

Linkages

THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN,
AFRICAN AMERICAN, AND DIASPORA STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

IN THIS ISSUE

Celebrating Professor
Eunice Sahle

Summary of AAAD
Undergraduate Research
Conferences

AAAD Students in
Conversation: *Graduating
Class of 2021 Speakers*

Africana Faculty
Dialogues: Interviews with
AAAD Faculty

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Photo Credit: Dan Sears/UNC- Chapel Hill

CELEBRATING PROFESSOR EUNICE SAHLE TEN YEARS OF SERVICE AS CHAIR

As a member and leader of one of the most intellectually and demographically diverse departments on campus, Professor Eunice Sahle has been a model citizen of the University in terms of her research and scholarship on democracy, human rights, and gender in East Africa, as well as her teaching portfolio that includes courses on women's rights mobilization, human development, and social justice initiatives. As Department Chair from 2012 until 2021, she led the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies during a challenging phase in its history, overcoming an

assortment of obstacles and, with the assistance of faculty colleagues, reinventing the unit as a robust and vigorous enterprise for the study of African peoples across the globe. The rising visibility of our talented faculty and student majors is substantially related to her leadership and openness to a number of initiatives that have enhanced the Department's legibility on campus, as well as within the larger field of Africana Studies. These initiatives include a revamped and enhanced curriculum; new hires in the area of African American Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and African Studies; and the inauguration of our annual Undergraduate Research Conference, an undergraduate research journal, a colloquium series, a study-abroad program, and other endeavors.

Professor Sahle has been particularly vital to efforts to extend the depth and breadth of the Department's intellectual engagement with other units and the larger campus. Under her leadership, the Department has offered many courses on human rights in Africa, global feminisms, civil rights movements in the U.S. and elsewhere, and classes on race, class, inequality, and so forth. During her two terms as Chair, the Department taught thousands of students across hundreds of course offerings, reaching large numbers of UNC students in any given year. In our current societal moment of racial reckoning, democratic crisis, and pandemic upheaval, the Department has been a steady, critical source of knowledge and counsel for our students and the larger world. Conversations about the campus's past, present, and future have been enriched by the knowledge of the Department's faculty, and Professor Sahle has been a strong advocate of efforts to firmly link the Department's mission with that of the broader University.

A highly regarded political scientist and published author, Professor Sahle maintained an active research agenda throughout her time as Department Chair. She contributed to and



edited three important volumes on globalization, democracy, and human rights between 2015 and 2019. Currently, she is completing a monograph on popular mobilization and human rights in Malawi and Kenya, which will be published next year. Additionally, she is working on another project that analyzes the evolution of modalities of citizenship in contemporary Kenya.

Photo Credit: [AAAD Department Website](#)

When she completed her final semester as Department Chair in Spring 2021, Professor Sahle left an admirable legacy for her successors to aspire to and to draw strength and wisdom from. Her contributions have been memorialized with the creation of the Department's first endowment, appropriately titled the Dr. Eunice N. Sahle Excellence Fund in African, African American and Diaspora Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences. We are thankful to the Gafinowitz family for making this endowment possible by their generous contribution to the Department.

As a member of the Department's faculty, I am proud to know Professor Sahle as a colleague and friend, and we could not have wished for a better, more suitable individual to lead the Department into its present prosperity. Professor Sahle has ennobled the Department and the University with her talents and dedication, along with her strikingly successful work toward, in her words, "creating the kind of department that I really wanted to be a part of."

Claude Clegg

*Lyle V. Jones Distinguished Professor & Chair
African, African American, & Diaspora Studies*



Photo Credit: [AAAD Department Website](#)

CHAIR'S MESSAGE — PROFESSOR CLAUDE CLEGG

As Chair of the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies, I am honored to introduce this issue of our *Linkages* newsletter. Despite the world's uncertainties, these are exciting times for AAAD. Our faculty continues to produce first-rate scholarship and publications, our students and alumni continue to make positive impacts on society, and the Department continues to thrive and advance its core mission.

Since becoming Chair in July 2021, I have had the pleasure of working with faculty colleagues and students toward realizing long-pursued goals and initiating some new ones. During 2021, we welcomed two new professors to our faculty, enhancing our intellectual and programmatic strengths in both African and African American Studies. Dr. Shakirah Hudani joined the Department in January 2021. She specializes in African urbanism and post-conflict urban change. Her current research focuses on post-genocide Rwanda. Additionally, Dr. Brandi Brimmer joined the Department in Fall 2021 as an Associate Professor and a Morehead-Cain Alumni Scholar. She specializes in African American social and political history and is a leading scholar regarding the study of enslavement and emancipation in the American South.

In relation to our students, the Department continues to serve as a vital nexus of education, professional training, and civic engagement. Over the past several years, we have established development opportunities that include our annual Undergraduate Research Conference, annual student-faculty Working Groups, our African Languages Fair and Night, and a Career Development Day. The Spring 2021 semester saw the publication of the fifth volume of AAAD's undergraduate research journal, the *Global Africana Review*, which consists entirely of high-quality undergraduate scholarship. Furthermore, with a considerable amount of pride and gratitude, the Department was recently fortunate enough to be the recipient of its first endowment. Named in honor of an esteemed colleague, the Dr. Eunice N. Sahle Excellence Fund will facilitate research projects and other creative activities of both faculty members and students.

Moving forward, the Department is in the process of expanding its list of affiliated adjunct faculty, which will allow us to draw directly on the abundant expertise of faculty colleagues campus-wide to further enrich our instructional and programmatic initiatives. Thanks to our world-class faculty, our brilliant and diverse student body, and our dedicated staff, the Department continues to project strength regarding its mission to educate and better inform the people of North Carolina and the larger world about the histories, cultures, and experiences of people of African descent. We appreciate your ongoing support of the Department and its achievements as reflected in these pages.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT:

PROFESSORS BRANDI BRIMMER AND SHAKIRAH HUDANI

AAAD is proud to announce its new faculty hires, Professors Brandi Brimmer and Shakirah Hudani.

Dr. Brandi Brimmer is Associate Professor in AAAD and Morehead-Cain Alumni Scholar. Dr. Brimmer specializes in African American social and political history. She has spent over a decade engaged in archival research aimed at recovering the voices of Black people—both free and enslaved—from the American Civil War archive. Her book, *Claiming Union Widowhood: Race, Respectability, and Poverty in the Post-Emancipation South* (Duke University Press, December 2020), investigates poor and working-class Black women's approaches to the law and governmental institutions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Brimmer is working on a new book project, *The Other Douglass: Frederick C. Douglass, A Black Freedom Fighter in the Post-emancipation South*, which tells the story of Black attorneys and claims agents who represented the petitions of disabled Black veterans and the widows of Black soldiers to the U.S. Pension Bureau.

Dr. Shakirah Hudani is Assistant Professor in AAAD and holds a joint appointment in the Department of City and Regional Planning. She specializes in African urbanism and post-conflict urban transition. Her research focuses on urban change in post-genocide Rwanda, with relevance to the Great Lakes Region and to urban planning processes in East Africa. She began working in Rwanda in 2002, examining the *gacaca* transitional justice process, and more recently returned to research urbanization and contemporary planning. Her new work examines peripheral urban change in Nairobi. She has held fellowships from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Institute for International Studies at UC Berkeley, and is a Rhodes Scholar.

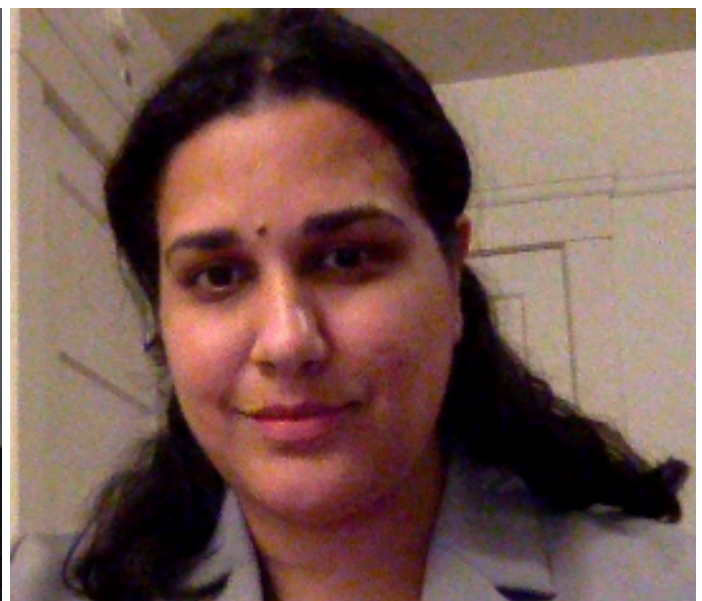


Photo Credit: [AAAD Department Website](#)

ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

9th Annual AAAD Undergraduate Research Conference By Professor Shakirah Hudani

The ninth annual Undergraduate Research Conference was held in person on Saturday, March 26th, 2022 in a celebratory atmosphere in Graham Memorial Hall, and was simultaneously broadcast to a remote audience. Organized by Professor Michael Lambert with the support of an advisory committee, the conference continues Professor Eunice Sahle's vision of a forum wherein selected students might share their best work.

The Conference began with the launch of the 6th volume of the *Global Africana Review*, shepherded this year by Executive Editor, Professor Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja. The new volume was presented by a proud Professor Claude Clegg, who as the Chair of the Department talked about the scholarly contributions made from students on a range of topics. Contributions in this volume of the *Review* are: Kimathi Muiruri on "The Pan-Africanist Rhetoric and Praxis of Thomas Sankara in the Burkina Faso Revolution, 1983-87"; Sophia Fantauzzi on "The Contributions to the Fight for Desegregation in North Carolina Public Schools"; Mina Yakubu on the "Interconnectedness of Black Liberation"; Kyende Kinoti on "The Green Belt Movement"; Amaya Graham on "Christianity and Social Reform during the Civil Rights Movement"; and, a "Review of 'Toward Freedom' by Toure F Reed" presented by Carly Wetzel.

The Conference's Dunbar-Stone Lecture was adeptly presented by Mr. Michael Williams from the National Humanities Center. Williams spoke passionately about his experiences attending UNC as an undergraduate and about the complex challenges that a humanities education helps address.

The Conference's proceedings were organized into two panels, moderated by Professor Shakirah Hudani and Professor Brandi Brimmer, respectively. Panel One, "Mobilizing across the Diaspora," brought together three illuminating presenters – Sophia Fantauzzi, Saskia Staimpel, and Amaya Graham – who talked about legal activism by Sojourner Truth, activism against racial democracy in Brazil, and the role of the archives in highlighting the work of two leading historic journals, "The Crisis" and "The Messenger." Panel Two showcased the work of Aashna Singh on race and gentrification in the Shaw neighborhood of Washington DC, Omar Farrag on educational disparities in contemporary Egypt, and Jarrah Faye on race and criminalization after the Reconstruction Era.

The event closed with remarks from Professors Lambert and Clegg, with aspirations for an even better event in 2023, during the Conference's forthcoming tenth anniversary.

ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

9th Annual AAAD Undergraduate Research Conference



above: Student presenters gather after the conference; Mr. Michael Williams delivers the Dunbar-Stone Lecture.

below: Professor Michael Lambert gives welcoming remarks; Department Chair Professor Claude Clegg introduces the 6th volume of the Global Africana Review.

Photo Credits: Professor Shakirah Hudani



ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

7th and 8th Annual AAAD Undergraduate Research Conference By Professor Michael Lambert

On Saturday, April 10, 2021, we celebrated the seventh and eighth annual AAAD Undergraduate Research Conference. Inaugurated in 2014, the annual Conference celebrates the mentoring that our faculty members have provided to students and features the original research of some of our most promising students. The global COVID-19 pandemic forced us to postpone the seventh annual conference, originally scheduled for April of 2020. After much consideration, we decided that the best way to celebrate the work our students produced during the 2019-2020 academic year was to hold a joint seventh and eighth annual conference in 2021.

The conference opened with the presentation of the keynote lecture for the conference, the Dunbar-Stone lecture. This lecture is named in honor of two former colleagues, Professor Roberta Ann Dunbar and Professor Sonja Haynes Stone, both of whom shared an unwavering dedication to their students. UNC AAAD alumnae, public historian, and American University History graduate student, Donelle Boose presented this lecture. In this engaging lecture, she highlighted the ways she has used the tools of public history to address contemporary racial issues. This lecture also served as a tribute to Professor Perry Hall under whose guidance Donelle Boose wrote her undergraduate honor's thesis. Professor Hall unexpectedly passed away on April 21, 2020.

This first panel, "Mobilizing Across the Diaspora," was chaired by Professor David Pier. Allison Whitenack opened the panel with the paper she wrote under the mentorship of Professor Eunice Sahle, "The role of NGOs in women's land rights in Tanzania." This was followed by a paper by Makaela Johnson, mentored by Professor David Pier, "The Nation of Islam, Mosque #34 Durham, North Carolina: Organizing and Educating Durham's Black Community." The panel ended with a paper by Mia Colloredo-Mansfeld, who was mentored by Professor Eunice Sahle, "Placemaking in Artisanal Small-Scale Mining: a gendered examination of mobility, economic opportunity, and vulnerability in sub-Saharan Africa."

The second panel, "Political Engagement Across the Diaspora," was chaired by Professor Kenneth Janken. The first paper of this panel, "Grassroots Activism's Transformative Role in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's Ideology," was presented by Saskia Staimpel, who was mentored by Professor Claude Clegg. The second paper of the panel, "The Interconnectedness of Black Liberation: The Cross-Political Relationship of African and African American Leaders in the Struggle for Post-Colonial Independence and the Civil Rights Movement [1950 - 1960]," was presented by Mina Yakubu, who was mentored by Professor Kenneth Janken.

The final event, a roundtable on digital media, featured students who produced digital media projects under the mentorship of Professor Kia Caldwell, who also served as moderator. Karly Smith opened the roundtable with her presentation, "Black Feminist Technoculture During COVID 19: A Digital Archive." She was followed by Kayla McLaurin, who spoke on her project, "The Ethics of 'Loving': A Podcast on Black Feminists and Love." And the roundtable, and conference, closed with Sophia Fantauzzi's presentation of her project on "Transnational Black Feminism in the Art World."

This conference served as a fitting tribute to the outstanding work produced by AAAD students and the mentorship they received from faculty members during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years.

Professor Samba Camara Wins Junior Faculty Development Award



Professor Samba Camara is the winner of a 2022 Junior Faculty Development Award. This honor is one of UNC-Chapel Hill's most prestigious awards and recognizes the high merit of research proposals submitted by nominees. Professor Camara's work deals with the ethics of personhood as articulated through Senegalese music, with a particular emphasis on how Muslim performers use artistic mediums to advocate for peace and community.

Photo Credit: [AAAD Department Website](#)

The African Languages Program

By Professor Mohamed Mwamzandi
Coordinator, African Languages Program

UNC's African Languages Program is hosted in the Department of African, African American and Diaspora Studies. The Program offers instruction in three African languages: Swahili, Wolof, and Yoruba. These languages are widely used in Africa and elsewhere in the world. About 100 million people speak Swahili in East and Central Africa. The African Union adopted Swahili as one of its official functional languages. In 2021, the United Nations declared July 7 as the World Kiswahili Language Day. Over 10 million people speak Wolof as their first or second language in Senegal, The Gambia, and Southern Mauritania. Modern migration, business, and trade have taken the language to some parts of Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali. Wolof is also widely spoken by Senegalese immigrants in the US and Europe. Over 20 million people speak Yoruba in Nigeria and parts of Togo, Ghana, the Republic of Benin, and Sierra Leone. Yoruba is also spoken by West African immigrants in the Americas and Europe.

The African Languages Program at UNC started in the 1990s. At the time, Swahili was the only language offered, with about 20 students enrolled in the program. In 2005, Lingala was introduced and about 10 students enrolled in the Lingala language course. Since then, the program has experienced growth in the number of students served per academic year and the languages taught. In the current academic year, 2021-2022, 107 students enrolled in the African Languages Program courses, with most of them being in the Swahili language, followed by Wolof, and Yoruba. Presently, the Languages Program is taught by three qualified and well-seasoned professors in their respective languages, namely Dr. Mohamed Mwamzandi and Dr. Raphael Birya in the Swahili language and Dr. Samba Camara in the Wolof language.

The African language faculty is assisted intermittently in their teaching by Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs) hosted by the African Studies Center. Besides these roles, the FLTA scholars participate in other university activities to share their cultural values and the beliefs of their countries of origin with the North Carolina community.

Pedagogically, the African Languages Program promotes three combined approaches: communicative-oriented, student-centered, and content-based. Adopting these approaches ensures performance-based instruction. The teaching embraces ACTFL's (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) general goals based on the standards for foreign language learning organized under the "5 Cs": communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and communities. Students enrolled in the African Languages Program have described their experience in the language classes as very enriching and different in approach. After a few weeks of instruction, the students make excellent progress in their language proficiency level.

AAAD Students In-Conversation — Class of 2021 Graduate Speakers

By Mina Yakubu

Each year the AAAD Department selects two students from the graduating class to speak at the Department's graduation ceremony. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Class of 2021's ceremony was held virtually; Mina Yakubu and Micaela Campbell were selected as their Class' speakers. In their speeches, they shared fond memories of their time in the Department, how the AAAD community influenced their worldview, and informed their scholarly voice. The pair recently caught up for an interview. In their exchange, they discussed what initially inspired them to major in AAAD, reflected on their time in the Department, and shared their advice for students considering taking an AAAD course. This article highlights a few key moments from their interview.

What inspired you to major in AAAD?

Micaela admits she took her first AAAD class — Professor Charlene Regester's Introduction to African American and Diaspora Studies — in part, to satisfy a UNC General Education requirement. But she also wanted to satisfy a curiosity in African American Studies that her Black high school history teacher inspired. She hence thought she'd kill two birds with one stone. That is until she says, she fell in love with the course and decided to take another one. Soon after, she declared a major in AAAD. Micaela says her AAAD courses complemented her passions and involvement in social justice efforts. While at UNC, Micaela worked alongside Black local community leaders as part of the Campus Y and Bonner Leaders Program. As Micaela says, her AAAD major provided her an “amazing opportunity to both learn about the work and live the work.” As Micaela engaged with local leaders, she also learned about the legacy of Black leadership in the United States and around the world.

Mina, a Ghanaian-American, wanted to major in AAAD to learn more about how her identities and the identities of other Black folks in the Diaspora were interconnected. Mina set out to major in AAAD to explore her unanswered questions, initially sparked in her hometown of Wilmington, North Carolina), and learn about the diversity of Black experiences. The graduating students' AAAD courses clearly satisfied their long-held intellectual curiosities. Both students declared their AAAD majors after taking their first few classes. They found that the people in the Department encouraged their questions and aided them with the tools to learn, research, and formulate their arguments.

What words of advice would you offer to an incoming first-year or transfer to UNC? Would you encourage them to take any AAAD courses? If so, what mindset do you think they should have?

Mina and Micaela urge students to find community. They recommend students take AAAD courses, in part, because of the Department's sense of community. Micaela suggests students have a mindset to learn and actively engage with their AAAD course materials. She especially urges white students to “listen first” because she believes “it

can be a transformational experience to be surrounded by Black students and Black professors and learning from them.” When considering AAAD courses, Mina suggests students take them “if you are ready to challenge your own understanding of things.” Mina encourages students to adopt a critical mindset in their courses. She says that while professors are teaching students, they are also learning from them. For her, the process of informing each other’s perspectives often happens in conversation. Mina also tells students to own their contributions to their respective spaces.

Talk a bit about the people in the Department. How have they impacted you?

In their conversation, both students remark how classes presented sacred spaces for them to hold thoughtful conversations and learn from their peers and professors. Mina calls it a “blessing” and a rarity to have the opportunity to learn from such diverse thoughts, experiences, and backgrounds. She says she often recalls some of her peers’ remarks from their class discussions because of the thoughtfulness of their responses. Micaela responds, “the AAAD Department is its people, it’s its content too, but its people make it special.” As a white person who does not share the lived experiences of many of her Black peers, Micaela says, “I would have completely understood if they asked me to leave because I respect the autonomy of Black space.” Yet, she found the opposite. Many of her peers welcomed her and graciously shared their experiences in their classroom discussions. Micaela thinks it is incredible that many of the Department’s courses are heavily shaped by the people in them through class discussions. She describes it as the process of “creating knowledge together.”

One of Micaela’s responses best sums up their discussion: “The people and the professors in the Department were so unique in their genuine care and their embodiment of the practices we were learning about, living out human rights and justice...It was nice to be surrounded by people who were actually living those values rather than just teaching about them.” As it is clear, the AAAD Department is a special place because of its people and their commitment to learning from one another.



Left: Mina Yakubu (photo by Hanna Wondmagegn)
Right: Micaela Campbell

AAAD Alumni Profile – Professor Donelle Boose

“Documenting Black Histories”

By Mina Yakubu

Professor Donelle Boose is, as she puts it, “first and foremost a Black public historian.” The soon-to-be Dr. Boose is also a PhD Candidate at American University where she teaches in the Department of Critical Race, Gender, & Culture Studies. Before Professor Boose earned her Masters in Africana Studies at Cornell or started 'The Self Determined Podcast' to document Black stories, she was a student majoring in AFAM (now known as AAAD) at UNC-Chapel Hill. This past year, she gave the Dunbar-Stone lecture at the annual Undergraduate Research Conference. Her speech honored the many people who inspire her work and provoked thoughtful questions about history, particularly the process of documenting it, its purpose, and whose interest historical narratives serve.



Photo Credit: Professor Donelle Boose

Notably, Professor Boose paid homage to the late Professor Perry Hall whom she considers to be one of her earliest mentors. In the excerpts below she talks about how Professor Hall supported her and nurtured her ambitions. Professor Boose shares her candid reaction to his passing and reflects on how Professor Hall inspired the work she does.

“At my graduation ceremony, he was there with the whole department to warmly congratulate me and my classmates. And when I left Carolina for Washington DC, but couldn't quite let go, he made time to have lunch with me and talk ideas when I came back to visit. He supported me when I floated the idea of attending graduate school, and twice recommended me, first to an Africana Masters program at Cornell and then the History PhD program that I am currently completing. Prof. Hall was the truth. I cried when I heard of his passing.”



Seventeen years ago, I sat in a classroom with Prof. Perry Hall, and he turned on *Eyes on the Prize* and made us think about it and discuss it. In doing that, he planted a seed in me that continues to grow into all the work I do now. He showed me that ‘the one thing we get right is the day we start to fight’ and to me writing and producing history, our way, is how I aim to fight.



In her speech, Professor Boose discussed how history is often told from a specific vantage point of power that excludes the histories of marginalized communities. She makes clear that “...there is no separating power politics from history and history telling” and “there is no history written just for the sake of recording facts, history is always written with purpose, it always has work to do.”

Now, as a Black public historian Professor Boose works to “research, write, and produce stories that reveal Black people, especially Black women, to be the monumental historical forces that they are in US history, so that Black folk currently engaged in political struggle to live as free, healthy, self-determining people may draw inspirations from their many forebearers. In short, I find and share stories of Black people bucking American oppression to live their best lives. Publishing Black inspiration through histories is my history work.”

AFRICANA FACULTY DIALOGUES

Professor Mohamed Mwamzandi

The 'Africana Faculty Dialogues' features Professor Mohamed Mwamzandi as part of the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies (AAAD) faculty profiles series. Dr. Mwamzandi joined UNC in 2015 as part of the teaching-stream faculty in the Department. His contributions to the Department are far-ranging and include teaching on Swahili language and culture, and African linguistics and literature. He is interviewed here by Assistant Professor, Dr. Shakirah Hudani, in mid-2021.

Please tell us briefly about your personal background and how you came to UNC.

I was born in Kenya where I completed my BA and MA degrees. I received my Ph.D. in Linguistics in 2014 at the University of Texas at Arlington. In 2015, I became a faculty member at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with an appointment in the Department of African, African American and Diaspora Studies.

Describe your academic background. What did you write your Ph.D. dissertation on and how do you incorporate that interest into your teaching at UNC?

My Ph.D. dissertation focused on my ongoing interest in linguistics, which focuses on examining information structure, corpus and computational linguistics, and morpho-syntax. In AAAD, I teach an upper-level seminar that introduces students to the study of African languages using insights from the discipline of linguistics. Based on my undergraduate and graduate work in Kenya, I teach Swahili language courses and African literature courses. I also serve as the coordinator of our Department's African Languages Program.

What are the best things about teaching at UNC? What do you most enjoy about the courses you teach?

I like teaching at UNC-Chapel Hill because students are very hardworking and enthusiastic about learning. I enjoy the collegial relationship with the AAAD faculty and the support I receive from the Department's administration, the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the African Studies Center in my academic and professional career.

On which subjects do you hope to develop courses on in the future, if anything different to what you teach now?

Africa is home to over 2,000 languages whose interaction demands individual as well as institutional multilingualism. It is fascinating how people can use more than one language to serve their various aims, sometimes even while addressing the same group. For example, politicians could use a national language to depict a national outlook, use a local language to show solidarity with the audience, and then use an official language,

mainly a former colonial language, to show sophistication and command of the official and international medium of communication. Languages can unite a nation if used constructively but can also destroy a nation if used to cultivate seeds of division for personal, racial or ethnic, economic and political supremacy. I, therefore, hope to develop a course that explores the relationship between language and politics in Africa. I am also currently undertaking a digitization project on Islamic manuscripts written in the 19th and 20th Centuries in Mali and Senegal. I plan to incorporate the findings of this project in a course I developed on Islamic societies and literatures.

Tell us about your project with Professor Samba Camara on digitizing manuscripts in West Africa (Mali)? Why is it so important to you and to work on African studies?

When I met Dr. Samba Camara in 2017, we immediately noticed our shared interest in understanding Black Muslims and Islam in Africa. Dr. Camara mentioned his encounter with a large body of Islamic manuscripts written in the 19th and 20th Centuries in Senegal and Mali. Our diverse experiences made it possible for Dr. Camara and me to collaborate on the Endangered Archive Digitization Project.

I studied corpus and computational linguistics. Dr. Camara is a specialist in the West African literatures and has firsthand information of the manuscripts we needed to assemble. The skills and expertise we possess made it possible to secure the manuscripts to avail to people to study the contribution of Africa to Islamic studies and education during the pre-colonial period.



Photo Credit: Professor Mohamed Mwamzandi

We prepared a proposal to undertake the digitization project and sent it to the Endangered Archive Program (EAP), in the British Library. Dr. Samba Camara and I are currently the Principal Investigators of a significant digitization grant of US\$50,000.00 awarded by the EAP, British Library (EAP1245). In collaboration with Dr. Samba Camara and a Senegal-based archival partner, West Africa Research Center (WARC), the project is undertaking the digitization of endangered Pulaar Islamic texts in Senegal and Mali.

This project envisions creating a digital repository of the Pulaar Ajami archives produced by Haalpulaar Muslim scholars in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Kept today in dispersed family collections, these texts were written by local Islamic authors affiliated with the branch of the Tijaniyya Muslim Brotherhood historically founded by Alajji Umar Taal (ca. 1796 - 1864) and spread by his descendants in Senegal and southwestern Mali. The project focuses on endangered archives currently kept in four Senegalese sites - Mermoz (Dakar), Medina Gounasse, Pate Gallo, Mbour - and two Malian areas - Kayes and Koniakari.



Photo Credit: Professor Mohamed Mwamzandi

There is a wonderful photograph of you helping translate for the Governor during a recent emergency (*from Getty images*). Please tell us the story behind this inspirational image and how you incorporate service into your life as an academic both inside and outside of the classroom.

In 2018, during Hurricane Florence when existing emergency shelters were hard hit by power loss, UNC-Chapel Hill helped the Red Cross turn the Friday Center into an emergency shelter. Some of the evacuees impacted by the hurricane were African immigrants originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo who could only speak Swahili and their native languages. The North Carolina state asked UNC-Chapel Hill to provide Swahili translation services to help with communication during a meeting between North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper and the Swahili-speaking New Bern community. In addition, the Red Cross requested volunteers who could make sure that they received the help they needed at the Friday Center shelter. When I received the call for Swahili translators from the University administration, I accepted to help.

AFRICANA FACULTY DIALOGUES

Professor Kenneth Janken

Can you talk to us about your intellectual formation, and how this led to your current research interests?

I was born in Los Angeles, California, and grew up there in the 1960s. I am a product of public education – from kindergarten to high school, and both my undergraduate and graduate degrees are from public institutions. My parents were civil servants: my mother was an office manager at an elementary school, and my father was an accountant who audited the financial records of savings and loans and insurance companies for the State of California. I came to believe in the value to society of the public sector and the importance of extending and strengthening actions that promote a public goods framework.



Photo Credit: [AAAD Department Website](#)

I grew up with great social movements like the anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights Movements in the news and on people's lips. The early and mid-1970s also were among the final years of an active post-WWII labor movement, and when I was an undergraduate, I also participated in activities to support workers on strike against various companies. But by the early 1980s, these great social movements had died down, and while some things had changed for the better, many things had not. After a hiatus, I returned to college and entered graduate school in 1987. I had many reasons for returning, among them a desire to understand what had happened in the previous half-century and to see if what I learned might make a contribution to how we might move forward. In my first semester in the Ph.D. program in History at Rutgers University, I had the good fortune to take a course with the eminent scholar David Levering Lewis, whose biographies of Martin Luther King, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Wendell Willkie and his history of the Harlem Renaissance have won wide acclaim. He is a demanding and no-nonsense person, but just as important, he is kind, generous and encouraging. I asked him, and he agreed to be my advisor. I had an idea then that I could make a contribution to the scholarship of African American history, and I also knew that, because he demanded that his students get their work done in a timely manner and done well, that I would not languish and would complete my doctorate with a minimum of distractions.

It was in large measure because of Lewis' influence that I became interested in biography, and I have written two, *Rayford W. Logan and the Dilemma of the African-American Intellectual* and *Walter White: Mr. NAACP*. I remain interested in this genre.

Your 2016 book, *The Wilmington Ten: Violence, Injustice, and the Rise of Black Politics in the 1970s*, analyzed a key period in urban race relations in North Carolina. Can you tell us a bit about the research that went into the writing of the book?

Having lived in North Carolina since 1991, I wanted to research and write a North Carolina story. I had been aware of the Wilmington Ten since the mid-1970s, when there was a renewed push to have their convictions overturned and free them from prison. I conducted research in several archives, including the Southern Historical Collection here at UNC; the Southern Oral History Program, also here at Carolina; the State Archives of North Carolina; UNC Wilmington; UNC Charlotte; Elon University; the Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter presidential libraries; the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library; the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center of Howard University; and various oral history collections at institutions in the Wilmington area. In addition, I interviewed 35 people with direct knowledge of the Wilmington Ten case. I had to learn legalese in order to read trial transcripts, records of the appeals of their convictions and other legal documents. And I filed Freedom of Information Act requests, which, after several years of delay, resulted in a trove of FBI and U.S. Justice Department documents that were extremely useful to putting together the history.

Please talk to us about your current research and writing directions.

I am at work on a third biography, which, while not about an African American, definitely will examine African American political and cultural action in the U.S. and the world from roughly the 1930s to the 1970s. It is a biography of Cedric Belfrage (1904-1990), a British expatriate journalist who was an important figure in the development of an international response to the threats of fascism and war in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s and a progressive, left-wing opposition to the Cold War from the late 1940s through the 1980s. His work as a film critic, newspaper editor, reporter, and advocate for African American civil rights, organized labor, and anti-colonial activities in the United States, Britain and Latin America mark him as an influential thinker on the Left both in decades where those movements seemed to be ascendant and where they were on the defensive. His extensive ties and abiding friendships with leftists around the world point to a style of political organizing that is under-investigated: that causes are advanced not only by articulation of ideas but also by building trust and intimacy among and within circles of like-minded persons.

Apart from your popular course on "The Harlem Renaissance" (AAAD 350), you teach a new course on "Disaster, Resistance and Recovery in US Southern Black History" (AAAD 239). Can you tell us why you developed this course and how it feeds into your current work?

We are a Southern institution, and a good deal of African American history is Southern history. The South is frequently visited by environmental disasters of one kind or another – flooding, hurricanes, air and groundwater pollution caused by toxic waste, and now Covid-19, and who knows what is coming soon? I thought it was important to examine this phenomenon in historical context.

Professor Charlene Regester



Photo credit: Professor Charlene Regester

You've been a key part of AAAD for a long time, in addition to being from Chapel Hill yourself. Can you tell us how you've seen the Department change over time?

Initially, the Department was a Curriculum prior to becoming a Department and in order to make ourselves viable to become a Department, we were encouraged to increase the number of students taking our classes. We always prided ourselves on being good instructors, particularly for a lot of the introductory classes, which is generally where you attract undergraduate students who might be interested in majoring or minoring in the discipline. We understood the importance of serving as role models to a younger generation of students who would likely be interested in African American and African Studies.

Even as an undergraduate student my attraction to the Department began out of an effort to search for Black faculty who could serve as mentors, since so few Black faculty were represented in all Departments across the campus. The Black faculty members, along with other faculty affiliated with other departments who served as mentors, were larger than life to me because of their scholarship, intelligence, leadership and willingness to inspire another generation of students — many of whom were disadvantaged. In fact, I established a life-long relationship with many of the former faculty members who served as mentors over the course of my career. In retrospect, I understand the sacrifices and commitments they made to training a younger generation of students; they felt committed to training students to enter the academy, particularly after the volatile 1970s era.

The Curriculum in African American Studies would ultimately become a Department despite a number of struggles and has continued to grow in size, number, diversity, focus and perhaps reputation, as we now are beginning to launch a graduate program — a feat that I assumed would never be accomplished. Even though the progress has been slow, it has been steady and this is most important.

Please talk to us about what influenced you to write your book *African American Actresses: The Struggle for Visibility, 1900-1960*? What are a couple of take-aways from the text that you can share with us?

I have always been fascinated with history and realizing that so few volumes existed on Black women who worked in the cinema industry, I felt compelled to tell their story. Many of these women were bold and audacious, considering that they desired to become actresses and particularly during an era where African American women due to

their gender and race were particularly marginalized. Undeterred, these women understood the limitations they likely faced in the cinema industry, but they created a space for themselves and developed formidable strategies to subvert the all too frequent one-dimensional roles to which they were assigned. The strategies they employed included: subverting the gaze; “talking back”; acting masterly; feigning ignorance; etc. In my work, it was my intent to deconstruct how they functioned, how they were constructed, and how they resisted the inscriptions imposed on them.

In terms of take-aways, many of these actresses were resilient and politically inspired. One example is that of Lena Horne, who received the endorsement of the NAACP and who spent much of her off-screen career engaged in political struggles associated with this organization. Another example I studied is that of Fredi Washington, who was so light in complexion that she was encouraged to “pass” as white, but she refused to do so even though she popularized the mulatto character in the widely known film, 'Imitation of Life' (1934). Washington's screen career was somewhat thwarted because of the cinema industry's inability to appropriately cast her.

What does your current research and writing focus on?

My current study explores Black actors (both men and women) who helped usher in the era of integration during the 1940s, 1950, and 1960s. Due to their involvement in civil rights or outspokenness on the racial disparities that existed, these actors became the subjects of FBI investigations. There is some overlap between my past and present study in that both focus on African American performers. In this study, however, I want to delineate the trajectory that these actors pursued in navigating the racial divide and exemplify how they endured both personal as well as professional struggles to permeate the industry.

For example, one actress centered in this study is Eartha Kitt who was feminized, sexualized, and politicized on and off-screen. My study examines how she navigated the personal and political during an era of political turbulence and how she appropriated her social body and social being. Kitt's political involvement resulted in the derailment of her career: she was forced to leave the US for a while, but returned in later years to revive a thriving career. The study also interrogates the mask (a temporary camouflaging of the true self) and the masquerade (a sustained camouflaging of the true self) as this actress attempted to assert her identity and cultivate her craft in a complicated world all too eager to exploit her race and gender for its own political agenda.

How do you approach teaching your popular course on "The African American in cinema: 1900 to the present" (AAAD 250)?

In my class, it is important for me to introduce what has happened historically because this might explain or speak to some of the issues that persist across time with respect to race and racial representation. Whilst most students are familiar with contemporary cinema, they are less familiar with early film history. Many have never seen a Black silent film so it is important for them to see these films so that they understand how racial representations have evolved over time. I also attempt to introduce film theory so that they have the necessary tools and skills to read these racialized representations and interpret the complexity of these visual images.

AFRICANA FACULTY DIALOGUES

Professor Michael Lambert

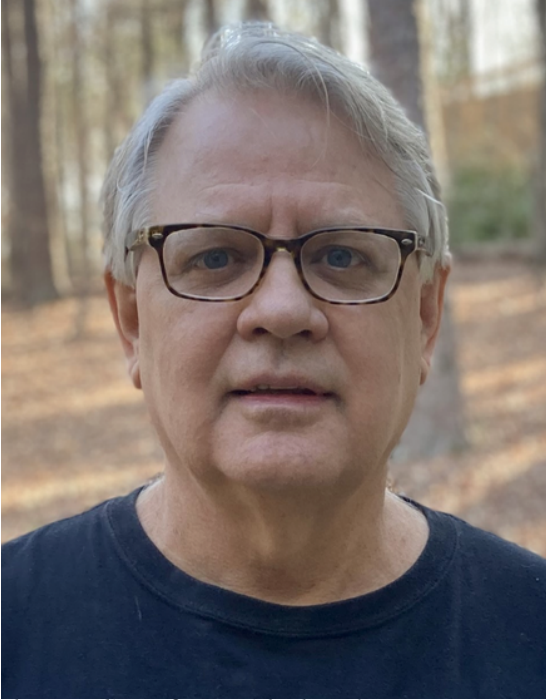


Photo Credit: Professor Michael Lambert

You directed the African Studies Center (ASC) at UNC for 10 years. Please talk to us about that experience and major milestones of your involvement with the ASC.

When we founded the African Studies Center (ASC) in 2005 our primary goal was to secure UNC's status as a National Resource Center in African studies. This is achieved through a competition that takes place every four years. The US Department of Education awards these grants based on the extent of an institution's commitment to African studies. When I was appointed Director in 2005, UNC did not have broad institutional strength in African studies and we were quite surprised when we were recognized as a National Resource Center less than a year after the Center was established. I think we got in by the skin of our teeth.

In the opinion of some, particularly those we beat out for this award, in 2006 UNC simply did not have sufficient commitment to African studies or a strong enough African language program to justify our designation as a National Resource Center. My tenure as ASC Director from 2005 to 2015 was devoted to addressing these deficiencies by increasing UNC's institutional commitment to African studies, so that we would be secure in our status as a National Resource Center moving forward. I think it is fair to say that we exceeded that goal. From 2005 to 2015 the number of UNC faculty working in African studies increased by over 50% (from 69 to 105), course offerings with Africa content increased by almost 75% (from 123 to 215), and UNC's institutional financial support for African studies increased by almost 70% (from roughly \$4 million to \$6.8 million). By 2012 we had established a well-respected African Languages Program which had the nation's most robust course enrollments in Swahili, Wolof, and Lingala. Now UNC is one of the leading National Resource Centers in African studies and, by my count, we are only one of four or five institutions that have continuously maintained this status from 2006 to present.

Tell us about your research in Senegal over time as well as its relation to your latest book project.

I have over 30 years of research experience in Senegal. During that time I have published on a wide range of topics, ranging from hip-hop and youth political movements, to press representations of political violence, to *négritude*, the francophone literary movement that was co-founded by Senegal's first president, Leopold Senghor. My current project returns to migration, the core focus of my first book *Longing for Exile*, and explores migration from the angle of boundaries, without

which, of course, there is no migration. Another way to describe this project is that I am exploring the afterlives in contemporary Senegal of the colonial strategy that Frantz Fanon calls 'compartmentalization.' This book project creates a conversation between three very different types of boundaries: the boundary between the global north and south (as seen in transcontinental migration), the boundary between rural and urban locations (as articulated through urban housing policy), and national boundaries, in particular the boundary between Senegal and Mauritania. Writing about the Senegal-Mauritania border has been particularly satisfying because this has taken me back to a region where long ago I worked for two years for a Mauritanian parastatal development organization, but which has not been the focus of my academic work.

What classes are you currently teaching at UNC and what motivated you to develop them?

I teach "Introduction to Africa," which all African studies faculty in the Department teach. The other classes I teach most frequently are "Ethnography of Africa" and "Political Protest and Conflict in Africa." "Ethnography of Africa" is directly related to my disciplinary background as an anthropologist. I use this course to introduce students to the genre of ethnographic writing, which is the principle research product in the field of anthropology. The course "Political Protest and Conflict," developed out of my research in Senegal. I happened to be in Senegal during several very significant instances of political conflict. The first was the emergence of separatist group fighting for the independence of Senegal's southern Casamance region, and the second was a series of democracy protests, which have long been a part of Senegal's political culture. I have another course on West Africa, which I am redesigning to focus more on migration. And finally, my favorite course is our departmental capstone course, "Intellectual Currents of African and African American Studies," which I developed out of a course I had taught twice as part of UNC's Honors Study Abroad Program in Cape Town. This class looks at political and academic writing produced on both sides of the Black Atlantic. Because the AAAD curriculum committee selected this course to be our departmental capstone, I do not have the opportunity to teach it as often as I would like.

You teach a freshman seminar on "African Migrations." Please explain why you focus on this topic and how you approach teaching on such an important issue.

I recently added this course to my teaching rotation and this is my second most favorite course to teach. I designed this course as a way to introduce students to African studies in a way that intersects with my research interests. The complete title of the course is "African Boundaries, Migrations, Displacements, and Belonging." In the core of this course we read six novels/memoirs, ranging from Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* (one of my all-time favorite books) to Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. All the students are in their first year and have almost no knowledge of Africa. It's a lot of fun watching their eyes open up to the African experience. Because they are first-year students, I try to set a strong academic tone and teach skills that will help them as they continue through their time at Carolina. For example, the course teaches them how to produce a scholarly research paper and be active learners both in and out of the classroom.

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Linkages 9-10 Editorial Team: Dr. Shakirah Hudani & Ms. Mina Yakubu.