PhD recipients **Marcos Leitão de Almeida**, whose dissertation was titled “Speaking of Slavery: Slaving Strategies and Moral Imaginations in the Lower Congo (Early Times to the Late 19th Century)”; and **Will Fitzsimons**, whose dissertation was titled “Distributed Power: Climate Change, Elderhood, and Republicanism in the Grasslands of East Africa, c. 500 BCE to 1800 CE.”

Three PAS graduate students received 2020–21 dissertation support.

**Bright Gyamfi** (history) won both a Fulbright US Student Award for research in Ghana and a Social Science Research Council (SSRC) International Dissertation Research award for the study of transnational radical thought inspired by Kwame Nkrumah; **Lamin Keita** (political science), received an SSRC grant; and **Dela Kumi** (anthropology) was the recipient of a Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship.

Panofsky Awards for predissertation research were granted to **Chernoh Bah** (history), **Elizabeth Good** (political science), and **Ewurama Okai** (sociology).

## Stranded in Mauritania during the pandemic

by Charlie Hummel

Spring quarter of my sophomore year (2018–19), I had the chance to work at a small solar company in Uganda through Northwestern’s Chicago Field Studies program. I had a phenomenal experience living with a local host family in Jinja, a city on the northern shore of Lake Victoria. At the end of that quarter, upon my arrival home, I began exploring other avenues to spend more time abroad. I knew I wanted to experience another part of Africa, and I had begun studying Arabic my in my first year, so I decided Morocco would be a great choice.

Eager to escape a Chicago winter, I launched my junior year by signing up to study at the Arabic Language Institute in Fez during January and February 2020. I spent two fantastic months learning the language and traveling around Morocco on its amazing and superaffordable train system. When my program ended, I still had a few weeks left before spring classes started at Northwestern, and I was eager to make the most of the time. I’d had my eye on the majestic deserts of Mauritania and the remote beaches of Western Sahara since I arrived, so when the last class of my program was over, I headed south.

By this time it was March, and the coronavirus had begun raging across Europe. My hometown friend who was studying abroad in Madrid had just returned from a trip to Venice only hours before Madrid went into lockdown and his program began discouraging travel. He had planned to join me in Africa, which was no longer possible. But without a single COVID-19 case in either Morocco or Mauritania, there didn’t seem to be any reason to alter my plans, so I pushed on alone.

My journey south from Fez was a mishmash of just about every transport means: a train from Fez to Casablanca, a two-hour flight from Casablanca to Dakhla in Western Sahara, a bus down to the Mauritanian border, and a minibus from the border zone into Nouadhibou, Mauritania’s second largest city. Once there, I spent the next two weeks exploring some of the country’s best-known sites and activities. I rode its famous iron ore train inland from the coast, visited the ancient holy city of Chinguetti, experienced several



breathtaking desert oases, and ate near the bustling fish market in the capital city, Nouakchott.

However, amid all the excitement and lacking internet connectivity, I didn’t fully realize that the world around me was quickly and messily shutting down. I was on a crowded minibus from Atar to Nouakchott when I heard the news from a frantic French passenger: the airports had just shut down. Without much else to go on and unsure of the extent of the lockdown, I hurried back up to the Western Sahara border, only to find it had closed hours before my arrival. After contacting the US embassy and finding no way to return home, I realized I was stranded.

I passed the next couple of weeks in the capital, walking the city, meeting locals, and getting to know other stranded foreigners from countries all over the world, including Russia, Germany, France, and Finland, to name a few. By this time Northwestern’s remote-only spring-quarter classes were ramping up, and without a laptop or a reliable internet connection, I was growing anxious at the prospect of being stuck where I was and missing a whole quarter of classes. To make matters worse, Nouakchott’s markets, restaurants, and all nonfood shops had closed, and the major cable bringing internet to the country had just been damaged.

Meanwhile, my mom in Missouri reached out to a Northwestern professor she happened to find online—Zekeria Ahmed Salem, a Mauritanian scholar who had taught for nearly two decades at the University of Nouakchott. Upon

hearing of my situation, he immediately put me in touch with one of his friends, a local English teacher named Baba, who offered to help get me set up for classes if I remained stranded in Nouakchott.

Fortunately it never came to that. About a week into spring quarter, the repatriation flight that the US State Department had been trying to schedule for US citizens finally departed.

The trip home from Mauritania was exciting and an enormous relief in one sense, but in another it was quite eerie. It was nerve-wracking too, as the plane had picked up groups of stranded people scattered across small countries throughout Africa. There was only one more stop—in Lomé, Togo—after I boarded in Nouakchott. The plane was full of Americans who had just left Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

When we finally landed at Dulles International Airport in Washington, DC, it quickly became apparent that the US was a very different country than what we had left behind. What had been one of the busiest airports in the country was almost entirely abandoned, only sparsely populated by the sporadically arriving plane loads of stragglers the State Department was repatriating from far-flung locales. After flying in a near-empty small plane meant for shuttling pilots between airports, I finally arrived home in Saint Louis, at an international airport where it seemed I was the only traveler.

While the once-in-a-lifetime circumstances added stress to my Mauritanian experience, Mauritania itself is a country I'll never forget. It's where I met the most hospitable and welcoming people I've ever encountered, and the landscapes throughout the country were unbelievably humbling.

In a final coincidence, topping off an already amazing trip, it turned out that Professor Salem was teaching the African Politics class I (virtually) joined upon my arrival home.

*Charlie Hummel is a junior studying political science and economics.*

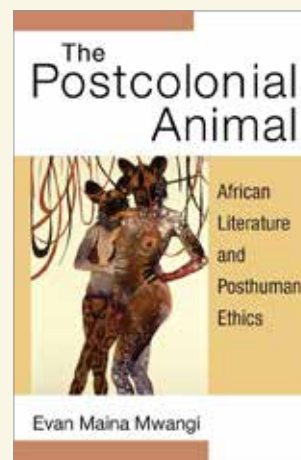
## Swahili language teaching assistant joins PAS



PAS welcomes **Nyanjala Maingu**, a Fulbright foreign language teaching assistant from Tanga, Tanzania, who will be involved in teaching and developing instructional materials for Swahili courses. She earned her BA at the University of Dar es Salaam

with a double major in political science and literature and has taught English language in primary and secondary schools.

## New to the PAS bookshelf

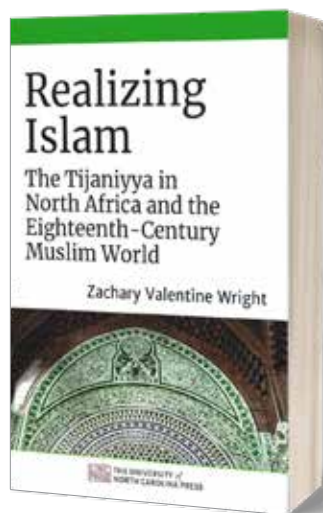


***The Postcolonial Animal: African Literature and Posthuman Ethics***  
(University of Michigan Press, 2019)

**Evan Maina Mwangi**  
(English) analyzes the importance of African writing to animal studies by exploring how African writers and storytellers

have campaigned for humane treatment of nonhuman others. Mwangi illuminates how African authors tackle the alternatives to eating meat, and how they present postcolonial animal-consuming cultures as shifting toward cultural and political practices that eschew the use of animals and mitigate animal suffering. *The Postcolonial Animal* examines texts that imagine a world where animals do not suffer abuse or become a source of food, clothing, or labor. It provides a blueprint for interrelations with others—humans and nonhumans—to create an equitable world, free of oppression, that recognizes the rights of all its inhabitants.

## Book and online initiative focus on Tijaniyya Sufi order



A new book by Zachary Wright—Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA) faculty affiliate, Northwestern alumnus, and associate professor at Northwestern University in Qatar—explores 18th-century Islamic scholarship in North Africa, with particular focus on the founding of the Tijaniyya Sufi order.

*Realizing Islam: The Tijaniyya in North Africa and the 18th-Century*

*Muslim World* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020) is available in print and, thanks to support from the Mellon Foundation, online at [library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/40109](https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/40109). (Hear Wright interviewed about his book at [stitcher.com/podcast/new-books-network/new-books-in-islamic-studies/e/77130468](https://stitcher.com/podcast/new-books-network/new-books-in-islamic-studies/e/77130468).)

*Realizing Islam* situates the Tijaniyya—the largest Sufi order in North and West Africa—within the broader intellectual history of Islam in the early modern period. Introducing the group’s founder, Ahmad al-Tijani (1737–1815), Wright focuses on the wider network in which al-Tijani traveled, revealing it as a veritable global Islamic revival whose scholars commanded large followings, shared key ideas, and produced literature read widely throughout the Muslim world. They were linked through chains of knowledge transmission from which emerged vibrant discourses of renewal in the face of perceived social and political corruption.

Coinciding with the book’s debut, Wright has launched an online initiative to collect and publicize literature related to the Tijaniyya. The Tijani Literature Online ([tijani.org](https://tijani.org)) ini-

tiative has five goals: providing accessible, objective information about the Tijaniyya and its leading scholars; creating an online database of Arabic primary sources in both published and digitized manuscript formats; creating a council of academics and Islamic scholars who conduct research on the subject; sharing published research and translations; and collecting and sharing multimedia representations of Tijani practitioners, including podcasts, songs, and spoken-word poetry.

The long-term objective of Tijani Literature Online is to complete a published reference work of Tijani authors and their writings, a project first initiated in 2005 by Bayreuth University-based scholar Ruediger Seesemann, then continued at Northwestern, through a Ford Foundation grant coordinated by ISITA. This earlier work relied on a team of research scholars tasked with substantive field research throughout North and West Africa.

New digital spaces, however, have opened new possibilities for resource exchange, expanding understandings of the texts themselves. Platforms like YouTube return researchers to notions of texts as performances of the type that arguably prefigured textual production in the Arabic-speaking world centuries ago.

Tijani Literature Online envisions a new type of collaborative research where disciplinary boundaries of history, religious studies, anthropology, linguistics, and media studies are crossed and where archival work, philological studies, and ethnographies are conducted in dialogue with both other researchers and the communities represented in this research. The council of scholars already has some 30 members, including academics from universities such as Harvard, Columbia, Sorbonne, and Exeter, and Muslim intellectuals from diverse locations such as Egypt, South Africa, and Mexico. The initiative has been funded in part by a grant from Northwestern University in Qatar’s research office and by additional support from the Office of the Provost.



## New acquisitions by the Herskovits Library

by Esmeralda M. Kale

In addition to answering user questions, revising LibGuides, and identifying e-books and resources, the Herskovits Library has recently acquired items that will be available for viewing when visiting the library in person becomes possible again.

New to the collection of pop art are two images (below) by New York-based Ghanaian artist Dennis Owusu-Ansah. The first image, *African Roots*, reflects the current resurgence of interest in hairstyles, which has led to a proliferation on the internet and in print of images of women's hair threaded in bright colors or braided with African fabric. The second piece, *Freedom Fighters*, speaks to the theme of freedom and social justice and links the notable African figures Kwame Nkrumah and Nelson Mandela with the African American figures Marcus Garvey and Martin Luther King. Both of these items should generate a great deal of conversation while connecting the past to the present.

Also recently added is a small collection of missionary bibles in Amharic, Ga, Bali, Duala, Hausa, Temme, Nama, Ovambo, Shambala, Tshi Chwee, Mungaka, and several other African languages.

Another new acquisition, *The Imperial British East Africa Company: Incorporated by Royal Charter 3rd September, 1888* (at right), consists of treatises, parliamentary papers,

regulations, agreements concerning slave trade, reports, and letters documenting the establishment of British influence and commerce in East Africa. It strengthens the library's collection of materials on the 1885-1914 "scramble for Africa" and British interests in East Africa during the period.

Staying within the same period but moving south, another recent addition is a small collection of materials relating to the borders of what would become present-day Eswatini (formerly Swaziland). Made up of notes and letters of Francis de Winton, the British commissioner to Swaziland, this archive provides the user with a perch on de Winton's shoulder to observe as members of the joint commission negotiated the fate of the kingdom.

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



## Community news

**Priscilla Adipa** (sociology PhD 2017) published the short story “Adjoa Boatemaa Asare” in the journal *Transition* (2019) and the article “Talking Events: How Social Interaction and Discourse Shape Cultural Participation, Aesthetic Evaluation, and Meaning-Making” in *Poetics* (2019). Adipa is assistant professor at the International University of Grand-Bassam in Côte d’Ivoire.

**Chernoh Bah** (history graduate student) is a frequent contributor to the Philadelphia-based *Africanist Press* ([africanistpress.com](http://africanistpress.com)). Last spring he coauthored the articles “Workplace Injustice in Sierra Leone: Unlawful Dismissals at the Bank of Sierra Leone” and “Maada Bio and Foreign Diplomats: A Failed Effort to Impress International Support.”

**Yaari Felber-Seligman** (history PhD 2014) recently published the article “Painting in Turbulent Times: House Wall Art, Culture, and Commentary in Colonial East Africa” in *African Arts*. Felber-Seligman (formerly Andrea Seligman) teaches history at the City University of New York.

Visiting scholar **Abdulbasit Kassim** published three articles over the summer in the Nigerian weekly *The Republic*: “‘Where Is God in All of This?’ COVID-19 and the Palliative Force of Religion”; “‘Only Science Can Save Mankind’: Coronavirus, the Death of Religion, and the Resurrection of Science”; and “God the Master Scientist: COVID-19, Pandemics, and Reconciling Religious Faith with Science.”

**Moses Khisa** (political science PhD 2016) continues to publish a weekly column in the *Daily Monitor* (Kampala) focusing on Ugandan politics and social issues. He is assistant professor of political science and Africana studies at North Carolina State University.

**Andrew Wooyoung Kim** (anthropology graduate student) published the op-ed “COVID-19 Has Changed the Way SA’s Only Toll-Free Mental Health Helpline Works. Here’s Why” in the August 11 edition of the *Daily Maverick* (Johannesburg).

**Robert Launay** (anthropology) was recognized for his mentorship by the Northwestern Anthropology Graduate Student Association.

**Henri Lauzière** (history) was named the Alumnae of Northwestern Teaching Professor.

**Marcos Leitão de Almeida** (history PhD 2020) accepted a 2020–21 post-doctoral fellowship at the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard University.

**Jahara “Franky” Matissek** (political science PhD 2018) has published several journal articles since last spring: “The ‘Goldilocks Zone’ of War and Peace” in *Journal of Character and Leadership Development*; “Your Hamburger and National Security: Veganism, Food Insecurity, and American Power” in *War Room*; “Limited Wars in the Periphery: The Dilemma of American Military Assistance” in *Expeditions with MCUP*; “Is Human Rights Training Working

with Foreign Militaries? No One Knows and That’s OK” in *War on the Rocks*; and “The Illogical Logic of American Entanglement in the Middle East” in *Journal of Strategic Security*. He also contributed the chapter “The Rise of Strong Militaries in Africa: Defying the Odds?” in *Fragile and Failing States: Challenges and Responses*, edited by David Brown. Matissek teaches in the military and strategic studies department at the US Air Force Academy.

**Sakhile Matlhare** (art history PhD 2017) has cofounded Sakhile&Me, an exhibition space for international contemporary art in Frankfurt. A summer group exhibition showcased interdisciplinary approaches to centering the human form in artistic practice, highlighting the work of Tega Akpokona, Adelaide Damoah, Mbali Dhlamini, Tagne William Njepe, and Tim Okamura.

**Peter Mwangi** (Swahili) completed a spring course on online language teaching through Michigan State University’s Center for Language Teaching Advancement and a July course on meaningful portfolio implementation jointly offered by the University of Oregon’s Center for Applied Second Language Studies and the University of Minnesota’s Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition in July. He produced an open educational resource for elementary Swahili, funded by a grant from Northwestern’s Office of the Provost and the Affordable Instructional OER grant program.

**Sally Nuamah** (education and social policy) received the American Publishers Association's 2020 Prose Award in Education Practice and Social Science for her book *How Girls Achieve*. She recently published the article "Every Year They Ignore Us: Public School Closures and Public Trust" in the journal *Politics, Groups and Identities* and coauthored "School Closures Always Hurt. They Hurt Even More Now" in *Education Week*.

**Seline Ayugi Okeno** completed her time as a Fulbright foreign language teaching assistant at Northwestern last spring and entered a master's program at Ohio University this fall.

**Carl Petry** (history) published the article "Female Slaves and Transgression in Medieval Cairo and Damascus: Gendered Aspects of Bondage and Criminality in the Mamluk Period" in *Orient: Journal of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan*.

**Will Reno** (political science) and former advisees **Chris Day** (political science PhD 2012) and **Moses Khisa** (political science PhD 2016) coedited a special issue of the journal *Civil Wars*, "Beyond the Coup d'État? Perspectives on Civil Military Relations in Africa." Their article "Revisiting the Civil-Military Conundrum in Africa" appears in that issue.

**Zekeria Ahmed Salem** (ISITA and political science) published the article "Rethinking the Weak State Paradigm in Light of the War on

Terror: Evidence from the Islamic Republic of Mauritania" in *Africa and the Middle East: Beyond the Divides* (POMEPS Studies 40).

**David Schoenbrun** (history) published the article "Words, Things, and Meaning: Linguistics as a Tool for Historical Reconstruction" in the *Oxford Handbook of African Languages*.

**Alexander Thurston** (religious studies PhD 2013) published the article "Why Are There Few Islamist Parties South of the Sahara?" in *Africa and the Middle East: Beyond the Divides* (POMEPS Studies 40). An assistant professor of political science at the University of Cincinnati, Thurston also publishes sahelblog.wordpress.com, a source for news on politics and religion in the Sahel.

**Marcia Tiede** (Herskovits Library) was appointed secretary-treasurer of the Mande Studies Association.

**Helen Tilley** (history) received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant for the collaborative project "Constructing African Medical Heritage: Legacies of Empire and the Geopolitics of Culture, 1890-1990."

**Chris Udry** coauthored the article "Good Identification, Meet Good Data" in *World Development* last March.

**Jessica Winegar** (anthropology) was appointed director of Northwestern's Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities.

**Sera Young** (anthropology) presented the paper "Simple Indicator of Global Household Water Experiences" at the 2020 annual meeting of the American Association of Science. Young has led a consortium of scholars in the development of the Household Water Insecurity Experiences Scale, a tool that permits comparisons across settings to quantify the social, political, health, and economic consequences of household water insecurity. She and several coauthors published the recent articles "Knowledge, Attitudes, Intentions, and Behavior Related to Green Infrastructure for Flood Management: A Systematic Literature Review" in *Science of the Total Environment*; "The Syndemic Effects of Food Insecurity, Water Insecurity, and HIV on Depressive Symptomatology among Kenyan Women" in *Social Science and Medicine*; and "Development of a Cumulative Metric of Vaccination Adherence Behavior and Its Application among a Cohort of 12-Month-Olds in Western Kenya" in *Vaccine*.

**Mlondolozzi Zondi** (performance studies graduate student) published the articles "Venus and the (R)Uses of Power: Nelisiwe Xaba's They Look at Me and That's All They Think" in *TDR: Drama Review* and "Haunting Gathering: Black Dance and Afro-Pessimism" in *ASAP Journal*.

## Swahili corner



by Claudia M. Kalisa

I was born in Luxembourg but raised in Rwanda. I moved to the US to attend Northwestern in fall 2017, the first time I had been that far from my family for more than a month. When I got to the US, everything was very different from what I

had been used to all my life—everything from the food to the weather to the culture. I had to adapt quickly.

I started taking Swahili during the winter quarter of my sophomore year (2018–19). I chose Swahili because it was the only thing that Northwestern offered that made me feel close to home. It reminded me of home not only because it is a Bantu language, and therefore pretty close to Kinyarwanda, my first language and the official language of Rwanda, but also because my dad speaks the language. Being able to connect with my dad was very important for me.

In my two years of Swahili, I met great people in the class from East Africa and Africa at large. It was always a pleasure to learn and discuss with others and also hear from people who used to live or still live in Kenya. Every day in class we saw and learned how things play out in the daily life of Kenyans.

When I started taking Swahili, my family and friends did not really understand how or why I decided to study Swahili at college in the US. During these two years, however, I have learned so much, not only about the language but also about the culture from the readings, the movies, and just hearing about our professor's experience.

As I reflect on my two years as a Swahili student, I don't think there is an experience that compares to it. I am capable of writing a text and listening perfectly, but my speaking skills need a little more polishing. I would like to thank my professor, Mwalimu Mwangi, for sharing his culture, teaching his language, and giving me an understanding of real Swahili experience. I have never been to Kenya, but I know that when I do go, it will feel like home, thanks to him.

*Claudia M. Kalisa is a junior majoring in industrial engineering and management sciences.*

## Northwestern

Program of African Studies  
620 Library Place  
Evanston, Illinois 60208-4110 USA  
Phone 847-491-7323  
Fax 847-491-3739  
african-studies@northwestern.edu  
northwestern.edu/african-studies

Chris Abani, *PAS Director*  
Meagan Keefe, *PAS Associate Director*  
Zekeria Ahmed Salem, *ISITA Director*  
Rebecca Shereikis, *ISITA Associate Director*  
Kelly Coffey, *Business Coordinator*  
LaRay Denzer, *Newsletter Editor*  
Tiffany Williams-Cobleigh, *Program Assistant*

©2020 Northwestern University. All rights reserved.  
Produced by Global Marketing and Communications.  
10-20/125/RM-GD/3073

*Send stories and news items to  
laray.denzer@northwestern.edu  
so that PAS can share them with  
the Africanist community at  
Northwestern and beyond.*