

Undocumented Immigrants in Nigerian Cinema.

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I participated in the Yoruba Group Project Abroad during the summer of 2008 to improve my Yoruba language skills, learn about Yoruba culture, and to assess potential dissertation research on Nigerian film and migration. This opportunity was made possible by Dr. Akinyemi who is the director of the YGPA and under whom I have been studying Yoruba for one year. My dissertation research is concerned with undocumented West African migrants in Europe and the US as they appear in international cinema and the influence that these films might or might not have on viewers. Part of this topic is the analysis of Nigerian movies.

My stay in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, lasted seven weeks during which I, along with the other GPA participants, attended intensive language courses at Obafemi Awolowo University as well as cultural performances and lectures on campus and in town. The program also included travel within Yorubaland, for example to Ibadan and Abeokuta. While most of my time was dedicated to meeting the program requirements and studying Yoruba language and culture, I was able

to dedicate some time to my dissertation research with the kind assistance of the program directors.

I was placed with my host father's family because he is involved in broadcasting technology at Obafemi Awolowo and was able to share with me his vast experience in local radio and television broadcast and its influence on viewers and show me the studio and equipment at the university where I was also able to witness a live



broadcast. Apart from this, my research was largely concerned with Nigerian cinema, more specifically Nollywood, and its appeal to a mass audience in Nigeria and beyond. I was able to find information on the history and development of Nigerian cinema, meet film makers, and investigate audience expectations, especially among students.

I am planning on returning to Nigeria to study the attitudes of Nigerians towards leaving Nigeria for Europe or the US as well as general expectations and experiences. Preliminary conversations during my stay in Ile-Ife serve as a basis for more extensive research on the subject matter I wish to conduct in Nigeria in the year of 2009 to explore how the representation of undocumented migration in cinema affects, if at all, Nigerian westbound migration. The GPA has advanced my research tremendously and the close collaboration of Obafemi Awolowo University and the University of Florida has been extremely helpful in planning further research in Nigeria.

Claudia Hoffmann is a doctoral candidate in the Department English. In summer 2008, she participated in the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Intensive Yoruba program in Nigeria.

