

WEST AFRICAN  
RESEARCH  
ASSOCIATION

## Fall Newsletter 2014

In this Issue:

Women in West Africa



This edition of the WARA newsletter is dedicated to the strength, agility, and tenacity that characterize the women of West Africa. Articles feature historical, sociological, political and artistic portraits of women that attest to the rich scholarly work happening around woman as subject. Trevor Getz's feature article examines the ways 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gold Coast women inserted themselves into judicial systems and therefore history as they fought the stigma of slavery and sought the protections and respect the status of wife could yield. Evelyn Sakeah writes insightfully about the issues of skilled birth attendants in rural areas in Northern Ghana where, although many women have access to Community-Based Health Services, there is still much to be done to be sure mothers have information, resources, and choices that inform the way they deliver children.

The newsletter also features articles from WARA fellows and members. We return to Northern Ghana in an essay highlighting the way women's art in the form of wall paintings shifts from the everyday to the sacred by way of the historical and contemporary to form rare understandings of culture and spirituality. Readers will be enlightened by discussions of Dagara women who play instruments traditionally associated with male purview. Erin Kitchell links issues of the sustainability of pastoral lands to politics and economics in the Sahel. Further emphasis is placed on the importance of agropastoral lands in the fellow's update titled "Food and Nationalism in an Independent Ghana," where she notes that crucial to Ghana's development of a national cuisine is the infrastructure to harvest, process and disseminate crops. In addition to the work that seeks to sustain the body, articles from WARA fellows and members comment on the continuing physical, mental, and socio-economic health challenges imposed by diseases like Ebola, the rights of LGBTI people, and traditional understandings of women that have kept this segment of the population on the fringes of political life. However, as this newsletter indicates, work about, for, and by women is one way to move the conversations forward.

### Claiming shame and respectability: the courtroom testimony of nineteenth century Gold Coast women

By Trevor Getz

It is almost a cliché to say that professional historians have written little about the everyday experiences of women, and especially non-elite African women, in the nineteenth century. Over the past two decades or so, historians seeking to reverse this silencing and learn more about the lives of women in 19<sup>th</sup> century Gold Coast Colony and Protectorate have pursued two general strategies. The first is to look for sources outside of written documents from that era, most of which were produced by men and focused on male actors. These scholars often use linguistic analysis and oral history techniques to interpret sources such as personal recollections, oral narratives, proverbs, and family rumors. A second approach is to concentrate on reading colonial and missionary documents of the era against the grain for evidence about female agency, worldview, and action.

Used in tandem, these two strategies can help us to excavate women's lived experiences from beneath the discourse that operationalized colonialism in the last decades of the nineteenth century and that continue to obscure historians' ability to read nineteenth century women's experiences today. Among the most significant of the signs within this discourse was "slave", a label through which both missionaries and colonial officials viewed Gold Coast women in this era of abolition. As understood by colonial officials, slavery was a particular configuration of dependency, labor, and social relationships that was both illegal and violated the enlightenment mindset while at the same time serving the economic and political needs of the colony. Thus

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—The Newsletter Committee

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## Message From Board President



I begin by expressing WARA/WARC's solidarity with and sympathy for the people of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone as they face a horrible epidemic of Ebola haemorrhagic fever. The "international community" in general and the U.S. in particular have not responded swiftly and effectively despite benefitting for years from exploitative resource extraction from these countries and early warnings about the magnitude of the crisis offered by

the WHO and others. Furthermore, shallow and racist reporting by the U.S. media has made matters worse by fanning hysteria and spreading inane moralism and misinformation rather than useful, scientifically informed public health information. For example, CNN maps have mislabeled Niger and Senegal as "red states" of the epidemic. (CNN also mislabeled Niger, identifying it as Nigeria.) Rather, Senegalese medical experts, in collaboration with CDC officials, should be congratulated for successfully containing the one case of the virus in the country. The mislabeling of Niger and Senegal and West Africa in general not only hurts the morale of the people it also may damage business and other important activities. This tragedy is also having an impact on WARC, as two of our three planned study abroad programs as well as several of our usual summer groups have cancelled their visits for 2015. Nevertheless, WARC remains open and active, and I encourage you not to cancel your own travel plans to Senegal. As one of WARA's initiatives to address this crisis, WARC will host a virtual panel on Ebola for the ASA. I encourage you to attend this as well as the WARA panel, "The Place of Language in War-making and Peacebuilding in Africa."

Changes to the Board of Directors include the departure of our long-time Board Treasurer, Jemadari Kamara, who will rotate off the Board this fall after serving two terms. I sincerely thank him for his dedicated and professional service to WARA. I am pleased to welcome incoming Treasurer, Cynthia Ezeani. Cynthia holds degrees in Law and in Banking and Financial Law and brings significant non-profit management and fundraising experience to the position. I express WARA's sincere gratitude to Tarshia Stanley, who has stepped down from her board position, especially for her valuable work on the newsletter committee. I am pleased to report that the board has voted to appoint Mary Ellen Lane to fill the seat vacated by Tarshia. We look forward to Mary Ellen's wisdom, experience, and continuing guidance.

The WARA Executive Committee held a very productive mid-year meeting in April at Lafayette College, where we were once again graciously hosted by Vice President Wendy Wilson Fall. We will hold a full-day meeting of the entire WARA Board November 19.

I encourage all current and prospective members to attend our annual General Membership Meeting and Reception on Friday, evening. This is an opportunity to celebrate our achievements, reconnect with one another, and share ideas about future WARA initiatives.

—Scott M. Youngstedt

## Historian Boubacar Barry to receive 2014 ASA Distinguished Africanist Award



Eminent historian Boubacar Barry is being honored this year with the Distinguished Africanist Award, an award established by the ASA to recognize and honor individuals who have contributed a lifetime record of outstanding scholarship in their respective field of African studies and service to the Africanist community. Professor Barry's work has transformed scholarship on the Senegambia and made major contributions to the study of West Africa and the Atlantic world.

Professor Barry will be honored at the ASA Awards Ceremony Saturday, November 22nd, 7:30—9:00 pm.

We will also be raising a toast to Professor Barry at the WARA reception on Friday, November 21st. Please join us in congratulating our friend and colleague!

### WARC Travel Grantees

#### Spring 2014 Awardees

- *Oluchi Ezekannagha* (University of Ibadan) for research in Benin and Senegal, "How food production systems affect the nutrition of smallholder farmers"
- *Ibrahima Ka* (Universite Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis) for research in Burkina Faso, "Défis de sécurisation foncière en Afrique de l'ouest: exemples du Sénégal et du Burkina Faso"
- *Kossi-Kuma Agbalevon* (Université Polytechnique de Bobo-Dioulasso) for research in Senegal, "Complications du diabète à Bobo-Dioulasso: Contribution aux méthodes de prévention"

#### Fall 2014 Awardees

- *Kouloung D. Eyoukéani* (University of Lomé) for research in Senegal. "L'ONU face aux enjeux et défis de la reconstruction des états d'Afrique subsaharienne affectés par des conflits armés internes: les exemples Libérien, Sierra-Léonais, Ivoirien et Centrafricain"
- *Abadjaye Faouziath Sanoussi* (Université d'Abomey-Calavi) for research in Senegal. "Effet du séchage traditionnel et amélioré sur les propriétés nutritionnelles et la teneur en vitamine A des cultivars à chair colorée de patate douce du Bénin et leur farine composite pour l'alimentation de sevrage"
- *Togo Mouhamed Traore* (Auburn University in Alabama) for research in Burkina Faso. "Modeling Households' Demand for Agricultural Food Commodities in Burkina Faso"
- *Essodolom Taale* (Université de Ouagadougou) for research in Benin. "Recherche de Gènes de Molécules Bioactives a Partir de Souches Bactériennes: Cas des Bactéries Productrices de Bactériocinènes"

# News From WARA and WARC Headquarters

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## WARA Director



Hats off to all our members who chipped in to help us make it over the finish line in this year's Giving Common Challenge! Not only did we cross the \$10K finish line before the deadline, but we crossed it first! This is a great accomplishment for WARA and we look forward to continuing the tradition next fall, so plan now to include WARA in your annual giving. Funds raised through the Giving Common help make it possible for WARA to continue its support to scholars, its outreach activities, documentation work, and other critical activities. This kind of support of WARA becomes more and more important as our traditional sources of funding diminish.

This summer, Dr. Christopher Tuttle took over as the new Executive Director of CAORC. On behalf of all of us at WARA, I would like to offer him a hearty welcome. Following in the footsteps of Mary Ellen Lane is not an easy task, but Chris has jumped right in to continue the tradition of providing us the kind of valued support and counsel that is the trademark of CAORC.

A number of WARA grantees conducted their research over the past few months; some of their reports will be found in these pages. The fall cohort of WARC Travel Grantees has just been announced. The 2015 Saharan Crossroads fellows will be announced in December.

Congratulations from WARA to Professor Boubacar Barry, long-time WARA friend and colleague, who has been named as the recipient of the 2014 ASA Distinguished Africanist Award. Congratulations also go to Professor Ibrahima Thioub on his new position as Recteur of Université Cheikh Anta Diop.

In the midst of these accomplishments and congratulations, on all our minds is the unfolding emergency in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea and the toll it is taking on the whole region. The disruption of normal relations and trajectories in a region marked by deep interconnections will surely have far reaching economic and political consequences. In the affected countries, health care systems weakened by recent conflict and decades of structural adjustment policies are collapsing under the demands put on them by Ebola. At the same time, one is humbled to see the incredible heroism of people on the ground as they join the fight against the virus—doctors and nurses who are caring for the ill; transport workers and the wide range of support staff running clinics and hospitals; those comforting the sick and burying the dead; lab technicians and the scientists working to find a cure—all are doing herculean tasks that put their lives on the line every day. On behalf of the entire WARA community, I extend our greetings of solidarity to all of these people and to everyone whose families and communities are being affected by the virus. May it very soon be history.

As always, WARA is grateful for the support it receives from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the Department of State, support that makes our fellowship programs possible; as well as for our funding through the Title VI AORC program, which provides support for operations of WARC in Dakar.

—Jennifer J Yanco

## WARC Director



After WARC's annual vacation in August, the staff reported back to work on September 1st with their signature commitment to WARC visitors, job satisfaction, and professional excellence.

With the demanding agendas ahead, their engagement is key to meeting the challenges facing us. The International Youth Foundation (IYF) established in Baltimore (Maryland) and conducting training projects for young leaders the world over selected WARC to implement a one-year project entitled Jeunesse, Entreprise et Transformation Sociale (JETS) for 15 young Senegalese leaders and entrepreneurs. The funding made available by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust to the Senegalese government (Ministry of Youth) and managed by UNESCO were entrusted to IYF for the implementation of the project. Both UNESCO and the Senegalese ministry showed their full satisfaction and confidence with WARC as the implementing partner of the training project.

Shortly after the August Africa-USA Summit in Washington, the White House announced the start of the Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI), one of the landmark moves made by President Obama for the African continent. The announcement stated that the West African Research Center (WARC) would be one of the three institutions selected to implement the YALI project in francophone West Africa.

We should add as well the Goree Island Archeological Digital Repository and the African Slave Wrecks Project initiated by the National Museum of African American History and Culture at the Smithsonian Institution, which will be implemented by WARC, University Cheikh Anta Diop and Oceanium in Dakar.

Meanwhile, WARC's ordinary activities are being implemented at a satisfactory pace: researchers are being affiliated and some of them are already on site conducting their research, public events at the Center are being planned including a special series, tentatively called les Samedis de l'Economie au WARC, that will focus on the economies of West African countries. Some cosmetic touches were also introduced with the long-dead live fence surrounding part of the premises being replaced by a wall soon to be painted and embellished with decorative plants.

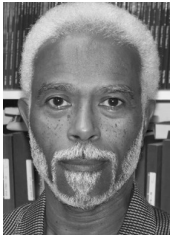
We are delighted with the appointment of Professor Ibrahima Thioub as Recteur (Vice President) of University Cheikh Anta Diop. WARC's relations with Senegalese universities (and especially with University Cheikh Anta Diop and University Gaston Berger) have always been a priority and, with a new recteur who is also a former president of AROA, WARC and UCAD will be working together even more closely.

We continue to be alarmed at the deadly incursion of the Ebola epidemic in some West African countries. That Senegal has so far been spared is no reason for complacency. Indeed, the toll so far in Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, and Liberia is rising daily. We hope to explore this crisis from an interdisciplinary lens during a special video conference session from WARC at the ASA Conference in Indianapolis in November.

—Ousmane Sène

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## Message From Board Treasurer



Over the past year the WARA Finance/Development Committee has monitored WARA's finances, engaged in development planning, established a fundraising campaign, collaborated with WARC to enhance their development objectives and worked to clarify our corporate support policies. The committee completed overseeing successful audits of both WARA and WARC. These audits are important parts of our continuing process of maintaining transparent, accountable records. They allow us to monitor our finances, upgrade our record keeping and ensure transparency in WARA and WARC's accounting systems.

Central to the finance monitoring function of the committee has been our initiatives to stabilize operating expenditures within the organization to ensure longer term institutional security. In order to facilitate development activity the committee has formulated an *Ideas Matter* Campaign. Still in its formative stages, the campaign will assist the organization in establishing an endowed fund to support awards for scholars in Africa. Initiated in concert with some of our pioneering activists and ambassadors, we hope to seed this endowed fund with resources that will guarantee greater independence and security for our award activities.

The process of fundraising is continuous. We are always submitting grants proposals to appropriate sources. However, the independent generation of resources through membership dues and our own fundraising is important to external funders and for the organization's autonomous stability. Participation in the Boston Foundation's *Giving Common Challenge* has been an important step for our fundraising and membership development efforts. This year we exceeded our goal by raising more than \$10,000. The outstanding work of our staff, Stephanie Guirand and Jennifer Yanco, guided the success of this effort. This included the participation of WARA member Dr. Henry Nii Nmai Bulley on a panel organized to kick-off this year's *Giving Common Challenge*. (see page 23). Committee members Pearl Robinson and Jemadari Kamara participated by sharing information about WARA and soliciting contributions. With such a successful third initiative made with the Boston Foundation through the *Giving Common Challenge*, we feel confident in making the Giving Common Challenge an annual WARA event. It has benefitted us in various ways—in our growing membership renewals and in attracting new support.

Our commitment to WARC has also proven to be very rewarding. The new, video-conference center has been very well received by the Dakar community. The use of the center has generated revenue as expected so that a steady stream of resources are now repaying the investment we made in the WARC center. We are very proud of the enhanced capacity of WARC and the tremendous programming that is going on at the center in part facilitated by our investment.

WARA's current fiscal state is stable. Future fiscal stability requires that we continue to seek autonomous support.

—Jemadari Kamara

## WARA at the ASA



### WARA Membership Meeting & Reception

Friday, November 21, 9:30 pm

Conference Hotel, White River Ballroom-C

#### **SPECIAL**

Virtual Panel Direct from WARC

***Ebola: Exposing the Fault Lines***

Friday 10:00 – 11:45

White River Ballroom-E

### WARA ASA Panel

The Place of Language in War-making and Peacebuilding in Africa

Friday, November 21st, 4:45pm—6:00 pm  
(Session VIII)

The panel addresses the uses of language in promoting conflict or building peace through studies on Mauritania, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Kenya. The papers range from ones in which language was used as both an instrument of oppression and resistance to cases in which language is a challenging and potent force in peacebuilding.

**Chair:** Abu Bah (Northern Illinois University)

#### **Panelists:**

Maimouna Barro (U of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

Michael J. Montesano (Indiana University)

Leigh Swigart (Brandeis University)

Fredrick Ogenga (Rongo University College, Kenya)

**Discussant:** Eileen Julien (Indiana University)

### Claiming Shame and Respectability: The Courtroom Testimony of Nineteenth Century Gold Coast Women

administrators felt a pressing concern to define, demarcate, and deal with slavery. This process of definition, which was expressed in the anti-slavery laws of 1874 and the courts that enforced them, brought colonizers together with local elite males whose collaboration or at least accommodation was necessary. Together, administrators and male notables construed slavery in this place and time as a particular kind of relationship whose binary opposite was a set of legitimate relationships including marriage, apprenticeship, and parental authority over children.

While generally serving the needs of men, the formal definition (and criminalization) of slavery also produced a new arena for women to make claims about slavery and marriage. Both in anti-slavery courts and in personal interactions outside of the official sphere, women tried to use the new laws and new definitions of slavery after 1874 to pursue personal objectives. Their goals were both changes in status that could enhance their living conditions and, at the same time, movement along an emotional and life-long continuum from shame to respectability. Understanding contests over slavery and marriage thus opens a window onto broader issues of daily life experience and emotion affecting women (and society in general) in the Gold Coast in this period.

Probably the richest source set for understanding these contests are records from colonial courtrooms, which include synopses and in a few cases full accounts of testimony. Court records can be supplemented by additional sources such as the reports of missionaries, including local evangelists like Theophile Opoku, as well as official communiqués. Problematically, these sources all tend to flatten women's perspectives and experiences and to place them within colonial and ethnographic modes of understanding. In order to approach the perspectives of women who are the subjects of these records, therefore, it is necessary to orient oneself using oral traditions and other sources from outside the colonial canon. For example, a broad range of oral traditions provides a basis for understanding slavery within the setting of a wider body of patron-client (*ako-awura*) relationships. Proverbs help to demonstrate the ways in which shame attaches to the condition of slavery but that no similar shame stigma was associated with being a debt pawn. Interviews conducted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century also help to show the expectations women had as wives, and point to a continuum that even enslaved women could traverse toward becoming viewed primarily as wives rather than slaves.

These findings, based on oral traditions and oral histories, are supported by the claims that women made in colonial courtrooms. Two examples will have to suffice here. The first is the case of Abena Mensah. Abena was a young Ewe woman

who had been kidnapped twice and then sold to a man named Yaw Awuah. Testimony from several witnesses suggests that Yaw married her at the same time that he purchased her. Yaw then brought Abena to the coast, where he left her with a business associate named Kwamina Adu. Testimony from another adolescent woman who knew Abena suggests that she knew she had been sold to Adu, and that she was unhappy with this fact. However, lacking another option, she stayed with Adu until, ten days later, when he informed her that she had been purchased so as to marry one of his dependents: a man named Tandoe.

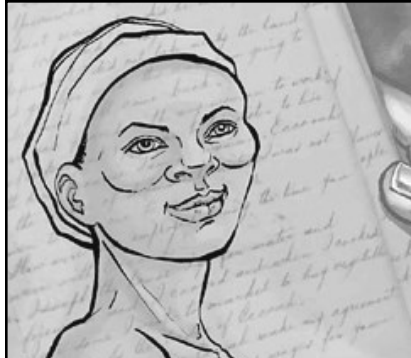


Illustration from *Abina and the Important Men*

In her testimony, Abena made two claims. First, despite the shame attached to slavery, she claimed that she had been illegally enslaved in order to establish that she should not have to stay with Adu. At the same time, she claimed the respectable position of wife by stating clearly that Yaw Awuah had married her and treated her as spouse. By making both claims, Abena advanced both an instrumental strategy to gain her independence from Adu and Tandoe and an affective claim to the respectability due to a wife.

A second illuminating case, from 1874, demonstrates the way in which slavery was connected to shame and difficult to differentiate in some cases from marriage. The case was brought to the Cape Coast High Court by a young woman from Denkyira named Akua Fua. Akua testified that she had fallen in love with a man named Yaw Abuah. The two ran away together to his family in Wassa Fiase, where they lived as man and wife. The Denkyira authorities appealed to the paramount chief of Wassa Fiase for her return, but the lovers refused to separate. Gradually, however, their relationship deteriorated. When, during the Anglo-Asante war, the two had to flee to Denkyira along with many others in Wassa, she chose to return to her own family. When Yaw demanded that Akua return with him, she refused, and claimed that both he and his mother allegedly called her a "slave", whereas she was actually Yaw's wife. In this case, Akua rejected the shame-laden title slave. However, she also claimed the right to free herself from being Yaw's wife because whereas she had done her duty by providing him with labor, Yaw had "ill-treated" her, contravening the rights due to a wife. This was probably her major complaint, and she should have had no problem leaving under Akan rules of marriage. However, she would have had to leave her daughter behind. By advancing the particular complaint that she had been called a slave, Akua was able to force colonial courts to hear a case that was, otherwise, a domestic dispute in which British authorities would have preferred to avoid intervening. Thus Akua opportunistically saw the anti-slavery laws as a means to effect her release and that of her daughter from Yaw, and used them effectively. At the same time, she was able to publicly deny that she was or had ever been a slave.

Other sources suggest that the context of abolition created

Continued from page 1

opportunities for women to advance claims outside of the courtroom as well. For example, Theophilus Opoku, the indigenous convert and Basel Mission cleric, reported in 1885 on a woman who died in childbirth in Kukuruntumi. According to Opoku, the woman was a "domestic slave bought by the man, and she became his wife." At one point, perhaps soon after the 1874 promulgation of the anti-slavery laws, she had threatened to desert her husband and obtain a certificate of freedom if he continued to ill-treat her, but that the issue had been quickly settled by some concession on his part."

Taken together, this body of evidence demonstrates the ways in which women used claims of enslavement and marriage to effect material advantages, achieve freedom from undesirable relationships, and to make claims to respectability or to erase shame. Of course, this argument shouldn't be taken as a suggestion that colonial abolitionism was organized primarily for women's needs. Rather, women strove to find ways to turn the new environment of colonial abolition to their purposes. Understanding these strategies offers access to new insights into the operation of slavery, abolition, and colonialism in global context.



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## Notes

- For example, Kwabena Adu-Boahen, *Post-Abolition Slaveholding in the Gold Coast: Slave Mistresses of Coastal Fante, 1807-1874*, (Lambert: Saarbrücken, 2011). Peter Haenger, *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast: Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage in West Africa*, (Basel: P Schlettwein, 2000)121-128.
- Kwasi Konadu, "Euro-African commerce and social chaos: Akan societies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries," *History in Africa* 36 (2009): 265-92.
- Peggy Appiah, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Ivor Agyeman-Duah, *Bu Me Be : Proverbs of the Akans*, (United Kingdom: Ayebia Clark Publishing Limited, 2007) proverbs 2002, 2004, 2452, 3161, 4520.
- National Archives of Ghana Public Records and Archives Administration Department (hereafter PRAAD) Supreme Court Files (hereafter SCT) 5/4/19, Regina v Quamina Eddoo 10 Nov 1876. Abena is an Akan day-name. Mensah usually means the fifth daughter in a family . In the transcript: Abina Mansah
- Yaw is an Akan day-name. I am speculating that his last name was Awuah, related to a village near Saltpond, but I could be wrong. In the transcript: Yowawah.
- Kwamina is a Fante variation of an Akan day-name. This name is common in Ivory Coast but not in Ghana.
- PRAAD SCT 5/4/18, Eccoah Fawah v. Yaw Abboah, 28 December 1874. Akua is an Akan day-name. In the testimony: Eccoah Fawah.
- In the testimony: Yaw Abboah- For example, Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, *"I Will Not Eat Stone": A Women's History of Colonial Asante*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000). Cati Coé, "How Debt Became Care: Child Pawning and its Transformations in Akuapem, the Gold Coast, 1874-1929", *Africa* , 82 (2012), 287-311.
- Basel Mission Society Archived-1.41.061, Theophilus Opoku, Annual Report for 1884, 5 March 1885. My thanks to Paul Jenkins for this source.

## The Boston Foundation, The Giving Common & WARA



L to R: WARA Director Jennifer Yanco, Facebook Guru John Haydon, and Director of Development for Community Rowing, Inc, Tracy Smith at August TBF Workshop of non-profit effectiveness

Since our first Giving Common Challenge in 2012, WARA has worked closely with The Boston Foundation, one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the nation. TBF plays a major civic leadership role by publishing research, convening groups to discuss challenges and create agendas for change.

In 2012, The Boston Foundation created the Giving Common, an online platform that allows non-profit organizations to present comprehensive information about their programs, governance, and finances. WARA is one of over 900 New England-based non-profits that are part of the Giving Common.

Earlier this summer, WARA was named one of two 'super-star non-profits' among all the Giving Common organizations, and was invited to present at both a webinar and an in-person workshop on non-profit effectiveness.

More recently, at the kick-off event for this year's Giving Common Challenge, WARA teamed up with another Giving Common member to host a public forum entitled *African Innovators*. Introductory remarks were made by The Boston Foundation Vice President for Program, Travis McCready. Among the three panelists was WARA member Dr. Henry Bulley who spoke about his work as chair of the Africa section of the International Association of Landscape Ecology.

The Giving Common is a powerful tool for WARA and makes it possible for us to present our organization to a wide range of potential donors. It is also an easy and secure way for members and friends to donate to WARA. Please keep WARA in mind as you make your annual giving plans. Our expanding range of programs requires expanding resources.



## The Giving Common

An Initiative of the Boston Foundation

### Can Community-based health planning and services program be used to promote skilled attendants at birth in rural areas? Evidence from Northern Ghana



#### Background

In Ghana, between 1,400 and 3,900 women and girls die each year due to pregnancy related complications [1, 2]. In 2013 alone, approximately 3,100 women in Ghana died from pregnancy-related complications [3]. An estimated two-thirds of these deaths occur in late pregnancy through to 48 hours after delivery [2]. Recent statistics

point to a maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Ghana of 380 deaths per 100,000 live births. This MMR is high when compared with that of other sub-Saharan African countries such as Namibia, which has a MMR of 130 deaths per 100,000 live births but is lower than the sub-Saharan African regional estimated average of 510 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births [3].

In sub-Saharan Africa, only half of women deliver with the assistance of skilled attendants [4]. In Ghana, the skilled delivery rate is slightly higher (68 percent); but there are rural-urban disparities. In 2011, only 54 percent of rural women were delivered by skilled attendants at their birth compared to 88 percent of urban women [5]. In rural areas of the Upper East Region (UER) which is the focus of this paper, the level is higher (67 percent) than in other rural areas in Ghana [5].

Experts agree that access to skilled attendants at birth (doctors, nurses, midwives) is one way to decrease maternal deaths, and such access should be available to women in rural areas as well as urban areas [6]. Since 2000, the government of Ghana has had an innovative program to promote primary health care in rural communities—the Community-based Health Services and Planning (CHPS) Program. In 2005, the Ghana Health Service piloted a program that involved training Community Health officers (CHOs) as midwives to address the gap in skilled attendance in the rural UER. Community participation was an integral part of CHPS and the CHO-midwifery pilot project from its inception, and results are promising [7].

The Community-Based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) program was established in 2000 to improve access and quality of health care and family planning services in Ghana. The CHPS Initiative emanated from the Navrongo experiment known as the Community Health and Family Planning (CHFP) project designed as a community-based model for providing integrated health services to rural communities. The experiences and lessons of the 'Navrongo Experiment' serve as the basis for the establishment of the CHPS program. The CHPS program is implemented by the Ghana Health Service (GHS), but with substantial contribution from the local communities with the provision of land and labor for building CHPS compounds [7]. Community Volunteers undertake health education and management of minor ailments [7].

The GHS has trained a cadre of health care providers known as

Community Health Officers (CHOs) to provide skilled attendance at delivery to women in rural areas through the CHPS program. A CHO-midwife is an auxiliary nurse with a two-year training in basic nursing and a two-year training in midwifery by WHO standards to provide basic health services including skilled delivery care in rural areas [7].

#### Study Setting

The study was conducted in the Kassena-Nankana East (KNE), Kassena-Nankana West (KNW), and Bongo Districts of the Upper-East region (UER) of Ghana. The UER, in northern Ghana, is one of the two regions in Ghana that are most remote from Accra, the capital. According to the 2010 census, the total population of the region is 1,046,545. The KNE district had an estimated population of 109,944 whereas the KNW district, newly carved out of the Kassena-Nankana District in UER, had an estimated population of 70,667 in 2012. Bongo district's 2010 estimated population was 84,545. KNE and KNW are predominately Kassenas and Nankanas and the Bulsas as a minority group in KNE. In the Bongo district, the people are mostly Frafras [8].

#### Ethics Approval

Ethical approval was granted by Navrongo Health Research Centre and the Boston University Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) before we conducted the study. The Boston University IRB reference number is H-31245.

#### Study Design and Methods

The main study constituted a post-hoc outcome evaluation and employed an intrinsic case study design with quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In this study, we focus on data collected from a household survey with women who had ever given birth in the last three years prior to the survey to ascertain their awareness of the program, use of the services and determine factors that are associated with skilled attendants at birth. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire from January 13, 2012 to May 31, 2012.

#### Sampling and Sample Size

The sample size was calculated based on a proportion of deliveries supervised by trained professionals of 50% in the UER with annual births of 8,918 in the three districts and 95% confidence interval as well as a corresponding  $p < 0.05$  for significance. We used the formula sample size  $n = [DEFF * Np (1 - p)] / [(d^2 / Z^2_{1-\alpha/2} * (N-1) + p * (1-p))]$  [10] and this gave us the sample size of 369 women. Assuming a refusal rate of 10%, the total sample size for the three districts was 407. In each district, women were included in the study based on the proportion of deliveries in that district.

#### Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to describe the data. Where relevant, the chi-square test was used to test for group differences.

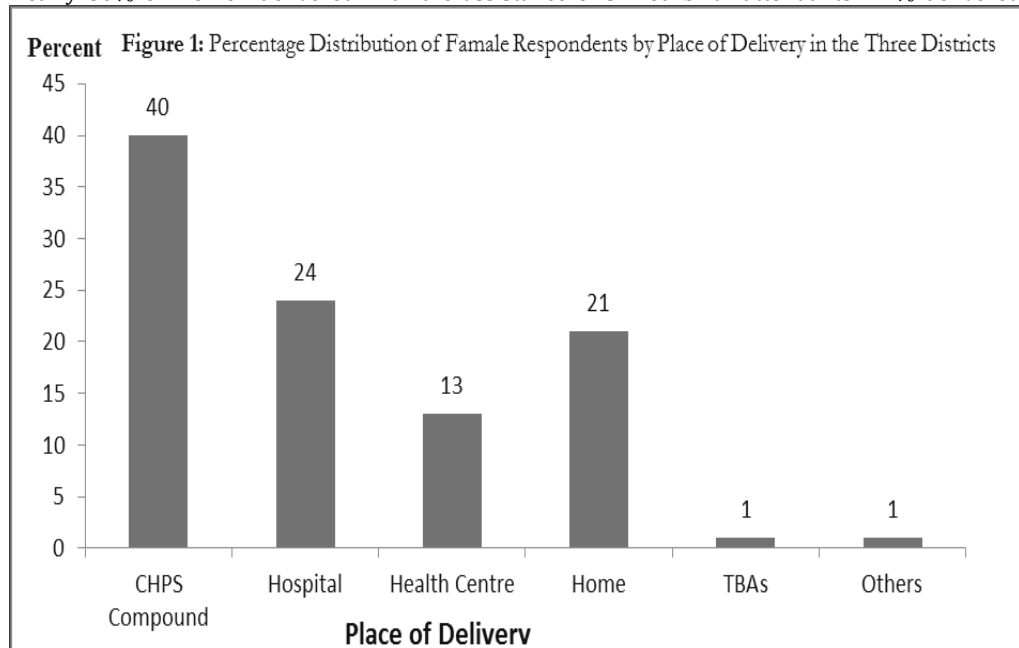
A total of 407 women were interviewed yielding a response rate of 100%: 165 women were from Bongo, and 121 women each from the KNE and KNW. Of all the respondents, 44% were



# Feature Article

Frafras, 30% were Nankanas, and 24% were Kassenas. About two-thirds (64%) of the respondents were Christians, 28% practiced traditional religion, and 9% were Muslims. Nearly half of the women have had some formal education (mostly primary level). Similarly, nearly half of the husbands have had education but their level of education was higher compared with the women. Of the 407 respondents, 93% had heard of the CHOs working in their vicinity. When respondents were asked who they believed provided skilled delivery services in their community, most respondents (83%) reported CHO-midwives; 10% mentioned midwives/nurses, doctors in the health centers/clinics, and district hospitals; 5% reported the TBAs who provide delivery services in their communities; and 2% mentioned the CHOs.

Nearly 80% of women delivered with the assistance of skilled birth attendants: 42% delivered with CHO-midwives; 35% with



doctors or midwives at health facilities; 2% with CHOs, and 21% with TBAs or other older women. Regarding future deliveries, 76% of the women indicated preference to deliver with a CHO-midwife, while 20% intended to deliver with health personnel at the hospital or health center.

Figure 1 presents the place of delivery. Of the 407 respondents, 40% delivered in CHPS compounds, 24% delivered in hospitals, 21% reported giving birth at home, 13% delivered in the health centers, and only 1% delivered at the TBAs home or other places respectively. Nearly 80% of respondents reported that they delivered in a health facility.

## Conclusion

The CHPS compounds have become the preferred place of delivery for many women in rural communities and a majority of women were supervised by the CHO-midwives in CHPS zones. However, quite a high percentage of women still deliver at home, hence the need for more education to make sure that every pregnant woman receives skilled care at birth. Also, community and health system challenges must be addressed to ensure effective and efficient delivery of the services.

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### Visualizing Cultural Identity: Tradition and Innovation in Wall Paintings by Women in Northern Ghana



I am a third-year doctoral student in the History of Art Department and the African Studies Program at Indiana University, Bloomington. I was awarded a WARA Pre-Doctoral Research Fellowship in the spring of 2012 and undertook my research project between January and April, 2013.

My research concerns the distinctive red, black, and white designs, known as *bambɔlse*, painted by Frafra women on the walls of their earthen compound-style homes in Ghana's Upper East Region. These paintings have long been a highly celebrated aspect of this area's indigenous artistic culture. My dissertation research concerns how this tradition has changed over time and to what extent it is being continued today.

The primary objective of my pre-doctoral project was to gain a broad understanding of current wall painting practices in the Upper East Region, mainly through interviews with elderly female artists. My questions included: Who still paints? Where are they painting? Why are they or are they not painting? What types of designs are they painting? I also asked questions concerning broader theoretical issues, such as what has been the impact of various institutions—like NGOs, governmental organizations, and individual supporters—and of religion—particularly Islam and Catholicism—on the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural practices in the Upper East Region today?

I focused on a sample of seven rural communities, spread across the area, in order to examine the variation in styles and the range of degrees to which wall painting is still being practiced in different locations. I conducted group interviews in Bongo and Zuarungu-Moshi, each with 10 women, in which I asked participants to identify designs on the walls of painted houses depicted in a set of photographs previously taken in the area. I visited painted homes and conducted interviews with their female residents. I focused my attention particularly on the community of Sirigu, where local women have formed the Sirigu Women's Association of Pottery and Arts (SWOPA), an organization that has been central to the preservation and revitalization of traditional arts in recent decades. While in Sirigu, I interviewed a number of the organization's members and staff. Most importantly, I was able to observe and participate in plastering and painting processes in Zuarungu-Moshi, Bongo, and Sirigu, and to conduct interviews with participating artists. I also explored my research questions through material documentation—including audio- and video-

recording, photography, and extensive field notes—and investigations of archival material in Accra and Tamale.

I found that the extent to which traditional plastering and painting practices are being continued varies greatly between the communities I visited, with Sirigu being the region's most significant stronghold of traditional cultural practices. It seems that younger women in a number of communities are not interested in painting their walls, meaning that *bambɔlse* is now being done almost solely by elderly women. I have focused especially, therefore, on creating a lasting record of the knowledge retained by these aging artists about *bambɔlse* and its history.

In addressing the influence of NGOs on traditional artistic practices, I focused primarily on SWOPA in Sirigu. This organization and its staff have been remarkably innovative and successful in adapting their traditional artistic practices to appeal to foreign tourists visiting the community. My research suggests that this has resulted in both strengthening Sirigu's local traditions and improving the incomes of its female artists. In addition, the efforts of SWOPA have raised awareness of and appreciation for traditional wall painting among both local and foreign audiences. While this has clearly benefited the community in various ways, I have been and will continue to be interested in learning more about local attitudes toward the changes to traditional artistry that have accompanied SWOPA's success.

As for the impact of outside religions, previous scholars have emphasized the influence of Islam on indigenous Frafra culture in general and on wall painting specifically. My research, however, has suggested that the influence of Islam is now vastly overshadowed by that of Catholicism. Today, this influence can be seen in both the application of traditional *bambɔlse* on the walls of churches, including the historic Navrongo Minor Basilica and the Sirigu Catholic church, and the incorporation of Catholic imagery into traditional *bambɔlse* on the walls of homes and those of the SWOPA compound.

The WARA Pre-Doctoral Research Fellowship allowed me to gather a great deal of vital information for my dissertation research project. Thanks to a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad award, I will be able to follow up on this preliminary data during nine months of field work from August of 2013 through May of 2014.



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### The Effect of Institutional Arrangements on Climate Risk and Conflict Resolution in Agropastoral Zones



From May 25 to July 20, I carried out exploratory research for my dissertation in geography. My work focuses on local land-use planning and conflict management in agropastoral areas of the Sahel. Specifically, I explore how varied social histories around land tenure affect livestock mobility. The assumption that grazing was inefficient and destructive has historically privileged agricultural production and marginalized pastoral livelihoods in the Sahel. The recent passage of national legislation protecting mobility signals a paradigm shift in land use strategies and creates a new political space for a range of actors to negotiate institutional arrangements. However, broad statements legitimating mobility have not been translated into effective local level arrangements for protecting pastoral resources (water points, pastures, and points of passage through cropped areas). The elaboration of local land use plans that include provisions for pastoral migration routes is proliferating across West Africa, often in the form of negotiated agreements facilitated by NGOs. These local conventions are meant to reconcile state and customary law, providing a role for customary institutions in resource governance without rigidly codifying local practice. Local conventions function as a contract between parties, but obtain juridical force when signed by the administrative head of the commune.

My dissertation will explore the impacts of local politics on the elaboration, formalization, and implementation of local conventions for pastoral resources in various communes. WARA pre-doctoral travel funding allowed me to visit districts in northern Burkina Faso, central Mali, and eastern Senegal to determine appropriate sites for long-term fieldwork. Group interviews and collection of field reports from the grey literature also provided preliminary data that I will use to refine my research questions and develop an appropriate methodology. Preliminary research involved a series of focus groups at the village and commune levels to discuss the nature of local conflicts over land use. Meetings were conducted in Bambara, Fulfulde, and Mooré. I also met with commune officials to determine if negotiated agreements between various user groups existed and had been formalized as local conventions.

In Burkina Faso conflicts stem largely from changing perceptions of the rights of customary landholders (descended from the first settlers of an area) vis-a-vis more recent migrants (though the latter have often been settled locally for several generations). Protection of pastoral resources is often a

function of whether or not herding groups exercise customary authority over land at the local level. In the Mopti region of Mali, the sources and evolution of conflicts are more varied due to the diversity of pastoral resources involved and the complexity of overlapping claims by various groups to customary authority over resources. The floodplain is dominated by Fulani herders, but extensive conflict occurs over control of high value *bourgou* pastures as well as over boundaries between resource uses (pasture, rice cultivation, and fishing). Eastern Senegal is similar in many ways, but the development of cropping in the flood plain and the national policy context differ significantly. A pastoral code is currently under development; further, a new decentralization reform may shift the role of local government in natural resource management.

Site assessment also included meetings with two collaborators, the International Livestock Research Institute in Ouagadougou and the Near East Foundation in Mopti, to discuss ways to integrate my dissertation research into existing research and community development projects. I was able to attend an NEF training session for commune residents, both farmers and herders, on conflict mediation. Further, the visit allowed me to establish a relationship with the Pole Pastorale des Zones Seches, a collaborative research unit based in Dakar that includes the University of Cheikh Anta Diop, the Institut Senegalais de Recherches Agricoles, and the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD). Collaboration with PPZS will provide significant opportunities for continued collaboration with West African scholars and researchers as I complete my dissertation.



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## Food and Nationalism in an Independent Ghana



Cuisine has become an essential part of modern nation building. It can serve to unify a country by encouraging the interchange of foods between regions, classes, and ethnic groups. In essence, national cuisines can build a sense of community in the kitchen. This could be especially true for recently independent countries like Ghana with an ethnically diverse population. In evaluating the symbolic power of food in the creation of post-colonial mass societies, Ghana is an ideal case study for testing the strength of arguments by historians that nations and nationalism have been superseded by globalization as a unit of analysis.

The following questions guided my research:

1. How does consumption in post-independence West African countries like Ghana play out against this new theory of global organization?
2. To what extent are new countries like Ghana appealing to the nation state model, its rules, and how does this model fit or not fit their reality?
3. How does crafting a national cuisine help or hinder Ghanaians in their quest for a state identity and a place in the global economy?
4. In what ways does food consumption behavior impact the standing of Ghana with respect to the global commodities market and the economic security of their nation?

Study with the University of Ghana in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences has allowed me to survey the historical milieu of choices of the tastemakers of Ghana by means of unstructured and semi structured interviews, direct and indirect observation, text analysis of locally and internationally published cookbooks, data from government websites, interviews with government officials, and archival research at the Public Records and Archives Administration (PRAAD) of newspaper advertisements and travel accounts.

With support from the West African Research Association, I resided in Ghana from May 21st to July 21st 2014, in Accra, the Upper East, Northern, Ashanti, Eastern, and the Central Region, gathering data all along the way. This research has facilitated an improved understanding of the changing definitions of citizen and nation through the emblematic use of food during different stages of Ghanaian growth. Ghana has the great fortune of being blessed with acres of very fertile land. However, a neglect of alimentary agriculture (due to lack of funding) combined with a poor road and nonexistent rail system, has contributed to long chains of distribution that

inflate the cost of domestic goods. Since independence, the focus on industrial development and commodities (cash crops) at the expense of subsistence agricultural development has created a vulnerability with regards to food security that is still felt today. Efforts to import food to alleviate the problem serve to undercut the national security of the country by depleting reserves.

Realizing that this dependence on foreign imports has put them at a distinct economic disadvantage, the government has historically promoted increased food production by increasing awareness through programs such as Operation Feed Yourself, the official cultural policy of culture of "producing what you eat, eating what you produce", the annual National Farmers Day Celebration in December, and support for festivals such as the Yam Festival in Ghana, also called the "Homowo" or "To Hoot at Hunger" Festival (a celebration of victory over hunger and can be traced back to pre-colonial times when a particularly bad drought affected the population). Irrespective of this, due to the transportation situation Ghana is not currently positioned to develop a national cuisine. However, Ghana is very well situated relative to the rest of the region to improve transportation infrastructure, especially with respect to the anticipated influx of revenue from the developing petroleum sector, its ongoing emphasis on tertiary education, and the unremitting efforts of its farmers and market women who, against great odds, continue to supply Ghanaians with wholesome, delicious, and satisfying alimentionation.

My thanks to WARA for awarding me the Graduate Student Internship travel grant that allowed me to conduct field research in Ghana. This work will form the foundation of my Master's Thesis. My appreciation to Dr. Jennifer Yanco, Director of the West African Research Association for her indulgent consideration and kind assistance with my many procedural questions. I am also thankful to Professor Christina A. Nti for her support during my field research.



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## Documenting words, language use, and multilingualism in Kom and Oku



As a recipient of the WARA Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, I traveled to the North-West Region of Cameroon between June 2014 and August 2014. My objectives in research were to improve linguistic documentation of several languages of the Cameroon Grassfields, primarily Kom and Oku. On one hand, unusual vowels with fricative noise (for instance, a “v” or “z”-like sound) are common in the languages of the northern Grassfields (including Kom) but remain poorly documented. On the other hand, more basic information on these languages is lacking, with the typical level of documentation involving only a small lexicon and some grammatical sketches. As such, a more general goal of my research was to provide more basic descriptions of each language in finer detail and with an eye towards variation between speakers.

I undertook a nine-week trip to the city of Bamenda and surrounding rural areas, where I obtained a variety of high-quality audio recordings of individuals’ speech: Kom and Oku in addition to Isu, Vəŋo, Lamnso’, Limbum, and an apparently undocumented language called Ghitsaŋ. The majority of recordings are of a set list of isolated words known to exhibit variation from language to language, but also includes spontaneous speech and storytelling. Each individual recorded filled out a sociolinguistic survey to provide additional contextual information.

The result of this research is a considerably enriched corpus of material for both Kom and Oku, a substantial addition for Isu, and numerous other smaller but useful records. I plan to carry out a full analysis of the recorded data, in particular acoustic analysis of vowel quality in Kom, but for the time being, some broad findings can be highlighted.

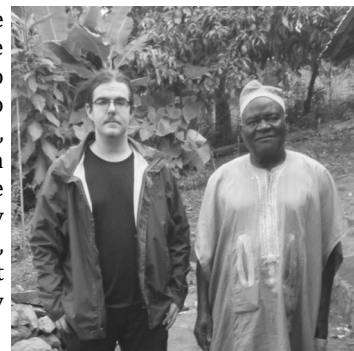
**Kom:** A wealth of data on vowels with fricative noise was collected, and has done much to clarify their fine phonetic detail. Striking variation between a v-like vowel and a z-like vowel is also robustly attested in my data, and this factor is clearly conditioned by age, if not other factors.

**Oku:** Work on Oku reveals that a second vowel with fricative noise is present in the language: a v-like vowel was already well-known, but speakers also typically have a z-like vowel. A large amount of novel lexical data has also been collected, facilitating comparisons with related languages spoken nearby.

**Isu:** Isu, a language related to Kom and Oku that was opportunistically recorded several times, exhibits several vowel sounds similar to the fricative vowels in Kom. These sounds have been completely glossed over in previous descriptions, and more work is clearly needed here.

**Ghitsaŋ:** Work at the fringes of the Kom-speaking area revealed that the “dialect” of Mejang, called Ghitsaŋ by speakers, is in fact substantially different from the surrounding languages; I collected a list of several hundred basic vocabulary items and basic grammatical constructions in an effort to more thoroughly investigate.

In addition to the above investigations, I had the privilege of giving two talks in Cameroon to concerned local groups, one to the Cameroonian Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) in Bamenda, and another to my host institution, the University of Yaoundé I.



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### **The Revolution will not be Subsidized: Dagara Female Musicians and the Problem of Development**



I first travelled to Fielmua in July 2008. I moved to the small town on the border of Ghana and Burkina Faso to study with female *gyil* players, women who perform on the Dagara xylophone associated with male spaces and men's work. Years later, after eighteen months of ethnographic research, my relationships with several Dagara women illustrate the politics of everyday solidarities. Those everyday actions, conversations, and moments shared, represent the struggles, goals, and desires of women. In this project I examine the intersections of transnational feminist thought, postcolonial theory, development ethics, and performance studies. I seek to articulate the production and contestation of power, both from a structural perspective and through individual narratives.

The WARA Post-Doctoral Fellowship supported a three-month research trip to Dagaraland. My objectives during this trip were to deepen my understanding of how performance is a site of articulating individual and group connections for Dagara women. I isolated three dimensions of how Dagara women create and challenge constrictive gender parameters: space, body and voice. I worked with individual women as well as family groups and community groups. I also incorporated research with government organizations that implement and generate gender-related policies in Ghana and Burkina Faso. In this brief essay I will discuss one moment that informs my larger project.

#### **Research Activities and Preliminary Findings**

In Dagaraland, music making is a mode of collaboration in which women create and reinforce meaningful relationships. Women's musical activities occur primarily in female-centric domestic spaces where women share knowledge, histories, and social commentary. Music making is a crucial site for establishing and maintaining these bonds, and performing acts of love, commitment, and community. Dagara women's articulations of solidarity and empowerment do not adhere to the current discourse on development, and thus are often

overlooked in official forums that mandate and recognize social change.

An important focus of this trip was on performance as a space in which women create and maintain intimacy while challenging the conventions of gendered space. In order to think about the ways that women transform space through shared experience I examine the political dimensions of loving and being loved. I began by investigating the local concepts of gender. Gendered performances must be understood as culturally intelligible, and are therefore not universally applicable. Among the Dagara, there is no direct translatable word for masculinity or femininity. People employ terms that demarcate gendered behavior, space, and work and which reveal how gender and sex are constructed for Dagara individuals. These boundaries extend to musical life as well. Dagara musical practice is characterized by the gendering of instrumental and vocal performance, performance space, genres, and dance styles.

The Dagara speak of a woman's place, "pɔgbɛ zie" or a man's place "debɛɛ zie." This can refer to a physical location as well as to a metaphorical role: the space that women and men inhabit in relationship to their broader community and social structure. The idea of space could be applied, for example, to the funeral grounds where men and women occupy clearly demarcated physical places that are imbued with ritual significance. Thus, space implies both the physical and the associated ideology. These spatial boundaries are not impermeable, although they structure social and ritual life.

During this trip, one significant moment occurred for me at a funeral. I have been working with a women's group in the village of Puo Kuu Gang, a village on the western border of Ghana and Burkina Faso, since 2009. In Dagaraland, women without access to formal educations have little opportunity for economic and social mobility. Despite being full-time workers, women do not have land ownership rights, and do not control

## From Our Fellows

family finances, thus they rarely have income beyond what their husbands give them. This group acts as a savings and loan organization as well as a source of emotional support. Women share resources, console each other, and celebrate lifecycle rituals together. Beyond the financial ties that bind the women, they share a song repertoire composed by group members, which they perform on social occasions. It was at the funeral of one of our members in August 2014 that my vision of female performance and mourning rites was significantly shifted.

Funerals represent a significant performance space both in terms of frequency and ritual importance. Dagara funerals are characterized by performances on the *gyil*, accompanied by the *kuor*, a calabash drum, and male praise singing. The ritual space created through this performance helps people mourn the deceased, but is also a theatrical performance of Dagara proverbs, shared historical narratives, and social commentary.

At funerals, gender ideologies are visible in the way men and women maintain separate activities, duties, and spaces. The men form a circle around the *gyile* (plural of *gyil*) to create a space for the praise singing. Mourners hold out their palms, and people come and place coins in their open hands. People also toss coins near the xylophones to pay those who are performing. During the funeral, while the men surround the *gyile*, women alternatively stand in front of the corpse, which has been placed atop a palanquin, and weep and sit together in shaded areas. Periodically women will move through the men's circle to give coins. According to the Dagara, men and women mourn differently, so a woman's presence in the male space would disrupt the efficacy of the event. If the person who has passed away is old, the funeral is also a cause of celebration and people will dance *bine*. Both men and women maintain several styles of dancing *bine*, which takes place in lines demarcated by gender. Not only are the dancing spaces demarcated by gender, men and women engage the music with their bodies quite differently.

I have witnessed many funerals, often noting the centrality of demarcated gendered space. On this occasion, since I too was a mourner, my participation was heightened, and my emotional transformation was significant. I was sitting with several group members nearby to the palanquin, close enough to see and hear women weeping. One woman turned to me and asked me to join the group meeting. I appeared to be confused by what seemed to me to be an out of place practice. She said, "ti na lang taar," "we will be together." Lang taar is a complex phrase, but indicates not only a physical togetherness, but also collaboration, solidarity. The women set up their benches in front of the corpse, called to order the meeting, and then staged the rituals of their group including singing the group's songs and dancing, a practice wholly out of character for a

funeral. The dancing style of a funeral, *bine*, is distinct from the women's social dance, *kaare*, the dancing that women enjoy during their group parties. The song repertoire for *kaare* is not customarily sung at funerals, and thus is a significant deviation from the cultural rituals and social space of the Dagara.



Sitting in front of their departed friend, the women reenacted the rituals of their life together, bringing her back into group solidarity. These actions created a distinct space separate from the male and female spheres operating at the funeral. It's important, though, to see these performances as non-oppositional.

The intentions are not to challenge the separate gendered spaces, but rather to remake and recreate the significant social rituals that unite the women in this group. By creating public space with a song and dance repertoire that deviates from the traditional cultural practices the women draw the attention of the broader community who continue to perform traditional funerary rites to the accompaniment of the *gyil*. The two simultaneous performances highlight the relationship between the layers of Dagara female identity—women's relationships with each other, and within the community. Their focus on group identity reestablishes the centrality of female solidarity among Dagara women. I suggest that the temporality of the performance in no way diminishes the transformative capacity of such solidarity. Through a ritual reenactment of group identity, the women bypassed the customary rites of the Dagara, choosing instead to perform the songs and dances that animated their life together. These moments indicate the deep bonds of intimacy that exist between group members. This intimacy should be understood in this context as a political act, as it represents a negotiation of power, and provides an empowering and rejuvenating context for women.

I would like to thank WARA for its support; I believe that this research advances the mission of WARA by providing a complicated and nuanced narrative of West African women's lives. Rather than rely upon reductive visions of women's histories and experiences, I encourage a sustained dialogue with cultural narratives that challenge and recreate the stories that are told about them. I welcome thoughts, comments, and questions about this project from WARA's membership.



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### Divinity and the State: Ideas, Politics, & History in Ègbáland, Nigeria, 1877-1940



The WARA Pre-Doctoral Fellowship enabled me to conduct research in the archives of the Yorùbá region of Nigeria. I spent three months in Nigeria exploring the collections of the Universities of Ìbàdàn, Lagos, Ilé-Ife, and the National Archives of Nigeria. My experience in Nigeria was rewarding both professionally and intellectually. I am forever grateful to the West African Research Association for its willingness to support my vision of this inquiry into Yorùbá history.

My dissertation explores the pre-colonial bureaucratization of the Ègbá state, its intellectual society, the centralization of its constitution, and the dualistic articulations of legitimate dynastic power by Ègbá intellectuals and the reigning Aké dynasty. The study argues that there is an important intersection in Ègbá discourses on the nature of divinity, kingship and statecraft. My plan was to explore the lives of a coterie of historians. I was to travel to Nigeria to acquire their treatises on polity history, *Ifa* divination, and philosophy. I came to appreciate that a singular focus on individuals may not prove fruitful. Most of their publications have deteriorated with the passage of time. The immensity of Yorùbáland made studying the myriad states daunting. I decided to refine my area of research to Ègbáland, with an investigation of its most prolific figures: Lijádu, Ajişafé, Fọlárin, and Şolanke.

The historiography is framed by two events: the Yorùbá Sixteen Years' War (1877-1893) and WWII (1939-1945). The former occurred after the disintegration of the first modern state, the Ègbá United Board of Management (1865-1874), and witnessed the rapid expansion of the Ìbàdàn Empire and its subsequent abrupt demise. I examine the intellectual implications of Ìbàdàn imperialism. I engage their ideas on Ègbá-Dahomey relations, and the competing expressions of modern statehood by these warring city-states. I reexamine Anglo-Ègbá relations. Following the EUBM's collapse, the Anglo-Ègbá Treaty of 1893 fostered a special relationship whereby the British Empire ensured a peace, while maintaining sovereign relations with the Ègbá state. The peace facilitated the ascendancy of the second modern state, the Ègbá United Government (EUG, 1898-1914). The consolidation of the second régime, and its ephemeral triumph of the constitutional monarchy, sets the stage for my foray into this unique civil society, and its theological discourses.

In the archives, I came to fully rethink the EUG era. I initially assumed the project would primarily focus on discourses of the colonial period. During archival exploration it became evident that the Ègbá state, through its Ègbá Government Press, has its very own intellectual history, embodied in a cryptic canon of publications on theology and historiography. The Ègbá state was

keenly invested in the production and distribution of ideas. The writers active in the colonial period were the architects of the EUG's earlier literary productivity. There was continuity in their ideological project during the administration of the EUG, and their subsequent debates after the liquidation of the Ègbá state (1914).

The research helped me to understand the direct relationship of divinity to their writings on the responsibilities of citizenship in the modern state. It evinced a new discourse on the absolute indivisibility of existence and nonexistence; it fortified their ambitious aim to forge a modern national security apparatus. Henceforth, they published on the dilemmas in *Ifa's* theory of predestination, the vicissitudes of physical existence, the constitution of human psychology, the virtues and the limits of human wisdom, the will and the reasons for being. To accomplish this, they consulted the *Babalawos* of *Ifa*, arbiters of its canonical wisdom. They articulated a triune conception of divinity in order to supplement *Ifa's* exaltation of proverbial human wisdom, and to subvert its relativism which they argued engendered a monopoly on divine-right by the Yorùbá aristocracy. By arguing for the metaphysical roots of sovereignty and the unadulterated legitimacy of the state itself, their doctrines paved the way for the complete restoration of constitutional monarchy as *the* legitimate form of temporal representative authority.

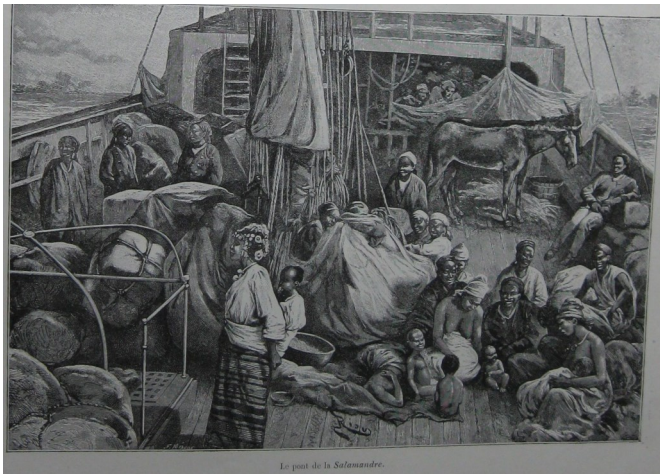
I hope that my work furthers the mission of WARA: knowledge production and scholarly exchange between the U.S. and West Africa. I acquired rare treatises that will contribute immensely to my dissertation. I met the descendants of Ajayi Ajişafé, an underappreciated yet seminal figure in the annals of the Nigerian state. I had not anticipated it for my first trip to Nigeria. I sincerely hope that one day the Ajişafé family will be willing to share his papers with scholars interested in Yorùbá history. The history of Yorùbáland is not the domain of one village, city, or state; it is in the truest sense a human heritage.



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## Mesdames Tirailleurs: Marriage, Migration, and African Combatants in French Empire, 1880-1962



I carried out research for my first book project in Senegal during the summer of 2014. Tentatively entitled *Mesdames Tirailleurs: Marriage, Migration and African Colonial Households in French Empire, 1880-1962*, this manuscript examines how West African colonial soldiers (*tirailleurs sénégalais*) and their wives (*mesdames tirailleurs*) married and maintained their households while participating in French colonial conflicts that ranged from West Africa's conquest in the 1880s to Algeria's decolonization in the 1960s. Marital legitimacy serves as the common unit of analysis throughout my manuscript and provides a lens through which to analyze how geographic location and diverse processes affiliated with French colonization influenced how marital partners and the colonial state regarded soldiers' conjugal unions.

Throughout this eighty-year period, West African marital traditions and colonialism dynamically intersected to influence changes to soldiers' family organization and household economies. West African couples' transoceanic migrations to new frontiers and cross-colonial marriages made up of West African soldiers and civilian women from the French empire reveal how geography and cultural difference shaped household responsibilities and obligations. Earlier chapters examine how colonial conquest, female slave emancipation, and soldiers' conjugality drew upon and contradicted local marital traditions in West Africa, French Congo, and Madagascar. The middle chapters illustrate how the French colonial state incorporated *tirailleurs* households into a military welfare state, which led to greater scrutiny of "legitimate" marriage and reduced *mesdames tirailleurs'* presence in empire. The final chapters examine *tirailleurs sénégalais'* cross-colonial marriages with Madagascan, Syrian, Vietnamese, and North African wives during and after French decolonizations across its empire.

In order to further this book manuscript, I proposed to carryout new archival and oral research during a two-month residence in Dakar. I also anticipated developing stronger social and intellectual ties with Senegalese and international scholars affiliated with the West African Research Center. I am pleased to report that I met many of the research and networking goals I set for the summer. I conducted research at

the Archives Nationales du Sénégal (ANS) and in its Annexe. The courteous and helpful staff at ANS, under the direction of Directrice Fatoumata Cissé Diarra, facilitated my access to newly reorganized and pertinent archival documents that I had been unable to access since beginning research in Senegal in 2006. My work continues to inestimably benefit from the supportive and professional relationships that I have established at the Senegalese National Archives.

I extend similar accolades to Ousmane Sène and the competent and professional staff at the West African Research Center. I was affiliated with WARC when I studied abroad with the Minnesota Studies in International Development in 2001 and had Ousmane Sène as a Professor. WARC has expanded and improved under Sène's tenure as director. While affiliated with WARC in 2014, I met new and old colleagues from West Africa, Europe and North America. I attended important scholarly and social events, as well as participated in classroom discussions with Masters students enrolled at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop. WARC also provided a wonderful space for processing archival materials and writing manuscript chapters.

Mamadou Koné, the librarian at the Musée des Forces Armées, once again shared his vast knowledge of the *tirailleurs sénégalais* with me. Due to his intellectual curiosity and extensive connections, I am participating in Senegalese state-sponsored efforts to create a three-tome *Histoire Générale du Sénégal*. I will likely contribute a French-version of a chapter that I authored while benefitting from the WARA grant in Senegal this past summer. This chapter, "Marrying into the Military: Colonization, Emancipation and Marital Legitimacy in West Africa, 1880-1900," examines how the colonial mechanisms of slave emancipation—*rachat*, military service, and marriage—legitimized *tirailleurs sénégalais'* conjugal unions even though their marriages did not conform to local marital traditions. At the writing of this grantee report, I am finishing another manuscript chapter, "Colonial Conquest 'en Famille': Household Migrations to French Congo and Madagascar, 1880-1905," which follows *tirailleurs sénégalais* families to new frontiers of French African conquest.

Once published, *Mesdames Tirailleurs* will contribute to a variety of historical debates concerning the colonization, West African intermediaries, women and marriage. This project will also shed light on the nature of the postcolonial relationship between the contemporary French state and its former colonial West African employees. The WARA grant's support greatly facilitated the completion of *Mesdames Tirailleurs* and I heartedly thank the association and its staff for research and travel assistance this summer.



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## West African Women in Politics

In a world where they represent half the population, women continue to strive for the balanced participation of men and women in politics by increasing their participation in key decision-making processes. In West Africa, women have continuously exemplified an acute sense of civic engagement. Their representation in local government, parliament and the executive has been rising steadily since the mid-1990s.

The African continent has the lead in women's parliamentary representation worldwide, with Rwanda ranked number 1 in the inter-Parliamentary Union World Classification, where 64% of parliamentary seats are held by women. Senegal has the lead in the West African region, ranking number 7 in the same classification, with 43% parliamentary seats held by women (Inter-Parliamentary Union).

Today, the African continent proudly counts two women heads of state in the most challenging of settings. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia -elected in 2005- currently faces the largest Ebola outbreak in history, the first in West Africa with the highest numbers of total cases, laboratory confirmed cases and total deaths in all affected countries which include Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Central African Republic (CAR) is also led by a woman since January 2014; President Catherine Samba-Panza. Since a civil war broke out between the Séléka rebel coalition and government forces in December 2012, the crisis in CAR has escalated to a near genocide with tragic humanitarian consequences. It has left around one million internally displaced persons, with the number of refugees and returnees estimated at 240,000 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

Taking a closer look at the 16 countries that make up West Africa, the highest government positions (behind Head of State/President) held by women are ministerial positions. This year, Cabo Verde is 5th worldwide in terms of women representation in ministerial positions with a percentage of 47%. While portfolios held by women ministers in West Africa include Finance/Economy portfolios (Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo) and Foreign Affairs portfolios (Ghana, Nigeria), it must be noted that portfolios mostly held by women ministers in Africa and worldwide are Social Affairs, Family/Children/Youth/Elderly/Energy, Environment and Women's Affairs/Gender Equality (Inter-Parliamentary Union).

This points to some of the challenges still faced by women in West Africa and across the whole continent with regard to their representation in the highest positions of state (executive and legislative).

Women's representation in parliaments is limited to Member of Parliament (MP) posts; when it should reach the highest levels of legislature with more women speakers and deputy speakers. Women's representation in the highest positions of State is low; when it should reach Head of State, Head of Government, and Prime Minister levels.

Women's representation in ministerial positions is limited to portfolios based on stereotypes associated with the female gender (social affairs, education, and gender equality); when it

should extend to finance, defense, human rights, public administration and other areas that are crucial to the economic and democratic growth of a country.

While the quota law is useful in increasing the participation of women in government and other decision making bodies, the common 30% cap in West Africa makes it restrictive for women. Furthermore, when quota systems are implemented they should include all three types of systems: constitutional quotas (constitutional provisions reserving seats in national parliaments for women), election law quotas (provisions written into national legislation), and political party quotas (adoption of internal rules to include a specific percentage of women candidates for office).

The feminization of poverty, described by UNIFEM as "the burden of poverty borne by women, especially in developing countries" is particularly high in West Africa and constitutes one of the strongest challenges to the political success of women. Because women continue to bear disproportionate shares of the poverty burden, they are confined to agriculture, trade and crafts industries to fulfill their basic needs such as food, without access to other spheres of economic activity and education that could facilitate their integration as executives, scientific and administrative practitioners.

Finally, it is the responsibility of men and women, government and non-government entities, national and international organizations, public and private institutions, and youth to overcome these challenges and ensure that not only the West African region but the continent as a whole places itself amongst world leaders of democracy, and economic growth.

While we still face serious challenges to women's participation in political life and key decision making processes, our West African she-roes should be celebrated and serve as motivation to those who aspire to contributing to the socio-economic development of nations.

As former Secretary General of the United Nations, M. Kofi Annan eloquently and simply put it "...there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women." (Kofi Annan).



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\*The 16 countries that make up West Africa are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. (WARA also counts Cameroon and Chad.)

### Women and Ebola: On the front lines

Researchers believe that the current Ebola outbreak began in early December 2013 in Meliandou, a small village in the southern Guéckédou prefecture of Guinea. According to a report published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the suspected index case was a two-year-old boy who exhibited the hallmark symptoms of the disease: fever, black stool, and vomiting. Although he died four days after the initial onset, it is suspected that the virus was transmitted to three female members of his family. His mother was the first to come down with similar disease manifestations and was quickly followed by the boy's three-year-old sister and grandmother. The report also asserts that the nurse and village midwife who attended to the family also contracted the disease and brought the virus to three more villages in the region.

The Ebola virus has struck several regions of the African continent in varying degrees of severity since 1976 when it was first isolated in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite differences in the number of people afflicted, the proportion of female victims has been significantly greater than the proportion of males. From the 1979 outbreak in Sudan to the 2000 Ebola virus outbreak in Uganda, statistics show that women are disproportionately affected by the virus (69% and 63% women, respectively). Common explanations for disparities include the women's familial and healing roles, both at a community and system level.

As of late August, The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the death toll in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria had reached 1,552 out of 3,069 cases. Over the past month, the outbreak's dispersal has accelerated and it is estimated that more than 40% of the total number of cases have occurred in this time period alone. Because of the increase in infected individuals and mounting stress on already feeble healthcare systems, the WHO projects that this epidemic will affect more than 20,000 people before it is finally contained and eradicated.

On August 14th, the *Washington Post* published an article claiming that 55-60% of current Ebola virus outbreak victims are women. Mrs. Julia Duncan-Cassell, the Minister of Gender and Development of Liberia (where 75% of victims are women), explained in an interview that, "Women are the caregivers – if a kid is sick, they say, 'Go to your mom'. Most of the time when there is a death in the family, it's the woman who prepares the funeral, usually an aunt or older female relative." Given the symptoms of the disease, family caregivers, even with proper protective equipment, are at risk of contact with contaminated bodily fluids. When circling back to the first four suspected cases in Meliandou, the female members of the household were infected first from the index case.

The epidemic also disproportionately affects women at the healthcare system level. Mrs. Sia Nyama Koroma, the First Lady of Sierra Leone, in an interview with the *Washington Post*, said "Women constitute a large section of the health workers and are on the frontlines of the crisis." Their occupations as traditional birth attendants, nurses, community health workers, and the cleaners and laundry workers in hospitals put them in constant risk of exposure to contaminated vomit, diarrhea, blood, and other bodily fluids.

Despite the haste of this epidemic, the transmission rate for Ebola virus is rather low compared to other infectious diseases. Infected individuals are expected to transmit the virus to one to four other people ( $R_0=1-4$ ). This, in comparison to ( $R=12-18$ ) for measles., During the first week of infection, the symptoms of Ebola virus disease resemble those of the common flu. However, past one week, the virus takes root and overruns the immune system. Symptoms intensify and the body responds by releasing a cytokine storm. Cytokines, small proteins that communicate with the immune system, signal white blood cells to attack infected regions of the body and operate on a positive feedback loop that amplifies the immune response. The end result is known as hemorrhagic fever – capillaries rupture from the damage, blood stains the victim's vomit and diarrhea, and the affected individual eventually bleeds to death.

The statements made by the First Lady of Sierra Leone and the Liberian Minister of Gender and Development underline the fact that the gender roles of women in the outbreak's zone put them at greater risk for transmission of the virus. This information can be used to positively impact the outbreak's containment. Relief efforts can target these caretakers and healthcare providers to better identify symptoms of Ebola virus disease and provide them with stronger medical equipment. Many recently published articles also recognize the importance of female community members in disseminating information on the outbreak to their communities. Although many believe the worst is yet to come, addressing the role of women in transmission, care, and containment will be critical in bringing the virus under control.



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### LGBTI Organizing in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) organizing is flourishing in many African countries. I had the opportunity to research LGBTI organizing in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in 2013 with Joëlle Cruz, an assistant professor of Communication Studies at Kent State University. We chose to compare developments in gender and sexual diversity organizing in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia because political leaders in the countries have responded to activists' demands for LGBTI rights differently at a time when Western governments are pushing African countries to respect these rights. Same-sex sex is illegal in Liberia, but not in Côte d'Ivoire, a country with a reputation for being tolerant of gender and sexual diversity. Antigay organizing surfaced in Liberia in 2012, but not in Côte d'Ivoire, at least not until after our arrival in Abidjan in June 2013.

LGBTI activism in Côte d'Ivoire is concentrated mostly in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working on HIV/AIDS education, prevention, and treatment. HIV/AIDS work enabled NGOs like Alternative-Côte d'Ivoire (Alternative) to work with gender and sexual minorities under the auspices of a public-health mandate. Antigay opponents sometimes portray LGBTI activists as corrupting and converting heterosexual people into "homosexuals." Couching LGBTI advocacy within a public-health framework allows some organizations to continue their gender and sexual diversity activism unfettered.

Alternative's reputation as an HIV/AIDS NGO began to falter when local media learned that the French embassy was giving the organization funds, resulting in antigay opposition directed at Alternative. Whereas some African LGBTI activist organizations experienced difficulty in obtaining funds for their campaigns, Alternative was quite successful. Although funding from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) supported much of Alternative's HIV/AIDS outreach work, Alternative managed to procure funding from other sources, including the French embassy in Abidjan, which pledged funds to support the group's LGBTI rights advocacy. Alternative celebrated this grant with a signing ceremony at the organization's office on June 25, 2013. Local homophobia erupted in the aftermath of the French embassy's grant to Alternative. Ivoirian media claimed that the French embassy was paying Alternative to advocate for the legalization of same-sex marriage. France's legalization of same-sex marriage in May 2013 and US President Barack Obama's call for African leaders to respect LGBTI rights during his June 2013 visit to Senegal added fuel to this conspiracy theory. These developments prompted Ivoirian President Alassane Outtara to issue a statement that same-sex marriage had no place in Côte d'Ivoire. Ivoirian media continued publishing unfavorable stories about Alternative. Some journalists disclosed the secret location of the organization's fundraising event, prompting leaders to postpone the event. Although local homophobia appeared to subside late in 2013, antigay mobilization became violent early in 2014, when vigilantes attacked the Alternative office and homes of Alternative's leaders. Fearful for the safety of the organization's staff and volunteers, Alternative's leaders pressured United Nations officials and the Ivoirian government to investigate these attacks, resulting in the posting of UN peacekeepers and Ivoirian military outside of Alternative's office in Abidjan. These events have shaken defenders of

gender and sexual diversity who closely monitor local political developments.

Developments in Liberia mirror the experiences of LGBTI rights advocates in Côte d'Ivoire. The primary NGO in the capital Monrovia that works with gender and sexual minorities is an HIV/AIDS organization, although local feminist organizations have also championed LGBTI rights. Social and political homophobia makes LGBTI persons and rights advocates cautious. Tommy, a gay man and volunteer at an HIV/AIDS organization, suffered homophobic violence when neighbors assaulted him on two different occasions. He attributed these attacks to community members' antigay attitudes. In an interview, Tommy explained, "Kids would just come into the community, stone the house I was living in, and just say words to us, like 'These guys are really homosexual. We don't want them around here.'" Anti-LGBTI mobilization materialized in Liberia early in 2012, as lawmakers introduced legislation that increased penalties for those involved in same-sex relationships. However, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf promised to veto anti-LGBTI and pro-same-sex-marriage legislation, a position that vexed local political, religious, and traditional leaders and disappointed observers around the world who claimed that, as a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, the president should take a pro-LGBTI rights position.

A few anti-LGBTI grassroots groups, including the Movement Against Gays in Liberia, have promised to harass Liberian LGBTI activists, but these groups have mostly disappeared from view. Only the New Citizens Movement, an organization composed of evangelical Christian pastors and Muslim clerics, has persisted. In interviews, founding members of the New Citizens Movement described their first collective action, the "Anti-Gay 'Right' Campaign," as persuading Liberians to sign a petition asking lawmakers not to legalize same-sex sexualities and marriage. This campaign elicited support from the Liberian Council of Churches and other leading religious bodies. Although it is unclear if or how anti-LGBTI organizing will develop in the future, some Christian leaders recently claimed the Ebola virus outbreak is evidence that "God is angry with Liberia" and that "Liberians have to pray and seek God's forgiveness over...corruption and immoral acts (such as homosexuality, etc.)." Such claims run the risk of encouraging disgruntled citizens to punish people they perceive to be gender and sexual minorities for the outbreak; in this environment, LGBTI rights defenders must monitor their safety carefully. Even though recent news about anti-LGBTI mobilization from Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia seems grim, LGBTI activists continue to organize quietly to meet the needs of community members.



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## Spotlight on WARA Lifetime Members

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This section of the West African Research Association newsletter is dedicated to WARA Lifetime members. The WARA Membership Committee has decided to honor Professor Judith Byfield of Cornell University.

### JUDITH BYFIELD

I was not one of those people who knew their calling from infancy. I had a vague idea that I wanted to be a teacher, but the beatings my teachers doled out on me in Jamaica put that idea to rest for a long while. In college the idea of teaching resurfaced and it was coupled with a very strong interest in African and African-American Studies. For a while I thought I had my life planned out – I was going to teach language arts in elementary school. However, one term of student teaching with fifth graders in Hanover (NH) and a second with middle schoolers in Jersey City disabused me of that idea. I decided to apply to graduate school until I figured out a plan. Graduate school made sense because I loved intellectual work; I thoroughly enjoyed my course work on African and African-American literature, African religions in Brazil and the Caribbean, African art history and African American music at Dartmouth College. I even wrote an ambitious research paper on nationalism in Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica. With that background I applied to Ph.D. programs in African history. I began graduate study at Columbia completely clueless.



As I honed in on my areas of interest, I drew from the things I liked in college. I settled on Nigeria because I liked Chinua Achebe's novels. I had enjoyed Toni Morrison, Nikki Giovanni and Gloria Naylor so it felt natural to want to work on women. My membership in a Jamaican political organization in New York helped me to figure out that I had a deep interest in women and nationalism. Marcia Wright and Hollis Lynch helped me transform these inchoate interests into areas of research.

It is hard to believe that I made my first trip to Nigeria in 1985. Where did twenty-nine years go? There are parts of that trip that I remember vividly. When I arrived at Murtala Muhammed airport I remember thinking that it smelled like the Norman Manley airport in Kingston. Lagos felt a little surreal because so many things reminded me of Jamaica, but instead of patois people spoke Yoruba and a pidgin I did not recognize. That first trip sealed my commitment to Nigeria. It helped that a family – Funmi, Femi and Funminiyi Ajaye – adopted me. I had planned to spend only a few days with them while looking for accommodations for my six-week visit. As we looked at different places, Funmi kept insisting that none of them would do. Finally, she insisted that I stay with them.

Living with Ajayes on the campus of the Polytechnic in Ibadan, I experienced the struggle of collecting water from an outside tank and carrying it up three floors, as well as the joys of weddings, visits to the seamstress, and determining that *ogi* and *akara* were my favorite breakfast foods. I so enjoyed living with Funmi and her family that my visit extended to twelve weeks. I was able to extend my stay too because I received such a warm welcome in the History department at University of Ibadan. It was so exciting to be there at that time. Professors Ade Ajayi, Atanda, Ayandele, and Ikimi were still active in the department. I shared my research findings with Prof. Ajayi on a very regular basis and those conversations helped me to decide on a dissertation topic – an analysis of the 1947 women's tax revolt in Abeokuta led by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. Later I would get to know Professors Bolanle Awe, S. O. Biobaku, LaRay Denzer and Nina Mba. As I look back, I relish the opportunities I had to engage with these scholars. They taught me so much, but more importantly they nurtured my interest in Nigerian women's history, colonialism and nationalism.

I am still working on the dissertation topic my committee approved, as different chapters have spun off into separate projects. The chapter on women's economic conditions under colonialism became *The Bluest Hands: A Social and Economic History of Women Indigo Dyers in Abeokuta (Nigeria), 1890 - 1940* (Heinemann, 2002). The chapter that was to focus on WW II is now part of a forthcoming co-edited volume with Carolyn Brown, Timothy Parsons and Ahmad Sikainga, *Africa and WW II* (Cambridge, 2015). There will be no more spin-offs; the next book will be the tax revolt—*The Great Upheaval: Women, Taxes and Nationalist Politics in Nigeria, 1945-1951*. My commitment to this project derives from a desire to reveal the material and theoretical ways in which these women contributed to the nationalist movement as well as their contribution to the broader and still on-going discussions about democracy, women's empowerment and state-society relations.

Nigeria has been the focus of my research and writing, but I also have an interest in bringing my work on Nigeria into closer dialogue with my Caribbean background. At Dartmouth, where I taught from 1991 – 2007, and now at Cornell University, I teach both African and Caribbean history. The research paper I wrote on nationalism in Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica as an undergraduate in many ways became the building block for my Caribbean History survey for I use those countries as the main case studies. The co-edited volume with LaRay Denzer and Anthea Morrison, *Gendering the African Diaspora: Women, Culture and Historical Change in the Caribbean and Nigerian Hinterland*, brought the two areas together intellectually. I plan to produce a book on Jamaica in the future, but I think Nigeria will always be at the center of my scholarly work. I now have so much history there, and the recent death of Prof. Ade Ajayi compels me to appreciate the many gifts Nigeria has given me.



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# The Foundation For West Africa

## Ebola Update: The Critical Role of Community Radio

The Ebola outbreak continues to cause great pain and upheaval in the sub region of West Africa. The economic and social impacts of Ebola continue to grow as well, as fear bogs down economic activity, and non-Ebola health services have nearly ceased.

Many readers of the WARA newsletter have friends and family in West Africa. It is a heavy, painful and frightening time for people on the ground and for all of us who are connected to them. Many people in Sierra Leone and Liberia are saying, 'This is worse than the war.' For anyone familiar with the civil wars in these countries, this is a difficult notion to fathom. But as many friends and colleagues in Sierra Leone have told me, 'you can't see the enemy, and there is nowhere to run.'

As the global community finally begins to scale up the response with medical personnel, supplies and training, it is important to recognize the importance of trusted, accurate information being available to people who desperately need it. Independent radio stations and networks in Sierra Leone and Liberia are now the major communications tools for Ebola response by international aid agencies. They are the only means by which information is reaching people *on a mass scale, and in local languages*. Radio broadcasts are providing life-saving information on Ebola prevention, treatment and mobilization programs such as last month's 3-day national lockdown in Sierra Leone.

Radio broadcasts are providing more than medical information during this crisis. They include education programming that reaches children who are stuck at home due to nationwide school closures. The sound of familiar voices in local languages provides comfort to people who feel isolated and afraid. Programs featuring Ebola survivors give hope. Music and cultural programs are helping people to cope.

The radio infrastructure in the sub-region is fragile. In Sierra Leone, dozens of community radio stations and the

Independent Radio Network (IRN-Sierra Leone) are operating on very low budgets, and with aging equipment. When radio stations cannot broadcast, the flow of reliable information is jeopardy, and the risk of Ebola spread increases. The Ebola crisis would be even worse without radio broadcasts.

As the Ebola crisis engulfed the forested area of the sub-region in July, I received a call from Foday Sajuma, who manages Radio Moa 105.5 FM in Kailahun, Sierra Leone. "Our generator is dying. We need help." Without a power source, Radio Moa is

unable to provide information for hundreds of thousands of people in this remote part of Sierra Leone. Without Radio Moa, people would be making life-altering decisions based on rumors, and Ebola would tighten its grip. Foday told me that rumors were causing mistrust and panic, and the spread of Ebola itself. One rumor resonated: The ruling party is sending so-called health workers to the opposition stronghold of Kailahun to disrupt and to kill.

Radio Moa need more than a generator, Foday said. Their reporters lacked the mobility and voice recorders they needed to reach remote

villages and get people's voices on the air. They needed the capacity to do live broadcasts from inside Kailahun town, because the radio station itself was a three-mile walk from town.

The Foundation for West Africa amplified Foday's call for help by launching an emergency campaign for funds to buy the equipment for Radio Moa. Several hundred people, mostly in the U.S. but from as far away as England and Australia, pitched in with support. And it worked. Yesterday (October 30) I received a call from Kailahun with the good news that Radio Moa was back on the air. Its reporters were energized by the arrival of three motorcycles and five voice recorders.

The Foundation is now turning its attention to Sierra Leone's Independent Radio Network (IRN), a network of 27 stations who, collectively, reach almost every corner of the country. IRN is setting up a capital fund to build its capacity repair and replace transmitters, generators and other essential needs. IRN is also trying to develop the capacity to provide real-time, nation-wide broadcasts that reach every corner of the country at one time.



Radio Moa "saving lives" in Sierra Leone



Independent radio communications has been important to peace and development for nearly two decades. It is now an essential component of the response to a crisis, whose end is not yet in site.

There is a new urgency to our mission. Over the past eight weeks I have been reaching out to build our capacity to help keep these still-fragile stations sustain and expand their reach. From our base in Rhode Island we have connected CDC and WHO officials in Sierra Leone and Liberia directly with leadership of the Independent Radio Network (IRN) and individual member stations. CDC has been using IRN and its 27 member stations as a communications outlet. In Kailahun, we have connected the staff of Doctors Without Borders and Radio 105.5 FM

We have also traveled to Washington, DC to urge U.S. and International investment in radio stations and networks. It is my hope that the officials from the U.S. State Department, USAID, and the World Bank will help amplify to the their leaders the importance of radio communications in the fight against Ebola.

The Foundation for West Africa will continue this work in the months and years ahead. The health of independent radio stations is essential to the fight against Ebola, and will be just as important as Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea emerge from the crisis and try to rebuild their health care systems and communities.

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The Foundation for West Africa is an institutional member of WARA

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## AFRICAN INNOVATORS

On Tuesday October 7, 2014, the West African Research Association teamed up with Seeding Labs, another Boston area nonprofit, to host a panel discussion that served as the kick-off event for our 2014 Giving Common Campaign.

*African Innovators* introduced three scholar/researchers who are at the forefront of building networks of scientists on the continent and linking those scientists to larger international scientific networks.

Moderator Nadeem Mazen, himself an MIT alumnus, introduced the three panelists:

**Dr. Henry Nii Nmai Bulley** (Geography; CUNY; Chair of the Africa Section of the International Association of Landscape Ecology) *Dr. Bulley's research focuses on the interactions between land use dynamics and the natural environment, with an emphasis on sustainable water resource management, and adoption of geospatial science and technology, including applications of GIS and remote sensing, landscape ecology, land use and land cover change at the rural-urban fringe.*

**Dr. Peter Jeranyama** (Environmental Physiology; University of Massachusetts, Amherst) *Dr. Jeranyama's work in Zimbabwe and the U.S. is in the crop and soil science fields, and focuses on irrigation water management and drainage systems, shade cycling, leaf gas exchange and frost protection.*

**Dr. Paul Mireji** (Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Trypanosomiasis Research Centre, Yale Laboratory of Public Health and Epidemiology) *Dr. Mireji's work in Biochemistry, Bioinformatics, Tropical Entomology, Parasitology and Genomics includes research on malaria and trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness). He studies the hosts of the cause of each illness, the mosquito and the tsetse fly, and is exploring vaccine and control effects for the latter.*



Clockwise from top: Travis McCready of The Boston Foundation, panelist Paul Mireji, moderator Nadeem Mazen, panelist Henry Nii Nmai Bulley, and Pearl Robinson with panelist Peter Jeranyama.

## Stand up and work!

### Reworking notions of femininity and social status in Kankossa, Mauritania

One day in Kankossa, a moderate-sized town in south-central Mauritania, some female vegetable traders who were slave descendants (Ḥarāṭīn) critiqued women who were members of their former enslavers' social category (Bīzān). Laughing, they compared Bīzān women to a large type of tree that grows in the town's lake. "Have you seen it?" one Ḥarāṭīn trader, Ami, asked me. "Its *aurāk* [roots] are in the water, right? Its head is above in the sky. It's like a Bīzān. Their *aurāk* are in the sand, their eyes are in the sky. They don't see anything." *Aurāk* means roots, but it can also mean hips, haunches, or thighs, and thus here also refers to a Bīzān's hindquarters. Like the tree, Ami suggests, Bīzān women are sitting immobile, rooted to the earth, looking out into space. The women laughed as a nearby man added, "They don't even think."

Ami's analogy captures some of the ideas about social difference and gender that circulated in Kankossa's market during my research between 2009 and 2011. Bīzān and Ḥarāṭīn have long been part of a social hierarchy which, while flexible, is historically based upon a continuum in which noble Bīzān and slaves occupied opposite ends. In the past, high social status was partly based on genealogy so, as ex-slaves or slave descendants, Ḥarāṭīn fell near the bottom. Today Bīzān and Ḥarāṭīn's overlapping histories mean that they share many attributes, including language (Hassaniya) and dress. The two groups are differentiated both by race – Ḥarāṭīn tend to be of black African descent, while Bīzān tend to be of Arab or Berber descent – and also by their genealogy, as either freeborn or former slaves. Given that slavery in Mauritania was legally abolished only in 1980, my research focuses on what it means to be a Ḥarāṭīn woman today. I am particularly interested in how women are challenging and reworking the bases of social hierarchy and, in some cases, asserting new criteria for social worth and rank.

Ami's description of a tree-like Bīzān woman firmly rooted to the earth is significant in light of the fact that the kind of labor that women do (or do not) conduct has long been a means through which femininity and social rank are constituted. Historically, abstention from labor signified a woman's high social position, suggesting that she had dependents to perform household tasks. Conversely, slaves' low social rank was in part marked by their participation in manual labor. Immobility and stasis, both of which were encouraged by families force-feeding young Bīzān daughters to produce larger body types, were also important markers of femininity. Ami, however, mocks such comportment, implying that women who adhere to it today are helpless, outdated, and lazy. Another Ḥarāṭīn trader, Lakhsara, seconded these claims, contrasting Ḥarāṭīn women's activeness with Bīzān immobility and noting that, "We are in a hurry. We get up and run."

For Lakhsara and Ami, their physical activity and participation in work are not signs of low social status, but rather mark their positions as responsible and honorable breadwinners in a difficult economy. Kankossa is in one of Mauritania's poorest regions and the challenge of making a living has meant that many residents (primarily men) have migrated elsewhere looking for work. Many women who remain behind serve as *de facto* heads of household

and are often largely responsible for providing for their families. In these Ḥarāṭīn women's eyes, sitting rooted like a tree is irresponsible behavior since, as Lakhsara put it, "a woman is not going to lie down if she does not have something to eat." In fact, many contemporary Bīzān women do work and also struggle with how their participation in labor transgresses historic notions of femininity. Bīzān professionals in Nouakchott, for example, told me that some male colleagues do not take them seriously and that their husbands may not respect their work. One woman described how, when she went on a work-related trip her husband followed the government car, thinking that she might actually be embarking on a secret rendezvous with a man. Despite this reality, the circulation of stereotypes like the stuck in the mud Bīzān allow Ḥarāṭīn women to contrast their ideas of social worth with what they present as an outdated model.

In recent decades, the government and NGOs have reinforced the value of women's work by encouraging their enterprises. Women in Kankossa remember a government official visiting the town who proclaimed, "Women must get up and work. The woman should support her house; the woman should do something for her children. If her man leaves, she can do something herself." Government support of such ideas was backed up by the country's adoption of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and neoliberal reforms that favored workers' self-sufficiency and participation in productive labor. While SAPs and neoliberal reforms have had devastating effects on Mauritania's economy, these programs' advocacy of women's work reinforced pro-work ideologies that Ḥarāṭīn could draw upon to assert their social worth and challenge older notions of hierarchy.

While many scholars of Mauritania have focused on shifts in Ḥarāṭīn status that occur at the national level and are led by politicians or anti-slavery activists who are primarily men, the Kankossa example illustrates how women also contribute to shaping what it means to be Ḥarāṭīn and to expanding the possibilities for claiming social worth. This example also demonstrates how social hierarchy and ideas of femininity are often intertwined; by dismissing notions of femininity that favor immobile women and by asserting the positive value of labor, Ḥarāṭīn women challenge the underpinnings of hierarchy. Instead of emphasizing ascribed attributes like genealogy, they assert that it is partly their participation in work that makes them responsible, modern people. Women's championing of such activities demonstrates their desire both to distance themselves from attributes that have been associated with slavery (particularly dependence on or working for others) and to also claim their own *karāma* (value, nobleness).



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## A 'product' of WARC, now a faculty member at UCAD, recalls his early days at WARC

*M. Cheikh Kaling est recruté en qualité d'Assistant stagiaire d'Histoire à la Faculté des Sciences et Technologies de l'Éducation et de la Formation (FASTEF) de l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop. C'est avec enthousiasme qu'il rend un vibrant hommage au WARC.*

Monsieur le Directeur,

J'ai l'honneur et le plaisir de vous informer que j'ai reçu hier l'arrêté de mon recrutement à la FASTEF. Sans votre soutien et celui de WARC, j'aurais eu beaucoup de peine pour en arriver là. C'est pourquoi, je tiens à témoigner à tout le personnel du WARC ma profonde gratitude.

C'est en 1998 que j'ai découvert dans le quartier de Fann résidence un havre de paix appelé Centre de Recherche Ouest Africain. Djiby Diouf, l'ami qui me l'a fait découvrir, préférait l'acronyme WARC (West African Research Center). La bibliothèque de l'UCAD étant à l'époque en réfection, il nous fallait trouver un refuge pour échapper aux vacarmes des tumultueux quartiers de Grand-Dakar et de Niarry Tally où nous logions. Je regrette de n'avoir pas noté la date exacte de cette première visite car j'aurais voulu en fêter l'anniversaire. A l'époque, je ne savais pas encore que le WARC allait jouer un rôle déterminant dans ma carrière. J'ai d'abord découvert la bibliothèque assez riche et surtout bien aménagée et climatisée. Quel bonheur! Ensuite ce fut les conférences. Au début, je venais simplement pour voir de mes propres yeux certaines hautes personnalités appelées autour de la table du jardin du centre. L'appétit venant en mangeant, j'ai fini par prendre conscience de l'intérêt de ces rencontres. Les conférences du WARC ont développé mon esprit critique et aiguisé mon appétit pour la recherche. Devenu apprenti-chercheur, je fréquentais plus assidument le WARC, non seulement pour ses conférences qui se produisaient à un rythme plus fréquent, mais j'étais appelé à participer à des séminaires. Ce fut l'occasion d'échanger avec des étudiants et des chercheurs d'autres disciplines et d'autres horizons.

Mais devant les aléas de la vie, j'ai faillit quitter la recherche. En 2004, en effet, je suis recruté comme vacataire au lycée Galandou Diouf de Dakar. Le poids du travail ne me permettait plus de me consacrer à la recherche. C'est le lancement du projet de numérisation des mémoires et thèses du département d'Histoire de l'UCAD, en 2006, qui m'a rapproché davantage du WARC qui venait de mettre à la disposition du matériel informatique. Pour la première fois je disposais d'un bureau dans cette maison. Je pouvais donc y venir comme je veux. Mes nombreuses tâches m'obligeaient à rester au Centre jusqu'à des heures indues. Je n'ai jamais reçu la moindre désapprobation d'un membre du personnel pour mon comportement parfois irrationnel. Même lorsqu'un dimanche matin un court-cuit a entraîné un début d'incendie dans mon bureau, le très diplomate Abdoulaye Niang s'est arrangé pour circonscrire le feu et m'a dit que ce n'était pas grave. Je n'ai jamais entendu parler de cet incident dans le Centre.

Lorsqu'après quelques errements, je décide de revenir à la recherche, c'est encore le WARC qui m'a facilité la tâche. En 2010, je suis boursier du programme WARC Fellowship. A ce titre je disposais donc d'un budget conséquent, d'un bureau et d'un accès gratuit à toutes les ressources documentaires du Centre. Je n'avais donc plus de prétexte de ne pas faire ma thèse. Je finis par la soutenir le 30 juin 2012.

**C'est pour toutes ces raisons que, lorsque j'ai reçu l'arrêté de mon recrutement en qualité d'Assistant stagiaire d'Histoire à la FASTEF, j'ai immédiatement pensé au WARC.**

**Monsieur le Directeur, veuillez recevoir et transmettre le témoignage de ma profonde gratitude à tout le personnel du WARC et à tous les membres du WARC.**

Fait à Dakar, le 09 octobre 2014

# ACPR

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Editor-in-Chief,  
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## Announcements



# Asociación Española de Africanistas

The Spanish African Studies Association (AEA) is a research-oriented, non-governmental, non-profit organization whose main ends are to encourage the study of every aspect of the African continent; to promote interest, within Spain, in African issues; to collaborate with institutions devoted to African Studies, to enhance knowledge and to promote cooperation projects with the sub-Saharan region as well as the Maghreb; and stimulate Spanish awareness of the cultural contributions made by African peoples, specially to Hispanic culture. Since 1984 the Association is headquartered in the Colegio Mayor Nuestra Señora de África (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain).

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## UNDEGRADUATE PAPER COMPETITION -WARA

In 2015, WARA will be offering four awards for outstanding undergraduate essays on West Africa. We welcome essays in all disciplinary areas and on topics of current relevance to the region. This competition is open to all students who are enrolled in undergraduate programs at a WARA member institution.

**Awardees will receive a certificate of award and a prize of \$250. Winning essays will be published in the WARA newsletter.**

Applicants must submit 1) a resume or CV, 2) a scan of official transcript, and 3) an essay of 1000-1500 words on a topic directly related to West Africa. Applicants must also submit one (1) letter of reference from a professor. All application materials must be submitted online no later than February 1, 2015.

**For more information visit [www.bu.edu/wara](http://www.bu.edu/wara)**

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