



COUNCIL ON AFRICAN STUDIES

THE WHITNEY & BETTY MACMILLAN
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL AND
AREA STUDIES

YALE UNIVERSITY

ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025

THE COUNCIL ON AFRICAN STUDIES (CAS) SUPPORTS AND COORDINATES THE STUDY OF AFRICA WITHIN YALE UNIVERSITY WHILE ALSO ENHANCING KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICA IN NEW HAVEN AND BEYOND



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The Council on African Studies once again enjoyed a rewarding year of research, programming, and community inspired by our faculty and students' novel approaches to African Studies. We brought African ideas and cultures to campus to inspire and spark curiosity. We also sent our community out into the world where they found opportunities to conduct new research, present their work, collaborate with existing partners and seek new ones. I am pleased to report that during the 2024-2025 academic year, we met the goals of generating and disseminating knowledge on Africa, amplifying African solutions to global problems, and enhancing understanding in the world.

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

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Chinua Achebe Leadership in Africa Forum



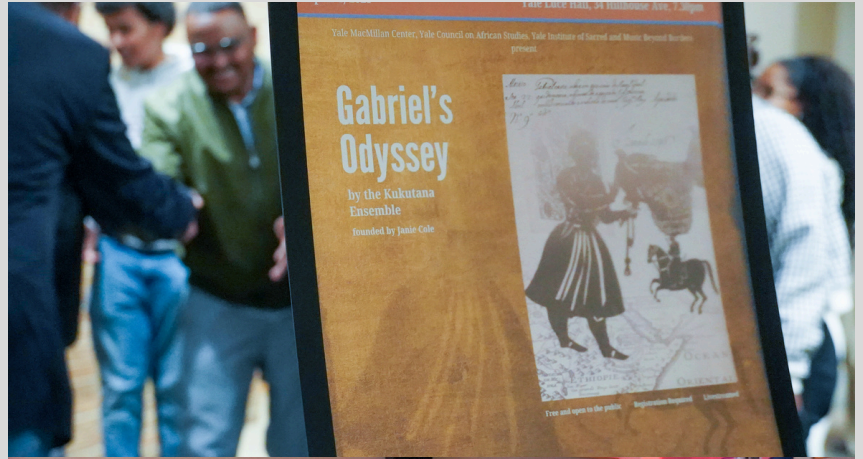
Cajetan Iheka, Chair of the Council and Head of the Africa Initiative at Yale, organized November's Chinua Achebe Leadership in Africa Forum with the late Achebe's family to explore the problem of leadership and good governance on the African continent. Panelists and over 200 attendees joined from across Yale and across the continent. "Africa is the world's future, so the problem of leadership there is an existential one that affects all of us," said Cajetan Iheka. "It is thus important and gratifying to see the Council on African Studies and the MacMillan Center curating conversations and supporting research on leadership across the continent. These activities are quite costly both in terms of labor and finance, but the urgency of the subject matter makes the expenditure worthwhile."

Leadership and Democracy, Subnational Governance, and Women in Leadership were among the themes discussed by such important political figures as former governor Peter Obi, governor of Abia State Alex Otti, President of Human Capital Africa and former Nigerian Minister of Education Obiageli Ezekwesili, Ugandan Ambassador Robie Kakonge, and Minister Seleshi Bekele Awulachew of Ethiopia. Former Nigerian President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo delivered the keynote address on democracy failures in Nigeria. Current Yale students contributed their voices on the intergenerational panel that put current and future leaders together in conversation. As Chair Iheka described it, "Our students are bright lights of their generation and African leaders in their own right."

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Gabriel's Odyssey

In April 2025, CAS hosted Gabriel's Odyssey, a musical narrative that draws on the earliest surviving biography of an Ethiopian slave, Gabriel, a 16th-century Beta Israel Jew sold into slavery in the Arab World where he converted to Islam. It traces his woeful wanderings between faiths, love, and persecution in Asia to his final encounters with the Portuguese inquisition in Goa. Gabriel's Odyssey was created by the Kukutana Ensemble which is made up of musicians and visual artists based in Ethiopia, South Africa, Tanzania, India, and the UK. Using both modern and early musical instruments, the ensemble spent months composing and creating online before coming together at Yale for one week of intense preparation for their April 4th performance, seen here: [Gabriel's Odyssey](#).



VISITING SCHOLARS

CAS was fortunate to welcome visiting scholars to campus in the 2024-2025 academic year.

University of Cairo Political Science professor **Rawia Tawfik**, an advisory board member of the African Peacebuilding Network of the Social Science Research Council, taught students a course on African Political Ecology. She also shared her research on Sudan through her public lecture “Losing Another Front in Africa? America’s Self-defeating Policy in Sudan.” Dr. Tawfik also hosted a panel discussion on “The Neglected Crisis: The Roots and Humanitarian Costs of Sudan's War.”



RAWIA TAWFIK



YEMIAMREW JORGI TEFERI

Ethiopian social anthropologist from Wollo University, **Yemiamrew Jorgi Teferi**, provided students with a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between personhood, learning, and the centrality of culture within various educational contexts in sub-Saharan Africa. In the CAS lecture series, he gave a talk on “Identity History from Below: An Ethnographic Account of Wollo-Borena in Ethiopia.”

VISITING SCHOLARS continued

Uchenna Okeja, who leads the Center for Philosophy in Africa at Nelson Mandela University and taught political philosophy from an African lens, delivered a talk on “Migration, Health Inequalities, and Global Justice.”



UCHENNA OKEJA



JONNY STEINBERG

South African scholar **Jonny Steinberg** taught on bureaucracy through the lens of revolution, genocide, and apartheid. In November he moderated a conversation with three leading figures of the post-apartheid era, Chair of the Federal Council of the Democratic Alliance Helen Zille, Chairman of Old Mutual and former Finance Minister of South Africa Trevor Manuel, and Advocate of the High Court Tembeke Ngcukaitobi, as they reviewed the first three decades of constitutional democracy in South Africa.

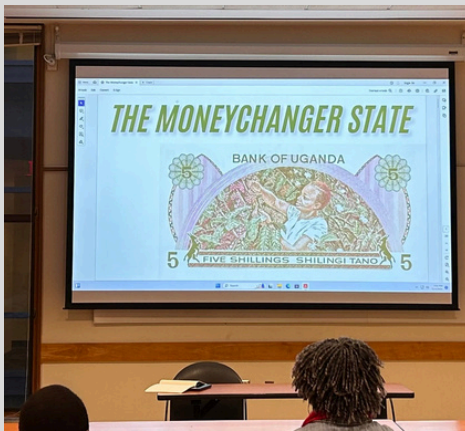


JENNIFER NANSUBUGA MAKUMBI

CAS collaborated with the Whitney Humanities Center to bring renowned writer **Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi** as a 2024-25 Franke Visiting Fellow. This past Spring, she gave a thrilled audience a preview of her forthcoming pan-African novel completed during her time at Yale, *Alkebulan: When the Lions Returned*.

LECTURE SERIES

The CAS Lecture Series, convened by Assistant Professor in History Nana Osei Quarshie, exposed the Yale community to new research, emerging ideas, and diverse perspectives around African Studies. Talks included “In the Twilight of Time: Chief Lóòghó Bámátulá, a Biography of an African Medicine Man” by Jacob Olupona, Professor of African religion at Harvard University, “The Aesthetics of Belonging: Indigenous Urbanism and City Building in Oil-boom Luanda” by anthropologist Claudia Gastrow from North Carolina State University, and Historian Benjamin Wendorf of Quinsigamond Community College with his talk “Ruling the Road in the Gold Coast.”



“The Moneychanger State” - **Kevin Donovan**



“Identity History from Below: An Ethnographic Account of Wollo-Borena in Ethiopia” - **Yemiamrew Jorgi Teferi**



“Partitions, Enclosures, and their Afterlives: Humanitarian Settlement in East Africa” - **Anooradha Siddiqi**



“In the Twilight of Time: Chief Lóòghó Bámátulá, a Biography of an African Medicine Man” - **Jacob Olupona**



“Losing another front in Africa? America’s self-defeating policy in Sudan” - **Rawia Tawfik**



“The Aesthetics of Belonging: Indigenous Urbanism and City Building in Oil-boom Luanda” - **Claudia Gastrow**

PANELS

World Fellows' Panel: Governance, Finance, and Culture: Community Based Approaches to Impact in Africa

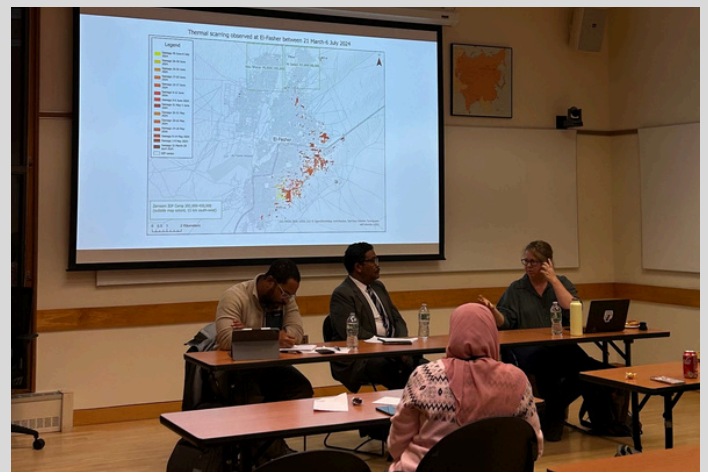


Three of Yale's World Fellows spoke on local solutions to African issues on a panel entitled "Governance, Finance and Culture: Community Based Approaches to Impact in Africa." Babra Bhebe is the Executive Director of the Election Resource Centre (ERC), a civil society organization that stands to promote electoral democracy in Zimbabwe and across the African continent. She spoke on "Getting Citizens at the center of Governance." Ghanaian Tarek Mouganie, an entrepreneur and Founder and Group CEO of Affinity Africa, a digital bank that

provides affordable and accessible services to micro and small and medium sized businesses, discussed "Leveraging Fintech and Innovation for Inclusion." Tunisian Soraya Hosni is an anthropologist, entrepreneur, sustainability expert, and Founder of Clever Harvest, where she spearheads the digitization of essential farming commodities into an online inventory system, providing real-time visibility across multiple crops and countries. Soraya shared "Reclaiming Our Stories and Restoring Culture for the Future Generation."

The Neglected Crisis: The Roots and Humanitarian Costs of Sudan's War

Associate Professor of History and CAS faculty member Alden Young and visiting Yale faculty Rawia Tawfik hosted a panel on "The Neglected Crisis: The Roots and Humanitarian Costs of Sudan's War" featuring Faye Al-Silaik and Nathaniel A. Raymond. Al-Silaik is a Sudanese journalist with over 30 years of experience in communication and human rights activism. He is the author of *The Backstages of Sudan's Transition*, a recently published book that explores the uneasy relationship between the different actors in Sudan's aborted democratic transition. Raymond is the Executive Director of the Yale School of Public Health's Humanitarian Research Lab (HRL) which monitors the ongoing conflict in Sudan through a combination of satellite imagery and open-source data analysis.



CONFERENCES

Northeast Regional Consortium for Programs in African Languages (NERCPAL)

In October 2024, CAS' African language faculty hosted the Northeast Consortium of Programs in African Languages (NERCPAL). Launched in 2008, NERCPAL strives to build links between the organization and broader academic communities, and to share its resources with teachers, professors, and students around the world. Twenty-seven language faculty from Boston University, Columbia, Howard, Princeton, University of Pittsburgh, Northeastern, and Northwestern joined Yale's faculty in two days of presentations and workshopping language specific medical materials. Presentations covered a range of topics including Body Language in Yoruba Social Interactions, Indigenous Knowledge in East Africa, Fusing AI and Traditional Approaches in Modern Language Classrooms, and Improving Somali Language Oral Communication Through AI.



Genesis Epistemologies: Origins, Syncretism, and Human Evolution in Africa Conference

In November, CAS faculty and paleoanthropologist Veronica Waweru organized the Genesis Epistemologies: Origins, Syncretism, and Human Evolution in Africa conference. Africa's status as the Cradle of Humankind holds little importance to its inhabitants, and the pursuit of Darwinian evolution of human origins remains largely a foreign-framed epistemological enterprise. Three genesis narratives are found in the continent: the exogenous religions of Islam and Christianity, Darwinian evolutionary science, and traditional origins myths. Even though both the earliest human ancestors and modern humans first appeared in Africa, many Africans reject Darwinian science due to colonialism, scientific racism, and misinformation. Efforts at community engagement in research projects have had limited success. The conference set out to foster discussion on origins syncretism, the place of Africa's indigenous origins narratives, multivocality, knowledge co-production, and meaning-making in African prehistory research. Africanist and diaspora scholars engaged in dialogue critical to what an African Cradle of Humankind means to researchers and communities, and to discuss how to incorporate local knowledge and skills in human evolution projects.



African Ephemera and the Archives Symposium

The symposium, African Ephemera and the Archives, organized in March 2025 by George M. Bodman Professor of English Stephanie Newell, delved into the status of ephemera in African literary and cultural studies. How useful is “ephemera” as a category for thinking about African art forms? How do definitions of ephemera change when materials are collected and preserved in institutional archives? The focal point of this symposium was the Beinecke Library's collection of Onitsha Nigerian market literature and presentations by scholars on newspaper archives, pamphlet literature, popular performances, street art, zines, and social media texts. The symposium was accompanied by the wonderful exhibit “‘Street Talk’: Pamphlet Literature of the Nigerian Marketplace,” curated by PhD student Thobile Ndimande, celebrating the publications which circulated widely across Nigeria. The pamphlets in the exhibition contain the voices of an emerging nation as it welcomed independence from colonial rule, inspired by pan-African nationalism and motored by local exigencies.

CAS Student Symposium 2025: Charting Africa's Next Chapter

Africa is — the context, the conversation, and the catalyst



The Student Symposium in April 2025 gathered over 55 students and faculty members for an afternoon that centered Africa as the driving force behind diverse research, reflection, and discussion. The symposium created space for students to test ideas, challenge each other, and reimagine Africa's future communities. The range of projects reflected the full spectrum of academic engagement. Some were the final articulation of senior theses. Others had begun as term papers that took on new life. Some were early-stage explorations; others represented complete dissertation chapters shaped by years of fieldwork and archival study. Together, they formed a compelling cluster of intellectual curiosity grounded in real-world relevance.

Students presented work on urban pollution and displacement, health care systems, literary memory, political theology, climate data, economic policy, language transition, and more. The theme spread was vast, yet every project spoke to the realities of African life and future. Each presentation offered a distinct lens on the changing forms of African knowledge, policy, and innovation. Beyond the content itself, the atmosphere was energizing. Students used the opportunity to practice public scholarship, refine their arguments, and connect with peers across disciplines. The space encouraged seriousness without formality—an environment where genuine learning and idea exchange could thrive. At the center of it all was a shared commitment: a belief that Africa is not a backdrop to research—it is the context, the conversation, and the catalyst.

This year's symposium affirmed the value of providing space for generative work in a supportive environment. More than that, it affirmed the talent, vision, and resolve of scholars committed to thinking with and for Africa.

[View more pictures of the symposium -](#)

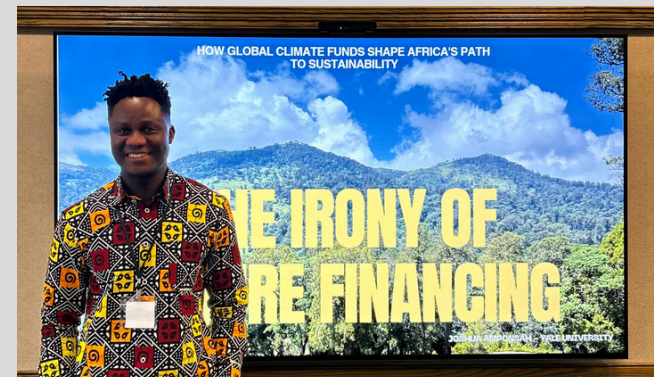
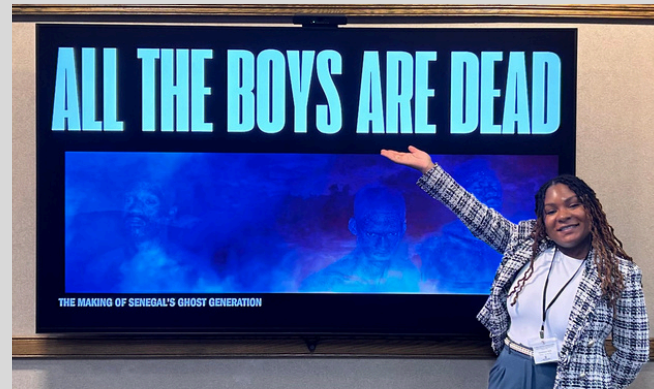


AFRICAN STUDIES - MA PROGRAM

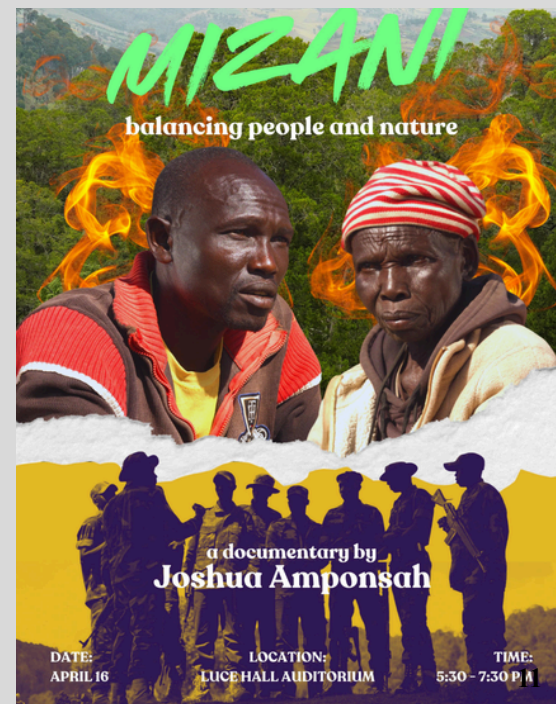
The Council's MA in African Studies prepares students to pursue careers in government, IGOs, NGOs, the private sector, and academia. Recent graduate, Jonathan Dörnhöfer, is the Manager at the Africa Practice at McLarty Associates where he works to develop market entry and expansion strategies for companies looking to invest in the region, while Charlotte Bednarski is pursuing her PhD in social-cultural anthropology at Yale with a focus on state-making, political imagination, and religion in West Africa. During the program students have many opportunities outside of the classroom to build lasting community and to develop research and professional skills. At weekly Council student lunches, they discuss their classes, thesis research, grant applications, and work on extracurricular projects.

MA students present at conferences and go abroad to conduct research. In academic year 2024-25 second year MA students Joshua Amponsah and Ivana Uzoh delivered papers at the African Studies Association Conference in Chicago. They also presented at the Indiana University Conference on Africa where Joshua's paper focused on "Irony of Nature Financing: How Global Climate Funds Shape Africa's Path to Sustainability" and Ivana's on "Literary Hauntings: Spectral Presence and Literature of the Nigerian-Biafra War." Their colleague Shanique Reid also presented at the Indiana University conference where her paper "All the Boys Are Dead: The Making of Senegal's Ghost Generation" earned the distinction of best paper of the conference.

These conference papers and their MA theses were developed from the research the students conducted in Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria during the previous summer. Joshua focused on environmental justice and climate sustainability. He carried out research in the Kalakpa Resource Reserve in Ghana and the Embobut Forest in Kenya for his comparative thesis on land rights and conservation conflicts in Africa. In addition to his written thesis, Joshua wrote and directed the short documentary Mizani: Balancing People and Nature, which CAS premiered at Yale this past semester. Joshua will spend the upcoming academic year as a Fox International Fellow at the University of Cape Town where he will turn his research lens on southern Africa.



Settling the Unburied Dead



LINDSAY FELLOWS

Graduate Students' Research on Africa



Shanique Reid - Senegal

CAS' Lindsay Fellowship for Research in Africa supports graduate and professional students to conduct research that will contribute to an increased understanding of Africa. This year, 15 Master's and PhD students from various disciplines in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Public Health, and Environmental Studies carried out research in Algeria, Botswana, France, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda. As a way to build community and, as part of their professional training, grantees present their research findings in the year-long Lindsay Fellows Talk Series on their way to producing Master's and PhD theses and scholarly and scientific journal articles. Some of the students can be seen [here](#) at their research sites describing the work they carried out during the fellowship.



Diana Namumbejja- Uganda



Samuel Akyirem - Ghana



Charlotte Bednarski - Mali



Ivana Uzoh - Nigeria



Joshua Amponsah - Kenya



Samantha Gillis - Ghana

UNDERGRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

In addition to welcoming graduate students, CAS offers a home-away-from home to our undergraduate population. We support not only our undergraduate African Studies majors but also undergraduate Africa-focused student groups across campus. As it does every year, the Council contributed towards the Yale African Student Association's (YASA) Africa Week, the Yale Africa Innovation (YAIS) Symposium, and to Yale Model African Union (YMAU). YASA took place in November, under the theme Africa in Bloom. In addition to a cultural carnival and art exhibition the week featured SongFest: Sounds of Home, a live, NPR-like 'tiny-desk' performance showcasing songs from different parts of the African continent including Rwandan Soul, South African traditional, and Ghanaian Highlife. The Africa Week finale featured dance and spoken word performances and a concert by Afrobeats artist, FAVE.



CAS strives to offer our students opportunities for development that will make them future leaders in the African space. At this year's YAIS, some 300 African and African American students from universities in the US and Canada participated in 13 innovation labs focusing on a range of themes including Agri-Business, Public Health and Research, Climate and Sustainability, Politics and Governance, Content Creation, and Economic Transformation. In the innovation labs, students convene alongside African industry leaders to deconstruct issues and produce resolutions. The symposium is designed to move beyond the standard discussion of Africa's challenges by focusing on the creation of actionable solutions. The conference emphasizes innovative thinking and problem solving as an important avenue for change.



YMAU, a leadership development conference run entirely by Yale students for high school and university students in Africa, engages in dynamic and immersive simulation of the African Union's policy making process. This past March, the fourth annual YMAU conference welcomed 580 participants to Nairobi, Kenya, in partnership with the Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate of the African Union and hosted such luminaries as the Ambassador of Kenya to the United States, university leaders, and CEOs.



By the Numbers



2024- 2025

African Studies MA Students - 7

Lindsay Fellowship for Research in Africa - 15 Fellows

Graduate Student Conference and Research Award Recipients- 10

Visiting Faculty/Scholars - 5 Scholars

Faculty Conference Support Recipients - 3

Lecture Series - 8 Lectures

Talks/Panels - 2 Panels, 2 Talks

Leadership in Africa Forum - 1

Student Groups Supported - 7

Yale Africa Innovation Symposium

Yale African Students Association

Yale Model African Union

Black Solidarity Conference

Yale Law School Student Conference on South African Democracy 30 years

Yale Muslim Students Association (MSA) and the Sudanese Students Association at Yale

Conferences & Symposia - 5

Genesis Epistemologies: Origins, Syncretism, and Human Evolution in Africa Conference

African Ephemera and the Archives Symposium

Virtual International Conference on The Black Indian Ocean: Slavery, Religion, and Expressive Cultures (1400-1700)

CAS Symposium - Africa's Next Chapter: Knowledge, Policy and Innovation

Northeast Regional Consortium for Programs in African Languages Workshop

Workshops - 6

Lindsay Fellows Workshops

Webinars - 1

Through The Eyes of She

Book Talk - 1

Sónia Vaz Borges' *Ragás: A Memoir of Home, Migration, and African Liberation*.

Yale Film Society - On Becoming a Guinea Fowl (Film Screening)



THE COUNCIL ON AFRICAN STUDIES



All of us at CAS are grateful to our faculty and staff colleagues, students, alumni and donors, who made 2024-2025 a 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.