



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I'm happy to share with you this summary of activities from the Council on African Studies. As we bid farewell to another academic year, we also say goodbye to a cohort of newly minted B.A. and M.A. graduates in African Studies. We wish them all the best in their bright futures and look forward to reconnecting with them as alumni. Once again in 2023-2024, the Council flourished in its fundamental mission to teach, promote research, and create opportunities for community engagement. CAS fosters an academic environment where students and faculty seek novel approaches to emerging issues in African Studies through joint endeavors across institutions at Yale, regionally, and in partnership with colleagues on the continent.

Cajetan Nwabueze Iheka, Ph.D.
Chair, Council on African Studies

Council on African Studies

**Whitney & Betty MacMillan Center for
International and Area Studies**

Yale University

Annual Report: 2023-2024

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**WELCOME
TO OUR NEWEST MEMBER
OF THE CAS COMMUNITY**



In June 2023, Rita Offiaeli joined the Council as its Program Manager. In this role Rita oversees all event planning, ensures that students stay on track in their academic programs, and generally helps the CAS Chair and Program Director steer the Council forward. She has become an invaluable member of the team as the first point of Council contact for students, faculty, and the greater community. In her first year, Rita has worked closely with students to expand on opportunities for coming together to break bread, exchange ideas, and create lasting bonds. MA cohort meals, CAS Grad Student social hours, and a more robust and expanded student-led social media presence are just some of the initiatives we are grateful to Rita for taking on this year.

COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH ON THE CONTINENT



CAS Chair Cajetan Iheka and Program Director Cristin Siebert traveled to West, Southern, and East Africa during the 2023-2024 academic year as part of the Council's commitment to ongoing engagement with the region. In the Fall they joined a delegation that included faculty and staff from the Yale School of Art (YSoA), the Office of International Affairs, the Yale Alumni Association, and the Development Office that traveled to Ghana, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire. Over the course of their visit the delegation celebrated, shared stories, and networked with well over 150 alumni and friends of Yale at receptions and art events in Accra, Lagos, and Abidjan organized both by representatives of the Yale Alumni Association (YAA) and Yale parents.

As a result of this trip, CAS is partnering with the YSoA to sponsor a MFA student to spend six weeks in Lagos, Nigeria this Fall 2024 in a residency fellowship at the Guest Artist Space Foundation (G.A.S.). The foundation, founded by British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare, offers a platform for creative and career development and knowledge exchange by bringing together multidisciplinary artists, researchers and curators from all over the world.



COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH ON THE CONTINENT



On March 14-15, the Council convened the “Yale Africa-China Symposium: Cultural Dimensions” at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique. While past Yale Africa-China Conferences have focused on the continent’s economic and political ties with China, the 2024 Yale Africa-China Symposium focused on the cultural dimensions of Sino-African relations. More than thirty scholars traveled from five continents to present their papers in sessions that included “Literary Imaginaries and Afro-Asia Worldmaking,” “Media Ecologies, Race, and Gender in China-Africa Discourse,” and “Art, Music, and Visual Affects.”

To conference presenter, Olakunle Folami, professor and social scientist at Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria, “the symposium provided a platform to reassess the relationship between Africa and China from a cultural perspective beyond just economic exploration, ...the symposium allowed the Southern hemisphere to explore and define their unique differences and abilities to move forward in unity, cooperation, and mutual benefit.”





COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH ON THE CONTINENT

As part of its March trip, the CAS team visited Johannesburg and Nairobi where the Council hosted an alumni dinner and reception. Among the initiatives to come out of these visits with alumni, beginning Fall 2024, CAS will host periodic virtual events to engage with Yale alumni and friends in Africa to update them on developments on campus and faculty research, and for our alumni based throughout Africa to network with each other.



Tomorrow's Leaders in Africa

This past March, CAS supported the second iteration of the Yale Africa Innovation Symposium (YAIS) <https://www.yaleafricaninnovation.org/innovation-labs>. This student-led program brought together Africans and first-generation African Americans from universities across the US to participate in innovation labs. Leaders from different industries in Africa presented a challenge case study from their work to solve with student participants, who were asked to pinpoint root causes, identify project goals, and draft approach and implementation strategies.



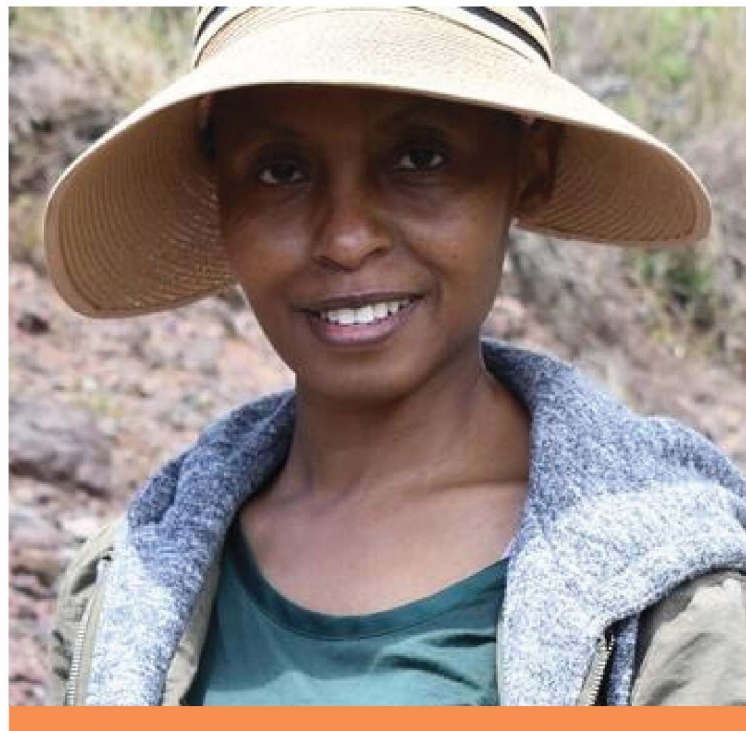
Senator Amara Konneh from Liberia, Senior Advisor for Africa for the World Bank, was one of the keynote speakers for the symposium and led the Economic Transformation innovation lab “Utilizing Mobile Money for Civic Participation in Liberia.” During his opening remarks, Senator Konneh emphasized to the audience of 200+ students the significance of the event that brought them together, encouraging them not to wait to be leaders and challenging them to demand their seat at the table with current African leaders. Remarkably, he predicted that someone in the room would one day be president of an African nation!



Also from March 15-17, the Council supported the third convening of the Yale Model African Union (YMAU), the first ever Ivy League Model African Union Conference. In Johannesburg, South Africa, Yale students and their African peers were encouraged to debate and innovate all-encompassing solutions to complex obstacles facing Africa today.

A LOCAL TIP HELPS CAS FACULTY REVEAL AN ANCIENT 'ARCADE' IN KENYA'S HIGHLANDS

CAS continues to support diverse Council faculty research, including paleoanthropologist Veronica Waweru. Professor Waweru works in the Central Highlands of Kenya to seek evidence of human evolution. Over the past several years, Waweru and her team have trained locals, mostly farmers, to help identify potential archaeological sites using a method she calls “knowledge co-production.” Currently, the team pays a core group of four amateurs, who in summer 2023 helped Dr. Waweru make a quite remarkable discovery: an “arcade” of several ancient Mancala game boards carved into rock, revealing that people, likely herders, were playing Mancala at the site several thousand years ago. Importantly, Dr. Waweru has indicated that the amateurs also engage intellectually with the objects they discover, reflecting on such things as what life was like for their ancient ancestors or the importance of conservation. More information about Dr. Waweru’s discovery can be found here: [Ancient Mancala Arcade](#).



Graduate Student Research on Africa: **The Next Generation of Scholars** Enlightens the World to the Complexity of African Cultures and Issues

Every year CAS supports graduate students to present their work at academic and professional conferences, and to conduct research in Africa through the Lindsay Fellowship. Over spring break, four of our African Studies MA students presented at Indiana University's 10th annual International Conference on Africa organized by the student run organization Graduate Students in African Studies.



Under the conference theme, Africa Our Future, first year CAS MA student Joshua Amponsah presented on "African Students at the Center of Transnationalism: A Case for Africa China Relations." First year Ivana Uzoh presented "Revisiting, Retelling, and Rememory: Igbo Women Writers on Biafra," second year Juliet Oware presented on "Sustainable Futures: Discerning and Integrating the Voices of Gold Mining Communities in Sub-Saharan Africa," and second year Xu Zhang presented "Boys in Prison: Precarity and Sociality of Working on Black Mountain." Juliet's paper came out of her research conducted the previous summer in Ghana and South Africa while Xu conducted his research in Zambia.



Along with Juliet and Xu CAS supported twenty future scholars and practitioners to conduct research in Africa during summer 2023. Students from across disciplines including History, Sociology, Medicine, Public Health, and Environmental Studies had projects on such things as malaria prevention in Senegal and Sao Tome and Principe, tuberculosis treatment in Uganda, Chinese Migrants in Tanzania, tree diversity and carbon stocks of forest fragments in Ghana, and women's empowerment in agriculture in Malawi. This summer 2024 we are supporting 15 students who are focusing on a wide variety of topics including the urban environmental history of Johannesburg, understanding the psychosocial needs of Rwandan caregivers, preventative medicine for refugees in the Palabek Refugee Resettlement in Uganda, and political transitions after Mali's 2020 coup.



“QUEEN OF BONGO FLAVA” AND A CELEBRATION OF EARTH DAY 2024

CAS organizes academic and cultural events throughout the year including our annual lecture series, which invites our colleagues from around the world to present their latest academic research on Africa. We also offer a lively calendar of arts programming that appeals to the greater Yale and New Haven communities. This year was no exception as we opened and closed the academic year with unique arts events.



The music of Tanzania’s “Queen of Bongo Flava,” Lady Jaydee, has long inspired the literary work of Nigerian writer Chigozie Obioma. We kicked off the year co-sponsoring the inaugural Humanities Now event in which the novelist and singer were brought together in conversation to reflect on the landscape of African music and literature, followed by Lady Jaydee in performance.

In the spring semester, as part of Earth Day 2024, we hosted ‘Nature’s Sanctuary: Ethiopian Church Forests and the Interplay of Religion and Ecology.’ The focal point of the event was a month-long exhibition of photographs which depict a story of ecological crisis and hope, as a local nonprofit partners with church communities to preserve some of the last ancient forests of the Ethiopian highlands. Professor Kyama Mugambi from the Yale Divinity School moderated a conversation with photographer Kieran Dodds and conservationist Alemayehu Wassie Eshete, who spoke about the saucer-shaped churches, which form forest islands in the desert landscape in the north of the country. As part of their faith, these communities celebrate and preserve forest habitats, which in return promote biodiversity. To set the scene for the conversation, cantors from the Ethiopian Orthodox church performed poetry and sung prayer that introduced their tradition’s celebration of nature and the spiritual significance of trees.



AFRICAN SCHOLARS ON CAMPUS

Students have been vocal in letting us know that they wish to learn African perspectives from scholars and practitioners on the continent. The Council was fortunate to have two visiting faculty this year. Professor Helen Yitah, past Dean of the School of Languages and former Head of the Department of English at the University of Ghana, taught the course 'Literature, Life, and Thought in West Africa from mid-1800s to 1960s'. As one student commented at the end of the course, "*Literature, Life, and Thought in West Africa* was exactly that. I anticipated a stack of books and lengthy discussions about texts, but Professor Yitah offered far more. The course situated all the works in their historical and political context. Starting from the mid-1800s with Black Enlightenment thinkers, we moved from topics on self-governance, emancipation, and civilization to the 1950s-60s, when writers discussed forging new states during the independence era."



South African scholar Jonny Steinberg taught on bureaucracy in Africa through the lens of revolution, genocide, and apartheid, as well as on the Covid-19 pandemic in Africa in the context of a century of pandemics beginning with the Spanish flu. This past March, Steinberg's biography 'Winnie and Nelson: Portrait of a Marriage' won the prestigious National Book Critics Circle Award. Looking ahead, we will bring three visiting African faculty to campus next year who focus on economics and political economy, African political philosophy, and anthropology, and hope to make the African visiting faculty program a permanent feature of our Council.



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All of us at CAS are grateful to our faculty and staff colleagues, students, alumni, and donors who made 2023-2024 a resounding success. We especially acknowledge the Hakeem and Myma Belo-Osagie Provost's Fund for the Promotion of Africa, the Stephen and Ruth Hendel Fund for Africa, the Lindsay Fellowship for Research in Africa, and the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies for the funding and support that made our activities possible.

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