

*Women in Science and African Nobel Laureates*

# IROHIN

*Taking Africa to the Classroom*

## 2018

**Remembering Winnie Madikizela-Mandela**

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**Dr. Agnes Ngoma Leslie** EDITOR

**Jenna Agres** DESIGN AND LAYOUT

**Fezile Mtsetfwa** EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

# CONTENTS

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 3  | Center for African Studies Outreach Program                                |
| 4  | Understanding the Size of Africa   |
| 5  | New Look for Africa on Corrected Maps                                      |
| 6  | Remembering Winnie Madikizela-Mandela                                      |
| 8  | Women in Science<br><i>Marquita H. Hubbard</i>                             |
| 12 | Africa and the Nobel Prize<br><i>J.P. Brown</i>                            |
| 17 | African Women Representation in Literature<br><i>Staci White</i>           |
| 20 | Tea Production and Fair Trade in African Countries<br><i>Kate Lawrence</i> |

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 24 | A New Day: The Continued Rise of the Contemporary Mega Church<br><i>De'Shanta Everett</i>  |
| 28 | The Manuscripts of Timbuktu<br><i>Ryan Reidway</i>   |
| 32 | Elements of West African Influences in North American Architecture<br><i>Paul Adams</i>    |
| 34 | Contemporary African Artists: Inspiring Change with Repurposed Art<br><i>Andrea Chavez</i> |
| 37 | Ancestral Whispers: The Roots and Rhythms of Urban Expression<br><i>Nicole A. Harris</i>   |
| 43 | Africa: A Soccer Story<br><i>Matt Davis</i>  |
| 46 | Works Cited  |
| 51 | Teacher's Summer Institute   |

# OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Center for African Studies is partially funded under Title VI of the Federal Higher Education Act as a National Resource Center on Africa. One of only 10 in the U.S., Florida's is the only Center located in the southeastern United States. The Center directs, develops, and coordinates interdisciplinary instruction, research, and outreach on Africa. The Outreach Program includes a variety of activities whose objective is to improve the teaching of Africa in primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and local communities. The following are some of the regular activities which fall under the Outreach Program:

### Publications

The Center publishes and distributes teaching resources including Irohin, a publication for K-12 teachers.

### Community & School Presentations

Faculty and graduate students make presentations on Africa to local communities and schools.

### Teachers' Workshops

The Center offers in-service workshops for K-12 teachers about instruction on Africa throughout the school year.



In front of the Old Man's Cloth sculpture by El Anatsui at the Harn Museum are the teachers who participated in the 2017 Summer Institute and contributors to this publication: Paul Adams, J. P. Brown, Nicole Harris, De'Shanta Everett, Matt Davis, Staci White, Marquita Hubbard, Kate Lawrence, Andrea Chavez, Ryan Reidway, Institute Director, Dr. Agnes Leslie, Presenters, Dr. Mandisa Haarhoff and Felicity Aku Tackey-Otoo.

# AFRICA

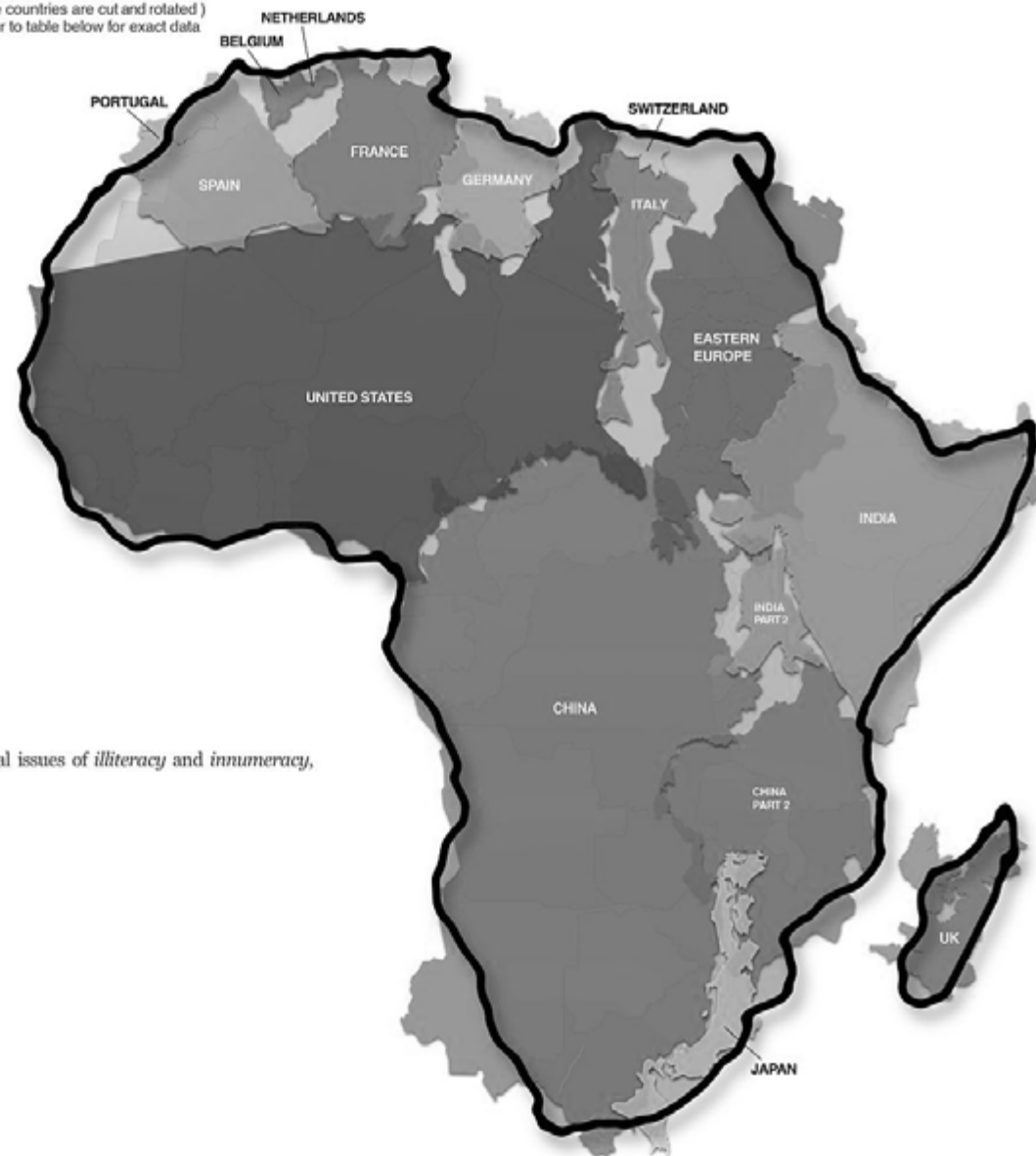
Africa is more than three times the size of the contiguous United States; there are more than 500 extant languages spoken across more than 50 countries; and the landscape spans from desert to rainforest. Languages, cultures, scenery and even the hemispheres change as you traverse Africa. This map may help us understand the true size of Africa and it's diversity.

## The True Size of Africa

A small contribution in the fight against rampant *immappancy*, by Kai Krause

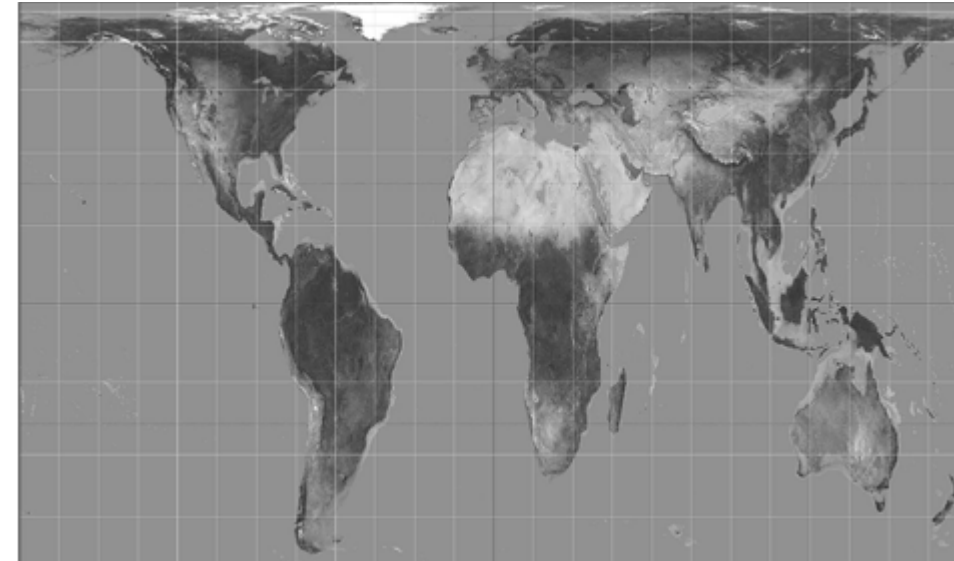
Graphic layout for visualization only ( some countries are cut and rotated )  
But the conclusions are very accurate: refer to table below for exact data

| COUNTRY          | AREA<br>x 1000 km <sup>2</sup> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| China            | 9.597                          |
| USA              | 9.629                          |
| India            | 3.287                          |
| Mexico           | 1.964                          |
| Peru             | 1.285                          |
| France           | 633                            |
| Spain            | 506                            |
| Papua New Guinea | 462                            |
| Sweden           | 441                            |
| Japan            | 378                            |
| Germany          | 357                            |
| Norway           | 324                            |
| Italy            | 301                            |
| New Zealand      | 270                            |
| United Kingdom   | 243                            |
| Nepal            | 147                            |
| Bangladesh       | 144                            |
| Greece           | 132                            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>30.102</b>                  |
| <b>AFRICA</b>    | <b>30.221</b>                  |



In addition to the well known social issues of *illiteracy* and *innumeracy*,

# CORRECTED MAPS



The Sallie-Peter projection shows correct proportions putting the right size of Africa.

Mar. 20, 2017 (GIN) - In an age of “fake news” and “alternative facts”, authorities in the city of Boston believe their new school map offers something closer to the geographical truth than that of traditional maps, and hope it can serve an example to schools across the nation and even the world.

The school district will drop the Mercator projection, which physically diminished Africa and South America, for the Peters, which cuts the developed world down to size.

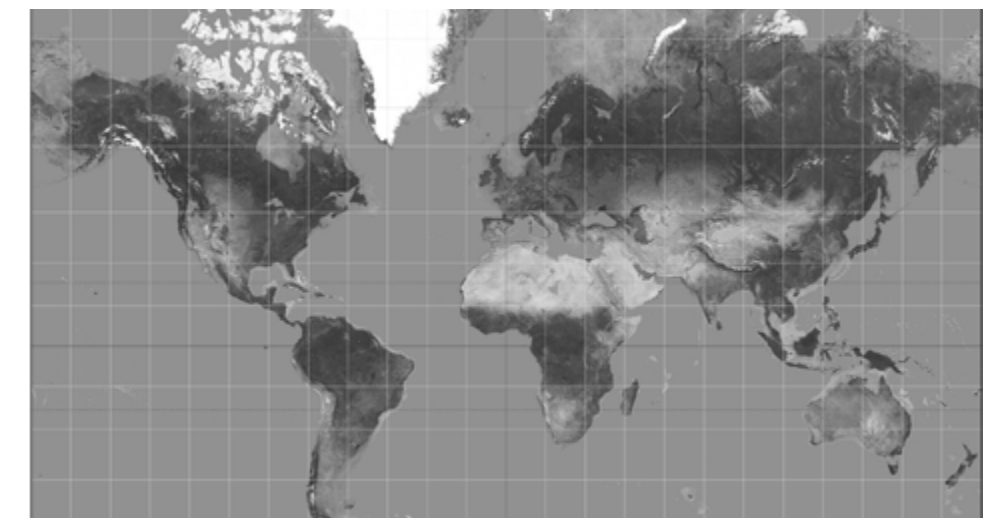
The Gall-Peters projection shows land masses in their correct proportions by area, putting the relative sizes of Africa and North America in perspective.

When Boston public schools introduced a new standard map of the world this week, some young students felt their world had changed.

The USA was small. Europe too had suddenly shrunk. Africa and South America appeared narrower but also much larger than usual. And what had happened to Alaska?

For almost 500 years, the Mercator projection – designed to aid navigation along colonial trade routes - has been the norm for maps of the world.

In the Mercator system, North America and Europe appear bigger than South America and Africa. Western Europe is in the middle of his map.



The Mercator projection, the map most commonly seen hanging in classrooms and in textbooks, gives the right shapes of land masses, but at the cost of distorting their sizes in favor of the lands to the north.

South America is made to look about the same size as Europe, when in fact it is almost twice as large, and Greenland looks roughly the size of Africa when it is actually about 14 times smaller. Alaska looks bigger than Mexico and Germany is in the middle of the picture, not to the north.

The switch to the Gall-Peters Projection sees Boston's public schools follow the lead of the United Nations, which has advocated the map as a more 'fair', less Eurocentric representation of the world, as have several aid agencies.

Teachers in the 2nd, 7th and 11th grades have already received their new maps, and say the reaction from their students has been fascinating. “It’s “interesting to watch the students saying ‘Wow’ and ‘No, really? Look at Africa, it’s bigger””, Natacha Scott, director of history and social studies at Boston public schools, told The Guardian.

“Some of their reactions were quite funny,” she added, “but it was also amazingly interesting to see them questioning what they thought they knew.”

# Remembering Winnie Madikizela-Mandela



Winnie Mandela during a rally (Source: Business Insider South Africa)

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, South African anti-apartheid campaigner and former wife of Nelson Mandela died on April 2, aged 81. Madikizela-Mandela known affectionately as “Mother of the Nation” kept the fight against the apartheid nation while her husband was imprisoned. She became the international symbol of resistance to apartheid. She was a

strong voice and fierce fighter while Mandela was in prison for 27 years. She was also imprisoned, tortured and at one time banished to a rural area and kept in solitary confinement. But she kept the fight and never gave up. She is quoted as saying: “They think because they have put my husband on an island that he will be forgotten. They are wrong. The harder they try to

silence him, the louder I will become!”– 1962. Thousands of South Africans paid tribute to Madikizela-Mandela at a memorial service held at a soccer stadium in Soweto after almost two weeks of national mourning. Among the many who paid tribute to her was Graça Machel, the widow of Nelson Mandela. Her tribute to Madikizela-Mandela is reproduced here in full:

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## *Graça Machel paying tribute to the “Mother” of the South African Nation – “One of the brightest stars in the sky”:*

It is with a heavy heart that I address you today.

As I struggle to accept your transition, I take solace in the fact that you have risen to become one of the brightest stars in the sky where you will remain ever present and radiantly shining. You will continue to serve as a guide to your loving family, your grateful nation, our beloved Africa, and indeed, the world.

The extraordinary life you led is an example of resilient fortitude and inextinguishable passion that is a source of inspiration to us all of how to courageously confront challenges with unwavering strength and determination.

Thank you for your brilliant wisdom, your fierce defiance and your stylish beauty.

Fortunately, stars shine brightest during the darkest of hours. I know you will continue to illuminate our sky, even through the storms and clouds. Your legacy will be an uplifting beacon from which we can continue to draw guidance and strength during difficult times.

You loved our people unconditionally and sacrificed so much for our freedom. It is my prayer that as befitting tributes are paid to you both at home and abroad, all of us will internalise the values you helped to mould and birth into existence.

As a nation, I hope we will stand tall and proud, and as uncompromising as you were in the defence and protection of our rights. As one of our brightest stars, continue to be the lioness that protects your children and your grandchildren. Warm their hearts so that while your transition may shake them, it does not break their spirit.

Your legacy is everlasting. Take a well-deserved rest in peace, my BIG sister.

Love and Respect Always,  
Your little sister, Graça.



Winnie Madikizela Mandela and Graça Machel with Nelson Mandela at his 86th birthday (Source: AFP/GETTY)



# Encouraging African Women Towards Science And Technology Innovation



Zambian female engineers, Rennie Shamambo and Sarah Chishimba work at an engineering company in a mining district on the Copperbelt in Zambia. (Source: Volvo Group)

Wangari Maathai stated in her memoir "Unbowed" that her years in the United States overlapped with the beginnings of the women's movement and even though many women were still bound to traditional ideas about themselves at that time, she came to see that as an African woman she was perhaps even more constrained in what she could do or think or even hope for (Maathai, 2006).

Although, women possess the capability to sustain another life for months, give birth to multiple children, love and nurture those children all while experiencing the pains of after birth, certainly making contribution(s) to science

is not a task beyond their cognitive psyche. According to The World Health Organization women scientists in Africa play a critical role in Africa's development, including pushing the envelope on gender equality.

Recently Nobel Prize winner Tim Hunt sparked controversy when he stated that women should not be in science, as they can prove distracting to male scientists within the work place. It is this type egocentric bigotry that not only creates but sustains the glass ceiling concept for women worldwide. Should women also refrain from fields of all forms, because men refuse to exercise self-control?

Can you imagine what the world would be like if this were so? Surely this would be a tragedy the world would never want to endure.

In recent Census Bureau reports, women make up approximately 48 percent of the total U.S. workforce, while only making up approximately 24 percent of workers in Science Technology Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

Although women constantly face oppositional challenges in their efforts of balancing a demanding career with having children and raising the next generation this paper looks at how women have remained resilient

in striving towards work equality in science through mentorship, education, and various other initiatives.

## ***African Women in Science and Engineering (AWSE)***

African Women in Science and Engineering is an organization that seeks to increase the number of competent women scientists and engineers in Africa. This organization implements various programs and spans high schools in efforts to recruit and mold career scientists and engineers. This program also seeks to promote the presence of women in science and technology through various empowerment programs in addition to highlighting and enhancing women's contributions in research, education, and the development of the continent.

## ***Overview of Women in Science across Africa***

Like the rest of the world, science is still a man's world in Africa. The marginalization of women in science throughout the continent of Africa is comparable to the rest of the world. It has been estimated that, on average, 30% of science positions internationally are held by women. According to The Conversation; Academic rigor, journalistic Flair within the years that Nobel Prizes have been awarded, 47 women have received prizes. Two of these were awarded in physics, five in chemistry, eight in physiology and medicine and one in economics.

The medal, that is awarded to outstanding mathematicians under 40, has only once in the past 70 years been awarded to a woman. With all of the presented facts representing women in the sciences it is even more dire in Africa. However, although there appears to be a poor representation of women in science fields throughout African, there remains

a disproportion of data due to the fact that only 3 of the 13 members on the council of the Academy of Science of South Africa are women. In addition to this, in most other academies of science within the continent, the norm is that there is only one or no appointed female council members. Therefore, the representation of statistical data maybe somewhat skewed. The Association of African Women in Science and Engineering estimates that women make up no more than 20% of the academics within these fields in Africa. However, within the continent there remains a strong push towards innovating women towards assimilating into the science fields.

Women's involvement, access, and perceptions within science and technology is pertinent to reducing poverty, creating job opportunities and increasing agricultural and industrial productivity.

## ***Promoting Women in Science within South Africa***

In September 2013, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Nairobi office ran a two-day workshop for university women decision makers, mid-career women scientists and engineers to find a developmental approach to express their lives, their views, and bounds of possibilities for women's concern. The meeting provided a platform for women to deliberate on how to forge ahead in preparing for the post 2015 development agenda. It also offered women an opportunity to identify niche areas in training and research that will enable women scientist to drive Africa's economic transformations and its sustainable developmental agenda. This is a wonderful initiative because it provides women with a voice in order to divulge their varying perspectives. Given that women are heard and granted input on scientific and economic concerns, it is a start to revolutionizing the very principles and core

values of modern day South Africa.

In recent efforts to promote women in science in South Africa, participants identified key strategies for training women to enhance their access to new and emerging fields of science, engineering, technology, and innovation. These meetings have also provided policy guidance concerning the implementation of strategic partnerships to empower women within science and technology sustainable development. During this time, an action plan was developed for educating and training women in science and engineering to enhance their employment opportunities and career paths. South Africa has developed a task force of energetic women within the sciences who are resiliently working to both empower and enhance women's involvement within Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). They seem to be making progress to bridging the gap between gender inequalities.

## ***Role Models and Biographies of Women in Science in Africa***

Professor Jane Catherine Ngila from Nairobi, Kenya has conducted research in the area of Analytical-Environmental Chemistry on water resource management. She is one of the leading women scientists in Africa. She received a PhD in September of 1996 under the supervision of Professor Brynn Hibbert and Peter Alexander. She became interested in science during the 1980s. She stated that during this time there was a belief among her fellow high school peers that science was difficult. In addition to this, many just thought that girls couldn't do science. Jane decided to set herself up for the challenge and prove this myth wrong. Her father being a chief (government administrator) during the British Colonial rule, encouraged her to pursue a higher education and never pressured her to get married.

In 1999, she was awarded a scholarship to the University of New South Wales in Austria. It covered medical expenses for both her and her nuclear family which included her son, Charles who was born on May 17, 1992. Her research focuses on leaching on aluminum in cookware. It focused on the development of new detection methods using aluminum wire for indirect detection of F<sup>+</sup> and Al<sup>3+</sup> and polymer coated wire ion-selective electrodes for nitrates and chlorides. In her current field, she places more emphasis on water research because due to its prominence in Africa. She is interested in the determination of water pollutants and their removal using functionalized chemical resins and biomass absorbents. These materials are intended to purify water at an affordable cost, by rural communities in Africa.

Currently, she is the head of the Applied Chemistry Department at the University of Johannesburg, where she continues to lecture in analytical/environmental chemistry, conduct research, recruit and supervise post graduate students and postdoctoral fellow, mentor junior lectures. In addition, Dr. Ngila provides service to her local community through outreach programs.

Finally, Dr. Ngila says that she has been inspired by women who have made it in a man's world whether in education, business, or politics. However, she is equally motivated by men who have made it to the top through hard work and perseverance.

Not only has Dr. Ngila, made contributions to the field of science in Africa but Rapelang Rabana, who is a technologist from South African is also a woman committed to the sciences as well. Rabana's entrepreneurial journey began when she was 22 years of age. She graduated from Business Science with honors in Computer Science from the University of Cape Town. She comes from a family with a strong belief in the power of education to create opportunities

for others. Her parents were the first in their family to earn degrees in architecture and electrical engineering. Prior to attending the University of Cape Town, Rabana attended the prestigious Roedean School in Johannesburg. While at Cape Town she learned how to code, which further led to her passion for computer science. She realized that the power of coding was the building block of being able to create something practical and of real societal value. She is the cofounder of Yeigo Communications, which is South Africa's first development company that offered free Mobil VoIP service. She has been listed in the Forbes 30 under 30: Africa's best young entrepreneurs and Oprah's Magazine; O Power List 2012. Today Rabana is the innovative founder of Rekindle Learning, a company that seeks to improve education in Africa into an opportunity to learn and empower people of all ages and backgrounds to take charge of their learning and development through the use of mobile technology and learning applications, thereby opening a whole new world of opportunities and possibilities.

### **Promoting Women in Science in Ghana**

In 1987 there was a paradigm shift in the inclusion of girls within



The African Academy of Sciences and the NEPAD Agency's Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA) and its partners announced a US\$2 million program, which will train postdoctoral researchers to support globally competitive research in African universities. (Nairobi, Kenya, 2017) (Source: African Academy of Sciences)

the science education. In recent years progress has been made in efforts to mainstream women in science studies and careers. The retention rate for girls in science fields at the university level has risen considerably. This section focuses on women scientists in Ghana.

Ghana is located on the west coast of Africa, north of the equator. It has a population of approximately 24 million, in which 51% are women. In 1987 there was a crisis when Ghana's government recognized that only one in 11 children at secondary schools in Ghana was a girl. This unfortunate circumstance led to the development of the Science and Math Education Clinic. Within the inaugural class there were 110 female students admitted. Due to the fact that the Science and Math Education Clinic was such a successful initiative, the concept was embraced and adopted into various other West African Countries. Since the implementation of this program the ratio of girls versus boys taking science and math at the secondary level in currently one and three. Due to these changes taking place girls from Ghana have both an advantage and an opportunity to thrive within the field of science.

As part of efforts to advance sustainable development through the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women

and girls in science the Diplomatic Corps decided to mark the 2017 International Day of Women and Girls in Science in Ghana. In addition to this, the United Nations General Assembly declared February 11<sup>th</sup> of every year, as International Day of Women and Girls in Science. What a paramount integral mark in history!

### **Promoting Women and Girls in Science in Kenya**

For years Kenya has sought to empower and inspire women in the field of science. Comparable to other countries around the globe, women in science are under-represented. In recent years Kenya has taken steps to address gender inequality and has adopted a strategy to mainstream gender in science. This has been embedded in their Science Technology and Innovation Act (2013). This Act recognizes women being under-represented in leadership positions, academic, scientific, research institutions and professional associations.

In addition to Kenya's recent Act, the country's National Commission for Science and Technology (NACOSTI) has designated funds to enable women scientists to conduct research, while the Nairobi African Academy of Science (AAS) has allocated travel grants that are geared to support women scientists to travel to conferences. Due to all these avenues of support; African women like Elizabeth Ochola, a research officer at the Kenyan Medical Research Institute, Center for Global Health Research are able to conduct research for infectious diseases in Kenya. Elizabeth was granted the opportunity to attend a week-long workshop alongside 20 aspiring women scientists. In order to facilitate these workshops 40 Kenyan teachers are trained in gender responsive teaching, and new partnership initiatives for enhancing women's participation in (STEM). During this workshop,

the women were provided with one-on-one mentoring support where they were afforded the opportunity to ask questions obtain feedback, and receive invaluable advice about how to manage the demands of a challenging professional career while maintaining a family. Subsequently, this mentoring project led to a platform to facilitate information sharing and professional support to aspiring women scientist in 5 Kenyan universities. Since then some of these women have developed proposals on infectious diseases that are now being reviewed for grant funding, while others have established informal Google and WhatsApp Groups that will facilitate much needed informative professional support.

### **Conclusion**

In most African countries, contemporary research on women and the learning of science in higher educational institutions has persistently focused on equal representation and access. Consequently, most governments worldwide have decided to commit more resources in order to encourage women to pursue the fields of mathematics, science, technology and engineering.

Although there still remains a slight gap between women and men in science within the continent of Africa, significant strides have been taken to further promote their involvement. As educators who are on the frontline to molding and shaping our students beliefs and attitudes towards various practices, we must certainly not take our positions lightly. We must make women in science a norm and not an exception. In doing so, it would prove to be highly beneficial if we were to introduce our young women to the pioneers in science who paved the way for them. While showing them real-world successful women who have been resilient in surpassing societal bias and stereotypes, they will be more enthusiastic about progressing into those fields.

### **Lesson Plans**

1. In order to educate students about women in science in Africa, I would begin by gathering their prior knowledge about the continent of Africa and women.

2. After gathering students' prior knowledge, ask students questions on an anticipation guide about women in science in Africa. This allows students to revisit their misconceptions at the end of the lesson.

3. Students would then complete a KWL chart on what they already know about women in science within the continent of Africa and what they want to know, at the end of the lesson students will fill in the portion of the chart where they can state what they have learned.

4. I will then assemble the students into groups of four by varying cognitive levels in order to incorporate differentiated instruction. Each student will possess a given role to ensure academic accountability. They will choose a country in Africa to research and teach their peers. They will play the role of the teacher and their peers will be the students.

5. Students will have to not only educate their peers, but form a lesson to enlighten and engage their students.

6. Finally, the students will come up with some form of exit activity to reflect and assess their student's understanding of women/girls in science in Africa.



# Africa and the Nobel Prize: Three Women's Stories



Nobel Peace Prize 2011 (Source: Harry Wad)



Wangari Maathai, first African to win the Noble Peace Prize (Source: Dirt! The Movie (2009))

The Nobel Prize is an honorary and monetary award presented by the Nobel Foundation for achievements in the sciences, literature, and for contributions to extraordinary peaceful political stability. By 2017 only twenty-five people from Africa had received the award (nobelprize.org, 2017). The prizes awarded to Africans span across categories, and include both men and women. Below is a current listing by date of African laureates and the categories for which their award was presented:

- 2013, Michael Levitt, South Africa (Chemistry)
- 2012, Serge Haroche, Morocco (Physics)
- 2011, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia (Peace)
- 2011, Leymah Gbowee, Liberia (Peace)
- 2005, Mohamed ElBaradei, Egypt (Peace)
- 2004, Wangari Muta Maathai, Kenya (Peace)
- 2003, John M. Coetzee, South Africa (Literature)
- 2002, Sydney Brenner, South Africa (Physiology or Medicine)
- 2001, Kofi Annan, Gold Coast {now Ghana} (Peace)
- 1999, Ahmed H. Zewail, Egypt (Chemistry)
- 1997, Claude Cohen-Tannoudji, French Algeria {now Algeria} (Physics)
- 1994, Yasser Arafat, Egypt (Peace) \*Included in the African listing by Nobel as he was born in Egypt
- 1993, Nelson Mandela, South Africa (Peace)
- 1993, Frederik Willem de Klerk, South Africa (Peace)
- 1991, Nadine Gordimer, South Africa (Literature)
- 1988, Naguib Mahfouz, Egypt (Literature)
- 1986, Wole Soyinka, Nigeria (Literature)
- 1985, Claude Simon, Madagascar (Literature)
- 1984, Desmond Mpilo Tutu, South Africa (Peace)
- 1979, Allan M. Cormack, South Africa (Physiology or Medicine)
- 1978, Mohamed Anwar al-Sadat, Egypt (Peace)
- 1964, Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin, Egypt (Chemistry)
- 1960, Albert John Luthuli, Southern Rhodesia {now Zimbabwe} (Peace)
- 1957, Albert Camus, French Algeria {now Algeria} (Literature)
- 1951, Max Theiler, South Africa (Physiology or Medicine)

In an analysis of the top five countries whose citizens receive Nobel Prizes, three of them (United Kingdom, Germany, and France) have a history as Old World European colonial powers. Another is the nation of Sweden, the origin and headquarters of the Nobel Prize itself. Finally, there is the United States; the current winner of the most prizes. However, in connection with the theory of geopolitical influence, it should be noted that the U.S. only became the dominant winner *after* World War II (when it became the dominant world power). In fact, from 1901 until 1936 the United States won only two awards (nobelprize.org).

## A Special Honor: The Peace Prize

Throughout its history, winning the Nobel Peace Prize has been an especially coveted recognition around the world. According to the Nobel Foundation, the “Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 97 times to 130 Nobel Laureates between 1901 and 2016, 104 individuals and 26 organizations”. The text of Alfred Nobel’s will specifies that award shall be given “to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses” (nobelprize.org). Unlike most laureates in the various categories, recipients of the Peace Prize often undergo significant personal hardships including persecution, physical danger, and imprisonment in a mission to help others avoid the same. For this reason, let us turn now to explore the continent’s history with the award.

## Africa and the Prize for Peace

On the continent of Africa, ten of these awards (eleven if Yassar Arafat, born in Egypt is included) have been presented to individuals and an additional four have been

awarded to organizations. In order to understand the history behind the Nobel Peace Prize and Africa, this article will start with the first people to receive the award.

## Albert John Luthuli, First African Nobel Laureate

The first Peace Prize awarded to an individual from Africa and first to an individual outside Europe was given to Albert John Luthuli in 1960 (although it was presented in 1961). Born into a humble background in 1898, Luthuli began his adult career as school teacher. Being raised with Christian influence (Methodist), he also became a lay preacher which he continued throughout most of his life. As early as 1928, Luthuli became concerned with the discriminatory plight suffered by ordinary working people and was elected to Secretary of the Natal Native Teachers Union. In that position he “gained valuable political experience by organizing boycotts and acting as a negotiator with white authorities” (sahistory.org). He made good use of that experience in 1935 as he was selected to become chief in his ancestral village; a position he held for seventeen years. In that role, Luthuli organized local farmers in disputes against white land owners or government officials. Later, in 1952, he was elected to the African National Congress as the President-General, a position he held until his death in 1967. He utilized his role as president to support the 1952 Defiance Campaign—a period of non-violent protests, boycotts, and other measures levied against the South African Government to affect the social inequality leveraged against black Africans by the government during Apartheid.

During his tenure as president, Luthuli was harassed, arrested, forced to surrender his position as chief, and severe limitations were placed on his ability to travel. In fact, Luthuli was only the second person honored by

the Nobel Foundation who was being actively “persecuted by his own authorities” at the time of his nomination. What’s more, his receipt of the prize had an additional impact as it “meant that the Nobel Committee had placed respect for human rights on the agenda, and that it had joined the international movement against apartheid” (nobelprize.org).

## The Peace Prize and African Women

Out of the 10 (or 11) Peace Prizes awarded from their inception until the present, only three have been awarded to African women. In addition to the Peace Prize, women received awards in categories of Literature and Chemistry. This ratio is consistent with the disparity between women and men from all nations across all categories awarded. From the years 1901 to 2015 only 49 women were presented with the award, compared to 825 men during the same time frame. What’s more, according to a historical analysis conducted by the British Broadcasting Company, one’s likelihood of being nominated is highest if you are a white male, over 60, married, and also clean shaven (Schultz, 2013). However, recent data suggests that the gender gap, especially in the sciences, is slowly closing (NPR.org). Let us turn now to examine the three African Peace Prize winners.

## Three African Women and Peace in Africa: A Brief Case Study

Wangari Muta Maathai: Women’s Rights and the Environment-Kenya

Born in 1940, in 2004 Wangari Muta Maathai became the first black African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Raised in a traditional household and during a time when formal education for black women in African was not common, Maathai was sent to school by her mother who used





Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Wangari Maathai (Source: Demosh)

scarce money she earned doing additional odd jobs. This would be an important step for Maathai as she found a niche in academia, and eventually furthered her education in the United States through a special educational program for Africans created by President John F. Kennedy. Earning multiple degrees, including a Ph.D. (1971), Maathai eventually became an associate professor and chair of the Veterinary Anatomy Department at the University of Nairobi (Unbowed, 2011).

In the 1970's, her then husband ran for a seat in parliament. Among others, one of his primary campaign issues was finding solutions to the growing problem of unemployment in Kenya. Maathai combined this issue, along with her interest in environmental conservation, to propose planting trees

using the unemployed and paying them with international funds. This idea was wildly successful, and eventually became known as the Greenbelt Movement.

The Greenbelt Movement simultaneously empowered African women, provided much needed income, and combated rampant deforestation at the same time. Like many other African women trying to effect change, Maathai was actively persecuted and arrested by the Kenyan government.

Eventually the movement spread to many other countries on the African continent, and resulted in the planting of more than thirty-one million trees (nobelprize.org). After her election to parliament in 2002, she was assigned the post of Assistant Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife. In addition

to her Peace Prize, Maathai has been recognized with a variety of international awards.

### **Ellen Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee: Two Women Saving Liberia**

#### Background

After decades of political instability fostered by corruption, in 1980 Liberia experienced a Coup d'état by Samuel K. Doe. President William Tolbert and sixteen of his high level staff were immediately executed.

In 1989, Charles Taylor, a former ally of Doe, led a successful revolt to unseat him from power using the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Soon after in 1990, Doe was tortured and executed on film. The film was widely circulated internationally as an instrument of fear to solidify Taylor's regime.

Soon after, many of Taylor's rebel fighters splintered off into separate factions in a bid for power. This action led to a bloody civil war which would last for nearly sixteen more years. In the interim, in the 1997 Liberian election, Taylor waged a campaign of terror using slogans such as "He killed my ma; he killed my pa; I'll vote for him." The war ended in 2003 with Taylor being ousted, and forced to resign and flee to Nigeria.

After Taylor's removal, a peace settlement was brokered among the remaining factions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and monitored by 15,000 United Nations peacekeeping troops (PBS.org).

Two women were instrumental in securing the peace, tending to the emotionally injured, and creating a solid foundation for stability in Liberia.

#### President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

President Sirleaf grew up in the Liberian capital of Monrovia, where she married and had four sons. In 1961, she moved to the United States with her husband and she earned two degrees; including a Masters Degree in Public Administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

After graduating from Harvard, she returned to Liberia and she held several government posts including minister of finance. Always trying to do the best for her people despite its political popularity, Sirleaf was often at odds with reigning political power. She was jailed for a year by then dictator Samuel Doe, and was threatened with death by his successor Charles Taylor.

Sirleaf persevered in her struggle to help a nation plagued with violence and war. Despite grave personal risk, she ran against Charles Taylor in the 1997 presidential election—an election he won by terror. After Taylor was forced into exile by

rebel factions in 2003, she became chairperson of the Governance Reform Commission of the National Transitional Government of Liberia but resigned a year later to run for president in 2005. She won and became the first female African president.

In 2007, President Sirleaf was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by the United States President George Bush. She served as President of Liberia for two terms until she stepped down in 2017. She was named by Newsweek Magazine as one of the World's "Top Ten Leaders" (nobelprize.org).

#### Leymah Gbowee

Leymah Gbowee also grew up in Liberia. As a teenager, she was present during the nation's brutal civil war which in her words "from a child into an adult in a matter of hours" (nobelprize.org). Soon after, she had her first child and became interested in social work. She wanted to learn how to do something that could help the emotionally wounded young women

and child soldiers she regularly encountered.

She started to organize as she believed that the women of Liberia needed to do something to stop the violence and chaos. She became one of the founders of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. Within the organization, she began an interfaith project of organizing and unifying women against war. This led to important contacts with women within the Muslim community and eventually gave birth to the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace. She convinced other women that it was their duty as women to take action to halt the violence (nobelprize.org).

Her active and effective role in the organizations assisted with the election of the first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. She also earned a Master's Degree in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University (Harrisonburg, VA).

As an international peace activist, she continues to push forward and organize other organizations of unity such as the Women Peace and Security Network Africa.



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, and Leymah Gbowee, 2011 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates. (Source: Nobel Media)



In 2011, three women shared the Nobel Peace Prize for "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work" (nobelprize.org). This included Tawakkol Karman who shared the award for playing a leading role in the struggle for women's rights and for democracy and peace in Yemen.

### Lesson Plan Objectives

The story of the Nobel Prize and the Nobel Prize in Africa, presents multiple learning opportunities ranging from the effects of colonialism, the injustice of Apartheid, political and historical movements in Africa, the struggle for women's rights in Africa, the opportunity and disparity between men and women internationally, and environmental stewardship.

#### Lesson Plans Elementary School:

The story of these courageous women would be an excellent storytelling and reading opportunity. As the reader, the students will form a circle around the teacher and take turns reading selected excerpts about the achievements of these women in the face of adversity. At

this level, the teacher can also use the subject as an opportunity to teach the students about Africa in general. A basic idea could include Africa's geography, history with colonial powers, and the struggle of the proverbial "underdog" using non-violent means to secure justice. Resources include library books, online materials, and various geographical art materials.

#### Lesson Plans Middle School:

The story of these activists would be a wonderful opportunity for the students to role play as both the women and their detractors. Some students might be assigned the role of the peace activists, while others would be the violent opposition. Through talks and negotiation, the students would learn what the issues actually were during the conflicts and seek to peacefully resolve them. There is also an opportunity for short biography presentations on African Nobel winners from any category where the student (or group) would choose a topic and offer a 5-7 minute presentation to the class (with or without a projector). As with the elementary lesson plan, an opportunity is also present to teach about Africa

more generally. Resources include books, online materials, and where possible-field trip opportunities.

#### Lesson Plans High School:

Any black African Nobel Laureate's biography would be an excellent assignment during Black History Month. In this way, the students would have a way to see beyond the traditional figures assigned to learn about the issues they lived through and resolved. Students could choose a laureate and create a paper then present it for the class. As with the other grade levels discussed, studying about Africa and the Nobel Prize is an excellent opportunity to introduce other topics about Africa in general. At the High School level a more in depth discussion and analysis of topics ranging from racism, political justice, feminism, environmental activism, and geopolitical influence can be introduced.

Staci White

# African Women Representation in African Literature

The representation of African women in African literature is a discourse that should be held in the classroom. As educators, do we really know how our students perceive the perpetuated images of African women in African literature? Are we aware of female African characters in African literature and the context they are presented in? By analyzing African literature that provides the illustrations of African women, we will be able to understand and acknowledge the representations of African women.

### Gender and Literature

To explore the dynamics of African women representations in African literature, we must unpack the aspects of gender in African literature. There is a plethora of African literature that entails the image of male dominance and ineffectively implores the case of the woman (Fonchingong, 2006, p. 135). "The beginning era of African literature was saturated with male authors that perpetuated the idea of women being marginalized or inferior; women were rarely depicted as the superior or powerful protagonist (Fonchingong, 2006, 135). The ideology of the female character created by male authors often disseminated traditional gender roles, such as the mother and the wife. The adaptations of these roles by women are affirmed by social construct and the value placed on the adoration

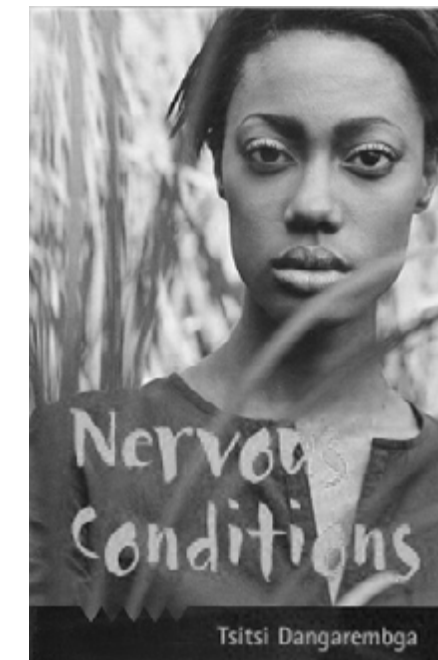
of the woman (Fonchingong, 2006, p.135). For example, in the novel *Things Fall Apart*, three goats are killed by Chinua Achebe's Okonkwo, for one of his wives who had three sons in a row, yet *The Concubine's Madume*, authored by Elechi Amadi, is ostracized due to his wife being unable to produce a male heir. Though the males are ostracized, women who are unable to bear children are stigmatized and identified as a societal misfit (Fonchingong, 2006, p.135). During the pre-colonial era, gender roles were complementary in African Literature. Colonization served as the era of women servants; women no longer governed power

in literature (Fonchingong, 2006, p.135-136).

Even when African women are given heroic roles in African literature, they are not always acknowledged as heroic or powerful. Research in African Literatures journal "Women in the African Epic" provided a critical perspective on women and their roles in African Epics, or poems. The female character is given the heroic role but is robbed of her recognition. As an audience, we attach the role of being a hero to the male, while dispelling the woman's actions of significance and perseverance. The Ashanti tale "How Spider Obtained Sky-God's Stories" serves as an



Nobel Laureates, President Sirleaf Johnson and Leymah Gbowee attend the Nobel Peace Prize Concert at the Oslo Spektrum Arena on 11 December 2011 (Source: Nobel Media)



(Source: We Should All Be Feminists by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Nervous Conditions by Tsitsi Dangarembga)

example of the female character displaying heroic actions, but the male is given the acknowledgement of being valiant. The primary male character, Ananse, is on a quest to obtain Nyankonpon, Sky-God's stories. Sky-God affirms that in order to possess the stories, one must capture a variety of different creatures. In order to capture these creatures, Ananse seeks guidance from his wife, Aso. Ananse was able to capture all the creatures requested and obtain Sky-God's stories due to Aso's teachings. The discussion surrounding this particular literature recognizes the problematic reactions: we are all too familiar with perceiving this literature as the male being the hero, and in the process, belittling the significant role of the woman (Mbele, 2006). This enforces the standard of male dominance and identifying the woman as inferior.

### **Expansive Depictions of African Women in African Literature**

Creating literature that accurately represents African women is a critical aspect concerning perpetuated ideologies. In the review of "The Sociology of Urban Women's Image in African Literature" by Kevin Little, reviewer Phyllis E. Goldberg acknowledges the problematic take on African women. The literature was uninformative and lacked true sense of the African woman (Goldberg, 1981). Male written African literature, sometimes, contain conceptual limitations regarding African women and how to accurately portray them. African literature, written by men, lack expansive images of African women; they are often seen as traditional and docile. This is not to say some African women are not traditional or docile, but this image is perceived as one of the few images of African women in colonized African literature (Representation of Women in African Literature, P. Jadeja, 2005).

### **African Women Representations in African Literature Written By Women**

Let's expand the discourse regarding representations of African women in African literature by acknowledging the woman writer. Many female African writers have included different perspectives of female identity and purpose. She is not always docile, her heroic moments are not always overlooked, and she is not always struggling with the ideology of tradition and western civilization. "New Women's Writing in African Literature," authored by Ernest N. Emenyonu, supplies an outlook on contemporary female poets from Northern Nigeria. Author Aderemi Raji-Oyelede discusses the poetry of Hannatu Abdul-lahi, Maria Ajima, Nana Ahmed, Binta Mohammed, Cecilia Kat. Raji-Oyelede recognizes the idealistic concern for the environment, celebration of motherhood, sisterhood, and womanhood, a modest critique of patriarchy, and religion. These poets embrace the depiction of African women welcoming the role of being mothers and individual women, simultaneously (Emenyonu, 2004).

In the book *Africa, African literature* is discussed in the context of representations of African Identity and African perspectives. Female African writers identify gender based literature, in which male writers criticize the imperial and colonized philosophies for racism and oppression. Even in this aspect, the criticism of the imperial and colonized philosophies is referenced to men, while women are portrayed as "goddesses," such as muses, idealized mothers, and simply helpmates (Julien, 2014, p. 220).

Many African women writers contribute to literature by offering a unique perspective regarding African women depictions. African women writers, such as Zukiswa Wanner, Chimamanda

Ngozi Adichie, and Mariama Bâ, recognize the perpetuated images and include representations that explore the distinct roles of African women in literature.

### **African Literature and Contemporary Depictions of African Women**

The post-colonial era of African literature entail images of African women that support ideologies of women fighting against stereotypical images and questioning societal systems, such as patriarchy.

*Nervous Condition*, a semi-autobiography by Tsitsi Dangarembga, shares a story of a young African woman who has dreams of gaining education. Dangarembga does not omit the role of women taking care of children, or being in the kitchen. She uses these roles to convey the hardships of patriarchy, cultural norms, and race concerning an African woman striving for social advancement. This novel critiques patriarchy and creates the ideology of women being a part of a liberated society (Mbatha, 1988).

The novel *Efuru*, authored by Flora Nwapa, explores the journey of a remarkable woman who faces many hardships in life. The novel discusses the issues *Efuru* has with men, her struggle with motherhood, and family. *Efuru* offers a fresh look at the African woman, in which *Efuru* struggles with the same aspects that African women are defined by (wmich.edu, 2001).

There cannot be a discussion about African women representations in African literature without discussing *Unbowed*, a memoir by Wangari Maathai. We enter a world of real events, real roles, and real life regarding African women representations. We see an African woman as an environmentalist, and not just a mother, or a wife.

### **Conclusion**

African women representations in African literature is fundamental to writing and reading. It is important for students to learn about literature in a cultural sense. It is also important for them to be able to critique and ask questions about societal practices, gender roles, and different eras that shaped literature. Students deserve the opportunity to learn about Africa and its diversity and vitality. Africa is a continent full of knowledge and history.

As an educator, it is my duty to teach material that broaden the perspectives of young women and young men. More activities and lesson guides should focus on the teaching of Africa. When we read material that touches on African representations, whether the focus is representation of women, or the continent, we will be able to better educate and discover knowledge that accurately define those representations.

### **Lesson Plan**

In a setting that focuses on literature, having different literary works a part of the lesson would be essential. The lesson could focus on two African literary works:

1. A short story, or excerpt of an African novel, that depicts the female characters in a stereotypical context, such as being women who are helpers to their husbands, and only mothers to their children.

- 2) The second literary work would provide a look at the African female characters in a diverse context.

- 3) Students will be placed into cooperative teams of three. The cooperate teams will identify and discuss the representation of African women in the literary work they are given.



Zimbabwean writer of novels including *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangarembga (Source: David Clarke, Ayeibia)

- 4) Each team member will have a role: discussion director, bridge builder, and summarizer. The discussion director will create questions that help guide the conversation.

- 5) The bridge builder will help the team connect what they are reading to their own lives, or culture. The summarizer will present a summary of the conversation to the class. This will give the students an opportunity to hear more than one perspective concerning the representations of African women in African literature.

To prepare them before the lesson, the warm up will consist of a guided question sheet or anticipation guide. The guide will consist of questions pertaining to African women and how they are represented in literature. Their learning slip, or exit slip, will be on the back of their guided question sheet. The students will write a summary on what they learned from each team regarding African women representations in African literature.



# Tea and Fair Trade in African Countries

## Tea Production in Africa

When people think of tea, the first image that surfaces may be a high tea in Britain or a ceremonial tea in China. The continent of Africa is not usually the first place that comes to mind when thinking of tea, but maybe it should be. After Asia, Africa produces the second highest amount of tea in the world and a large 62 percent of this is produced in Kenya alone. (Smith, 2016) In the global market, Kenya is the third largest producer of back tea after India and Sri Lanka. (R.M. Gesimba, 2005)

Eleven countries in Africa cultivate, produce, and export the *Camellia* plant which black, green, and white teas are derived from. These countries are (in order of volume produced): Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Smith, 2016). However, there are many other countries which produce herbal, floral, or rooibos teas.

## African Countries That Consume Tea and the Culture of Tea in Africa

For many Africans, tea is as much a way of life as it is for the British. This isn't hard to conceive as many countries in Africa were colonized by the British and other tea-drinking European countries. In fact, on the continent of Africa, the annual per capita tea consumption is 1 lb. 3oz (Smith, 2016). When compared with the UK at 4lbs. 3.oz, that doesn't seem like a lot. But when compared to

other countries known for their tea, such as China at 2lb. 7oz. and India at 1lb 11oz., one can see how integrated tea is in African cultures.

There are many different countries in Africa, and therefore many different cultures and customs centered around tea. Some cultures are affected by the agricultural aspect of tea. Other countries are known for a specific way of preparing tea, or a certain ceremony that is popular in that region.

In Kenya the number three in tea production in the world, tea is consumed on a daily basis. However, in comparison to the tea Kenyans consume that is grown in Kenya, as a percentage it exports the largest amount of tea it produces each year (Smith, 2016), Almost 90 percent of Kenya's tea is hand-picked and produced. (Gaylard, 2015) As such, tea production makes up a large part of many Kenyan's lives.

In northern Africa, tea ceremonies are unique to certain countries or areas. Moroccan mint tea, is popular in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. It is made by combining Chinese tea, mint leaves, and sugar and poured from a height to create a froth. It is traditionally served three times creating a different flavor with each steeping (Gaylard, 2015). In Senegal, there is a similar tea, but the focus is more on the ceremony called *attaya*, which can take hours, allowing for family and friends to visit.

As earlier mentioned, tea production in African countries is not limited to beverages made from the tea tree. Rooibos, sometimes called red tea or redbush, is grown

exclusively in the Cedarberg region of South Africa. South Africans have been consuming rooibos tea for centuries (Kevin Gascoyne, 2016). As such, this tea was a part of South African culture long before European colonists brought with them their version of tea.

## Economic Effects of Tea in African Countries

African tea growers contribute 12 percent of the world's tea production. Much of the tea produced is exported to the European, Middle East, and North American markets. (Smith, 2016) According to the census bureau of Kenya, Kenya produced 399,211 metric tonnes of tea at a price of \$2.96/Kg. Kenya is the world leader in black tea exports and makes up 22 percent of the world's exports of tea. Recent reports state that Kenya produced 476,640 tons and exported 258,140 tons of tea, over half of the tea produced nationally (Smith, 2016). Another country that produces a high volume of tea for export is Malawi. Malawi produces 59,525 tons and exports 38,225 tons of tea. This again is well over half of the tea produced in the country. Uganda produces 58,420 tons and exports nearly all at 55,115 tons of tea (Smith 2016). While these nations export a large amount of tea, unfortunately much of it is not packaged within the country. If this were the case, it would earn a much greater amount of money per volume, and more of the earnings would stay within the borders of the country itself.



Kenyan professionals discussing a frost prone tea field at a tea estate (Kericho) with Regina Mutai (center) and Geoffrey Kipngeno of James Finlays and Absae Sedah (center right) of Kericho County Meteorology office (Source: Servir Global)

## Environmental Effects of Tea Plantations

Tea is a beverage that is widely enjoyed all over the world. It is seen as a healthy alternative to coffee with intrinsic health benefits. Green tea especially is known for its antioxidant properties. Tea production has recently increased not only in African countries, but globally as well. With this increase, there is a need for larger tea estates with more tea trees available for harvest. But tea trees take a lot of care to keep. Because of the growth in number of tea estates and the care needed to cultivate them, there are inherent environmental impacts.

Since it is a monoculture, meaning there is only one type

rather than many varieties, tea cultivation has environmental impacts. Because there is, in essence, only one plant many times over, it is much more easily susceptible to pests, disease, and weeds. Application of weedicides, pesticides, and inorganic fertilizers creates environmental hazards. These insecticides often eliminate not only the targeted pest, but many other animals native to the large areas of land on which tea estates are located.

Soil degradation is an additional concern because the incessant use of fertilizers and herbicides compound soil erosion. Apart from those issues, chemical runoff into bodies of water can also create problems. Finally, during tea manufacturing, fossil fuel is used

to dry the processed leaves, which also increases environmental pollution (Mondal, 2017).

Because tea estates are large, huge amounts of land must be cleared to sustain them. This results in large amounts of deforestation. In addition, the estates and gardens are kept clear of any weeds or native growth which would otherwise keep the soil in place. This results in soil erosion, which in turn results in lowering of the natural water table.

One environmental positive in cultivating tea is the necessity for shade trees. Tea is a delicate plant which requires shade to thrive. This being the case, large trees native to the area are planted to provide relief from constant, direct sunlight. Shade trees are helpful in



that they add organic matter to the soil by shedding their leaves, preserve soil moisture during the dry winter months, as well as balancing nitrogen levels (Mondal, 2017).

### **Brief History of Tea in Africa**

Tea has an interesting and vibrant history that is oftentimes marked or accompanied by strife and discord. This has been no different on the African continent. As with many other countries, tea growing and cultivation started as a result of European colonization. In the pre-colonial era, tea trees were not indigenous to any countries in Africa. As European colonialists settled in Africa, they brought with them their own cultures and enforced their lifestyles on peoples and environments that were previously unaffected by the sweeping brush of European colonialism.

Tea trees were first introduced in tea gardens in the 1850's in South Africa, and the first plantations appeared in 1877 (Kevin Gascoyne, 2016). Colonial culture greatly impacted the previous agriculture of African nations. The colonists created a cash society of economics that required African farmers to grow cash crops or work on farms of settlers that grew such crops.

In many cases in Kenya, entire families moved to the settlers' farms to work. But as there were no schools on or near the farms, education was not readily accessible. (Maathai, 2007) Because of this, families were either separated when children went to school, or remained on the farms for generations due to lack of social movement related to lack of education. In Malawi, European settlers offered land in exchange for labor. There were verbal agreements of one month of work to pay taxes, and one month of work, to pay for rent. However, the idea of "one month" was often stretched well

beyond that time line (Palmer, 1986).

Although there were tea associations formed and laws passed, more often than not, those in control chose to work around them, or ignore them. (Palmer, 1986) The wages for workers on tea plantations or estates have been extremely unbalanced compared to the amount of money brought in by their tea production. This has continued until recent and even present times. However, in present times there are some organizations that are working to recalibrate the balance of not only money, but empowerment. In Kenya, the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) has undergone some reforms for the benefit of all its workers (Messah, 2011).

### **Fair Trade and the Tea Industry**

Tea production and trade is growing globally and especially in African countries. It is an important part of the economic structures of many African countries, however more could be done to increase the income from tea exports. Despite advances in representation for the labor force on tea plantations, many workers on estates labor in hard conditions and for very little compensation. Ecological sustainability is an issue within tea estates and gardens, including deforestation, displaced wildlife, soil erosion, and lowering of the water table. Fortunately, the Fairtrade organization has recently added tea to its umbrella of protection. There are now multiple tea plantations across the continent that have benefitted from a relationship with Fairtrade and other sustainable business partners, such as United Kingdom-based Ethical Tea Partnership and the Rainforest Alliance.

Fairtrade prides itself on espousing the values of empowerment, integrity, sustainability, innovation, excellence, personal development, community, fairness, and impact. They wish to empower

family farmers and workers around the world, while enriching the lives of those struggling in poverty. These are indeed commendable and desirable characteristics to strive for. However, there has been some concern raised that these models may not be reaching their intended goals for tea farmers in Africa.

In a study of Fairtrade in Aruka, Kenya, it was found that while the intended goal of having a minimum working wage was set and realized, the tea being produced could garner a higher price at the Mombasa Tea Auction since it was a higher quality tea (Dolan, 2010). While the goal of providing workers with a minimum working wage is important, in this case, it stunted the wages of the workers rather than embellished them.

Another study in Kenyan Fairtrade showed that there was definitely success and growth in some areas. There is compelling evidence that the projects have made a positive contribution to the area, reducing productive and reproductive labor constraints and opening up new possibilities for education and health care. Approximately two-thirds of smallholders claimed to have directly benefited, or knew other members of the community who had benefited from the community projects (Dolan C. S., 2008). However, there is still lack of transparency and gender equality promised by the values of Fairtrade.

Allison Marie Loconto and Emmanuel Frank Simbua conducted a study on Fairtrade tea in Tanzania. They looked at the differences in Fairtrade and existing ownership to promote the values of trading and governance relationships. In addition to these relationships, they delved into the other ideas of sustainability promoted by Fairtrade. One such notion is that of empowering farmers. The Tanzanian Tea Authority (TTA) had already passed ordinances that allowed smallholders to produce and sell tea on a

smaller scale. The findings were that many of the values advocated in Fairtrade were already in effect in Tanzanian tea gardens. It was found that the benefits claimed by Fairtrade as it is currently enacted (direct contracts, empowerment, and higher prices) may also be obtained from existing business relationships between producers and buyers in the Tanzanian tea industry (Simbua, 2012).

When looking at the effects of Fairtrade in the rooibos tea market in South Africa we find similar results. South Africa's largest tea export is by far rooibos, which until recently had been consumed largely domestically. The plantation which produced by far the most tea has been historically cultivated by marginalized black workers and sold by white middlemen paying prices so low that they failed to even cover costs. With the arrival of Fairtrade markets, empowerment and benefits have significantly increased, but the benefits continue to be unequal (Ngcwangu, 2010).

### **Conclusion**

Tea in Africa is not to be overlooked. The people in African countries consume large amounts of tea as a part of their daily life and culture. Each country is affected by tea in its own unique way, by cultivating, exporting, consuming, or in ceremonies. African countries are an essential component in global tea trade. Be that as it may, a multitude of workers are underpaid for their efforts, and the countries suffer for it in various ways, not the least of which is financial. In the last decade, some African countries like Kenya and Malawi have proven that given a fair trade regime internationally, and pro-growth economic policies at home, they are capable of competing in the international market. (Ndegwa, 2014)

There are still very few ecologically sustainable practices being instituted as a part of Fairtrade partnerships. Because of this, the

negative impacts of tea estates on the local ecology and health of the local people are still in effect. While many national and international tea associations and organizations under the Fairtrade umbrella are making positive differences, we need to consider if small positive movement is enough for the countries in Africa. We need to consider if better is the same thing as good. There is still a great deal of growth to be done to truly empower tea farmers in Africa.

### **Classroom Connection**

These ideas can be introduced in the classroom in multiple ways. I will outline one possible lesson, but the variations are many.

1. First, it is important for students to understand where different products that they consume in daily life come from before they are in the store where they are purchased.

2. Open a discussion of what goes into making their favorite

foods and beverages. Afterwards, you could represent the different privileges of different peoples and the unequal balance of the global economy by creating a "global economy" in your classroom.

3. Split the students into "countries" which will need to all produce the same exact things. This can be simplified to even producing the same exact shapes. However, only provide some student groups with the materials necessary to create the items. The shapes will need to be measured against the model and must match exactly for the country to be "paid".

4. Students will quickly realize the discrepancy and lack of fairness between countries. As a follow up activity, encourage students to use their voices and write to companies who are not currently Fairtrade partners explaining the activity and why it is important for everyone who produces a product to be empowered to do the best they can.



Tea field workers in Rwanda (Source: Jordyashagaza/Wikimedia)

# A New Day: The Continued Rise of the Contemporary Mega Church

The belief in the existence of a God or supernatural entity is a simple definition of what is religion. According to Merriam-Webster religion can also be defined as an “organized set of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or group of gods.” The desire to believe in the existence of a god is not uncommon. In a research study conducted by Pew Research, with a sample size of 35,071

participants, 63% of participants stated they believed in the existence of God in comparison to 9% who adamantly stated they do not believe in the existence of a god. Why people believe in the existence of God varies. Many times individuals believe in the existence of God, because their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other loved one’s do; Just like physical characteristics are passed

down within one’s family, so too are religious beliefs.

In a continent consisting of 54 countries, Africa is as diverse with its topical landscapes as it is with its religions. Its origins centered primarily on its traditional religions. Africa’s traditional religions consisted of public rituals that engaged unforeseen forces, private consolations that provided individual

assistance, contacting spiritual forces in specific places or through the use of masks and other objects (Grosz-Ngate, Hanson, O’ Meara, 2014). These traditional practices were passed down from generation to generation of Africans. However, the introduction of Christianity and Islam through colonization brought about a new change. Today it is common to see Africans practicing traditional African religion as well as Christianity and Islam.

Christianity and Islam are the two most dominant religions in Africa. From 1900 to 2010 the number of Christians in Africa grew from 10 million to 470 million believers. In addition, the number of Muslims also increased to more than 450 million (Grosz-Ngate, Hanson, O’ Meara, 2014). In a close examination of the growth and decline in South African churches, David Goodhew examined census documents to study the trends between 1960 through 1991. In his research he found that before 1960 all churches showed evidence of growth. Within the Roman Catholic Church membership grew from 24,000 to 233, 000 by 1936.

Although African Independent churches were not included in the 1911 census, by 1936 records indicated membership of over 1 million, and 2, 188, 000 by 1960. At this time one group that did show a decline was the ‘No religion/ other and Unspecified which went from being three quarters of the total in 1911 to one third in 1960. Goodhew also noticed that Roman Catholic churches, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Methodist all continued to grow rapidly while African Independent churches grew at a more gradual pace in comparison (pg 36). “In the three decades between 1961 and 1991 mainline Protestantism suffered a huge decline. Roman Catholicism saw significant growth, but may have begun to be effective by the same malaise as other mainline churches. However, Christianity per se was

not in retreat. The period saw the flowering of a wide spectrum of churches” (Goodhew, 2000).

One of the churches that began to blossom during this time period was the Pentecostals. Pentecostals as defined by the author of “New African Initiated Pentecostalism and Charismatics in South Africa”, states “ I am one of those who favor a wide definition to include in South Africa those Pentecostals with historical links to worldwide ‘classical’ Pentecostal denominations, the African Initiated ‘spirit’ churches with historical intersection with Pentecostalism (67). The author went on to state some characteristics found in the Pentecostal church such as, emphasis on the power of the Spirit in the church, especially manifested through such phenomena as healing, prophecy, exorcism and speaking in tongues (Anderson, 2005).

There are many ideas as to why this shift began to occur, politics being one of them. Desmond Tutu described it best with this quote:

*“When missionaries came to Africa they had the bible but we had the land. They said ‘let us pray’. We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the bible and they had the land”. (Xplore.Inc, 2017)*

The arrival of colonialists in Africa changed everything including languages, cultural traditions and family structures. In her memoir “Unbowed”, Wangari Maathai, described some of the changes that took place. “ Throughout Africa missionaries renamed whatever they came across. At home, we learned the names of mountains, streams, or regions from our parents, but in school we were taught the colonists names deemed “the proper names” in which had to use on exams” (Maathia, pg 6). The shifting of power became immediate once colonialists became integrated in the African society. Maathai adds: “in general, local Kenyans who converted to Christianity were given preference within the British colonial administration and often were appointed

chiefs and sub chiefs in villages and towns” (pg 11, 2007).

With its stronghold in every area of African life, Africans desired a change. The apartheid system with its enforced segregation within early South African Pentecostalism drove many Africans into rejecting Europeans' form of Christianity and resulted in the mushrooming of African independent churches. Also the effects of discriminatory laws led to a feeling of depression, disorientation, and marginalization among South Africans. Many new converts simply wanted a place where they could belong and be respected (Anderson, 2005). Anderson also stated that it was also an attractive alternative to the “pie in the sky approach (71)”. The “pie in the sky approach,” according to phrases.org, is an idiom coined by a Swedish born labor in 1911. The phrase appeared first in Joe Hills, The Preacher and the Slave. The song criticized and brought attention to the focus of saving souls rather than meeting the basic needs of the people. Eventually the phrase came to represent any prospect of future happiness which was unlikely to occur here on earth.

Due to the various reasons, many Africans began to move away from mainline churches to seek alternatives. Today you can see numerous African independent churches with membership’s attendance in the thousands throughout Africa.

According to ABC News, the number of Americans who attend a mega church is between 2 -5 million people. In 1999, Church Growth Today had already identified 10 churches outside the U.S. with 30,000 weekend attendance. The three largest were Yoido Full Gospel Church-Seoul, Korea (180,000), Vision de Futuro-Santa Fe, Argentina (80,000), and Deeper Christian Life Ministry – Lagos, Nigeria (70,000).

Africa is projected to be the most populated Christian continent by 2020. Africa already has more



A mega church in Lagos, Nigeria. Some mega churches in Nigeria accommodate more than 200,000 people. (Source: REUTERS/Akintunde Akinleye)





Another mega church, the Holy Ghost of The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in Nigeria. (Source: National Geographic/Robin Hammond)

than 15 churches reporting more than 20,000 attendances. As more people seek an alternative solution to the traditional growth will continue to occur. Do mega churches possess similar characteristics? In his research Dr. Scott Thumma has determined this to be true. In his research "Exploring the Mega Church", Dr. Scott Thumma stated "Whatever the focus, this visionary identity is seen as a particular "calling" and God-given "mission." Many of the mega church pastors speak of this special "mission" as having been given them in a supernatural "revelation," "dream," or "vision." The congregation's identity then is shaped around that vision. Today's more contemporary mega churches seem to fit this mold. For instance, Bishop David Oyedepo of Living Faith Church stated that he received a mandate from God in an 18 hour vision to liberate all mankind in all facets of human existence, to restore broken

destinies, to bring healing to the infirmed. Another similarity found within some mega churches is the non-traditional approach. This approach describes the church's mission to deviate from past traditional models of churches. Their goal is to attract those individuals who wouldn't fit in or feel comfortable in a traditional church where there exists a strict social code including for dress attire. Dr. Thumma stated the idea is to remake traditions so that they are acceptable and relevant to a modern person who had been turned off by traditional religion. He also discovered through his research that most non-traditional mega churches exude simplicity. Sanctuaries are usually spacious auditoriums, large stages exist, and a minimum of religious symbols are present. He goes on to state that "the sermon would also be delivered from a clear plexus glass removable podium, convey

a biblical but practical, non-dogmatic, worldly message that also suggests that religion should not be separated from daily life'. This description perfectly describes Sara Omakwu's church the Family Worship Center in Nigeria, Africa. If one were to view a sermon you would find that its service is held in a large auditorium upon a stage, delivered from a clear plexus glass.

In a field dominated by men Pastor Sara Omakwu along with her husband founded Family Worship Center in 1993. The church has grown since its beginning membership of 47 to now 8,000. Besides her pastoral duties she is also the chief organizing officer of the Christian Broadcasting Network INT'L in Anglophone, West Africa and the National director of counseling- World Reach Nigeria. After the death of her husband she became the President of Family Ministries International and the senior pastor of Family Worship

Center. Family Worship Center is a non-denominational charismatic church that offers pre-marital and marital counseling, training in discipleship and has multiple locations in South Africa and Nigeria. Its vision is "to exist to worship God to demonstrate God's transforming love to man in order to make him an agent of love.

Another similarity found within mega churches besides its physical structure, is its funding source. The funding source of mega churches seem to be derived from member tithes. Members of churches are asked to give 10 percent of all income they earn back to the church. Many churches see up to 20,000 people a service or have a solid member base of 2,000 people. If each member contributes 10% of their income along with charitable donations received, each church stands to bring in millions of dollars each year. Many churches also own other business such as restaurants, which all remain untaxed since the church is a charitable organization. Winner's Chapel is a prime example. Its church has expanded to include for profit business such as gas stations, schools, restaurants just to name a few. Officially Bishop Oyedepo is known as the richest pastor in Nigeria and possibly the world. It is believed that his network is about 150 million dollars as reported in 2011.

In the face of poverty in countries such as Nigeria, many wonder if churches should be taxed considering the vast sum of money that could assist its citizens. With pastors owning private planes and appearing on Forbes Magazine as one of the world's elite, questions have arisen how financial donations are being spent, and if churches should be taxed.

## Conclusion

While church memberships in North America seem to be declining, this is not the case in other parts of the world including Africa where the gospel is touching many people's lives. People are seeking alternatives that shy away from the traditional churches. The growth can be seen globally as well as in the United States of America. Some people call it a movement or even phenomena but it's not being described as a fad.

## Lesson Plan Ideas

Activity: Shattering Misconceptions

Allow students a few minutes to think about and write everything they know about Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism on a sheet of paper. Once completed allow students the opportunity to discuss what they have written using the talking stick.

After the discussion read a book regarding one of the religions discussed previously. Once the book is finished ask students the following questions:

- Have any of your ideas or thoughts changed? If yes how?
- What will you now tell a friend, parent, or relative about the religion you learned about?
- Did you see any similarities between two religions discussed?



# The Manuscripts of Timbuktu: The Unacknowledged History of Knowledge



Great Mosque of Djenné (Source: Ruud Zwart)

Colonization of the African Continent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by European countries perpetuated the idea that Africa was intellectually backwards. One of the common stereotypes is that Africa is void of a written history. While it is true that many African cultures did rely on oral traditions such as stories and songs to pass down information about their customs, numerous libraries consisting of written African history including subjects such as language, religion, social

hierarchies, governance, and morality can be found in the deserts of Mali.

It is estimated that between 400,000 and 700,000 written manuscripts currently reside in the city of Timbuktu (Riason, 2004). They offer a different perspective, not only on the literate history of the continent and in particular West Africa, but paint the city as a cultural heartland equivalent to the north African city of Alexandria in antiquity, and Paris or London in modern times. Once considered

to be the intellectual hub of the Islamic World, Timbuktu and its vast collection of manuscripts, provide insight into a civilization full of rich knowledge and intrigue, which deserves that same reputation as its Western counterparts.

## History

The history of these manuscripts and how they came to exist is just as fascinating and enlightening as what is written in them. It is entwined with the history of

the city and the people that wrote them. Many historians date the founding of Timbuktu to around 1100 C.E. (Riason, 2004). It was originally founded as a nomadic settlement, but very soon played an intricate part in Saharan Trade networks. It was because of these trade networks, that knowledge became a major commodity for the city and its people. The first manuscripts date back to the 12th century and give insight into the day to day lives of the Arab traders who visited the city (Ghayyur, N/D).

Word quickly spread across the desert of the vast fortunes and opportunities that lay within Timbuktu, and by the time it was conquered by the Mali Empire in the 14th century, it was seen as a major player in the Islamic world (Riason, 2004). Beautiful Mosques, including the Dijinger-Ber, lined the streets and academics, religious officials, and royalty alike, traveled from as far as Mecca to visit the scholarly heartland of the Sahara (Penney, 2017).

Research suggests that approximately 85% of the manuscripts are written in Arabic; however, this began to change when the city was integrated into the Songhai Empire in 1468. It is under Songhai rule that Timbuktu saw its “Golden Age” (Boissoneault, 2015). For the next 120 years, the city retained relative autonomy over its governance and trade. This autonomy allowed intellectuals from all over North Africa, West Africa, and what is now the Middle East to come to the city. During this time period, which mirrored the European Renaissance, a very sophisticated education system developed within Timbuktu that rivaled the rest of the Islamic World and its counterparts in Western Europe. Intellectuals were encouraged to study at the various mosques and schools within the city and were expected to contribute written works about Islam and the world around them (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2017).

By the year 1591; however, the city was in decline due to the occupation of and eventual conquest by the Saadian Empire. The search for gold and the rise of the Atlantic trade routes in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries allowed for control of the city to change hands and caused the city to fall into disarray (Riason, 2004). However, new research shows that the story of the manuscripts doesn't end there.

In fact, some of the most notable of the manuscripts were written after the Moroccan invasion of 1591 and into the French Colonization period in the late 19th century. Scholars and common people alike in the city began writing about their experiences, ideas, and views (Riason, 2004). These “newer” manuscripts represent the changing times, while still honoring the written traditions of Timbuktu.

## The Manuscripts

Even to this day, there is not a centralized collection of these manuscripts. Vast private collections of them have traditionally belonged to families within the city. Some collections are said to have numbered close to 40,000 pieces and new collections are being discovered all the time (Riason, 2004).

This runs contrary to Western Europe where up until the invention of the printing press in 1440, written knowledge was limited to the elite, such as nobles and priests, and centralized in places like universities and churches. These private collections offer insight into how written knowledge was controlled and dispersed not only in Timbuktu, but within the various African Kingdoms that controlled it. This challenges the stereotypes of Africa being primitive, as one of the dimensions of a civilization is documentation of a written language - which, as the evidence shows, was more widely available in West Africa before it was in Western Europe.

In addition to Arabic, there are

manuscripts that are written in several different local languages and dialects including Songhay, Fulfulde, Tamasheq, and Hausa (Riason, 2004). Many also include calligraphy, diagrams, drawings, graphs, and charts. Some are single sheets of parchment, while others are bound together in books with leather coverings. In terms of the content, the manuscripts vary. Topics range from philosophy to medicine, literature to astronomy, law to finance, mathematics to art, as well as numerous priceless editions of Qurans and other important Islamic texts (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2017).

Yet despite the variety of topics, they give us a rare insight into issues we have faced and continue to face in 21st century. For example, Okolo Rashid, Executive Director of International Museum of Muslim Cultures (IMMC) in Jackson, Mississippi, states that there are numerous manuscripts that deal with the idea of global governance (Ghayyur, N/D). This is an idea that only came into fruition in the Western world in latter half of the 20th century, with the rise of organizations such as the United Nations and technology such as the internet that truly created a global community.

Others deal with social and religious topics, such as morality. For instance, there is an extensive number of manuscripts that deal with how Muslims interrupted slavery. These types of manuscripts reference both Sub Saharan Slavery and the Atlantic Slave Trade. They give insight into who could become enslaved and how enslaved people were meant to be treated under Islamic law. One manuscript in particular, from the 17th century, is translated as *Ahmad Baba Answers a Moroccan's Questions about Slavery*. This manuscript describes how the institution of slavery defies Islamic law because the Quran states that, “the



Storage cases full of ancient manuscripts from Timbuktu (Source: Brent Stirton / National Geographic)

fundamental and original nature of humanity is that individuals are free” (Mohammed, 2010).

Some manuscripts also deal with science such as one that translates as *The Important Stars Among the Multitude of the Heavens*, from 1733. In it, the author uses diagrams to describe the careful practices students must take when studying Astronomy. It describes how with practice, they will be able to determine the lengths of seasons by tracking the movements of the stars, which would in turn be crucial for providing horoscopes and for agriculture practices (Ghalaw, 2010).

### **The Significance of European Search and Conquest**

As early as the 16th century, Europeans began hearing rumors and various accounts of the mysterious desert city of Timbuktu. Stories of massive deposits of gold

in the deserts surrounding the West African city prompted some to call it the El Dorado of Africa (The Economist, 2017). And while gold did play an important role in Timbuktu's colonial history, it was the manuscripts that seemed to be the most valuable resource the city had to offer. Timbuktu remained a source of fascination to scholars who were enraptured by the gilded legend of its libraries and unrivalled learning well into the 20th century.

Despite numerous attempts to reach the city by European explorers, it wasn't until 1826 when Alexander Gordon reached the city, that Westerners got a real glimpse at what Timbuktu had to offer. In 1853, Hendrich Barth wrote detailed descriptions about the city and its vast wealth of knowledge. It was his accounts that inspired more interest in the manuscripts. However, during the French colonization of the surrounding

region, known as the French Sudan from 1892-1960, many of the private collections were pillaged and the manuscripts were either destroyed or taken back to Europe as souvenirs, which could be then bought or traded for very low prices (Riason, 2004).

It should be noted that the intrigue of European explorers in these works ran concurrent to the overall idea of Western Christian Colonization. Missionaries would have forced conversion on the conquered peoples of the region, and deemed the manuscripts to be a form of heresy. The manuscripts that were removed were not seen as scholarly works, but rather as exotic treasures from primitive peoples (Penney, 2017). This distinction adds to the narrative and reinforced the common misconception that there was not a written history of Africa.

After Mali gained its independence in 1960, many people

were interested in reclaiming the country's history. Several initiatives were started including the centralization of private collections at the Ahmed Baba Institute in the 1970's (Riason, 2004). However, due to funding issues a majority of the work done to preserve the manuscripts in the later half of the 20th century was done with the help of numerous European and International organizations, leaving some of the owners of private collections skeptical and reluctant to give up their manuscripts. This is an issue that continues to be an intricate part of the manuscripts story to this day (Penney, 2017).

In 2013, there was a brief occupation of Timbuktu by an Islamic Extremists group linked to Al-Qaeda. It was rumored that the group was stealing manuscripts from private collections across the city and burning them in attempt to wipe away any traces of Islamic history in the region (Sabine, 2017). Much like French colonialists a hundred years before, the insurgents viewed the manuscripts as a threat to their narrative about Islam. When French military forces arrived to liberate the city later in the year, they discovered that many of the manuscripts were still intact and in hiding throughout the city (The Economist, 2017).

### **Preserving the Manuscripts**

In recent years, progress has been made in attempting to preserve the manuscripts. Several agencies have taken the lead including UNESCO, The Library of Mali, The Luxembourg Development Agency, and the South African-Mali Project. The goal of preservation is to take the manuscripts and have them digitized. Through digitization, these agencies not only hope to preserve the legacy of the manuscripts, but hope to help change the preconceived notions of African history (Riason, 2004).

Climate factors, political instability, funding, basic infrastructure, and translation problems, are listed as some of the numerous challenges historians are facing as they take on this daunting task (Riason, 2004). Several books including *The Book Smugglers of Timbuktu* by William Collins, and several documentaries including the California Newsreels *The Manuscripts of Timbuktu*, have been created to depict the story of these manuscripts and the painstaking efforts to preserve them.

### **Conclusion**

The study of these manuscripts and their story is not only informative and fascinating, but it is crucial to writing the story of West Africa and the continent in general. It provides us with a unique insight into the minds of West Africans not only during the Colonial Era but in terms of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as well. It debunks popular myths, common stereotypes, and gives meaning to cultures that are far too often dismissed as uncivilized. They make connections and offer answers to questions that the Oral history of Africa can't answer as well as highlight the relationships of truly global communities, centuries before Western scholars even came up with the concept of globalization. Each manuscript is a story worth telling, and it is crucial that the preservation of these documents continue, before they are lost and forgotten in the pages of history.



Manuscripts dating back to the 11th century (Source: Brent Stirton / Nat. Geo.)

### **Lesson Plans:**

**World History:** Manuscripts used to gain insight into Islam, West African Culture, and Colonialism. Teachers could combine several manuscripts to create a great Document Based Question activity for teaching historical analysis.

**Civics/Economics:** Using the manuscripts, students could make comparisons to modern day political thought, laws, and governance. Students could also identify the importance of trade and commerce using the manuscripts. Comparisons for trade could be made to the Silk Road in antiquity and to the internet in the modern era. Comparisons for government could be made to the democracies, theocracies, and oligarchies of the modern world.

**American History:** Teachers could use the manuscripts to examine the Atlantic Slave Trade, the Saharan Slave Trade, and the interactions of Europeans/Americans with North Africa in the 18th - 20th centuries. Analysis would allow students to have a better understanding of the crucial role Africans have played in their own and global history.

**All Social Science Disciplines:** As the archiving of the manuscripts is currently going on, it is a great opportunity for students to learn about history as a science. Teachers could reach out to the numerous organizations conducting research and create a partnership in which students could engage in helping document the manuscripts.



# Elements of West African Influences in North American Architecture

The Atlantic Rim of Africa has had and continues to have a variety of architectural styles influenced by a wide variety of variables. Architectural styles have been impacted by climate, cultural, religious practices, available resources, the amount of disposable wealth of communities, individuals,

and societies. In addition, the development of local building techniques and the adaptation and incorporation of foreign building techniques have also influenced these styles as well.

During the Islamic presence in the Iberian Peninsula called Al-Andalus from 711 A.D. to

1492 A.D., Moorish architecture flourished and many well preserved examples of this style still exist, according to National Geographic. There are very few major urban centers in the Atlantic Rim regions of the Western hemisphere that were not impacted in some way by the West African Rim societies.

The need for a skilled labor force in European Atlantic Rim Colonies, as well as the necessity of maintaining a large enough population base in order to make and keep their colonial holdings profitable and under each nation's control (Hall, 22-25). Europeans were unwilling to emigrate to their Atlantic Rim settlements in large enough numbers to keep control and profits. At this time, Native American populations had been decimated by warfare, disruption of food production, and trade systems. Furthermore, Native American populations were deeply affected by diseases from Europe and Africa from which they had no immunity and were in no position to fulfill the needs of mercantilists European societies.

Many Africans were brought to North America because of their skills in areas such as Blacksmithing and iron-wrights, and carpenters. While, African American builders have contributed greatly to the design, construction, and design renovations to great structures both public and private. According to Vlach (1990), "the greatest contributions of Blacks to American building custom and precedent has been in the realm of the common dwelling house." It is in this area that the design of what is known as the shotgun house is found in many communities. This design of private houses spread from Africa to Haiti and then to New Orleans in the early nineteenth century and from there to the Mississippi valley and east along the Gulf Coast. Originally there were two distinct variations first there was the single design which was the conventional freestanding one story home. The second design is referred to as a double shotgun and is basically two shotgun houses connected to each other, sharing one long central hallway. The original shotgun house had three to five rooms, while the double had twice the number of rooms as the single. There is some debate as



Ornamental iron work in New Orleans (Source: David Ohmer)

to the origin of the name. Some say that it is because if one fired a shotgun, thru one of the doors, the buckshot would pass out the other door. According to author Vlach (1990), the name originated with the Fon ethnic group in the area of what is now Benin. The word, "To-gun," is said to have meant place of assembly and in the linguistic diffusion of that was understood to mean shotgun, when the design arrived in North America. The early benefits of this dwelling were that it was easy to build with minimum materials and the utilization of small of spaces in urbanized areas (Dapper, 2000). As more space became available for housing, modern amenities were added at the consumer level. For example, appliances and indoor plumbing. In addition, variations of this basic plan were expanded to also take into account occupants' desire for increased privacy and new construction materials and advanced techniques.

Another element of African architecture found along the Gulf and Atlantic Rim regions but not limited to these areas is

the ornamental iron work mostly designed and made by African-born populations and their descendants. Examples of this excellent craftsmanship can be found from New York to New Orleans and as far as the Mississippi valley. African American blacksmith were prominent in many areas from the 1600's to the early 20th Century. Tools, weapons and household items were also manufactured by both enslaved and free master craftsmen (Altman, 1997).

While much of the work of African American artisans has been lost in some cases, the details of who produced particular pieces still remain. The main gates of many existing plantation homes throughout the south, wrought iron balconies, balcony supports, overhangs in the form of animals, geometric shapes and Roman letters can still be found throughout these areas. These were the areas where African American blacksmiths once dominated the profession throughout the Atlantic Rim region and have left lasting examples of their work and their crafts for future generations.



Classic "shotgun" style house on Rampart Street, Faubourg Marigny neighborhood of New Orleans (Source: Infrogmaton/Wikimedia)



# Contemporary African Artists: Inspiring Change with Repurposed Art



Cameroon artist Pascale Marthine Tayou with his plastic bag installation (Source: Luigi Constantini/AP)

There is a growing global concern about the increase of pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and the depletion of Earth's natural resources. Africa produces only five percent of the world's solid waste production (Asnap, 2012), yet contemporary African artists are contributing their voices to the discussion of sustainability and using their artwork as a medium to communicate messages about globalism, consumerism, and waste.

The need to advocate and inspire change stems from concerning statistics of globalization and waste production. According to Paul Muggeridge of the World Economic Forum (2015), the amount of waste that is being produced is outgrowing urbanization. The World Bank's Urban Development Department estimates the amount of waste will rise from 1.3 billion tons per year to 2.2 billion tons per year by 2025 (Asnap, 2012). Africa

is comparatively low on the list of regions, with 62 million tons of waste generated per year (Asnap, 2012). However, African artists are transforming discarded objects, which were once considered trash, into internationally recognized works of art (M&G Africa, 2015). Contemporary African artists are redefining the way we see and use waste.

El Anatsui, a Ghanaian contemporary artist, is recognized

internationally for his "massive, striking sculptures composed of thousands of folded and crumpled pieces of metal that had been discarded (M&G Africa, 2015)." El Anatsui's metal sculptures, which hang like tapestries, demonstrate society's uncritical relationship with consumption and waste. *The Old Man's Cloth* (2003), which is currently on display at the Harn Museum in Gainesville, Florida, was constructed with "flattened aluminum from liquor bottles that were collected near his home in Nigeria (Young)." El Anatsui's artwork has also been featured in art museums around the world, including The Brooklyn Museum, The British Museum, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 2003, El Anatsui stated: "Art grows out of each particular situation, and I believe artists are better off working with whatever the environment throws up (Anatsui, 2003)." The world recognition of El Anatsui's artwork, and his promotion for artists to use the environment around them, mirrors many contemporary African artists using recycled materials to create repurposed art. This article explores the influential messages of three distinct contemporary African artists and their use of repurposed art: Pascale Marthine Tayou, Elias Sime, and Kioko Mwitiki. Each artist has their own style, mediums, motivations, and culture, yet they're united over one commonality: to inspire change with repurposed art.

## **Pascale Marthine Tayou**

Born in Cameroon in 1967, Pascale Marthine Tayou prefers to work with materials that are a part of his everyday life (Pijpers & Mallos, 2010). Tayou's goal is to take discarded materials and alter their meanings in the context of his installations (Pijpers & Mallos, 2010). Tayou's mediums vary, including drawings, sculptures, installations, videos, and performances. Tayou tackles various

issues within his artwork, including national identity, the complexity of urban life, and globalization (Pijpers & Mallos, 2010). With his motivation to outline the effects of urbanization, Tayou produces artwork in hopes of eliciting an emotional response from his audience. His famous installation, *Plastic Bags* hung at the Gallery of Modern Art (2001-2009), "is made up of hundreds of plastic bags which hangs from the ceiling in a giant drop-like shape (Pijpers & Mallos, 2010)." Tayou uses the plastic bags to draw the audience's attention to the correlation of consumerism with the overuse of plastic in our daily lives, and the vast amount of non-biodegradable waste they produce. Plastic bags are an essential component of our everyday lives; yet through Tayou's installation, we can see the excess of contemporary living and how plastic bags, like so many consumer products, are useful and convenient but also dangerous.

Tayou premises his work on the assumption that artwork cannot be separated from life. He feels inspired to create site-specific installations in which he recycles materials, objects, and images that have a history and personal culture (Magnin, Greene, Wardlaw, & McEvilly, 2005). He also views his artwork as 'collective' pieces, in which he includes his "experiences, journeys, encounters, energy, chance, and spontaneity" (Magnin et al., 2005). Tayou's work sends inspiring messages for self-examination of our actions, and the consequences they may have on our planet. Tayou considers himself simply a deliverer of these messages and states; "I leave to others the possibility to saying it all. For me, art is just a simple vector of communication (Magnin et al., 2005)."

## **Kioko Mwitiki**

Kioko Mwitiki who lives in Nairobi, Kenya, is regarded as "Kenya's Michelangelo" and is

widely celebrated as being a pioneer for junk-metal art in East Africa (Kabukuru, 2010). Kioko's path to success, and ability to be freely expressive and creative, was embedded with challenges. As a student at Kenyatta University College in the 1980s Mwitiki began to study Fine Arts; however, his experiences during his years at college are what inspired him to create repurposed artwork. He states: "The year was 1986. When, along with some other radical students, we were suspended from campus because of our hard-line stance on political issues that affected our lot and the country in general (Kabukuru, 2010)." Mwitiki was a part of a "leftist movement calling upon to elite powers to relinquish power" and in the process, was forced underground as the government initiated a massive witch-hunt for "real and imagined culprits (Kabukuru 2010)." Mwitiki said that during these lonely years in exile he became interested in junk art. Despite the difficulties of the time, he began to work, using what was readily available to him and searched through the Kikomba landfill and "learned to pick up scrap items which could be used to make something new (Rosa, 2009)." Mwitiki challenges himself and society by creating beautiful sculptures through discarded objects. To this day, Mwitiki enjoys leaving his workshop to search for scrap metal in his community, and often still goes to Kikomba (Rosa, 2009). Similar to El Anatsui and Pascale Marthine Tayou, Mwitiki believes that artists should become inspired by the environment they live in.

In 1997, Mwitiki started his own art gallery in Nairobi, Pimbi Gallery. According to the news source, Kenya Buzz, "Pimbi Art Gallery is the home of metal art and has been at the forefront of conserving the environment through education, recycling junk metal and articulating conservation issues through art." Mwitiki is also a dedicated supporter of wildlife

conservation and often works with the Kenya Wildlife Service. In return, many of his metal sculptures depict the beauty of the vast wildlife of Kenya. Mwitiki is a contemporary African artist using repurposed art to not only clean up his local community, but inspire and educate others about the realities of waste and consumerism. Mwitiki states: "...Believe you can change the world and not be overwhelmed by it (Rosa, 2009)."

### Elias Sime

Based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Elias Sime makes complex art from tiny discarded objects (Cotter, 2015). Creating collages and sculptures, Sime has made a name for himself in the East African art scene (M&G Africa, 2015). Unlike other contemporary artists in Ethiopia, Sime rarely uses brushes or paint (Klemm, 2010). Sime used objects such as thread, buttons, plastic, fabric, bottle tops, and e-waste (electronic waste); as well as organic materials such as mud, straw, and animal skin (Waldron). According to Mali & Guardian Africa (2015), Sime is interested in the "new lease of life" he gives these discarded objects. He appreciates using his hand to create his elaborate artwork, and will often sew or sculpt over long periods of times (Klemm, 2010). Sime's artwork, mirroring El Anatsui, has been featured in many prominent museums such as Santa Monica Museum of Art and The James Cohan Gallery in New York, NY. Peri K Kelman (2010), reviews Sime's exhibition at the Santa Monica Museum of Art titled, *Elias Sime: Eye of the Needle, Eye of the Heart*, and states his two- and three-dimensional artwork demonstrate the contrast between Addis Ababa's urbanization and landscape. However, Sime does not treat his objects like trash, but instead, he states: "I treat them like oil paint, acrylic or clay (Waldron)"

One of Sime's most famous sculptures, *Tightrope 7*, featured

in The James Cohan Gallery, was created with reclaimed electronics (Cotter, 2015). Holland Cotter of the New York Times describes *Tightrope 7* by stating: "Stretching almost floor to ceiling over two walls, it's a collage of thousands of metal computer boards lined up edge to edge and adorned with buttons, screws, batteries, bundled wires and sections of keyboards, along with bottle caps and scraps of cigarette packs (Cotter, 2015)." Dumping electronic waste has become an increasing problem in African communities. Often, western countries, including the United States, are discarding e-waste into many parts of Africa, such as in Agbogbloshie, a 20-acre scrap yard in Accra, Ghana (Minter, 2016). The erupting fires and the potential for e-waste to seep into bodies of water is a major concern for many living in Africa, including Elias Sime, who uses *Tightrope 7* to communicate the detrimental effects of e-waste and our consumer-based world. Sime is redefining what others consider to be discarded waste and creating a diverse range of artwork that impacts not only the members of his community in Ethiopia but also around the world.



Kenyan artist Kioko Mwitiki used scrap metal to create new repurposed art. (Source: Tourism Media)

### Conclusion

In *The Art of Recycling in Kenya*, Annelise Della Rosa states: "The environment is suffering the effects of man-made damage, and pollution and looming global warming are not only the only problems: the interaction between the man and nature, has too been altered (Rosa, 2009)." Contemporary African artists, such as El Anatsui, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Kioko Mwitiki, and Elias Sime recognize the environmental and social issues affecting our globe and contribute to geo-political discussions on climate change and waste production with their artwork. These are only a few of the many African artists using recycled materials to communicate messages of environmentalism, globalization, and of course, to inspire change.

Nicole A. Harris

# Ancestral Whispers: The Roots and Rhythms of Urban Expression



Dancers Diamia Foster, Daniel Morimoto, Amanda Ruiz and Larry Rosalez Lewis with drummer Aboubacar Soumah pose in costume for the Agbedidi performance (2014). Rosalez reminds us that aesthetic is constantly evolving. (Source: University of Florida College of the Arts)

Renowned anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits and prominent sociologist E. Franklin Frazier famously debated in the mid-20th century whether African-Americans had retained a cultural African heritage or if traces of that heritage were lost during the Mid Atlantic slave trade. Frazier argued in favor of deculturation, stating that "the manner in which the Negroes were captured in Africa and enslaved, they were practically stripped

of their social heritage" (Frazier 1963). Herskovits maintained that African Americans had "pure African carry-overs" (Herskovits 1941). Since then, scholars have emerged to provide evidence that enslaved Africans did indeed pass down a host of traditions that are seen in retentions known as "Africanisms" which appear in the African-American use of the English language, cuisine, religious and spiritual practices, fashion,

rituals, gatherings, and art.

In the ground-breaking 1969 film, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" starring African-American actor Sidney Poitier, he explains to his soon-to-be Caucasian father-in-law, "you can do the Watusi, but we *are* the Watusi" in reference to a dance craze that swept the U.S. in the 60s, named after the Tutsi people of Rwanda. These Africanisms are defined as "those elements of culture found in the



New World that are traceable to an African origin” (Holloway 1990). One area where such Africanisms are evident is in the area of performance art, particularly in urban expressions of social dance and rap. For this context, “urban expression” will be used to explore rap and social dances originating in America’s major urban cities that now form a significant part of entertainment and expression amongst African-American youth everywhere as well as pop culture at large, and in the African Diaspora globally.

In almost every classroom, any teacher could ask their students to do the “Benny Whip”, “Nae Nae” or “Hit the Quan” and bets are at least half of the class would be able to produce energetic results, rapping along and dancing to the latest dance crazes (latest, 2017 anyway). However, even the last 5, 10, or 20 years would produce the same results when one recalls dances such as “The Stanky Leg”, “Walk It Out”, “Crank That”, “Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It”, “The Dougie”, or as far back as “The Tootsie Roll” and “The Electric Slide”. Almost everyone of these social dances has an accompanying song, which, most commonly in recent years, is a rap song. Rap and social dances are forms of urban expressions within Hip-Hop culture that work in tandem; there cannot be one without the other. In terms of their aesthetic, they overlap. To help uncover the African roots of these urban art forms this article explores its beginnings.

### **Social Dance As Freedom, Survival, and Belonging**

Dr. Patricia Hilliard-Nunn, professor of African-American studies at the University of Florida, reminds students “if you start [African-American] history with slavery, you miss most of the story.” Barbara Glass, a retired professor and author of *African American Dance: An Illustrated History*, echoes this

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. African Movement Vocabulary               | the use of total body movement   |
| 2. Orientation to the Earth                  | bent knees, flattened or flexed feed, leaned forward   |
| 3. Improvisation                             | leaving room to shape a traditional dance for new contexts by infusing individual creativity as long as it is in line with the music and original purpose                              |
| 4. Circle and Line Formations/Communal Dance | reflects communal nature of African dance and commitment to the group. Even solo dancers are encouraged by the group through songs, chants, claps, and instruments                     |
| 5. Polyrythms                                | the ability to dance to multiple rhythms at the same time in line with music that also included several rhythms, responding to chants and songs which often utilized call-and-response |
| 6. Percussion                                | dances centered around percussive instruments or movements such as hand-clapping, foot tapping, and patting (especially later on when drumming was banned on the plantations)          |
| 7. Pantomime                                 | movements that imitate the realities of life such as agricultural jobs, animals in motion, the opposite sex, or the spirit world   |
| 8. Something in Hand                         | using props to tell the story  |
| 9. Competition                               | competing to show skill  |

NOTE: This list was modified and adapted from *African American Dance: An Illustrated History* by Barbara S. Glass, 2007

sentiment: “when captive Africans were brought to North America, beginning in the 1600s, they came without possessions, but not without culture. In their memories, their customs, and their world views, they carried their cultural arts” (Glass 2007). In this survey of Africanisms retained in urban expression, it is important to recognize that Africa is a large continent that is triple the size of the United States, with 54 countries, and about a thousand cultural groups within these countries that all possess a unique worldview, customs, and beliefs. This vast richness could never be fully explored in a single study. However, one common thread exists among the distinctive qualities, and that is a strong tradition of music and dance in its varied forms throughout the continent. The focus here will be

in West Africa since a “majority of African-Americans can trace their ancestry to captives taken in West Africa and brought as slaves to the Western Hemisphere” (Glass 2007).

Stripped from these origins, Africans brought to the U.S. various means to form new relationships and alliances across languages and groups. One of the ways to communicate was dance and music. Thus, transforming into a new African-American identity in the New World. Some functions of dance in many African communities before slavery were to perform rites of passage, communicate with deities and facilitate spiritual practices, honor those who died, “satirize misbehavior”, celebrate a new birth or the harvest of a crop, tell stories of community history, or simply joyous recreation.

These functions were not removed, but only continued and

passed down when enslaved Africans brought their rituals to the plantations. Choreographer, educator, and TED Fellow Camille A. Brown explains that “dance is a language” and “[African-American] social dance is an expression that emerges from a community. A social dance isn’t choreographed by any one person, it can’t be traced to any one moment. Each dance has steps that everyone can agree on but it’s about the individual and their creative identity. Because of that, social dances bubble up, they change, and they spread like wildfire. They are as old as our remembered history” (Camille A. Brown, TED Ed 2016).

Though African dance cannot be lumped into one category because of the diversity of cultures on the continent, there lies a unifying aesthetic that forms the foundation of movement across many African dance styles. Barbara Glass categorizes defining characteristics of African dance: These characteristics can be seen in the earliest forms of African-American social dance. The enslaved Americans of African descent (now somewhat acculturated into American society and some at this time, American-born) as well as newer arrivals from Africa still being smuggled in after the official ban on importing slaves in 1808 maintained a connection between the continent and the United States, where customs could be directly linked to traditions of home as well as reinforce and reinvigorate an African identity amongst those who would now be more removed from the place of their birth (Hazzard-Gordon 1990).

The **Ring Shout** was one of the first social dances created on the plantations. African dance principles could be seen here; enslaved descendants of African ancestors would form a circle, with knees bent, stomping and clapping, as they sung songs of blessings over their lives and labor while pantomiming the digging of potatoes, the picking of cotton, or the rocking of a baby (PBS Free to Dance 2001).

This dance was a spiritual experience, transforming later into a practice by “Christianized African-American communities” (Glass 2007). Peter H. Wood, a cultural historian remarks, “as the old song says ‘gimme the knee bone bent.’ In Africa, the knees bent symbolize being alive, if your legs are straight, you’re dead, they might as well bury you” (PBS Free to Dance 2001). **Corn Shucking** or **Husking** was another dance created by enslaved African-Americans. The movements and songs happened while working in the corn fields and accompanied by songs where there was a caller to facilitate call-and-response songs that initiated competition between the teams. These songs were comical and often satirical. White masters allowed this merriment and saw it as a form of entertainment and a way to avoid the effects of depression on the enslaved. The enslaved people used it to make the labor bearable and as a form of resistance and empowerment through songs that addressed their conditions. One such song is as follows: “Rabbit in de gyordin (general’s call)/Rabbit hi oh (all [farm] hands respond)/ Dog can’t ketch um/Rabbit hi oh/Gun can’t shoot um/Rabbit hi oh/Mon can’t skin um/Rabbit hi oh/Cook can’t catch cook um/Rabbit hi oh/Folks can’t eat um/Rabbit hi oh” (Hazzard-Gordon 1990).

“Ralph Ellison, a 20th Century writer, called these dances ‘America’s first choreography’” (PBS Free to Dance 2001). Many of these songs and dances transformed into secular songs and dances purely for entertainment, rooted in experiences of African identity and captivity. These songs and dances were a psychological means of survival. Though some cultural practices were forbidden, the ones that remained were seen as less threatening and helped the enslaved retain their humanity in inhumane conditions and become a part

of a community and experience beyond their dire circumstances. It was an awakening and reprieve in the face a consistent attempt at a breaking of the human spirit. Almost immediately, white captors and slave owners began to create traveling productions and shows which spread the African aesthetic of dance worldwide. Many posters for these shows can be found in historical archives.

The commercialization of these dances led to **The Cake Walk**, **The Charleston**, **The Lindy Hop**, **The Twist**, and other dances created by African-American communities which are regarded, centuries after slavery, as quintessential American dances. The **Cake Walk** is another shining example of dance as resistance. The African dance aesthetic of objects in hand is visualized with top hats, fans, and canes. This dance made fun of the upper echelons of white society, mimicking their mannerisms and was a parody of their lifestyles unbeknownst to many in white society that the dance targeted them. They enjoyed the display and crafted productions of the dance (Camille A. Brown, TED Ed 2016). The **Charleston**, created in the 1920s in South Carolina has Congolese roots and followed the African dance principles of bended knee and response to polyrythms with an orientation to the Earth. The Charleston’s influence can be seen as late as the 90s in the famed “Kid ‘N Play” dance, first known as “The Funky Charleston” (Camille A. Brown, TED Ed 2016). Early on, the African ancestral whispers now permeated not only in African-American communities, but within the nation as these dances as well as others spread into crazes. This tradition continues today.

## Ancestral Whispers Remain After Colonial Legacy

In making the bridge between the African dance principles that exist in urban expressions, Larry D. Rosalez (intentionally lower-cased) was interviewed to help make these connections. Rosalez is a professional contemporary dancer who has studied in New York with Ron Brown's EVIDENCE dance company and Movement of the People (MOPDC) and also taught and performed West African Dance at Santa Fe College and the University of Florida. He cautions against freezing Africa in time. He explains that in the 1300s, the Mali Empire of the Mande people, formed their own "ballets" in an attempt to spread their influence and expand the empire. This effort led to a pre-colonial global awareness of the African aesthetic of dance and its influence on all forms of dance. Rosalez reminds us that this aesthetic is constantly evolving as it goes from the *bantaba* (the word

circle in the Mandinka language) to the stage (2017).

When it comes to the dances and accompanying rap songs of today, Rosalez has a thought-provoking perspective: "I think it's interesting, the root and branch idea, this circular narrative. We inherited a "traditional" dance that was already changed from its original form. This dance influenced African-American communities, eventually leading to hip-hop dances. Now, the youth of different African countries have their own forms of urban dance in which they are both taking from their ancestors as well as America's hip-hop culture through globalization, which originally finds its own roots on Africa's soil" (Rosalez). When asked to identify his own universal principles that he saw in West African dance, Rosalez offered the following: bent knees, hip and pelvic movement, thrusts, gyrations, circular motions, repetition that follows the rhythm, polycentric isolations, gestures, locking

and popping of joints, contraction and release, variations within a set dance, flat or flex feet as opposed to pointed toe commonly associated with more Eurocentric dances, and percussive stepping positions.

However, he expands these universal principles of African dance beyond their aesthetic to their functions. He says the Africanisms that we see in the dances of today not only lie in how they are performed, but how they are used. He poses the question: "Can you think of the day or class where you learned the Electric Slide?" Rosalez makes the point that the very passing down of dances and their songs from generation to generation in griot-like (oral tradition seen in many African societies for storytelling) form is its own Africanism and a retention that we see even with newer dances in pop culture such as the "Nae Nae" or "Hit the Quan." "Instead of being formally learned, it's just embedded and a part of 'Africana' which is just Americana, which in turn is,

Africana. It's a transitive property," Rosalez (Rosalez 2017). Another Africanism seen in today's social dances is the appropriation of dance. Urban expressions of dance, though carrying similar technique, change when that dance is for recreation, church, or cultural celebration asserting freedom and identity (Rosalez).

Venue and place is another Africanism. Often social dances are performed outside in a natural element similar to early enslaved African-Americans and African ancestors before them. Today's social dances are often spread through videos on social media, often taking place outside. Within urban expression, rap and social dances are not mutually exclusive entities. This melding is in itself a retention from Africa. Social dances are often not made in a vacuum apart from a song that is intended to make explicit references to the dance, the same way drums inform the Gelede dancers among the Yoruba people, or the Zaouli dance of the Guro people in Cote D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). Africanisms are seen in the rap songs that make the social dances possible. For instance, it is common that young people will form a circle as they are dancing. If the actual recording is not played, it may be rapped by someone who knows the lyrics or new lyrics altogether originally made by someone who is skilled at doing so in a freestyle. An Africanism often seen at such informal gatherings is the participatory nature of the music (Holloway 1990). As the rapper raps with dancers dancing, it is common to hear sounds of approval from the audience like "ayyyeee," "yah," or "get it" to show shared joy or approval of someone's skills and abilities, incorporating vocal sounds with the rhythms. This adds to the African tradition of polyrhythmic sounds and a "communal approach to music-making." Often call and response happens through a rap lyric asking for either a vocal response or bodily response through movement.

(Holloway 1990). Similar to the Mbuti and Twa people groups that are skilled at impersonating sounds that occur in nature, "beatboxing" within hip-hop to imitate drums or electronic beats is an Africanism that emphasizes 'the voice as instrument' and can facilitate dance.

Though the line of African influence may seem further removed from today's urban expression of social dance and rap than its plantation predecessors, the ancestral whispers remain through the principles and survive the colonial legacy. African-American youth have centuries between them and their African ancestors, yet there lies the idea of cultural or collective memory, a psychological phenomena where traditions are passed down and then learned or known intuitively (Price 2013).

Let's examine three of today's latest dance crazes created by African-American youth. First is "Hit the Quan". Like the Ring Shout, this dance is often performed communally in a cluster or circle. The rap has a call-and-response nature similar to songs and beats in traditional African dances and chants: "Hit the Quan (*hit the Quan*)". There is a Caller, artist iLoveMemphis, that shouts directions to be followed by the participants listening and dancing to the song: "I said get down low and swing your arms/I said get down low and hit the Quan.../ Please watch your step 'cause I'm feeling myself/Throw a flag on the play, man somebody get the ref/Go blah da da da dol, man somebody get some help..." There is the repeated and long-standing African dance aesthetic of bent knees throughout this dance. Pantomime is also seen during the directives of the rap artist when dancers touch their face and chest with the lyric "I'm feeling myself." This continues when there is a literal run when listeners are asked "get the ref" and a bending low and praying hands when iLoveMemphis says, "somebody get some help." The whole

song isn't directives, however. There is other rapping that leaves room for freestyle dancing, though the moves retain the initial overall style. One dance that isn't specifically directed but happens in the duration of the song is one called "Hittin'Dem Folks." In it, hands are raised in fist position, one leg is raised, while the other is bent. This move looks strikingly similar to a move done in the West African Dance called Sinte.

Next is the song by rap artist Silento, "Watch Me (*Whip/Nae Nae*). This song follows the tradition of dance variation. Within the lyrics, listeners are called to do other dances that were created prior to the making of the song other than just "The Whip" or the "Nae Nae". These dances employ the polyrhythmic nature of African dance, as well as repetition both in song and movements throughout the entire song. "Repetition is a crucial element of traditional West African...music. It brings out a rhythmic tension that constitutes a beat. [It] also locks the listener to the song, compels them to dedicate their attention and teaches them how to move in accordance with its rhythm" (Johnson 2012). Flat and flexed feet are seen in "The Bop" and "Break Your Legs" (both dances embedded within this song). In both dances, circular motions of the hand are seen in the freestyle. The "Do It Like Me Challenge" is a mashup of the aforementioned songs, but in the lyrics, it challenges the listener when rap artist DLOW boasts, "betcha can't do it like me." This speaks to the African dance principle of competition seen in the **Corn Shucking Dance** and traditional African dances like the competitive jumping Adumu dance of the Maasai people (Eastern Africa, Kenya and Tanzania). Modern dances done among African youth share these similarities as well. **Azonto** is a dance and music genre in Ghana that employs the same principles with a body orientation towards the Earth. Coupe



"Dance is a language." Camille A. Brown  
(Source: Ted Ed)



Decale from Cote D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) includes a pop and locking of the joints. Many of the modern youth African dances like the ones aforementioned also include moves from the urban expressions of African-American youth. With social media, there is now an even more active sharing as well. It's full circle. It's the *bantaba*.

This article *barely* scratches the surface of all the linkages that exist in urban expression and their original African roots. Hopefully, it has piqued your interest to explore beyond the history in these pages. The recognition of Africanisms in urban expression is powerful because beyond entertainment, it helps widen the lens of what is American history among all peoples who have been influenced by African dance and the innovation and contribution of the continent of Africa to our everyday lives that we often miss. Furthermore, it can help solidify an identity for so many African-American youth who do not have an Ellis Island to affirm their roots and have a need to connect to a rich heritage.

### Lesson Plans

Here are some ways to extend the lesson and make these connections in your classroom:

Middle School and High School  
*Ethnographic study as form of research*

1. Have students look up prominent dances and hip-hop artists in the African diaspora (Latin America, Caribbean, America, Europe) and do observational study to identify universal African principles in dance.

2. Provide a list of artists and dances with region to make sure the choices for presentations are varied.

A Comprehensive Case Study Analysis  
*Have students choose five specific dances:*

- 1) Traditional dances from pre-colonial Africa,
- 2) Early African-American Dance from Slavery Era,
- 3) Post-slavery African-American Dance,
- 4) Urban African-American dance

- 5) a Modern African dance and discuss their origins, meaning, and any spreading that might have occurred. Have students use RAFT (Role, Audience, Format, Topic) method to present findings

Both secondary lessons can be centered on the essential questions:  
*How does culture spread and form identity?*

Elementary  
*Explore and Move*

1. Introduce the African continent, highlight COUNTRIES, find three SPECIFIC dances from various regions. Show students videos of these dances and teach students purpose and function of each dance for the community. Have them compare with their own favorite dances and find similarities in movements.

2. Let the students up with their own dance in small groups and name it, ensure that they use the African dance principles, and decide meaning of each movement with a song and an overall function/reason behind their dance.

Matt Davis

# Africa: A Soccer "Football" Story



In 2010 South Africa became the first African country to host the FIFA World Cup. The event was colorfully celebrated and introduced new culture including the Vuvuzelas (seen in the picture)!!  
(Source: Marcello Casal Jr/ABr)

"I feel like a young man of 15," stated 85-year-old Nelson Mandela when South Africa was granted the privilege of hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ (FIFA.com, 2016, para. 3). It is common knowledge that soccer is the most popular sport in the world, and its influence reaches every remote corner of the globe. Individual and collective passion for this simple yet complex game is capable of making nations pause virtually all other activities in order to watch their teams and causing elderly men and women, including the late Nobel Peace

Prize winner Nelson Mandela, feel young again. Although Europe and South American national teams perpetually dominate the global soccer scene, soccer has been on the rise in Africa during recent decades. Mandela could not have said it better when describing his feeling for the game of soccer; "Sport has the power to inspire and unite people. In Africa, soccer enjoys great popularity and has a particular place in the hearts of people. That is why it is so important that the FIFA World Cup will, for the first time ever, be hosted

on the African continent in 2010. (FIFA.com, 2016, para. 5). Soccer has a rich diverse history that has touched the lives of people on every continent including Africa. The African soccer landscape has been continually molded and shaped by various factors including European colonialism, the fight for "soccer independence," organizational, political and economic challenges and international competition.

## A Brief History of Football (Soccer)

“The very earliest form of the game for which there is scientific evidence was an exercise from a military manual dating back to the second and third centuries BC in China” (FIFA.com, 2017, para. 3). The origins of soccer date back over 2,000 years to China’s Tsin and Han Dynasties. In this era, the game was called cuju or t’su chu, which means “football.” Although the ancient forms of football did not directly impact the development of the modern game, it is clear that there is a connection to past (historyoffootballreally.blogspot.com, 2017). The game was played with a leather ball filled with feathers and hair and the object was to kick the object into a net affixed to lengthy bamboo poles. Although the Chinese are credited with developing the earliest forms of soccer (football), the contemporary game is widely accepted to have begun in England with the first official soccer governing body forming in 1863 (historyofsoccer.info, 2017).

## The Introduction of Soccer to Africa

Soccer was introduced to the African continent in the mid 1800s by colonialists from European nations such as England, France, Belgium and Portugal (explorin-gafrica.matrix.msu.edu, 2017). Peter Alegi, author and African studies professor at Michigan State University, states that “the game came with European imperialism and first with the British, of course. It was soldiers, traders and the missionaries who really pushed the game. And they were the ones who played that first game in 1862, almost 150 years ago. But the game spread very quickly through the mission schools, through the military forces and through the railways. And it was quickly embraced by Africans” (npr.org, 2010, para. 6). In his

interview with National Public Radio, Alegi (2010) went on to say that the sport spread at different rates throughout the continent with nations such as Algeria and Ghana having organized teams and leagues as early as the late 1890s and very early 1900s. The longest surviving African soccer team is Cape Coast Excelsior which was started in 1903. Although soccer was mainly controlled by Europe and South America for the first half of the 20th century, Africa is credited with democratizing the sport which was greatly linked to the soccer sanctions against apartheid in South Africa (npr.org, 2010, para. 13).

## Politics and Economics

Greenstreet and Oliveri (2013) state that in the beginning, colonialists used soccer as a way to control Africans and maintain an environment that was comfortable for Europeans to remain on the continent. Missionaries introduced soccer in schools and Europeans owned just about every aspect of the game (stadiums, equipment, etc). Eventually, African soccer was free from European control and became a “vehicle for expressing indigenous aspirations for emancipation and harnessing resentment towards the exploitative and oppressive conditions which typified much of colonial life in Africa.” (Oliveri, 2013, para. 4). “The foreign sport of football unified and liberated African cultures — only after the sport’s initial application as an instrument for colonial control” (Oliveri, 2013, para. 1).

One of the main things that separates Africa from the world’s most dominant soccer continents is its comparatively low level of financial resources (Weaver and Gagne 2011). “When compared to the rest of the world, African soccer teams fare surprisingly well considering their lack of resources. Ivory Coast and Ghana have the lowest GDPs per capita out of all teams in the Top 25 and rank 17th and 23rd

respectively [3]. Compare that to a country like Norway, ranked 47th, despite having a GDP per capita over 30 times greater than that of the Ivory Coast” (Gagne, 2011, para. 1). The world rankings have continually changed since Gagne’s report in 2011, but this information still shows a relatively current look at the connection of African soccer and economics.

## Player Development and Organizational Challenges

Gabriel Kuhn (2011) says that most soccer associations in African nations are only concerned with the national teams and younger players must be involved with private academies if they want to receive organized skill development training. Although the number of African soccer academies has increased significantly in the last 25-30 years, many young aspiring African players choose to leave their continent and take their chances abroad. Many African soccer players have traveled to Europe with no guarantee of success. Several younger players in lower leagues are reportedly underpaid, but they still consider it a better opportunity than what they would earn in their African homelands. “Every African player that is any good quickly finds themselves being lured to Europe with the promise of more money and better training, some end up cleaning streets instead. (Even FIFA recognizes that false promises to African boys with promise is an issue). Consequently Africans have to follow European football to get to see their own players. There are currently more than 1000 Africans playing for European clubs...The televised matches and the radio broadcasts from the European leagues is also of much better quality than anything broadcast locally. Plus people just enjoy a good game of soccer and it’s played awfully well in Europe” (Zijlma, 2016, para. 3,4)

African soccer organizations are working to keep players at home by providing training at the local level (Kuhn, 2011). Grassroots efforts like the Mathare Youth Sports Association and the Baba Dogo Sports Association in Kenya and the Bosco United Sports Association in Liberia are some examples of how African nations are achieving success in the realm of organized soccer player development despite dealing with negative issues such as corruption and other factors that are capable of undermining success. Even with the challenges, African soccer will remain in the circles of international discussion.

## African Soccer on the International Scene

As of June 1, 2017, there were 206 countries that maintained a men’s national soccer team and 115 nations that had an active women’s national team. Africa has 9 nations in the top 50 of the men’s FIFA world soccer rankings (Egypt, Senegal, Cameroon, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana) with 2 more countries in outside the top 50 (Algeria, Morocco). On the women’s side, the top 50 spots are divided among nations from a variety of regions including North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania (Australia, New Zealand). Africa holds 3 of the top 50 spots with Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon leading the way for the continent. Practically speaking, South Africa can also be included in this group as it ranked just outside the top 50 at #51. (FIFA.com, 2017). In Africa, “Football is really a male thing in Africa. You won’t see a lot of girls kicking a ball around in village” (Zijlma, 2016, para. 6). However, the women’s game is making some progress across the continent (Zijlma, 2016). Africa holds a bi-annual Africa Women

Cup of Nations that does not yet receive much publicity and that Africa has been represented in recent international competitions such as the FIFA Women’s World Cup.

## Future and Conclusion

The future of African soccer has some challenges but also some great opportunities for continued growth. In 2017, the Confederation of African Soccer elected a new president. One should consider the following quotes when analyzing the current and future situation on the African continent:

*“African football grew much more prosperous...thanks to lucrative sponsorship deals and the sale of television rights to global broadcasters. But critics have long wondered where all the money went. Much of the continent’s footballing infrastructure is old and shoddy, as a short drive from the AU offices in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, to the decrepit national stadium illustrates. Cash barely reaches the grassroots” (Ababa, 2017, para. 3).*

“CAF’s incoming president, Ahmad Ahmad..., says he wants to clear out the rot. He also wants to provide annual grants for national federations, which would be a first.” (Ababa, 2017, para. 4).



Ghana Black Stars team playing against the United States in the 2014 World Cup! (Source: AP Photo/Hassan Ammar)

“We need to be open to discussion again and open to advice on how to improve. We want to talk to Africa’s top players to see how we can run the game better. We want anyone with a love for football and ideas on how to improve the game to feel they can come and discuss this with us,” Ahmad said on Friday” (Gleeson, 2017, para. 3).

“Now that the elections are over, everyone should be focusing on a bright future for African football,” he [Ahmad] told reporters at the end of the Congress (Gleeson, 2017, para. 11).

## Lesson Plan Ideas

1) Write a brief 1-2 page essay that compares and contrasts the national soccer teams from two African nations. Students may choose to focus on either the men’s or women’s teams.

2) Research the current uniform design for one African national team. Design a new uniform for the team. Make sure to keep the nation’s official colors and national symbols in mind when creating the design (ie. United States – red, white, blue).



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