



AFRICAN STUDIES **OUTREACH**

A NEWSLETTER FOR TEACHERS
FALL 2002

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES SUMMER INSTITUTE: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES

The African Studies Program collaborated with the Center for the Study of Global Change and other area studies outreach centers to host the seventh annual International Studies Summer Institutes for K-12 teachers and high school students. Presentations on African topics included: *Ethnic Conflict in Kenya* by Hannington Ochwada, (History and African Studies); *The Joys of Motherhood: A Critique* by Theodore Bouabre (Comparative Literature and African Studies); *Contemporary Art in Senegal* by Kalidou Sy (African Studies). Summaries of these presentations are provided in the pages that follow.

The African Studies Program also sponsored a cultural evening. Following a Nigerian dinner, Institute participants received a tour of the African Hair exhibit (see p. 2) from Curator Diane Pelrine, learned how to tie Nigerian headwraps (see below) from Stephanie Shonekan (Assistant Director, Archives of African-American Music and Culture), and enjoyed a performance-discussion of Malian music offered by Heather Maxwell (Ethnomusicology and African Studies). More pictures inside, pages 3 and 10.

Institute participants watch as Shonekan demonstrates how to tie a Nigerian headwrap



THE HEAD-WRAP: AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE NIGERIAN WOMAN

by
Stephanie Shonekan

It's a late Saturday morning and Chief Mrs. Folu Balogun is getting ready to go to the wedding of her brother's daughter. Her driver is downstairs warming the car and waiting for his madam to come down. "The Chief-Mrs.," as the people in her office call her, has been preparing for this event for weeks. It is a high society event. All the biggest names in Lagos will be there and this, again, is a time to shine. She had sent in her money for the "and-co" fabric. All the relatives on the Bride's father's side would be wearing the same lush purple and gold stiff *asoke* material; the women would have their material made into wrappers and head-wraps and the men would have their little strips made into caps.

Chief-Mrs. slips into her white lace blouse first, careful not to disturb the make up she has already applied to her well-preserved 45 year old face. Eyes set steadily on the mirror, she wraps the larger piece of purple and gold fabric round her lower body. She tucks in the end of the wrapper and is pleased to see that her figure can still compete with younger women. The smallness of the waist is accentuated by the generousness of her hips. Nice.

Chief-Mrs. then sits on the stool in front of her mirror and takes the other length of *asoke* in her two hands expertly. She quickly decides she is in a flamboyant mood and wraps the material around her head, leaving the two ends fanned out with eye-catching flair. She is done in less than 3 minutes. She has been tying head-wraps her whole life and now it is as natural as breathing, except that her choice of head-wrap style depends on the occasion. She stands up and is satisfied with the total picture the mirror presents to her. Donning her gold sandals, she picks up her gold purse and heads downstairs.

Across town, Mrs. Obi rushes into her bedroom. She was in the middle of her weekend cooking when she realized she had

forgotten to buy palm oil for her okra soup. The mother of four quickly looks down at her "up-and-down" – a simple cotton wrapper and blouse. Ah, it's the blue and white one so she knows she needs to grab the blue and white head-wrap from her wardrobe. She pauses in front of her mirror for a mere minute, wraps it simply around her head, shoves her feet into a pair of low slippers, grabs her car keys and rushes out to her Volkswagen beetle. She would make it to the market and back within the hour.

The head-wraps that Chief-Mrs. and Mrs. Obi wear are important parts of Nigerian women's outfits. Although the average working girl in Nigerian urban society does not wear traditional outfits on a weekday, come Saturday, she is free to choose between "Western" attire – jeans, skirts, blouses, trouser suits – and "traditional". Having chosen the latter, a head-wrap completes her outfit. Whether it is the more festive events like weddings, baby naming ceremonies, funerals, birthday parties, or casual outings to the market or to visit friends, the head-wrap is functional and necessary. Most importantly, it adds character and personality to a Nigerian woman's appearance. I can think of no parallel in Western dressing.

The head-wrap to a Nigerian woman's traditional attire is more important than the belt that holds up a pair of jeans or skirt, more important than a baseball cap or a string of pearls. The omission of a string of pearls on a woman's neck is relatively unnoticeable. On the other hand, the omission of a head-wrap renders the outfit incomplete. A woman's head-wrap embraces her flair for life and her essence. It is the reason why a woman will stand out and remain memorable.

As Chief-Mrs. arrives at the church for the wedding, she is greeted by the seven or so other women who are wearing the same purple and gold material. People immediately recognize her because her head-wrap stands

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The Head-Wrap: An Important Part of the Nigerian Woman

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beautiful and tall on her head. Mrs. Obi walks through the market stalls and is hailed by her favorite palm oil seller who spots her from yards away. This customer is always simply but elegantly dressed in full up-and-down, complete with head-wrap. Chief-Mrs. and Mrs. Obi do not know each other. They come from different ethnic groups and have different lifestyles. However, their aesthetic values are similar in the sense that they are both Nigerian women who have grown up to understand the value of the head-wrap. ♦



Institute participants showing off their headwraps.

HAIR EXHIBIT

“Hair in African Art and Culture,” organized by the Museum for African Art (Smithsonian Institution) and curated by the late Dr. Roy Sieber and Frank Herreman, was on view in the Art Museum from May 24 through July 28, 2002. The exhibition brought together a unique collection of sculpture and photography, showing the range of hair styles across the continent and in the diaspora over time, and their representation. Africa curator Diane

Pelrine also presented several smaller exhibits (beadwork, headrests, ceramics) in the Focalpoint Gallery during the course of the academic year.

The Sofa Gallery in the School of Fine Art hosted “Not just Stripes: An Exhibition of West African Weaving” from March 19-23, 2002. ♦

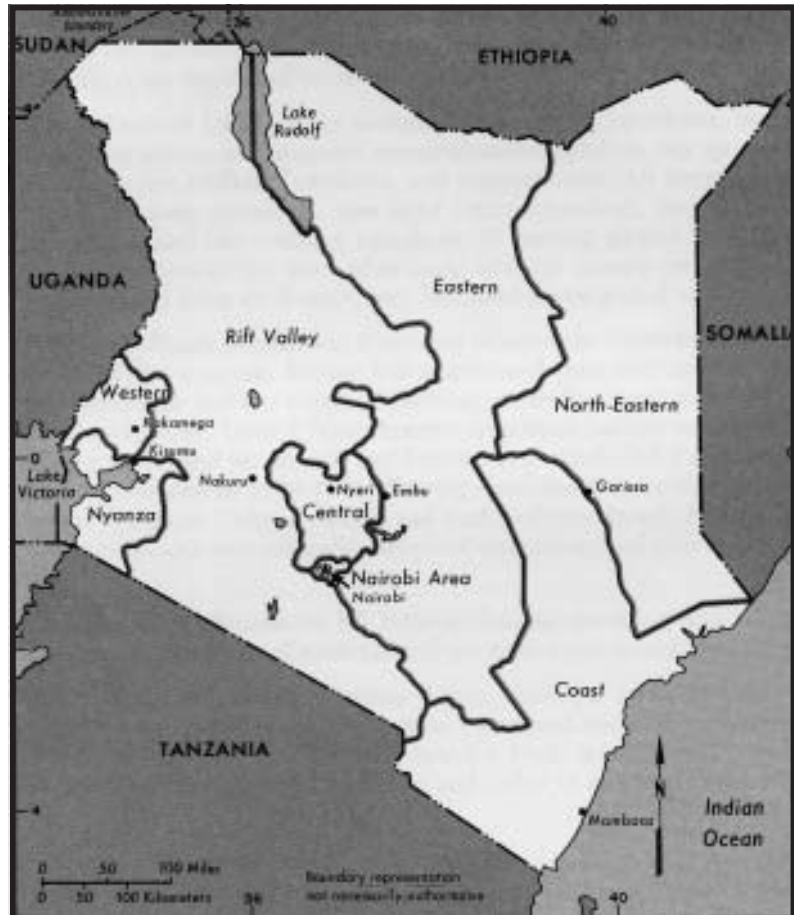
ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN KENYA AND THE SHARING OF “NATIONAL CAKE”

By
Hannington Ochwada

Anyone who has been following the raging succession debate in Kenya will immediately notice the place ethnicity occupies on the minds of Kenyans about who should become the country's third president after Daniel arap Moi retires at the end of 2002. Kenya is preparing for its third multi-party general election since the re-introduction of pluralism in the country in 1991. This preparation has given Kenya's 42 different ethnic groups of about 30 million people an opportunity to ponder who will be the country's next president.

While Kenya boasts of having fairly integrated its different ethnic groups within a national culture, the ethnic conflicts that erupted in the country in the early to mid-1990's rendered this assumption false. In fact, ethnic tensions and conflicts continue to feature prominently in the sharing of national resources – christened the “national cake.” The craving to “eat the cake” is a function of patronage politics in Kenya, which is a reward and punishment system used to ensure loyalty to the regime in power. Those with political power hand out benefits in the form of jobs and lucrative contracts to their relations and political allies. This arbitrary allocation of resources has meant that virtually all ethnic groups are determined to provide the country with a president and hence partake of the national cake. The refrain “our turn to eat has come” (*ni wakati wetu wa kula*), is a common theme in Kenyan politics.

Ethnicity has therefore come to play an important role in generating conflicts or clashes. The politicization and manipulation of ethnicity in



Map of Kenya, showing the eight provinces: Rift Valley, Western, Nyanza, Central, Nairobi, Eastern, North-Eastern and Coast provinces.

order to have access to, and control of, state apparatuses reached a disturbing point in the early to mid-1990s. The struggle for the control of State House (the ultimate seat of political power) was apparent in the infamous ethnic conflicts that rocked the country in 1991, 1992, 1994 and 1997. While the first three ethnic clashes were restricted to the interior of the country, mainly in the Rift Valley province and some parts of western Kenya, the latter rocked the Coast province (*see map provided above*).

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ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN KENYA AND THE SHARING OF THE "NATIONAL CAKE"

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Since 1991 about two thousand Kenyans have been killed and hundreds of thousands driven from their homes in well-organized series of violent attacks. Most of these individuals took refuge in churches, homes of relatives and city streets.

The Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) and the *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee to Investigate Ethnic Clashes in Western and Other Parts of Kenya (1992)* have blamed the violence on politicians belonging to communities linked to the government and the ruling party-KANU (Kenya African National Union). These politicians advocate for the formation of ethnic enclaves, the so-called *majimbo* federal program, as a way to institutionalize ethnic political control, distribution and ownership of land and other resources in geographical areas claimed to historically belong to certain groups, thereby driving out "foreigners".

Scholars such as John O. Oucho in his book, *Undercurrents of Ethnic Conflict in Kenya (2002)*, argue that the victims of the violence were members of ethnic groups that were associated with opposition politics, and those who were pressing for the re-introduction of multiparty politics and for democratic change and redress. Human rights groups working in Kenya believe that given their privileged position, the Kamatusa (Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana and Samburu) groups in government, could not tolerate opposition to President Daniel arap Moi. They contend that leaders of the opposition groups comprising mainly the populous Kikuyu, Luo, Luyia and Gusii were perceived as enemies of the Kamatusa. Thus, members of Kamatusa called for expulsion of members of the opposition groups from areas thought to historically belong to Kamatusa ethnicities. The ethnic cleansing of the Rift Valley Province and other areas should be understood within this context.

The Kamatusa ethnicities endeavored to remain at the helm of political and economic power to ensure their continued eating of the national cake. On the other hand, other

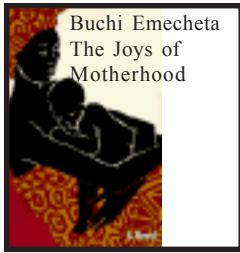
ethnicities that had been excluded from State House strove to actualize their turn to eat! The Kenyan coastal communities also became embroiled in ethnic conflicts in 1997, ostensibly over farmlands between the Pokomo and Ormas.

In retrospect, it is important to note that the British colonists in Kenya restricted proto-African political associations within the boundaries of ethnically defined administrative districts. Consequently, African political activism came to acquire the garb of tribalism. The political debate leading to *uhuru* (independence) between the main political protagonists in KANU and KADU (Kenya Africa Democratic Union) were cast in ethnic terms. The two largest ethnic groups, the Kikuyu and Luo were in KANU while the smaller ethnic groups, fearing dominance of the two larger groups, coalesced under KADU. Thus, ethnicity was forcefully launched as an organizing concept to political and economic power. That is how ethnicity in Kenya has come to serve as a strategy to advance individual and/or community interest in given situations. Kenyans have emphasized ethnic allegiances as the most meaningful basis of identity when it has been in their best interest to do so.

If some Kamatusa politicians have supported the formation of ethnic enclaves, it is because this political structure will enable those ethnic groups with political control, the distribution and ownership of land and other resources in geographical areas they claim as theirs.

Thus, to understand ethnic conflicts that have dogged Kenya since independence we must analyze the process of politicizing ethnicity. Professor Colin Leys has argued in his seminal study on Kenya entitled, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism (1974)* that "areas of the country where the opposition to government was strong were threatened and to some extent actually punished with reduced levels of public spending, and loyal areas, including Kikuyu districts, were relatively

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A Critique of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*

by
Theodore Bouabre

The Joys of Motherhood (1979), by Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta scrutinizes the position of the African woman. Nnu Ego is a village girl, the daughter of a great Igbo chief. When she gets married, she is expected to have many sons. She does not have any children with her first husband who beats her and she eventually leaves him. She gets married again to a man who works in Lagos, the capital city. The move from the village to the city holds promise of an easier life, but she discovers that her husband earns a living that for her assails his dignity as a man. Her life is miserable as she and her husband engage in a daily battle for food and money.

Nnu Ego becomes pregnant. Her infant son dies suddenly and she nearly goes mad. She recovers and gives birth to more children, including two sons. Her eldest son goes to school in America, marries a white woman and rarely contacts his mother. He does not financially support her as village ethics demand. Her younger son follows in his brother's footsteps. Nnu Ego is considered a success in her village, but she dies alone. Her eldest son returns to Nigeria and pays for a big funeral in order to prove what a good son he is.

One of the major themes of the book is family ethics. Nnu Ego exhausts herself to provide for her sons, but they do not cherish her before her death. What kind of financial and moral support do children owe to parents who are mentally or physically ill? Or even to parents who are healthy? The novel makes clear the immense importance placed on male offspring. Nnu Ego's anguish over the death of her first son evokes empathy for parents facing crib death or still birth. The novel is also a troubling account of British imperialism and its effects on the people of Nigeria.

Critique: The book as a whole clearly describes what childbearing means in traditional terms. But it is also an illustration of what

happens when, for some reason, things go wrong in relationships between parents and their children. Nnu Ego lived for motherhood, she wanted to be a mother and she had seven children to whom she devoted herself entirely. But it amounted to nothing. Despite achieving motherhood, her hunger for the ordinary dignity of womanhood went unfulfilled. She was not able to do anything for herself, except achieve motherhood.

Emecheta's clear message is that being a mother should not be the only reason for women's existence. Making marriage and motherhood the central theme of that novel, Emecheta shows how women themselves adopt the ideals of motherhood created by men, fall into their traps and are eventually destroyed.

The Joys of Motherhood is a novel that depicts African women's condition in the purely traditional and the hybrid post-colonial contexts, neither of which are conducive to women's personal fulfilment. Nnu Ego has to marry a man she does not love. She later literally thinks of herself as the property of that man and as a result, treats herself as a beast of burden. This description of African womanhood is realistic enough and illustrates what went on for a long time and is probably still going on in some areas of Africa and needs to be changed.

On the other hand, the way Emecheta handles the relationships between mothers and children is problematic. I would attribute the unrealistic end of the novel to an "anti-utopian impulse" on the part of the writer. A mother who has devoted her entire life to her children should not and could not die such a miserable death, even less in Africa. Nnu Ego had seven children, why wouldn't even one, at least one of her daughters, invite her to stay with her in Lagos? I have no qualms saying that in Africa children do not abandon their parents in old age.

Here Emecheta created a family anti-utopia in order to put forward a certain feminist

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Overcoming Cultural and Economic Barriers

The Education of Mutindi Ndunda

Mutindi Mumba Kiluva-Ndunda grew up in a small village outside of Kilome, Kenya. Because her ethnic group generally had lower educational expectations for women than for men, Mutindi was not intended to go to college. However, she did graduate from college and even went on to obtain her doctorate from the University of British Columbia in 1995. Today, Ndunda works as an assistant professor at the College of Charleston School of Education. Each semester, the soft-spoken professor works to prepare future teachers for the classroom.

She also works to educate the world about the harsh reality of the educational system for women in Kenya. Having published a book last year entitled "Women's Agency and Educational Policy," Ndunda is now organizing a study to Kenya for this summer. Education, once an elusive ambition, has become the focal point of the professor's life: her work, her independence, her dream, and the dream of her mother and brother.

While growing up, Ndunda and her three brothers and sister studied every night by the light of the kerosene lamp in their small home while their mother, Ndoti, cooked and took care of household chores. She would encourage her children to study, whether they had homework or not, and she would check what they were doing, whether she understood it or not. "She knew that the only way that I could be independent was to have an education," Ndunda recalls. Because she had only a fourth grade education and a polygamous husband who did not want her to work, Ndoti knew the frustration of dependence and limitations. "Because he was a polygamous man, she had no control over the resources.

There was no law that could force him to assist her," Mutindi remembers. Mutindi's father, the first (in replacement of colonial administrators) African Superintendent of Police in their village, did not see the use of education for women and paid his children's school fees very reluctantly. While Ndoti ensured that her children knew the value of education, Mutindi's brother Fred ensured that she would have a chance to

get an education. He gave up a scholarship to a college in the former Soviet Union to get a job to help pay his siblings' school fees. He never told his family of his sacrifice until years later.

Fred paid for his little sister to go to Kenya High Girls School in Nairobi - formerly a school for European girls only. It was an exclusive high school primarily for the children of prominent Kenyan families. "It's sad when your brother gives up so much," Ndunda says, fighting tears. "He came and got me out of the village and took me to a very prestigious school. He didn't have to do that. My school fees were very, very high." While she had an opportunity that most female children only dream about, the experience was nonetheless a difficult one. The girls at the elite school spoke, talked, dressed, and acted differently than the village girl from Kilome. They bragged of shopping in Paris and London and had parents who picked them up in expensive luxury cars. "In these countries, if you're wealthy, you're really, really wealthy. They (the students) make it clear to you—whether intentionally or not—that you do not belong to the same group," Ndunda says. While the experience was a difficult one, Ndunda received a quality high school education and went on to receive a scholarship to the University of Nairobi in Kenya.

The young student had her hopes set on studying medicine, but the government wanted and needed more math and science teachers and offered scholarships to students willing to pursue this field. Upon graduation, she taught chemistry for several years, at Pangani Girls High School, making a life and a family for herself. She married her husband Tom and had two children, Nthenya and Ndambuki. And then she had to leave them.

Ndunda applied for and received a scholarship from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, in 1988. She left her husband and two small children in Kenya to pursue her master's in education, an action that was looked down upon by her family and countrymen. But she had to go: "in the name of freedom, in the

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Overcoming Cultural and Economic Barriers *The Education of Mutindi Ndunda*

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name of independence, in the name of getting that little thing that is yours.”

She cried all the way to Halifax, a stopover point to Kingston, and immediately called home. “It cost \$9.50 for three minutes. I had to call from the call box, and it only took quarters.” Nine months and a lot of quarters later, Ndunda returned home. But the family didn’t stay settled for long. Ndunda pursued various teaching jobs, and her husband followed *her*, leaving his family and a successful career as an auto insurance broker. “For us, what we do when we leave home, we grow umbilical cords where we are attached to people,” says the international traveler. “You make them your brothers, your sisters, your uncle. You make not just a community, but a family.” Ndunda started making a family in Charleston in 1997 after she accepted a position with the College of Charleston School of Education.

Five years later, Ndunda is still here and feels she may be ready to settle in Charleston.

She relates a story her uncle used to tell her about trying to catch the wind. She gestures out her office window to a tree in the courtyard. “You run to catch the wind in that tree, but when you get there, it’s gone. It’s no longer there. It’s moved over to another tree,” she says, gesturing to another tree. “You can’t keep running like that because you’ll never catch up with it. When you spend time in a place, you grow roots. It’s hard to uproot those roots.”

Growing roots for Ndunda means contributing what she can to the College of Charleston and encouraging her students to be continuous learners and champions of justice. She feels strongly about justice and giving every child a fair chance, whether they are in Africa or America. “I think we need to give the credibility that teaching deserves,” she said. “We’ve got to want to achieve. We’ve got to want to be thinkers. We really have to continue rethinking teaching.” ♦

Source: Connections Newsletter, Spring 2002, Online at <http://www.cofc.edu/SchoolofEducation/NewsSpring0410.pdf>
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A Critique of Buchi Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood*

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agenda. African women’s condition must definitely be improved, but not at the expense of the deep love they have and should continue to have for their children, to the point of sacrificing themselves for them. Accordingly, children’s gratitude to their mother/parents follow naturally. Buchi Emecheta could have imagined another way of ending the novel which is nonetheless a very beautiful text about an Igbo world in transition, seen from a certain womanist perspective. ♦

Curriculum Suggestion

The Joys of Motherhood is a popular book and should be readily available in most libraries and bookstores such as Borders, Barnes and Noble, or online at amazon.com.

Professor Brians provides a study guide on his website for teachers and students. See if

you can discover what Emecheta’s analysis of women’s roles is about from her own point of view. According to Brians, because she shares many western feminist concerns, she has been embraced by many feminist writers, but she herself does not identify entirely with western feminism. Many male writers in Africa have rejected her as a hostile emigrant contaminated by European views.

Source: Professor Paul Brians - Washington State University, Study guide:
<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/anglophone/emecheta.html>



ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN KENYA AND THE SHARING OF "NATIONAL CAKE"

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favored." This was undertaken in the name of Africanization, which changed to be known as Kenyanization and, subsequently, kikuyunization read-tribalization of power and economy in Kenya thereafter. ♦

This is a very exciting time for many Kenyans who are hoping to usher in a more democratic government come the general elections at the end of the year. Currently Kenyans are holding their collective breath as they wonder who will succeed Moi as the next president. There are sporadic instances of violence across the country, tensions are running high, new and unusual alliances are being forged, strategies and counterstrategies are rolled out daily. An update on current politics

in Kenya, can be found at the websites of Kenya's leading daily newspapers:

Daily Nation: <http://www.eastandard.net/>

East African Standard Online:

<http://www.eastandard.net/>

Kenya 2002 Elections:

<http://www.nationaudio.com/elections/>

References, Further Reading:

•Leys, Colin (1974). *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism 1964-1971*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

•Oucho, John O. (2002). *Undercurrents of Ethnic Conflict in Kenya*. African Social Studies Series, 3.

•Weapons Proliferation, Political Violence, and Human Rights in Kenya, <http://www.hrw.org/africa/kenya.php>

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Study Abroad to Kenya

Charleston School of Education is currently planning a summer study abroad program to Kenya. This course, set for June 4-30, will compare and contrast how diversity shapes educational and economic opportunities in Kenya and the United States. For more information, contact Dr. Mutindi Ndunda at (843) 953-8046 or ndundam@cofc.edu.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY'S 8th Annual
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high school students and grade 7-12 teachers are invited to join us on Indiana University's Bloomington campus for 2 concurrent International Studies Summer Institutes. More information and an application can be found at this website
<http://www.indiana.edu/~global/>
Feel free to call 812/855/0756 or email kgold@indiana.edu

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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES SUMMER INSTITUTE



***Nigerian Dinner:** The dinner consisted of fried chicken, Nigerian beef stew, jollof rice (rice, lots of tomatoes and vegetables), green vegetables, moyin-moyin (mashed black-eyed peas), dodo (fried diced plantains), iyan (pounded yams), Nigerian beverages and other delicacies.*



***Malian Music:** Heather Maxwell and daughter entertain participants with contemporary Malian music played on traditional instruments. Shown here is the balafon, a kind of pentatonic xylophone.*

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Effective Strategies for Teaching and Learning about Africa Washington DC

The African Studies Association, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center & The Howard University Continuing Education Office present Effective Strategies for Teaching and Learning about Africa: A Workshop for K-12 Teachers, Librarians and Educators with Award winning children's Africana book writers and illustrators & Africanist scholars.

Teaching about Africa is a challenge in every classroom today. How can teachers be effective in teaching about the continent of Africa? Where do teachers/educators find resources? How can they evaluate them – are they unbiased, adaptable, proven?

This workshop is designed to explore effective, innovative ways of teaching and learning about Africa, to provide K-12 teachers, librarians and educators with information and ideas, and to enable participants and their students to explore the diversity of Africa and its importance in the world community.

Participants may attend all of the ASA conference sessions as part of the workshop for CEU credits and in addition receive extensive handouts. A ceremony to award the authors and illustrators of the best children's books on Africa is the highlight of the program. The "Children's Africana Book Award" was established in 1991 by the African Studies Association Outreach Council to encourage the writing, publication and use of accurate, balanced children's materials on Africa.

Date: Saturday, December 7, 2002
Time: 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Location: Howard University
Armour J. Blackburn Center Auditorium
2400 Sixth Street NW
Washington, DC 20059

For further information, contact:
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The African Studies Association www.africanstudies.org/ was founded in 1957 as a non-profit organization open to all individuals and institutions interested in African affairs. Its mission is to bring together people with a scholarly and professional interest in Africa.

The ASA's 45th annual meeting "*Africa in the Information and Technology Age*" is being held at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC, December 5-8, 2002.

WRITE TO US:

We would like to hear from you. Please share with us any stories, best practices, suggestions and any concerns you may have. For questions regarding this newsletter and other Outreach Activities, please contact us via email at afriout@indiana.edu, or via telephone (on the back cover).



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