

2019/20 Annual Report

 **African Studies Center** International Studies and Programs **Michigan State University**



Table of Contents

Message from the Director	3
About the African Studies Center	4
Teaching African Languages	
Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS)	5
African Languages Instruction	5
Supporting Our Students and Scholars	
Student and Scholar Engagement and Activities	6
ASMSU President Abii-Tah	7
Education Abroad	8
Undergraduate and Graduate Student Highlights	11
Disseminating Information to the Public	
Eye on Africa	12
MSU African Alumni Engagement	13
Year of Global Africa	14
Creating New Knowledge	
Ubuntu Dialogues	16
Faculty Achievements	17
Working with the Community	
The African Studies Center at MSU and on the Continent	20
Outreach	21
Alliance for African Partnership	22

Message from the Director



Jamie Monson, Director
African Studies Center
MSU

Dear colleagues, students, alumni and friends,

Warm greetings to you from the African Studies Center at Michigan State University! It has been a tumultuous year. When Outreach Director Dr. Isaac Kalumbu first proposed that we create this Annual Report last spring, we were still working on campus here in East Lansing. Since that time so much has happened – from the global COVID-19 pandemic to police violence and the global protests against anti-Black racism worldwide.

Our response has been to recommit ourselves to meaningful action, as described in the Action Plan and Statement on our website. We believe that the African Studies Center can play a positive role in promoting education and outreach about Africa, and we have already begun our work to use African Studies as a platform and advocate for work to end anti-Black racism together with our colleagues on and off campus.

In this Annual Report, we provide you with an overview of our work during the last academic year. Here you will find information about our mission and values, our academic work, outreach to schools and the community, education abroad in Africa, new partnerships, our just-completed Year of Global Africa and more.

I want to extend a special thanks to Isaac Kalumbu and Therese Brimmer for all the hard work they have put into this document, and to all of our staff for the contributions they made.

Even though we are not physically in our offices as I write this, the MSU African Studies Center welcomes you more warmly than ever to connect with us! Get involved in our virtual community by attending events, reaching out over email and social media, and sharing your ideas and experiences with us so that we can continue to support you and the rest of our African Studies family, wherever you may be.

Warmly,

Jamie Monson
Director, African Studies Center
Professor, Department of History

About the African Studies Center

The MSU African Studies Center (ASC) is one of a suite of highly respected international studies programs at MSU whose purpose is to offer a truly global education while engaging in cutting edge research on the world’s most pressing challenges. Our mission is to produce and disseminate knowledge about Africa, to teach African languages, to enhance understanding of Africa among the general public, and to support the next generation of experts on Africa. We are proud to continue to serve as a federally-funded Title VI National Resource Center for the study of Africa. This Annual Report documents the diverse activities carried out by the ASC in 2019-20 that fulfill our mission.

The MSU African Studies Center supports the generation of new knowledge about Africa through research fellowships and grants, including research that leads to sustainable partnerships with African institutions. In keeping with our land grant tradition, we have the obligation to apply the knowledge that we generate toward solving the complex interlocking and global problems that confront the African continent today. Our Core Faculty of 94 who are spread across 46 academic departments at MSU carry out extensive research programs in Africa, some of which we highlight in this report.

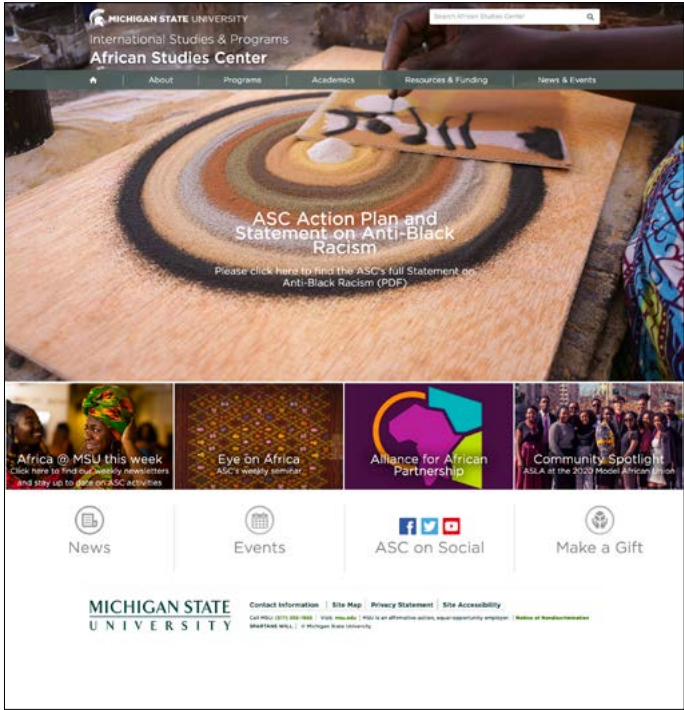
One of our signature programs, Eye On Africa, serves as a vehicle for sharing new research and the knowledge emanating from it. Eye on Africa seminars are available online through livestreaming. We also support both print and digital media publications, to be sure that research findings reach our academic and public audiences.

We have established one of the largest African language programs in this country, teaching on average about 12 African languages per year, with the capacity to take students from beginning level to advanced level in languages such as Kiswahili, Hausa, Yoruba and Zulu. Federally funded FLAS fellowships support undergraduate and graduate student African language study at MSU and abroad.

We have an obligation to present information to the public that is clear, concise and contextualized about the social, political and economic dynamics of the African continent. We work with local teachers to incorporate African material into our local school curriculum, including best pedagogical practices for teaching about Africa. Our highly regarded online teaching resource, Exploring Africa, is widely acclaimed

and updated weekly so that teachers can have access to relevant materials for classroom use. Our growing relationship with Binder Park Zoo is an exciting opportunity to provide suitable programming for middle school students who participate in summer activities. We have also begun a new outreach activity with Lakeland Correctional Facility in southern Michigan.

We work closely with community organizations that have an African focus here in Michigan, nationally and internationally. We are especially proud of the community connections that were strengthened during our Year of Global Africa when we collaborated with a diverse group of local and international community partners.



Teaching African Languages

FLAS: A ‘World of Interaction’

The African Studies Center at MSU is among a cohort of institutions of higher education that are allocated Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships from the U.S. Department of Education for the study of African languages.

Each year, the Center solicits applications from graduate and undergraduate students and awards FLAS Fellowships to students enrolled in a program that combines the study of an African language with advanced training in African Studies.

MSU offers instruction in African languages from all the major regions of the continent. Arabic, Swahili and Zulu are taught regularly in a classroom setting. Many other languages are available on a tutorial basis. These are learner-oriented and on-demand, and native speakers are recruited from the African students in the MSU community to serve as tutors, trained and supervised weekly by a faculty linguist.

During the Summer of 2019, eight students received FLAS Fellowships and studied abroad in Africa, learning Hausa in Ghana, Mende in Sierra Leone, Amharic in Ethiopia, Swahili in Tanzania, Zulu in South Africa and Namibia, and Arabic in Morocco. Twelve others were awarded Academic Year FLAS to study different African languages.

These students are the next generation of educators and international and government service workers. They are cognizant of the fact that learning a foreign language is an asset in today’s job economy and value the personal transformation they experience in the process of learning a new language. One FLAS applicant wrote the following:

“I am pursuing a FLAS Fellowship to study Swahili for a number of reasons. First and foremost, I respect and appreciate languages other than my native English and truly value the world of interactions that emerges when one can converse with someone in their native language. I believe having local language skills helps build rapport and respect with locals.

It shows an initiative to understand others on their terms rather than constantly forcing them to bend to ours or be reliant on a translator.”

African Languages Instruction

The African Languages Program offered a number of languages at different levels during the 2019-2020 Academic Year. For the Fall semester the language classes included Hausa II & III, Krio I, Swahili I, II, III & IV, Yoruba I & III, and Zulu I & II. A highlight was the first time offering of the 300 level Swahili class approved last year. This means that students can now take regular Swahili classes for four years. For other languages, regular classes are only for three years, courses being in the 100, 200 and 400 levels. In Spring 2020

the African Languages Program offered Hausa, Swahili, Yoruba, and Zulu at the same levels as in the Fall.

Like many other academic programs at Michigan State University and in universities around the world, the African Languages Program faced challenges midway through the semester due to COVID-19. Face-to-face classes were suspended and most students had to go home. Classes were then taught remotely via Zoom and Skype.

Learning from home was difficult for some students due to technical issues (e.g. network connection problems) and social issues since students come from different backgrounds. Those from low income and larger families were affected the most. However, instructors were able to navigate through these unforeseen circumstances to provide quality instruction. Most of the issues were eventually resolved and the semester ended well with all the students getting their grades.

Summer plans for online instruction were put in place, with Intensive Swahili, Zulu, and Yoruba were offered remotely via Zoom.

55
African language courses offered

319
students enrolled in language courses

6
African languages offered

Supporting Our Students and Scholars

Engagement and Activities

COMMUNITY FALL SEMESTER WELCOME PICNIC

The annual Fall Welcome Picnic is intended to introduce new and old African and Africanist members of the MSU community to one another. The picnic helps new students, visiting scholars and faculty to establish connections with fellow Africanists for continued interaction and support during their stay at MSU.

According to Dr. Linda Chukwurah, Alliance for African Partnership (AAP) visiting research fellow from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, “the picnic provided a high degree of acceptance and connection with home, Africa, and provided great connections.” For Humphrey Fellow Ines Anoman, “the picnic was a kind of ice-breaker. As an introvert, it helped me feel more comfortable in my further relationships with the people that I met.”

Below: 2019 Picnic attendees gathered for remarks from ASC Director, Dr. Jamie Monson
Right, top: African Student Gala 2019



THE AFRICAN STUDENT UNION GALA

The African Student Gala is an annual event hosted by the African Student Union (ASU). It is a prominent MSU event that attracts people from the Greater Lansing area, neighboring institutions, and neighboring states. Students decide the theme of the gala based on contemporary local and global issues related to Africa. The theme of this year’s gala was ‘Umoja’, a Swahili word that means ‘Unity’. Over 500 people attended.

Happygod Macha, a first-time attendee, and Foreign Language Teaching Assistant, was pleased that the gala “does not only foster the Africans-to-Africans fraternity; it also promotes socio-cultural awareness to the MSU community and promotes a sense of global citizenship.”

AFRICAN STUDENT LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATION (ASLA) PARTICIPATION AT MODEL AFRICAN UNION CONFERENCE

ASLA represents MSU at the annual international Model African Union (MAU) conference hosted by Howard University in collaboration with the African Union Mission to the USA. The conference is a simulation of the proceedings of the African Union. Over 30 universities from the USA, Canada and Africa participate each year. This year, ASLA represented Gabon and Burundi.

According to its president, Luyando Katenda, “ASLA was founded by African students in the diaspora with the intent of instilling in them leadership and diplomatic skills.”

AFRICAN FEMALE STUDENTS EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (AFSEP)

The goal of AFSEP is to support African female students at MSU. The program provides a safe space where students can come together to build comradeship, receive mentorship, and engage in activities that foster self-esteem and the development of leadership and professional skills.

AFSEP also recognizes the importance of giving back to the community. The group partners with Woven Vessels International (WVI) Ministry in Lansing to provide mentorship and support to African women and girls in the Greater Lansing Area. Most of the girls are in middle and high school and come from families that migrated to the US as refugees. AFSEP believes that through the mentorship program, these girls acquire necessary tools to adjust and thrive in their new community, and are better able to take advantage of opportunities available to them.

ASMSU PRESIDENT ABII-TAH BIH

Abii-Tah Bih made history this year by becoming the first student from Africa to be elected president of Michigan State University’s Associated Students of Michigan State University ([ASMSU](#)) for the 2020-2021 academic year. Bih



Abii-Tah Bih

is a rising senior studying international relations and comparative cultures and politics in James Madison College where she is part of the prestigious College’s Leadership Program.

FEATURED EVENT: The African Tea Time Series

The African Tea Time series is hosted by the Kongamano Student Group together with the African Studies Center. Events are held biweekly, and aim at sharing knowledge about cultural, political, historical, and socioeconomic developments in Africa. Presenters include students, faculty, visiting scholars, and guests to MSU.

Ines Anoman, a Hubert Humphrey Fellow, reported that she, “learned a lot about strengths and challenges faced throughout the continent. I discovered that African cultures have some similarities, which is a factor in coming together.”

“...mind opening on many African issues, from politics, cultures, social services, educational system and tourism, accompanied by intellectual discussions. It was more than being in a multidisciplinary course about Africa.”

HAPPYGOD MACHA, VISITING FULBRIGHT FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING ASSISTANT

Students taking Africa-related courses find Tea Time to be a great resource to augment their classroom learning. Lily Cross, a first-year student taking an Africa-related course, attended Tea Time as part of a classroom assignment. She “met awesome leaders and learned a lot about an amazing continent and got to know the African population at MSU better .”

Tea Time is also a place to make valuable connections for personal and professional development. According

to Macha, “the social nature of the program allows one to create important professional networks, which is a good thing for me as an educator.” Sarah Davis, the president of Kongamano stated that, “Tea Time is an amazing way to meet new people and to connect with acquaintances and friends from all colleges, countries, and continents.”

Lily Cross felt she “gained a family and community through the African Tea Time. I was always pointed in the direction of someone who could help me personally or even just someone to have a chat with. I will not forget this and intend to continue visiting the African Studies Center and learn as much as I can because it helps me debrief from my place alone in East Lansing.”

Bih will succeed Mario Kakos as the undergraduate student body president. She won the election in a tightly contested race against ASMSU’s Vice President for Student Allocations, Dylan Calatano on April 15, 2020. The election was conducted over Zoom, due to the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bih’s candidacy for the presidential role was historic on a number of levels. Although she was already involved in student government as a James Madison Representative in the ASMSU General Assembly, this is a first for a representative to run. Being a female

international student did not deter her either. Instead, Bih believes that her background and experience as an international student made her uniquely qualified for this position and role. She notes that prior to, and during their stay at MSU, international students achieve levels of fearlessness that render them qualified enough for many roles on campus. “This is really setting a precedent for everyone who looks like me, sounds like me, comes from the position that I come from to actually know that they too can achieve this because you are indispensable,” Bih said.

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Supporting Our Students and Scholars

Bih realizes the immensity of the task ahead of her. She feels grateful to the Spartan student community for putting so much trust in her. “These elections meant so much to so many students and I am determined that this year, we go above and beyond to meet students at their points of need.”

Asked what her election as an African meant, Bih said it took an immense amount of courage to join student government. She feared that she might not belong, or be accepted, but once she mustered the courage to attend the meeting, she quickly realized how much she fit in. She learned that despite differences in background and nationality, service to Spartans was a shared value between her and her ASMSU colleagues. She found a home away from home and a family at ASMSU. “So if there is any activity that any African students are holding back on because they worry that they might not fit in, it is imperative to remember that MSU is complete because we are a part of the process. So shoot your shot with all you’ve got.”

136
African Studies courses offered

6,713
students enrolled in ASC courses

\$21,325
Awarded to student organizations

4
Africanist Fulbright Fellows

EDUCATION ABROAD

MSU Education Abroad Programs in Africa offer Spartans Varied and Unique Global Educational Experiences.

The provision of robust, diverse, and immersive Education Abroad programming is something upon which MSU prides itself, and the professors leading Education Abroad programs to Africa have made a strong commitment to this goal. According to ASC Core Faculty member and Assistant Professor of African Languages Dr. Jonathan Choti: “Education abroad is a crucial educational experience for the students, professors, and communities where the learning experience takes place.” When asked about why they lead undergraduate students on study abroad programs in Africa, almost all faculty members commented that the opportunity to offer students new experiences in new cultures and to serve not only as teachers, but as role models and mentors, was the most meaningful part of their teaching role.

MSU faculty members from nine different colleges led eleven programs with more than eighty students on Education Abroad programs during the Summer Semester of 2019. From researching wildlife biology in Kenya to working with women in politics and advocacy in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Malawi, MSU Education Abroad



Pictured left to right Ja’La Wourman (MSU graduate student), Holly Pummell (MSU undergraduate student), Wilbert Mitao (Sokoine University of Agriculture student), Drew Frommelt (MSU undergraduate student) and Dr. Jonathan Choti (MSU Professor). This is pictured at a household in Naitola Village by a keyhole garden that was create by the community and the MSU Environment Team. The keyhole garden is used to provide a closed-loop food system with their biogas digester.



Establishing the keyhole garden.



Ground garden.



Making teaching aids.



Building a raised garden.

their course work, but are valuable in the opportunities they offer students to immerse themselves in cultures, experiences, and scholarship that is unlike anything they have been involved with before. Arts and Humanities professor Dr. John Aerni-Flessner says of his program on History, Culture, and Schooling in Southern Africa: “The students got to meet and interact with a wide range of people across both South Africa and

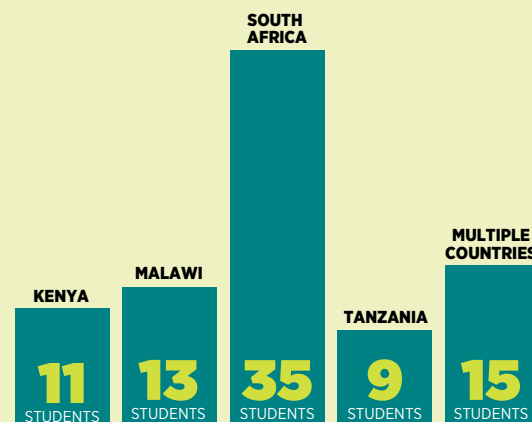
“Education abroad is a crucial educational experience for the students, professors, and communities where the learning experience takes place.”

DR. JONATHAN CHOTI

Lesotho. The human connections were the most important part of the trip, and really helped the students think about how people live.”

Students also comment that one of the most valuable parts of their Education Abroad experiences are the people they meet. Holly Pummell, an undergraduate student from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources says of her experience on the Sustainable Community Development in Tanzania program, “I

EDUCATION ABROAD BY DESTINATION COUNTRY



EDUCATION ABROAD BY AREA OF STUDY

African American/African Studies:	1	PROGRAM
Education:	3	PROGRAMS
Business:	2	PROGRAMS
Natural Sciences:	2	PROGRAMS
Community Development:	2	PROGRAMS
Engineering:	1	PROGRAM

programming in Africa offers students unique opportunities to pursue global educational experiences. It is clear when talking to students and faculty alike, that these programs are not just valuable in

applied for this study abroad, because I wanted to experience an entirely different culture than my own and gain experience in sustainable community development. Reflecting on the past 6-weeks, I gained so much more than that. When you have the opportunity to work with individuals from different backgrounds, you are able to learn something new from each and every one of them.”

MSU Education Abroad programs are not only about learning – they also provide opportunities for MSU students to give to others through internships, volunteer service and research collaboration. Geography Professor Leo Zulu says his Education Abroad program – Development and NGOs: Internships in Malawi – “is a great opportunity for world-curious and adventurous students, regardless of major, and those seeking to explore how they can contribute to positive change for others.” One of his students, Russell George, who is studying Human Geography, said his experience in Malawi “was a great opportunity to apply my interests and education by witnessing development firsthand.” The Research and Action in the New South Africa program led by Dr. Joy Coates (African American and African Studies) concentrates on immersing students in “real life contexts where they directly examine, explore, and engage in the ‘African World’ lived-experience in practice.” This program is special because it seeks to develop connections, partnerships, and scholarly collaborations between South Africa and MSU students with the end goal of contributing towards a “reservoir of bilateral goodwill that will support African interests in the future.”

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Supporting Our Students and Scholars

MSU Education Abroad programming in Africa focuses on helping students to integrate the classroom knowledge they have gained in East Lansing with expertise developed from first-hand experience in an African context. Programs such as Behavioral Ecology of African Mammals in Kenya allow students to “fully experience life as a wildlife biologist: both the research side and the on-the-ground diplomacy and team work that’s required to successfully conduct research.”

In a very different field, Dr. Ernest Betts from the Broad College of Business leads a program that allows students to explore the “economic structure, business opportunities, and historical/current political position of South Africa from a global business perspective.” Students not only gain valuable scholarly perspectives from their Education Abroad studies in Africa, but they are also able to make connections.

Grant Keyvanmanesh, an undergraduate student on the Sustainable Community Development in Tanzania program articulates this well, saying of his collaborative project: “I was able to do something that made a difference.” The key here is that students are not just engaging in community projects while in-country that have no real impact on the community; they are co-creating with community members, scholars, and local university students to engage in meaningful and long-lasting collaborations.

Undergraduate and Graduate Student Highlights

ASLA AT THE MODEL AFRICAN UNION

In the Spring of 2020, students from the African Students Leadership



Many of the students and professors that attend the 2019 education abroad in Tanzania.

Association (ASLA) participated in the Model African Union in Washington, DC. ASLA is a student organization that includes both graduate and undergraduate students looking to participate in events that promote pan-Africanism and engage with issues related to Africa’s development. According to the organization’s president, Luyando Katenda, ASLA was founded by African students in the diaspora with the intent of uniting African students and instilling in them leadership and diplomatic skills. This year ASLA students participated in The International Model African Union event held at Howard University.

The Model AU is a simulation of the proceedings of the African Union. Students participate in pre-conference study and Embassy briefings in Washington, D.C. The conference aligns with the goals of ASLA in helping participating students gain understandings of the role, structure, and activities of the African Union as well as the economic, social, and political issues facing African countries.

“ASLA is a space that has allowed me to learn more about my continent than any class or school will ever teach me,”

MIRIAM KABURU
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT FROM KENYA

Miriam Kaburu, an undergraduate student from Kenya said that this year’s Model AU gave her an opportunity to learn about different African cultures and she was “able to contribute solutions to continent-wide challenges such as the movement of goods and services and border security.” When asked about how ASLA has changed her experience at MSU, Miriam said “ASLA is a space that has allowed me to learn more about my continent than any class or school will ever teach me,” adding that the real value of ASLA is having conversations with others who have experienced issues that most people only read about on paper.

FELLOWSHIP AWARDS FOR STUDENTS CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN AFRICA

In 2019, four MSU students won Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Awards. The Fulbright Awards provide funding to support field research for doctoral students. Applicants are ranked on their knowledge and use of less commonly taught languages as well their academic preparation. Of the 9 applications submitted from MSU in March 2019, 6 received awards – 4 of which were for students conducting research in Africa, specifically Senegal, Ghana, Namibia, and Kenya. Among the Africa related awards, two are in History, with one each in Anthropology and Curriculum, Instruction & Teacher Education (CITE).

From the department of Anthropology, **Brian Geyer** used his Swahili proficiency to conduct research with technology professionals in Kenya’s ‘Silicon Savannas.’ **Eric Kesse**, from the department of History, explored the environmental and social history of a community living in the Amanzule River basin in Ghana, using the Akan Twi language. Eric also researched the history of this community by examining sources in British archives in London and Birmingham, and conducted interviews with tourism officials in Accra. **Bernard Moore**, also from the department of History used Afrikaans to collect oral history interviews with elderly sheep farmers in Namibia to explore their life experiences in the midst of the social and political changes they have observed. He also examined archival records in Pretoria and Cape Town. And from the College of Education, **Rachel Lockart** used her fluent Wolof and French to research teacher education and employment in Senegal as, “contested terrain,” due to a policy of

replacing professional teachers with low paid contract workers. The new teachers are rushed through teacher training courses as an economic measure, which is a practice that is becoming more common in other countries besides Senegal.

In addition to these four students winning Fulbright Awards, two other students won awards from International Studies and Programs to help them continue their dissertation research in Africa. **Alaina Bur** and **Claire Hoffman** have received the Claffey Meyer International Travel Grant through MSU’s International Studies and Programs to conduct dissertation research in East Africa. This award provides financial assistance to domestic students who intend to travel to developing countries for the purpose of providing technical assistance, participate in research, or engage in service.

Alaina Bur, from the department of Sociology, conducted research on women’s power in West Pokot County, Kenya within the context of a situated political-environmental system related to water management. She explored the relationship between water scarcity in a lowlands region as it is connected to highlands forest management and its impact on power for women in these communities. And from the department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Claire Hoffman sought to develop sustainable solutions for human-wildlife conflict in the areas near to Murchison Falls National Park in Uganda. Her research focuses on the depredation caused by carnivores on livestock and human lives, and by crop-raiding elephants, which also sometimes ends in human fatalities.



Brian Geyer



Eric Kesse



Bernard Moore



Alaina Bur



Claire Hoffman

Disseminating Information to the Public



*Elisabeth Schmidt, Eye on Africa
October 10, 2019*



*Cherif Keita and Jamie Monson, Eye on Africa
November 7, 2019*



*Kim Yi Dionne and Awa Sarr, Eye on Africa
October 24, 2019*

If It's Thursday, Eyes are on Africa!

Every Thursday at noon during the academic year, it is Eye on Africa time. Eye on Africa is the weekly seminar series of the African Studies Center at MSU. This public seminar aims to bring to the MSU community, and the interested public, cutting-edge knowledge about the African continent. The series draws on international and domestic experts, Africanist as well as African scholars, and emerging and established researchers to create an inclusive view of Africa and African histories, economies, politics, and cultures.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, Eye on Africa presented a series of talks from distinguished visitors, MSU faculty and graduate students. For example, Dr. Amanda Logan, an Africanist archaeologist from Northwestern University with research interests in food studies, opened the series with a lecture entitled, "Excavating Histories of African Food Security." She outlined the continent's food security history and contrasted it with its current status of food insecurity, arguing that the "long-term view challenges notions of the African continent as a forever food scarce place, suggesting that the past can act as an inspiration for food security futures." The series of lectures was cut short in March due to COVID-19 and will be offered virtually in a webinar format in the Fall Semester 2020.

Eye on Africa is a learning space as well as a space for networking and socializing. Every Thursday, a community of people with shared interest in studying the African continent come together, share food, catch up with one another, and learn together. In Dr. John

Aerni-Flessner's words, "Eye on Africa disseminates knowledge, creates community, and brings together the African Studies Center in one place." John is Associate Professor in the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities (RCAH) at MSU. He regularly attends Eye on Africa lectures and uses the platform to present his own work, as do many of our Core Faculty. "I love the Eye on Africa series," he says, "not only do I get to stay up to date with the latest in research on the African continent from a wide-ranging and diverse set of academics from all over the country and the world, but I also get to connect with my fellow faculty

"Eye on Africa disseminates knowledge, creates community, and brings together the African Studies Center in one place."

DR. JOHN AERNI-FLESSNER

members who work on Africa-related issues. The Eye is a space where we learn from the speakers, but also make the connections between research and activities taking place on campus in a number of different departments, colleges, and centers."

Bringing the academic community together is one priority of the African Studies Center at MSU, and Eye on Africa plays a crucial role in its realization. The series also helps in the training and mentoring of the next generation of Africa scholars, an important priority for the Center. Through the series, graduate students learn from researchers from around the world, expanding and deepening their knowledge of the continent one lecture at a time. Jason Smith, a Ph.D. student in Linguistics attests to this: "I really enjoyed the Eye on Africa



Eye on Africa gathering of students and faculty.

series this past year, as it broadened my exposure to research and issues in Africa, particularly outside my area of study (Sierra Leone). The talks by Elisabeth Schmidt and Todd Cleveland were both interesting, and I used Dr. Schmidt's Foreign Interventions in Africa as a source for a paper that I wrote for my African History Seminar. As a linguistics Ph.D. student studying Mende, I also found the talk on Ajami script given by Dr. Fallou Ngom to be quite fascinating."

Eye on Africa provides graduate students with the opportunity to learn from experts. It also connects them with leading scholars in the field of African Studies. Guest speakers often meet

with graduate students in small groups or hold one-on-one conversations with them. Caitlin Baker, a Ph.D. student in African history, writes, "[t]he weekly Eye on Africa lectures are one of the highlights of my week. Not only do they allow me to keep up-to-date with cutting-edge research in African Studies, but they also provide a valuable, regular place for me to interact with my colleagues and mentors.... My colleagues and I have gotten a lot out of these interactions, particularly when they give us the chance to meet senior scholars in our own field of interest. Those contacts have already proven valuable for me in my own research."

MSU African Alumni Engagement

The African Studies Center values our relationships and connections with African alumni. Many alumni are already engaged with MSU through their home departments and through MSU-Africa partnership and activities. To strengthen these connections, the Center has developed an African Alumni engagement strategy which, among other initiatives, seeks to facilitate the establishment of alumni clubs in Africa. Currently, we have clubs in Kenya, Botswana, and Ghana.

These clubs are relatively young. However, the club leaders and founding members are proud of the progress they have made thus far. Professor Fred Amimo, the president of the Kenyan alumni club commented, "The alumni idea was realized to reconnect. We have held an inaugural meeting and elected officials. We have also formed a WhatsApp group and are in touch with one another. Going forward, we hope to foster collaborations among ourselves and share knowledge in our areas of expertise for mutual benefit. We hope to work closer with our Alma mater and contribute to the African Studies Center at MSU and vice versa."

Some alumni have made individual efforts to promote MSU in their countries. Dr. Annah Molosiwa, participates in recruitment fairs organized by the US Embassy in Botswana. The Embassy invites involvement of alumni of various American universities and Dr. Molosiwa has been a champion for MSU. Similarly, Prof. Amimo pointed out that, "many of us have informally advertised and encouraged potential students in Kenya to attend MSU." [continued on next page...](#)

Disseminating Information to the Public



Top: Ghana alumni & friends after a dinner, July 2019. Middle: Dr. Annah Molosiwa (seated) at the US Embassy in Botswana recruitment fair, 2019. Bottom: Inaugural Kenyan Alumni & Friends Gathering, July 2016.

It is impressive to learn that the clubs are serving as intellectual resources for the younger alumni who look up to older members as role models. Arhin Acheampong, a 2018 Ghanaian alumnus, stated, "I like the fact that I have a resource of alumni I can always fall back

on. Seeing other alumni succeed in their various sectors is such a motivation." Arhin hopes that in the future, the group can, "initiate a mentorship program where alumni with similar interests can bond and expand their networks."

More alumni gatherings have been held in Africa as part of the broader MSU partnership activities and programs. A reception was held in Cape Town, South Africa, during the MSU Alumni Tour of Southern Africa in 2018. In Tanzania, an alumni reception was held during the launch of the Alliance for African Partnership (AAP) in 2017. Most recently, MSU alumni met at a gathering in Botswana during an AAP sponsored conference in 2019.

In summer 2020 an African Alumni panel will be part of the MSU annual Alumni University activities, allowing MSU African alumni to share their experiences at MSU and reflect on the ways their MSU connections have played a

role in their professional development and how their careers have created impacts in their home countries. We look forward to continuing to engage with our alumni to support recruitment and career opportunities for new generations of African students at MSU.

"The Year of Global Africa was a year to reeducate people about what Africa is, it was to highlight that we have the fastest growing economies, beautiful traditions and culture, and that we are a continent of change makers."

GIGI NGCOBO, SOUTH AFRICA
UNDERGRADUATE, FINANCE AND UX DESIGN

Year of Global Africa

The [Year of Global Africa](#) (YGA) highlighted MSU's rich history of connection with our many partners across Africa and throughout the African Diaspora. During the Year of Global Africa, MSU colleges, departments, programs and organizations worked closely with the Year of Global Africa team to create activities and programs connected to the expanding African diaspora, the diversity of African people and places, as well as what brings Africans together. The Year of Global Africa also highlighted the importance of reciprocal partnerships that honor different ways of knowledge construction.

To learn more about the Year of Global Africa activities and impacts, watch our complete [YGA Documentary here](#) or the short [trailer](#).



Year of Global Africa Half Time Show Fall 2018 Kick off event.



Shingi Mavima, John Metzler, Angela Manjichi and Jonathan Choti.



Professor Malete at the Year of Global Africa Mini Grants reception.



Dean Steven Hanson at Year of Global Africa Mosaic exhibit reception.



Taste of Africa : Panashe Mayangamutse, Perpetual Koech and Miriam Kaburu.



Jemison Yewah and Mycala Smith perform at ASU Gala.

Creating New Knowledge

Ubuntu Dialogues

“When I lived in Malawi...my brother went playing and got lost [but] one member of the community found him and brought him home,” recalled Benedict Nsenga, an MSU student majoring in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy. Benedict singled out the practice that he experienced in Malawi, of community members looking out for each other, as embodying Ubuntu, an African socio-centric philosophy premised on collective humanity and interdependence. However, being a Rwandan who had also experienced national discrimination and xenophobia in Malawi, Benedict was quick to note that the notion of Ubuntu can often be exclusionary: “if you are not part of the community you might not get the same care and concern.”

Benedict is one of 8 MSU students who participated in four facilitated virtual student conversations with 10 South African students that took place during October 2019. The conversations are a component of the [Ubuntu Dialogues](#): Museums and Communities Connect, an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation-funded partnership between the Stellenbosch University Museum and Michigan State University's African Studies Center. As pointed out by Prof. Jamie Monson (Director, MSU African Studies Center and one of the co-PIs for the project), the three-year partnership is intended to create transformative dialogue, mutual discovery, and productive debate across time and across space. It comprises the virtual student conversations, such as those that Benedict participated in, a seminar speaker exchange program, and a student exchange/internship program. The project is managed by Dr. Upenyu Majee at MSU and Mosa Phadi at Stellenbosch University with Dr. Bongani

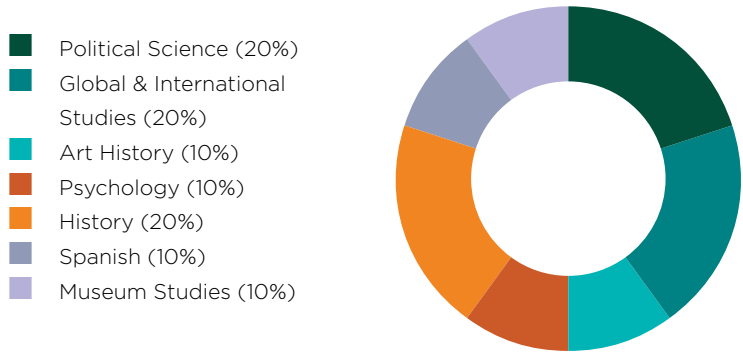
Mgijima (Director, Stellenbosch University Museum) serving as the other co-PI.

VIRTUAL STUDENT CONVERSATIONS

The October 2019 student conversations focused on 1) Ubuntu as a concept and as lived experience; 2) racial discrimination and reparations in South Africa and the U.S.; 3) black and minority student experiences at South African and U.S. university campuses; and 4) Ubuntu and identity. The

Ubuntu even within racially and nationally homogeneous communities. Far from providing answers, the conversations raised fundamental questions relating to the place of Ubuntu in light of the Black Lives Matter, #Rhodes/FeesMustFall and other movements responding to the widespread dehumanization and dispossession of African and other peoples across the world and through time.

UBUNTU INTERNSHIP STUDENTS BY MAJOR



dialogues connected American students from underrepresented minority backgrounds and South African students from historically disadvantaged demographic groups to rethink national, racial, linguistic, and other boundaries and differences; to foster cross-cultural understanding; and to promote the resolution of real and imagined differences through dialogue. Participants reflected on the many complexities surrounding Ubuntu as an idea and as practice. For example, Bryan Kauma, a History Ph.D. student at Stellenbosch University, pointed to the differences of understanding and appreciation of

SEMINAR SPEAKER EXCHANGE PROGRAM

While the virtual student conversations focus on contemporary issues facing young people across the Atlantic, the seminar speaker exchange program takes the form of intellectual engagements focusing on institutional histories and the meaning of Ubuntu and related moral/ethical philosophies, worldviews, and value systems. It addresses these themes in the context of debates on Pan-Africanism, knowledge generation and institutional decolonization and transformation, and the place of South Africa in Africa and of the U.S.



Frederick Gooding (center), one of the MSU-recruited seminar speakers, with the Stellenbosch University Ubuntu Dialogues team (Mosa Phadi - Project Manager, and Bongani Mgijima - Co-PI) during his visit to Stellenbosch University in February 2019.

in the Americas. Seminar speakers are recruited from among academics, professionals, and advanced doctoral students in museum and heritage studies, public history, and other related fields in the Social Sciences and Humanities, from MSU and Stellenbosch University and elsewhere in South Africa and the U.S. Upon returning from presenting a paper on Ubuntu and Hip Hop at Stellenbosch University on February 27, 2020, Dr. Frederick Gooding remarked:

It was very exciting to be a part of an initiative that brings people together...a very intentional effort to decolonize the museum. I was both stimulated and challenged by the exchange and look forward to dialoguing about how to continue the conversation on “de-colonizing” more spaces like these.

Unfortunately, given the scale of disruption to university operations and international travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, 5 seminar sessions originally scheduled for March – May 2020 (2 at MSU and 3 at Stellenbosch University)

have had to be postponed. As we wait to resume programming, we are working with the seminar speakers to develop their paper manuscripts for publication.

STUDENT EXCHANGE/ INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The third component of the project, the student exchange/internship program, engages a wide array of on-campus and off-campus partners in providing participating American and South African students a robust global community engaged learning experience. Given the benefits of existing institutional support structures, we located the exchange/internship program under the auspices of the MSU Office of Education Abroad. Following the recruitment of ten participants, we enrolled them into a 3-credit course (undergraduate students) and a 1-credit Independent Study (graduate students) in the College of Social Science. The course comprises pre-departure seminars; a two-week Education Abroad experience in museums in Cape Town, South Africa (Stellenbosch University Museum, Robben Island

Museum, Iziko Museums of South Africa, and Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum); and a re-entry reflection component. We also started preparations for the inbound Stellenbosch University students who will be placed with the MSU Museum, MSU Library, Matrix, and the Broad Museum of Contemporary Art. The students will also have the opportunity to tour other museums and heritage sites in Detroit (e.g. the Charles Wright and Motown Museums) and the Lansing area (e.g. the Michigan Historical Center and the Pave the Way I-496 Project). The student exchange/internship as well has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and has had to be postponed, but plans are underway to resume programming once we are cleared to do so.

Faculty Achievements

African Studies Core Faculty Promote Meaningful Scholarship, Leadership, and Mentorship Inside and Outside the Classroom.

From studying the ecology of African carnivores and their prey to researching religion in a trans-regional context, the Core Faculty of the African Studies Center work to create new understandings, contribute rigorous research, and promote the study of Africa. But they are not just doing research; they are winning awards for teaching and instruction, they are advocating for new perspectives, and they are leaders for diversity and equity on Michigan State’s campus. The African Studies Core Faculty are creating change in East Lansing and across continents.

[continued on next page...](#)

Creating New Knowledge

FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS

For his work researching the ecology of African carnivores and their prey, **Dr. Robert Montgomery** won the John K. Hudzik Emerging Leader in International Studies and Programs Award in 2019. Students in his laboratory are involved in the entire scholarly



process of designing research questions, coordinating field research activities, and in the writing and publishing of results as first authors. Dr. Montgomery's work has resulted in increases in the number of African scientists and in the importance of the roles they play in the research process. Not only is Dr. Montgomery a renowned scholar, he is a valued mentor for emerging scholars in the field, and his students speak of him as such. Arthur Muneza, a Ph.D. student from Rwanda says of his work with Dr. Montgomery: "Had it not been for Dr. Montgomery's encouragement and advice, my career would not have progressed to the extent it has in such a short time." A recent Ph.D. graduate, Tutilo Mudumba says: "Dr. Montgomery's dedication to my academic welfare and his decision to recommend me for the Ph.D. put me closer to my ambition of becoming a professor of Wildlife Conservation at Makerere University in Uganda."

Another of our Core Faculty members, **Dr. Jonathan Choti**, has been recognized for his mentorship and teaching with the 2019 Quality in Teaching Award presented by the Mid-Michigan Spartans. This award seeks to recognize excellence in classroom instruction through the incorporation of research and creative learning opportunities. Dr. Choti teaches several African language

courses, Integrated Arts and Humanities courses, and leads a study abroad program to Tanzania on sustainable community development. When asked why he teaches, Dr. Choti says: "My ultimate goal as a professor is to stimulate my students to think, reflect, connect ideas, explore knowledge, and become excited



about learning." Dr. Choti and two graduate students received the 2020 Excellence Award in Interdisciplinary Scholarship for their work with the Sustainable Community Development Education Abroad program in Tanzania.

Dr. Mara Leichtman conducts interdisciplinary research on the connections between religion, politics and migration in Africa. Recently, she has been working on a research project titled, "Humanitarian Islam: Transnational Religion and Kuwaiti

Development Projects in Africa." For this research, Dr. Leichtman was awarded the Luce/American Council of Learned Societies Program in Religion, Journalism & International Affairs Fellowship. The goal of the Luce/ACLS Fellowship is to produce a significant piece of scholarly work and to engage journalistic and media audiences through collaboration with renowned journalists. "As our world continues to seek understanding and a path forward in a time of great uncertainty, we want to celebrate examples of how humanists produce knowledge for the public good," said ACLS President, Joy Connolly. Dr. Leichtman has been a member of the Anthropology faculty since 2005, and she helped develop the Muslim Studies



FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

Program here at MSU. She continues to contribute new and significant research to the field of Anthropology with her work on Humanitarian Islam. Dr. Leichtman joined six other scholars from top research universities around the country in this fellowship.

In addition to making strides in teaching and research, members of the African Studies Core Faculty are becoming more influential leaders on MSU's campus. **Dr. Lisa Cook**, Professor of Economics and International Relations was promoted to Full Professor in James Madison College in the spring of 2020. As an expert in international economics, Dr. Cook is a former advisor to policy makers in the Obama Administration as well as in the Nigerian and Rwandan governments. Her research is at the intersection of macroeconomics and economic history, with recent work in African-American history and innovation economics. In



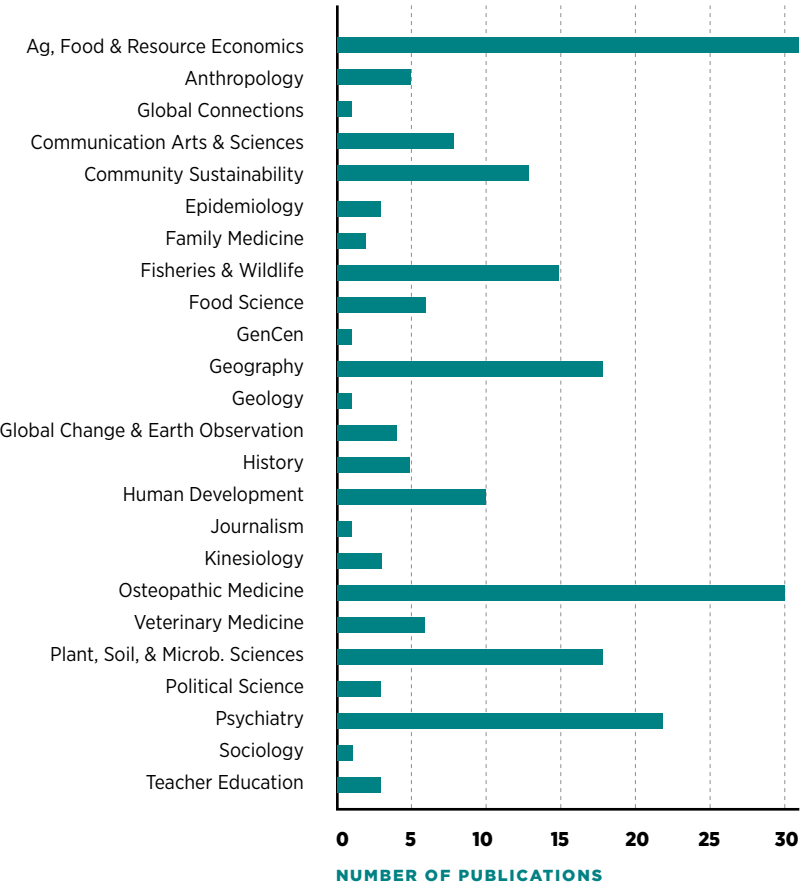
addition to her academic accomplishments, Dr. Cook is known for her efforts in mentoring black women and advocating for their inclusion in the field of economics.

Fellow advocate for women and inclusion, **Dr. Nwando Achebe** recently assumed a new role as the Inaugural Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the College of Social Science. Dr. Achebe is a renowned historian and scholar, and has written a number of books on women, gender, and sexuality.



Not only does Dr. Achebe conduct research on diversity, equity, and inclusion, but she brings this knowledge and expertise to classrooms across campus every day. As a graduate student at UCLA, Dr. Achebe was dissatisfied with the way African people – especially women – were portrayed in academic texts. She decided to be a positive force for change. Now she teaches courses that actively advocate for a better informed perspective on Africa and African people. In an article published by the College of Social Science recently, Dr. Achebe said, "I don't want to publish another book or article that does not have an advocacy purpose to it. I want to use my work to potentially change lives." Dr. Achebe continues to promote equity, to teach students the importance of perspective, and to collaborate with diverse communities to advocate for change.

CORE FACULTY PUBLICATIONS BY DEPARTMENT



MSU African Studies Core Faculty engage in cutting edge research, teaching, and leadership. Their award winning teaching and research inspires new scholars to study Africa. They are dedicated mentors and role models for conducting innovative research that crosses regional and disciplinary boundaries while challenging negative narratives about the African continent.

Working with the Community

The African Studies Center at MSU and on the Continent

Since the founding of the University in 1855, Michigan State has been connected with the African continent. The connections were initiated and developed by individual professors and later became formal institutional engagement. In 1960, MSU cooperated with the first president of Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikiwe, to establish a new African university at Nsukka based on MSU's land-grant model. The desire for partnership with African Institutions has characterized our approach ever since.

The African Studies Center has historically partnered with US and African institutions to fulfill its mission. The activities and programs that we held throughout 2018 and 2019 under the Year of Global Africa and celebrated with a community-wide Grand Finale in December reflect not only the large numbers, but the rich diversity of our local and global partnerships and linkages. Academic institutions, departments, units, students and community organizations were all a part of our programs and activities. We study Africa in its global context, aiming to bridge the gap between the academic conceptualization of issues and the pursuit of practical solutions. Similarly, we work to connect the community and the classroom, academic excellence and social activism locally and globally. These values form the core elements of an MSU land grant and world grant education,

and likewise, the foundational principles of the African Studies Center.

The African Studies Center has worked with many units across the MSU campus to achieve its goals in the many areas that are part of the Center's core priorities. One such area is language training. Title VI funding supports the teaching of African languages. The MSU College of Arts and Letters has been a partner in this work for many years, collaborating with the African Studies Center to provide language training to undergraduate and graduate students from diverse MSU departments and colleges.

“We are proud of our legacy of African Studies at MSU, where the study of Africa links classroom learning with global engagement; where academic excellence and social activism go hand in hand; and where our excellent faculty not only carry out cutting edge research but also turn that research into practice to address real world challenges.”

JAMIE MONSON, DIRECTOR, AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER

The Center also works closely with the MSU Education Abroad Office. We provide advice and guidance with the development of Africa-based programs, and help disseminate program information to prospective students. The African Studies Center actively engages in the enrollment of students into Africa programs by participating in the Education Abroad Office's Annual Education Abroad Expo.

The Transregional Studies Initiative with Asian Studies and Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies represents another of our partnerships with other units on campus as well as

national and global partners. Our focus in this partnership is the rethinking of international studies, a project that will continue for the next four years.

In the past year, the Mellon Foundation-supported Ubuntu Dialogues Project has worked with 8 students from 9 units across the university in virtual conversations, in partnerships with the College of Social Sciences, MSU Library, the Broad Museum, Matrix and the MSU Detroit Center. Through this program we support academic and community engagement opportunities for under-represented minority students from the US and from his-

torically disadvantaged communities in South Africa.

The Center supports faculty research collaboration through all our primary activities. In 2019, Core Faculty generated 184 publications through collaborations with African and other

international partners. Similarly, the African Studies Center works closely with our domestic and international student organizations. During the Year of Global Africa, we provided 17 student organizations with support to carry out African-related activities across the campus and community.

As a Center, we have initiated and maintained relationships with the community and institutions in the Mid-Michigan Area. Our outreach programs to Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek and to Lakeland Correctional Facility in Coldwater are some examples. Closer to home, we worked with Woven Vessels,

a community organization dedicated to assisting African immigrants in the Lansing Area; and brought in a Burundi Community Gospel Choir to be part of our Year of Global Africa Grand Finale in December. In a display of inter-departmental and cross-cultural exchange, the choir was joined by two music ensembles comprised of American students from the College of Music who played Ghanaian and Zimbabwean music selections. The contributions of the musicians to the success of the event was invaluable.

The Center's work with Linking All Types of Teachers to International Cross Cultural Education (LATTICE), Michigan Institute for International Intercultural Education (MIIE), the Greater Lansing United Nations Association (GLUNA) and other organizations continued throughout the year. We are exploring new initiatives with the Africa America Institute and with historically Black colleges and universities to enhance the production and dissemination of knowledge about the continent.

On the continent of Africa, our work with Adanu and the University of Cape Coast in Ghana and with the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal has continued. We have established strong linkages in South Africa, with such institutions as the University of Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch University and the University of Pretoria. Individual faculty from social sciences, humanities, medicine, education, communications and the sciences continue to do cutting edge research and to forge relationships with African academics and with local communities.

“Our presentations... showcased the use of animal characters in African storytelling, songs, poetry and proverbs, and how these folkloric forms are used for teaching about the moral and philosophical values of a people,”

ISAAC KALUMBU, ASC ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR OUTREACH



MSU Senior, Luyando Katenda, teaching an African childrens' game-song at Binder Park Zoo.

MSU Students Share Their Knowledge of Africa During Overnight Visit at the Zoo

The African Studies Center has, for the last two years, partnered with Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek to bring more curricular coverage on Africa in the K-12 education system in mid-Michigan through a program titled, “Traditions of Africa.” The Center has a rich and distinguished tradition of outreach to K-16 educators/students, museums and community groups, but we have never had the opportunity to work with a zoo. Africa has been overly represented by its wildlife, leading to misunderstandings of the continent, its environment and its peoples. Working on this project provides us with the opportunity to use the publics fascination with African animals to foster understanding of

the broader historical, socio-cultural, political and economic contexts that inform the experiences of Africans, and bring these into dialogue with issues of conversation, environment and animal well-being that are at the forefront of zoo exhibits. We have had an unprecedented opportunity at Binder Park Zoo to work with very collaborative and engaged staff.

This past year, we conducted two events at Binder Park Zoo; one in late August and another late in September. We collaborated with Binder Park Zoo staff to develop a unique overnight safari program that allowed MSU students to teach young children about African culture and about wildlife and environmental conservation efforts on the continent.

The weekend adventure provided a first-hand opportunity for the children, their teachers and parents to participate in aspects of African culture, including

Working with the Community



African food, music, dance and story-telling around the campfire. Luyando Katenda, a senior from Zambia, said he was excited to participate in the program. “We all have stories and those stories are going to be shared,” he said. In addition to music, dance and story-telling, the MSU students engaged in the students in educational games and arts and crafts. “Our presentations also showcased the use of animal characters in African storytelling, songs, poetry and proverbs, and how these folkloric forms are used for teaching about the moral and philosophical values of a people,” said Isaac Kalumbu, ASC Assistant Director for Outreach.



A new outreach undertaking this past year was our work with Lakeland Correctional Facility in Coldwater, Michigan. In December 2019, ASC Director, Jamie Monson and Assistant Directors Awar Sarr and Isaac Kalumbu were invited to Lakeland to participate in their annual celebration of Kwanzaa, an African American festival that celebrates African culture and heritage. We returned to Lakeland for more joint programming for Black History Month in February 2020. This time, we included Swahili instructor, Dr. Jonathan Choti and visiting Yoruba language instructor, Olamide Olanyian, who talked about African languages and cultures. Chioma Uchefuna, a doctoral student in history, joined our team and spoke about the importance of women in African families and societies.

Much of our spring and summer programming has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the African Studies Center has remained committed to our engagement and collaboration with historic partners such as

Pictures to left: Binder Park Zoo activities.

LATTICE, the Michigan Institute for International and Intercultural Education and the Greater Lansing United Nations Association. Our work with the Michigan World Language Association has also continued. We will be offering our programming virtually in the fall semester, 2020 in the form of webinars.

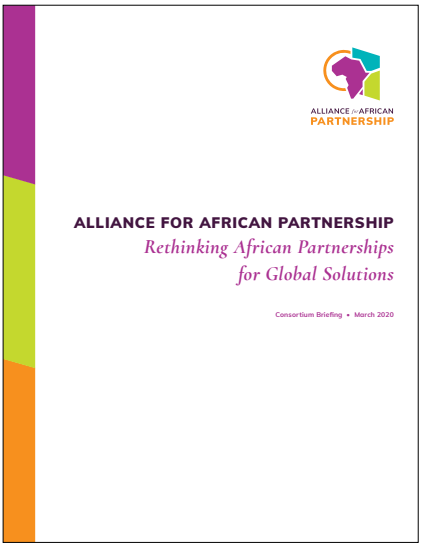
Alliance for African Partnership

Founded by Michigan State University in 2016 in collaboration with African colleagues, the [Alliance for African Partnership](https://aap.isp.msu.edu/current-programs/) (AAP) is a consortium of MSU and ten leading African universities. AAP members are committed to working in equitable partnership to transform lives and address global challenges. The AAP builds on MSU’s long-term engagement in Africa, building on the foundation laid by the African Studies Center and evolving models of engagement in line with AAP’s guiding principles of accountability, equity, inclusivity, sustainability and transparency.

AAP members are committed to working in equitable partnership to transform lives and address global challenges.

AAP takes a cooperative approach to addressing global challenges by building networks across all sectors—including universities, NGOs, government, and the private sector— to partner around core thematic areas including agri-food systems; water, energy, and the environment; culture; youth empowerment; education; and health

and nutrition. AAP has also identified three program pillars focused on 1) building bridges across sectors, disciplines, and continents; 2) transforming institutions so they are better able to engage in equitable and sustainable partnerships; and 3) transforming lives on the ground through engaged research and scholarship that address shared challenges. Gender and inclusion, and policy are both cross-cutting themes of the AAP and are woven into all AAP-sponsored and implemented activities. AAP catalyzes, supports, and mobilizes its multidirectional partnerships in such a way that the



resulting activities positively transform institutions and livelihoods in Africa, the U.S., and beyond.

Consortium members are well-situated to work together with other partners to address many of the most pressing challenges of our time. The

AAP effectively leverages consortium members’ expertise and networks to position the members at the forefront of development and globalization initiatives on the continent, broadening long-term collaborative relationships among African universities, MSU and other partner institutions, and ultimately making positive change in Africa and globally.

Currently, AAP is primarily funded through an initial annual investment from MSU, with the goal of long-term sustainability through shared investment from consortium members and external funders. This initial investment is already showing strong returns for members not only in terms of attracting external funding, but also in raising the visibility and reputation of their institutions and the AAP consortium.

For more detailed information on AAP programs, please go to: <https://aap.isp.msu.edu/current-programs/>

Pictured below: AAP puts a spotlight on youth during a public forum on Investing in Youth for the Knowledge Economy, hosted by AAP in collaboration with the University of Botswana and Infers Group.





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