

Message from PAS director Chris Abani

As a writer I have learned to pay attention to the interaction of space. Like light, space gets refracted, shaped, shadowed, and muted or brightened depending on environmental and human factors. The environmental factors are random, but the human factor is mostly language, which is to say, a story. So, in this way, place, wherever that place may be, is the story we tell about a particular space.

To many of us, Northwestern is a place to come and study, to learn, and to become certified at undergraduate and graduate levels. For some, Northwestern is the home of their research activities, their labs, the crucible in which ideas get tested and move into the arena of fact, or strong theorem, or innovative thinking, of the discovery of methodologies that can be repeated, and independently evaluated. Sometimes they become patented outcomes. For others, it is the place for improving systems, for new approaches to the administration of people and resources.

A university can feel like a failing enterprise because it cannot be all things to all the people collectively, even though it is simultaneous. The thing I am trying to describe is very commonly known as community. Community is a word that is used in diverse ways, but that is what makes Northwestern a collective of people embarking on the work of living, of making, and shaping lives bound by a common goal, to uphold whatever things are

true. This, Northwestern's motto, is taken from the book of the Philippians and refers to a moment when Paul speaks to a common purpose. Purpose is always a choice, and when this is pointed in the direction of truth, the community is

always stronger. A community is not a group of people who agree on everything, or even in fact on anything. What makes a strong community is that while we don't always agree on many things, we agree on the purpose that we have set out to guide and bind us.

It has been touching for me to see the solidarity that African heritage students have shown to the Northwestern community in these recent times of protest. Despite difficult and largely invisible conflicts on the continent (Sudan, Somalia, Congo, to name a few), African-heritage faculty, students, and staff have shown commitment to a common truth we can agree on, that no loss of human life is acceptable. Why is this important? Because the shared purpose, of all education is to produce human beings who bring the vast knowledge they accumulate to make the worlds we live in free and robust, ever growing, and alive. In Igbo we say, *Jisike*, in Yoruba we say, *Ekú ísẹ*. In English we say, *greetings on this great and subtle labor*.



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PAS welcomes visiting scholar Abdul Rasheed Na'Allah



Professor Abdul Rasheed Na'Allah is a distinguished scholar of comparative African literature. He is no stranger to PAS whose activities he used to attend when he served as professor and chair of the department of African American Studies at Western Illinois University

from 1999 to 2007. In 2009, he returned to Nigeria to become the pioneer vice chancellor of Kwara State University, serving in that capacity for two terms, before becoming vice chancellor of the University of Abuja in 2019. Na'Allah received both a BA and MA in English literature from the University of Ilorin in 1988 and 1992, respectively. As a student, he anchored a radio program, contributed articles for local newspapers, and published poetry. He then went to the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada where he earned a PhD in comparative literature in 1999. After that he joined the faculty of the Department of African American Studies at Western Illinois

University eventually rising to become its chair.

Na'Allah has authored or coauthored many books, including *Africanity, Islamicity, and Performativity: Identity in the House of Ilorin* (Bayreuth African Studies, 2009), *African Discourse in Islam, Oral Traditions, and Performance* (Routledge, 2010), *Globalization, Oral Performance, and African Traditional Poetry* (Palgrave Macmillan, March 2018), and *Yoruba Oral Tradition in Islamic Nigeria: A History of Dadakuada* (Routledge, 2019). Na'Allah has also edited or coedited other books on African literature, including *Ogoni's Agonies: Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Crisis in Nigeria* (Africa World Press, 1998). His work on the evolution of Dadakuada in Ilorin and its connection to Yoruba oral history deconstructs misconceptions surrounding Yoruba oral history but also sheds light on its adaptation to Islamic cultural principles. Reflecting on his career, he has asked "have I done something extraordinary?... For me, humanity is the basis of African values and it is the basis of what I was taught as a child by my parents and my Ilorin, Sokoto, Koko, Yauri and all the cultures abroad that converged into the values that developed me into the person that I am."

PAS welcomes four new PhD students

Jacob Adesina has a BA in history and international studies from the University of Osun and an MA in history from the University of Ibadan. His research interests include music, statecraft, slavery, abolition, and postcolonial African societies. He holds a Mellon Foundation Fellowship in African Studies awarded by The Graduate School at Northwestern University.

Esther Osei Adjei has a BEd with a major in history from the University of Cape Coast. Her research focus centers on the religion and architecture of the people of the South-Central Ghana. She was a member of the debate team of the Religion Department (UCC) and won several awards. Esther is enthusiastic about youth education especially the girl child. Prior to graduate school, Esther taught history at a private secondary school in Ghana.

David Jones is a PhD student in art history. His research is on the history and theory of photography as it relates to the African diaspora and focuses on the entanglement between landscape, western expansion, fugitivity, and displacement in nineteenth-century and contemporary lens-based practices. David has his master's in art history from York University in Toronto (2022). David was an assistant exhibition and project coordinator at Wedge Curatorial Projects in Toronto. His critical writing can be found in The Studio Museum in Harlem's Archive and *tba: Journal of Art, Media, and Visual Culture*. His recent curatorial collaboration includes a virtual viewing at the Brooklyn Museum for Ebony Haynes's "Black Art Sessions."

Ifeayin Ogbuli has a BA in global studies and an MPH from the University of Southern California. Her research interests focus on the interplay between human rights and history of colonized societies and peoples, particularly the transformation of rights claims between the colonized and colonizer and their implication on colonial resistance.



Uche Okpa-Iroha (left) interviews professor Dotun Ayobade (center) with Benita Nnanchortam (right).

Parallel Perspectives series continues

Last fall, the Program of African Studies (PAS) debuted the series ***Parallel Perspectives*** on its Youtube channel. Parallel Perspectives is a video series that invite artists, curators, academics, and educators to discuss topics related to the African art world, its diaspora and beyond. In these conversations, hosts Uche Okpa-Iroha and Benita Nnanchortam talk with their guests about contemporary practice, art education, history, curation, and more.

Northwestern graduate student Okpa-Iroha is a founding member of the Nigerian photography group known as the Blackbox Photography Collective and of the Invisible Borders Trans-African photography travel group. Benita Nnanchortam has recently obtained her master's in art administration from

the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Before coming to Chicago, she served as an official photographer in the Ogun State Governor's Office. In addition, she is also the founder of BenTeller Media and creative director of the Kuta Arts Foundation, a pro-youth organization in Ogun State

The newest six interviews, which take place in the conference room or through Zoom, all loosely feature the idea of curation. They speak with Jodi Minnis, artist and curator of Tern Gallery, professor of art history Antawan I. Byrd, professor of performance studies Dotun Ayobade, Northwestern graduate student Olananke Goriola, Herskovits Library curator Esmeralda Kale, and award winning photographer Aida Muluneh.

Emeritus Professor Anthony I. Asiwaju visits PAS

Emeritus Professor Anthony I. Asiwaju paid a surprise visit to PAS in August. In 1989, he was a visiting senior scholar at PAS where he inaugurated the Program of International Cooperation on Africa (PICA) seminar. At that time, he was a professor of history at the University of Lagos and a member of the Nigerian Boundary Commission. He was already known as Nigeria's premier borderlands scholar for his study *Western Yorubaland under European Rule, 1889-1945, a Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism* (1976). Asiwaju later served as director of the Centre for African Regional Integration and Border Studies and commissioner on the National Boundary Commission in Lagos from 1988 to 1994. Three years ago he published his memoir, *Bridging Boundaries*, to commemorate his 80th birthday. More recently, he published a blockbuster book, *Bridging African Boundaries: Cross-Border Areas and Regional Integration in Comparative History and Policy Advocacy* (Austin, TX: Pan-African University Press, 2022) (see PAS bookshelf).



Anthony Asiwaju (left) poses with PAS newsletter editor LaRay Denzer (right) as she holds a copy of his latest book.

South Africa's 2024 national elections: A short commentary

Lwazi Siyabonga Lushaba

On May 29, 2024, South Africa held its seventh general elections since the fall of colonialism in 1994, to elect both its national and provincial governments. According to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)—the body responsible for the conduct of the elections—23,292 voting stations were in operation on election day. Of these, 93% began operating on time (8:00 a.m.), the remaining 7% coming on board an hour later, owing to administrative hiccups, mainly the late arrival of voting material. For the first time since independence the elections were moved on to an automated platform, using a handheld voter management device. The introduction of this automated platform encountered a few glitches, but these affected neither the smooth conduct nor credibility of the elections as provision had been made for the use of a manual voter's roll in such cases. The elections were conducted under the recently promulgated Electoral Amendment Act, No.1 of 2023. The Act is notable for the “inclusion and nomination of independent candidates as contesters to the elections in the National Assembly and provincial legislatures” for the first time since independence (IEC; 2024).

Although the African National Congress (ANC) won an outright majority in five of the nine provinces, it did not do well in the other four provinces. A variety of opposition parties prevailed in the other provinces. In Western Cape, the Democratic Alliance (DA) won and in the remaining three—Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Northern Cape—the results required coalition governments. Nationally, which is our focus in the present commentary, the former liberation movement, the ANC garnered only 40% of the vote down from 57.5% in the previous elections, the DA, the official opposition party, obtained 21.8%, up from 20.7%, in previous elections, the newly formed, Umkonto Wesizwe Party (MKP), led by former President Jacob Zuma, won 14.5%, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by Julius Malema, won 9.52% down from 10.8%, and the Inkatha Freedom Party

(IFP), which contested its first election since the demise of its founder Mangosuthu Buthelezi won 3.85%, slightly up from 3.3%. Beyond these parties, a whole host of contested and won seats in the National Assembly and various provincial legislatures. However, the parties listed above cumulatively account for more than 90% of the national vote. More pertinently, the above empirical details constitute the canvass against which the more substantive claims of the commentary below are formulated.

Following the third wave of democratization (a la Huntington) in the early 90s, the study of democracy, democratic transitions, and/or democratic regimes in Africa was conducted through questions and concerns formulated and popularized by the North American-based Africanist scholarly community mobilized around the now defunct *Journal of Democracy*. South Africa's 1994 independence, characterized in the literature as a democratic transition, being one of the paradigmatic cases in democratization studies, continues until now to be analyzed through prisms reminiscent of the democratization literature. Mainstream media and scholarly analysis before and after the 2024 elections has been no exception. Of course, the genealogy of the paradigmatic concepts and categories used is now hardly traced to the scholarship of the third wave even by those who deploy them. Importantly, the influence of the democratization literature exceeds the narrow bounds of scholarly and public analysis.

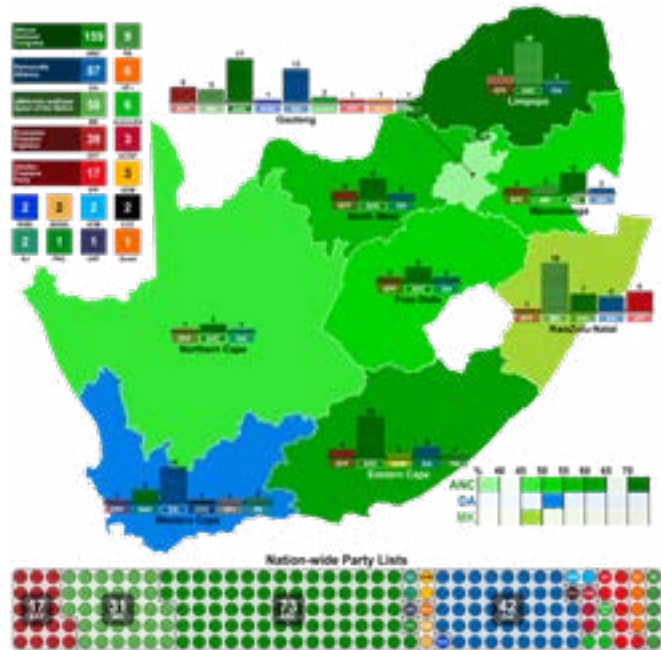
This literature, and a slew of its assumptions, have been equally determinative of the practical political consideration around the elections. An accepted view within the scholarship on democratization was that only when a political system has held two successive peaceful elections, each marked by a realistic plausibility of the opposition defeating the incumbent/ruling party, can it appropriately be considered a consolidated democracy. At the level of political praxis this saw “western democracies” not only deploy an army of election observers, but also generously funded academics affiliated to research institutions and individuals aligned to civil society organizations. Media houses, eager not to be outdone, sent a caravan of journalists whose pronouncements were made with unmistakably authoritative voices beamed to their audiences back home.

The presence of western observers en masse was

justified by the need to safeguard fragile democracies on their way supposedly to becoming consolidated. These western observers became, as it were, de facto jurors who arrogated unto themselves (and their governments invariably) the responsibility to certify the elections free and fair or otherwise. However, not coincidentally, South Africa has since 1999 seen a precipitate decline in the interest and presence of western election observers. For evidence contrast the attention drawn to the 1994 and 1999 elections to the international media excitement generated by the 2024 elections. Western observer missions (including western media houses) were hardly a feature in the recently concluded 2024 elections. Lest the point be misread, this is not a plea for the mass return of western observers to South African elections. Rather it is an attempt to illustrate the extent to which the North American-dominated scholarship and literature on democratization in Africa has been determinative of practical political considerations.

A dialectical relation, of course, exists between the influence at the level of practical political considerations and the influence at the level of analysis. It is for this reason that we now turn to examine the influence of the democratization literature and scholarship on how the 2024 elections in South Africa have been thought through in the mainstream. For reasons of space, I want to foreground two intricately related points that have been accentuated in the public and scholarly analysis in South Africa prior to and after the 2024 elections. One, there has been a notable obsession (I use the word advisedly) with the liberation movement (ANC) losing its electoral majority for the first time since independence. This fact has often been harnessed to prove the now widely popular scholarly claim that parties of independence tend to lose their popular appeal, electoral and political dominance after 20 years in power.

The same argument was mobilized with equal power per force by those predicting ANC loss and/or electoral decline below 50% prior to the elections. Already convinced of this now lawlike 20 years+ statement, others would ex post facto search frantically for other reasons to reinforce what was otherwise a forgone conclusion—that the party of independence had reached its expiration date. Out of this exercise came a flurry of explanations, which read like an index of ANC government failures. It is best to think of these multiple explanatory variables as together constituting or as evidence of unfulfilled expectations of independence (a la Ade Ajayi). In this frame of analysis, the rest of society, except for the ANC as the governing party, emerged free of any blemish.



2024 South Africa election results. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Racism became symptomatic of the ANC's failure not to be blamed on the racist configuration and perpetuation of a structure of society and consciousness congenial to its reproduction. Alarming high rates of crime became the sole responsibility of the ANC, not shared equally with a society whose political culture is highly tolerant towards violence. Blame for the poor, perhaps collapsing delivery of services, was pinned exclusively on the ANC to the exclusion of those segments of society that benefit from and as such precipitate such collapse. High levels of corruption in this frame of analysis are blamed on the amorality of the ANC absolving the rest of society of moral degeneracy or better still of its ethicomoral blight. So, I may not be misconstrued, analysts who subscribe to the above arguments undoubtedly do have a point. The ANC as the custodian of the state for almost three decades has held the power and authority to engineer into existence a new society, rid of racism, corruption, violent political culture, etc.

Almost indistinguishable from the above point has been the celebration (again I use the word advisedly) in mainstream analysis of the political configuration of state power dictated by the 2024 electoral outcome as inaugurating post-liberation politics. The positive valuation leaves one with a sense that postliberation politics are good in and of themselves, conversely, that politics that speak in the language of liberation or evocative of the culture of liberation struggle are the

inherently or necessarily bad. Pundits in the mainstream press have called this normalization of South African politics. Again, I have no doubt that those who argue in this way do have a point. The intent in this commentary is not to quarrel with these educated viewpoints. What I want to do is expose continuities between these viewpoints and the assumptions established in democratization literature and scholarship.

Briefly, before turning to what is elided in mainstream thinking, let us map the genealogy of the two arguments above that have featured prominently in the analysis of South Africa's 2024 elections back to the democratization literature. I do so, conscious of the inadequacy imposed on my attempt by the limits of space.

The third wave of democracy in Africa and the democratization scholarship in tow was triggered in the main by the triumph or universalization of liberal capitalist modernity (a la Fukuyama) made palpable by the collapse of the Soviet Union. As part of this ideological makeover of the world, liberal democracy—valorization of procedural over substantive aspects, liberalization of politics, individuation of experiences of historical injustice, primacy of the individual over social rationale, idea of progress, unilinear development—became the only recognizable (to thought as well as to modern imagination generally) and legitimate configuration of power, society, and human relations. As such, what is wrong with the politics that speaks in the language of liberation is that ideologically it harkens back to an age that was supposedly vanquished in 1989 with the triumph of liberal capitalist modernity. A politics whose language is that of liberation politics/politics of liberation is not only incongruous with the normative ethic of liberal democracy but contests its hegemony. Consequently, the clamor for the normalization of politics is a metaphor for the generalization of the liberal norm, the liberal logic of politics. The obliteration of parties of independence or liberation parties, considered anachronisms of a vanquished past, opens onto the subtly celebrated continuing progressive present of liberal democracy.

Perhaps there is indeed something to be celebrated in the demise of parties of independence and/or liberation politics. However, such celebration, I argue, is rather too presentist, short-sighted, and fraught with long-term danger. Particularly when it is not accompanied by a serious reflection of what kind of politics and party-political organizations, imbued with what political ethic, ought to replace liberation politics and parties of independence. Proliferation of political parties (often without any distinguishing ideology) that liberal democratic theory implicitly holds as a guarantor, falls far short in the face of the challenge to hold society together talk less of ensuring that it remains cohesive, even in the

aftermath of the most brutal dictatorship. For example, in the aftermath of the 2024 elections in South Africa the ANC, which, gained 40% of the vote, could easily have elected not to participate in the formation of the government and become an official opposition. I invite those who celebrate the demise of parties of independence, to consider that the ANC in this instance, without volunteering an alternative is, considering the existing racial divisions in society which other organization or alternative motive force could possibly have coaxed the remaining political parties into a consensus. At the risk of asserting more than we prove, I am prepared to hazard the conclusion that none would have agreed. Again, so I may not be misconstrued, the intent here is to render conspicuous what may be prior fundamental questions that scholarship ought to examine but are from ab initio occluded in any analysis that begins from an over valorization of the supposedly normative virtues of liberal democracy irrespective of the constellation of sociohistorical facts.

Let me end by surfacing yet another complexity glossed over in the current mainstream analysis of the 2024 South African elections. South Africa, like the US, is a settler colonial society. At the moment of independence all settler colonies are confronted with an ethical quandary. Formulated into a question: how are yesterday's dominant settlers and the dominated, enslaved, or colonized going to be unto each other as equals? Liberal democracy has proven over centuries its predilection to avoid the question, and/or ability to preclude it altogether. It responds with strategies that are compatible with or perpetuate the continued racial domination of the previously enslaved, dominated, and/or colonized. In South Africa, where political parties are organized along racial lines or perceived to represent racial interests and categories, where the previously enslaved, dominated, and/or colonized constitute the majority, a far more urgent discussion ought to be: what threats do the lingering or enduring effects of settler colonialism pose to electoral democracy? Answers cannot be known a priori. All that can be done at present is to plead for these questions to be accorded space in the current discourse on elections and democracy in South Africa, totalized by the liberal conception of democracy.

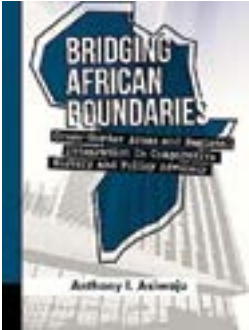
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IEC. "2024 Election Results," (2024), <https://results.elections.org.za/home/>, accessed August 25, 2024.

Professor Lwazi Lushaba is currently a visiting scholar at the Program of African Studies

PAS bookshelf



Bridging African Boundaries: Cross-Border Areas and Regional Integration in Comparative History and Policy Advocacy
(Austin, TX: Pan-African University Press, 2022)

Emeritus Professor **Anthony Asiwaju** presents a massive compendium, consisting of three

parts, including three of his scholarly studies, articles, and other items of interest. Part 1 republishes his comparative study of French and English colonialism in Yorubaland, first published in 1979. The second part republishes, *West African Transformations: Comparative Impacts of French and British Colonialism*, which examines other parts of West Africa such as Borgu, Mono, Zou, and Opara. The third section republishes *Boundaries and African Integration: Essays in Comparative History and Policy Analysis* (2003). Asiwaju's work highlights the disruption caused by colonization and its partitioning of African peoples, a move that permanently affected the inter-geographical and intercultural relationships of the African people to date.



International Conference on Manding Studies/Congrès International d'Études Manding, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London: Fiftieth commemoration/commemoration du cinquantième 1972-2022

(Barrington, IL: The Graphic

Arts Studio, Inc. for the Mande Studies Association (MANSA), 2023)

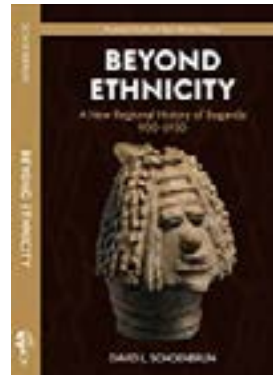
This beautiful pamphlet commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the International Conference on Manding Studies, edited by **Marcia Tiede**. It includes copies of original correspondence pertaining to the first conference, photographs, the program, and reflections by founding members, including Bai T. Moore, David Dalby, Robert Launay, David Conrad, David E. Skinner, and Roderic Knight.



Critique of Political Decolonization
(New York: Oxford University Press, 2023)

Alumnus **Bernard Forjuor** (political science 2015) offers new methodological, theoretical, and conceptual approaches to engaging the questions of colonialism,

political independence, political decolonization, justice, and freedom. He constructs multiple conceptual bridges between traditional disciplinary fields of inquiry (politics, history, law, African studies, economic history, critical theory, and philosophy/political theory). Rejecting the idea that formal colonization is over, he reconceptualizes the meaning of colonialism and decolonization and argues that decolonization is largely a question of justice.



Beyond Ethnicity: A New Regional History of Buganda 900-1930

(Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers Ltd., 2024).

Building on a vast array of sources, **David Schoenbrun** (history), examines groupwork—the imaginative labor that people do to create communities—in an

important region in East Africa within the past millennium. He shows how Africans formed groups beyond the face-to-face, working from shrines, without writing. Legal culture and ideologies of fertility blended with the expansion of the Buganda state. Women's creative embrace of cultural work and procreation blunted the dislocations of that state's expansion. Literate Christian men writing Uganda's history in a time of colonial rule debated belonging in more than ethnic terms.

Grounded in Schoenbrun's skillful mastery of historical linguistics and vernacular texts, *Beyond Ethnicity* supplements and redirects current debates about ethnicity in Africa and beyond. This timely volume carefully distinguishes past from present and shows the many possibilities that still exist for the creative cultural imagination.

How I spent my summer “vacation”: Mikhaeel attends summer school in Spain to enrich Arabic language teaching at Northwestern

Ragy H. Ibrahim Mikhaeel

In the fall of 2023, I created the first Arabic language course to be offered in North America at college level teaching Advanced Arabic using Arabic manuscripts and doing codicology at the same time (Arabic Literature 316-2; Fall 2023). Codicology is the study of manuscripts as cultural artifacts, focusing on the physical aspects of manuscripts such as ink, paper, layout, binding, decorative elements, and more. At the same time, ISITA collaborated with me to enrich this class, by hosting the well-known Mauritanian calligrapher, Mohameden Ahmedou, while my course was in session. This offered a golden opportunity for my students to have an in-class hands-on experiences working with a real khaTTaat khaṭāṭ (calligrapher). During the two workshops he held, I was inspired to expand the scope of my course, which focused largely on deciphering different script styles of calligraphy to include the fundamentals of Arabic codicology.

During my sabbatical in June, I learnt from Dr Rebecca Shereikis that there was an intensive course on Arabic codicology at San Lorenzo de El Escorial in Spain taught by the well-known scholars in the field of codicology: Dr Nuria de Castilla (. École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris) and Dr François Déroche (Collège de France). Déroche is considered to be the founder of the Islamic codicology discipline. His masterpiece, *Islamic Codicology. An Introduction to the Study*

of Manuscripts in Arabic Script (London, 2005), has become the textbook for the discipline. The updated version of this work is expected to be published in 2025, coauthored by himself and Dr. Nuria.

After receiving word of my acceptance into the course, I applied for and was awarded a grant from the John Hunwick Research Fund (administered by ISITA and the Program of African Studies) to support my travel and other costs. The calligraphic part of the course I taught at Northwestern had focused primarily on calligraphy and textual analysis. At the end of the day, I am a language teacher, and so language learning needed to be at the core of the course. However, I felt that giving hints on the codicological side of the manuscripts is another enrichment of my material. This was my

motivation for taking this intensive codicology course in Spain—and I believe such training would be important for other Arabic teachers who will follow the path I started in “Teaching Arabic language using Islamic Manuscripts.”

I needed to learn more about how to present fundamentals of the following topics in my class: parchment and paper, writing surfaces of the Eastern and Western paper, the Codex and its gatherings, the basis



Original Arabic manuscripts at the first known library in the world to display its books and manuscripts in shelving cases along the walls rather than in bays that were placed at right angles. Royal Library of San Lorenzo de El Escorial – San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain - Atlas Obscura



Ragy (upper center) at the Royal Library of San Lorenzo de El-Escorial with colleagues from Italy, Spain, Tunisia, Egypt, US, Turkey, Germany and Iran. Photos courtesy of Ragy Mikhaeel.

of Codex composition, inks, and Arabic paleography.

In Spain, the hands-on session, “How to Observe and Describe an Arabic Manuscript,” was a golden opportunity to see an iconic manuscripts written by Ibn Khaldun himself, hold it in my own hands, and evaluate it with colleagues from Italy, Australia, Germany, Spain and the Arab world. This was a historical moment I hope to integrate in my class, so that students learn to appreciate the glory of history and the beauty of the manuscript tradition, best learned if the teacher has already internalized such experiences.

In addition, I believe the core value of the course came from our visit to the Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial and our work with the authentic manuscripts in its collection and library. Added to this was another hands-on session, “Bookbinders at Work and Towards a History of the Arabic Manuscript,” that included a series of lectures on the layout and decoration of manuscripts, Arabic bindings, notes and colophons, and the history of manuscripts. The course concluded with the lecture, “The Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial and its Manuscript Collections,” by Jaime Sepulcre, the guardian and walking encyclopedia of the Escorial collection.

I look forward to integrating all that I learned in Spain into my course at Northwestern, which I plan to teach again in fall 2025.

Ragy H. Ibrahim Mikhaeel is the associate professor of instruction in Arabic at the Middle East and North African Languages Program (MENA-LP), Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences

Patterns and clues revealed in Arabic 316

The Arabic 316-2 course on Islamic manuscripts with Ustadh Ragy was a fascinating and eye-opening experience. The discoveries we made in class every day encouraged me to continue engaging with each new text. It was amazing to observe firsthand the evolution of Arabic calligraphy through the work of scribes and calligraphers across time and space from symbols that were barely recognizable to scripts very similar to what we see printed today. In terms of Arabic language learning, the texts pushed us to use contextual clues and recurring patterns in order to figure out words and phrases. It was helpful that the texts covered similar subject matter related to religious and spiritual guidance, which meant that we accumulated a common vocabulary and saw how different calligraphers rendered the same words and letters in their unique ways. Of course, encountering new and difficult words in new and difficult scripts presented an added challenge for us to work our way through. This class was unique in that we got to interact with classical Arabic texts in their original form. We also had the opportunity to learn more about the process of creating these works of art when Ustadh Muhammad visited our class. After struggling to replicate one or two letters and basic words even after he walked us through the strokes multiple times, I gained an even higher degree of appreciation for the meticulousness, patience, and discipline that creating such manuscripts requires.”

Asiyah Arastu is an undergraduate student at Northwestern University

A selection of electronic resources for African studies

Esmeralda Kale

We would like to highlight some electronic resources that we hope you will discover and explore as you conduct your research. This is a brief list of some of the more recent additions to our collections. For a complete list of electronic resources consult the African Studies Libguide.

Reference:

Oxford Bibliographies: African Studies: Provides annotated bibliographies of the most important books and articles related to African Studies. It combines broad introductions to such subjects as African society, politics, and literature with specific studies of individual peoples, states, and literary traditions to enable the user to appreciate Africans' distinctiveness as well as their diversity.

Oxford Bibliographies: Islamic Studies: This provides peer-reviewed annotated bibliographies on the range of lived experiences and textual traditions of Muslims as they are articulated in various countries and regions throughout the world.

Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History: This resource covers the entire range of African history, from the earliest stone tool-using hominids to the most recent religious movements, or from new interpretations of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya to recent reconsideration of the Rwanda genocide and its aftermath. By offering students and scholars a dynamic, engaging, and continually expanding reference work, our aim is nothing less than to make the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History a model for encyclopedias in the digital age.

Primary Sources:

Africa Commons: This is available in four parts, largely focused on South Africa. Black South Africa Magazines; History and Culture; East African Magazines, Newspapers and Films from the legendary Kenyan journalist, Hilary Ng'weno; Southern African film and Documentaries.

African Newspapers: The British Library Collection features nearly 60 newspapers from throughout Africa, all published before 1901. Originally archived by the British Library—the national library of the United Kingdom—these rare historical documents are now available for the first time in a fully searchable online collection. From culture to history to geopolitics, the pages of these newspapers offer fresh research opportunities for students and scholars interested in topics related to Africa.

Our subscription to **Colonial Law in Africa** is available in three parts that span 1808–1966. Originally known as the 'Government Gazettes', each item contains the colonial laws for the year they were published. The legal records also include property for sale, probate records, and bankruptcy notices. These items cover the Napoleonic Wars, the Boer War, and the First World War. They also cover the abolition of the legal status of slavery, and the transfer of Southern Rhodesia from the British South Africa Company to colonial rule. A series of legal notices also reveal the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on Tanzania. Then, the Second World War led to a series of new laws in these colonies. The Mau Mau uprising, the creation of the first legislative councils and legal changes to transfer power to those councils. These gazettes were published alongside the African Blue Books of Statistics during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Confidential Print. Africa, 1834–1966: Issued by the British Government, this is fundamental to political, social, and economic research. It covers coastal trading in the early 19th century, the 1884 Berlin Conference, and the subsequent Scramble for Africa. They follow the abuses of the Congo Free State, fights against tropical disease, Italy's defeat by the Abyssinians, World War II, apartheid in South Africa, and the independence movement.

Nineteenth Century Collections Online: Europe and Africa: Commerce, Christianity, Civilization, and Conquest: This resource delivers monographs, manuscripts, and newspaper accounts covering key issues of economics, world politics, and international strategy.

Esmeralda Kale is the George & Mary LeCron Foster Curator of the Herskovits Library of African Studies.

PAS recently learned that at age 3, **Vice President Kamala Harris** briefly lived at 620 Library Place when her parents worked at Northwestern in the 1960s. Her father, Donald Harris, was an assistant professor of economics during the 1967-68 academic year while her mother, Shyamala Gopalan Harris, was a staff member in the Biological Sciences Department.

PAS joins in celebrating Nobel laureate **Wole Soyinka's** 90th birthday. Soyinka has had a long relationship with PAS going back to 1968/69 when he was artist-in-residence at NU. In spring 1968, his well-known play, "The Lion and the Jewel" was performed in conjunction with the Elmwood College drama department; the Ghanaian poet, George Awoonor-Williams (later known as Kofi Awoonor) played the lead. Soyinka's drama, "The Trials of Brother Jero," was performed by the Elmhurst College players. In January 1996, Soyinka visited NU again and participated in a three-way discussion with Sandra L. Richards (theatre and African American studies) and Edward Hirsch (poet and literary critic, at Ethel Barber Theater. On November 1, 2006, Soyinka presented a major public lecture, "Othello's Dominion, Immigrant's Domain," as part of NU's campus-wide Othello Project. Further, he gave the keynote address, "Democracy and the Nigerian Ambiguity." at the PAS conference, "Nigeria 2007: Political, Social and Economic Transitions." More recently in October 2020, PAS director Chris Abani joined Soyinka in an online conversation which resumed

a conversation between the two writers at the New York Public Library in November 2019. Both discussions can be accessed online.

Alumnus **Chernoh Bah** (history 2024) was interviewed on KPFA in June on the harassment of the Africanist Press and the current climate of repression in Sierra Leone. You can access the interview at: <https://kpfa.org/player/?audio=380358>.

Alumnus **Lamin Keita** (political science, 2024) has accepted a post-doctoral fellowship at The Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. He will join a team of political scientists and experts to investigate the rapid decline of democracy and human rights in Africa. He recently published an article, "Youth and Protest: How "#Gambia" Ended Decades of Autocratic Rule," in the *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (CJAS) 53(3), 2023, 585-604. doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2023.2254859.

Alumna **Dolores Koenig** (anthropology 1977) published "Evaluating Well-being after Compulsory Resettlement: Livelihoods, Standards of Living, and Well-being in Manantali, Mali." *Economic Anthropology* 11(2) 2024: 210-220; "Alternative Development Paths in Manantali, Mali" in *Resettlement with People First: Counterfactual Pathways*, Susanna Price and Jay Drydyk, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2024), 69-89; and "Manantali, Mali: Urbanization in and around a Small Town in the

West African Savanna" in *Africa and Urban Anthropology: Theoretical and Methodological Contributions from Contemporary Fieldwork*, Deborah Pellow and Suzanne Scheld, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2023), 144-216.

David Schoenbrun (history) has retired after twenty-five years teaching at Northwestern. He also served as Interim Director of PAS from 1996 to 1997. For an overview of David's career, see Jonathon Glassman's account in the History Department's spring 2024 newsletter, <https://history.northwestern.edu/about/newsletter/spring-2024/retiree-spotlight2.html>. Colleagues and alumni gathered for a joint celebration of the careers of David Schoenbrun and Jonathon Glassman at a two-day conference, *African History: Past, Present, and Future*, at Harris Hall held May 31 to June 1.

Marcia Tiede (Northwestern Library) presented a paper, "An overview of MANSAs and West African Scholarly Participation : From London 1972 to Bamako 2024 = Un aperçu de MANSAs et de la participation scientifique en Afrique de l'Ouest: de Londres 1972 à Bamako 2024" at the 12th International Conference on Mande Studies / 12e Colloque International des Études Mande, held in Bamako, Mali, 26-29 June 2024. It was hosted by the Institut des Sciences Humaines.

Swahili table to community table

Garner Wallace



I am a recently graduated student-athlete at Northwestern. I took Swahili for my language requirement because I knew some of my teammates were also taking it. What was a requirement quickly became one of my all-time favorite classes that I took at Northwestern. The community you build with your classmates is unlike any other experience at Northwestern. I was looking forward to attending every class, which is not something I could say about my other classes. I wanted to continue improving my Swahili skills, so I started using Duolingo to continue learning even when I wasn't in classes. I still continue to learn from Duolingo

today and have even found an amazing use of these language skills I had been practicing.

This summer, one of my friends told me about an organization that she was involved in named Exodus World Service. This organization helps refugees who recently moved to a new city. My friend told me that one of the recent refugee families spoke Swahili and invited me to meet this family. It was an amazing experience. I got to make food with them and play games. What was most exciting for me was communicating with this family and speaking in Swahili with them. This was a great experience and reminded me of all the language tables we did for our Swahili class, where we got to talk to all different people in different classes and native Swahili speakers.

My hope for the future is to travel to either Kenya or Tanzania after I finish graduate school or some other time in the future to continue to use my classroom experience in the real world. Taking Swahili was one of the best choices I could have made at Northwestern.



PAS welcomes new Foreign Language Teaching Assistant

Stacey Akinyi joins PAS as the new Foreign Language Teaching Assistant. She is a Swahili teacher from Kisumu, Kenya with two years teaching experience at some of the best schools in the country. She holds a BEd from Moi University. Her students have achieved some of Kenya's top student awards. Stacey is passionate about fostering a love for the Swahili language and culture among her students and creating an engaging and supportive learning environment. Outside the classroom she enjoys music, acting, participating in community outreach programs, volunteering, and exploring beautiful landscapes.

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