African Studies at UCLA  
already in its Sixth Decade  

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International Institute, July 8, 2016 — The James S. Coleman African Studies Center (ASC), founded in 1959, is one of the oldest and most distinguished research, teaching, and outreach centers on Africa in the United States. UCLA is one of only two universities west of the Mississippi to have a full-fledged African Studies center (the other being the University of Kansas), which is complemented by a world-renowned library collection of Africana materials and a global arts and cultures museum (the Fowler Museum) that specializes in the arts of Africa and regularly curates exhibits.

ASC is dedicated to multidisciplinary research and teaching about Africa in its full complexity. In close to 60 years of operation, the center has nourished and sustained a dynamic community of world-renowned experts on Africa at UCLA, including historians, political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, linguists, ethnomusicologists and specialists on African literature, visual arts and performance, as well as many scientists and medical and public health professionals who specialize in Africa. The center is a forum where experts and students interact in a research environment that fosters a deeper understanding of Africa.

ASC founded UCLA’s African Studies academic programs, which have trained several generations of specialists. Graduates of the program have gone on to successful careers in diplomacy, development, and academia throughout Africa, the United States and beyond.

The center is committed to educating the UCLA campus and the greater Los Angeles community about Africa through lectures, conferences, symposia, and film screenings. Its public outreach activities also include highly valued professional development workshops and teaching resources for public school teachers, both of which aim to enhance the ability of primary, middle, and secondary teachers
to instruct their students about the breadth of African history and culture.

One of the center’s most important goals—and consistent achievements—is to continuously dispel American stereotypes about the continent and its peoples, deconstructing negative images through informed research and presentations by scholars from around the world, including African leaders in politics, culture, and academia.

UCLA Research Professor Edmond Keller directed the ASC from 1991 to 2001. (Photo: UCLA.)

**Historical Overview**

In response to growing national interest in post-colonial Africa, ASC was created in 1959 as an organized research unit of the University of California. Soon afterwards, it was designated a National Resource Center for African Studies by the U.S. government and received significant federal funding for its programs both at home and abroad close to four decades. ASC helped pioneer academic research and outreach programs on Africa by encouraging the study of the second largest continent on the planet in all of its dimensions, including its history, cultures, languages, economy, and modern politics. It was also the institutional host of the African Studies Association, the professional academic association of African experts in the country, for several years in the 1980s.

The founding director of the African Studies Center, political scientist James S. Coleman (1919–1985) was instrumental in establishing African Studies as an academic field of research. A pioneer in the field of African Studies in the United States, he is widely considered a major scholar in the field. The center was renamed in his honor in 1989.

**Educational reform in the immediate post-colonial era.** As representative of the Rockefeller Foundation in East Africa in the mid-1960s, Coleman recruited large numbers of African Ph.D. students to study at UCLA and other U.S. institutions of higher learning (including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, Wisconsin, and Indiana) in a range of disciplines. He also recruited top-level talent in all disciplines from western universities to teach in emerging African universities.

In that same decade, Coleman himself headed academic departments at both Makerere University in Uganda and the University of Nairobi in Kenya for several years, respectively. His engagement with higher education in Africa was focused on training a generation of African professors who went on to teach younger generations and become leaders in their respective universities.

As a later director of the center, UCLA political scientist Mike Lofchie noted, “Coleman was very much a believer in the ‘best and the brightest’—he wanted to bring the best and brightest of Africa here to the United States to study and learn, and he wanted to bring the very best and the brightest of the United States to Africa to teach.” Coleman was supported in that mission by grants from the U.S. government (primarily through the Department of Education), as well as from the Rockefeller, Ford, and Carnegie foundations.
The list of African scholars who were either trained by Coleman or whose education he facilitated, includes Dunstan M. Wai (1947–2005), a specialist on Arab-African relations who became Vice President of the Africa Region at the World Bank, and Wilbert Kleruu, who became a regional commissioner in Tanzania under President Julius Nyerere. Other notable beneficiaries of Coleman’s efforts as a recruiter for American foundations were the eminent Nigerian scholar Claude Ake, Kenyan political scientist and politician Peter Anyang’ Nyang’o, Ethiopian filmmaker Haile Gerima and renowned Kenyan scholar and intellectual Ali Mazrui.

May 29, 2015. UCLA’s African Activist Association and the Community Programs Office celebrated African Liberation Day. (Photo: Sonja Bartlett/Daily Bruin.)

Pioneering the teaching of African languages. Over the course of its first four decades, starting with James Coleman, ASC helped develop a robust teaching program in African languages at UCLA that offered instruction through the intermediate, and even advanced, level in numerous languages, complemented by courses in African literature. These languages included:

- Amharic (Ethiopia)
- Bambara (Mali)
- Berber/Tamashaq (primarily, Morocco and Algeria)
- Hausa (Niger, Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Sudan, Togo)
- Xhosa (South Africa)
- Swahili (Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda)
- Yoruba (Nigeria, Benin)
- Zulu (South Africa; Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland)

Notably, ASC helped make UCLA a leading institution in the teaching of Swahili. UCLA linguists Russell Schuh and Thomas Hinnesbusch, among others, pioneered the teaching of African languages in U.S. academia, writing grammars, textbooks, and dictionaries with the help of numerous graduate students and Africans on the ground. Many of their textbooks continue to be used throughout the United States and Europe to teach Swahili (and related Bantu languages), Hausa, and Miya.

University budget cuts gradually reduced the scope of African language teaching at UCLA, taking on steam in the 1990s and 2000s. However, the university continues to offer instruction in Amharic, Bambara, Hausa, Swahili, Yoruba, Wolof, and Zulu. In addition, Hinnebusch has created an online Swahili poetry archive, complete with a digital anthology and glossary of vocabulary used in this poetry.

Russell G. Schuh (left), professor of linguistics and African languages, and Thomas Hinnebusch, professor emeritus of linguistics. (Photos: UCLA.)
The UCLA International Institute’s Center for World Languages also hosts the Language Materials Project (LMP, www.lmp.ucla.edu), a fully searchable online bibliography of teaching materials for approximately 150 less commonly taught languages, including 30 African languages. The LMP offers authentic teaching materials, language profiles, and a K–12 gateway. In a testament to the utility and professionalism of the project, the LMP and its staff — Professor Emeritus Hinnebusch, linguist Barbara Blakenship, and researcher Arturo Diaz — were awarded the Modern Language Association’s eighth annual prize for a bibliography, archive or digital project (for the 2012–13 period.)

**African Development Institute.** In the 1980s, a grant from the Episcopal Church enabled ASC to create an “African Development Institute” that sponsored a series of seminars and publications on African economic development that also dealt with environmental issues. The initiative enabled the center to recruit and train a talented generation of graduate students in many disciplines. One of those students, Jamie Monson, has since become one of the leading U.S. experts on contemporary Chinese-African relations. Monson went on to complete a Ph.D. in history at UCLA; she is now director of the African Studies Center and professor of history at Michigan State University.

**Scholar and student exchange programs with Africa.** ASC has actively pursued formal academic exchanges and collaborative programs with African universities throughout its existence; it has also hosted African academic colleagues from across the continent on a more informal basis. Whereas in the 1960s UCLA welcomed many African doctoral students, the 1970s began to see more African scholars visiting UCLA to teach courses and do research.

For example, the center hosted a number of visiting African scholars from Francophone West Africa in that decade, who both conducted research projects and taught courses for the African Studies program. In the 1980s, funds from the Institute for Economic Development enabled ASC to forge a scholarly exchange program with Cuttington College, a small private college in Liberia. In the same decade, ASC also led an academic exchange program with the College of Education of Somali National University (SNU).

Over the years, the ASC has also sponsored a number of Regents Lecturers, including former president of Nigeria (1999–2007) **Olusegun Obasanjo** and renowned Kenyan scholar and intellectual **Ali Mazrui**. During the 1980s, the African Studies Center received funding from the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) to create an academic linkage with the **College of Education of Somali National University (SNU)**. The initiative enabled SNU education faculty members to receive graduate training in their particular discipline at UCLA.

Approximately a dozen SNU faculty members enrolled in the center’s M.A.
Program in African Studies, eventually receiving MAAS degrees that focused on the Africa region, but featured a strong disciplinary emphasis. Visiting Somali faculty received graduate training in such fields as geography, language teaching, comparative literature, and African history. Finally, a number of UCLA faculty members associated with the African Studies Center visited Somalia to gain familiarity with its rich cultural and historical heritage as part of the program.

In the late 1990s, ASC created the Institute for the Study of Gender in Africa with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. This program hosted both junior and senior African scholars of gender studies including Nkiru Nzegwu, Bola Udegbe, Frehiwot Tesfaye, Jaspal Singh and Oyeronke Oyewume. In addition to supporting colloquia, including a series on “Gender and the Environment in Africa,” the institute supported several African women scholars (including junior and senior professors) to come to UCLA to do research on gender in Africa and deliver occasional lectures at UCLA.

In a major initiative in the late 1990s and early 2000s, ASC worked with the three major universities of East Africa—Dar Es Salaam University in Tanzania, Makerere University in Uganda, and the University of Nairobi in Kenya—to create the Uongozi Institute (uongozi is Swahili for leadership). With support from the Ford Foundation and additional funders, that Institute offered a six-week leadership training program in Africa for three consecutive summers for undergraduate students from the three African countries and from throughout the United States. The basic goal was to build networks among the next generation of young Africans and Americans who might go into the fields of African Studies and international relations.

Each summer, approximately 50 talented undergraduate sophomore and junior students (drawn in equal numbers from the United States and the three African universities) came together at the Uongozi Institute to attend a combination of academic and practical training held sequentially at the respective sponsoring universities in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. The institute, which also invited professors from U.S. universities to present lectures and lead classes, organized visits to international organizations, including the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (located in Arusha, Tanzania).

Once students attended the Uongozi Institute for one summer, they were encouraged to compete for internships...
with businesses and/or development agencies and nonprofit organizations in either Africa or the United States. Graduates of the institute went on to work in the Tanzanian president’s office, the international tax and audit services company KPMG, a U.S. senator’s office, the World Bank, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the BBC. Yet another pursued post-doctoral work in African legal studies. The Uongozi Institute continues to operate to this day; although it no longer funds non-African students, such students remain welcome to attend its summer courses.

The initiative funded four signature projects on Africa regarding, respectively, conflict management and democracy; HIV/AIDS; and urban governance, water, and poverty alleviation; and an online curriculum project (“GlobalLink–Africa”). The program provided innumerable benefits to UCLA students and faculty working on Africa; one awardee used his funding to give a year-long course on the globalization of African music that featured guest teaching by a number of master African musicians.

GRCA also organized conferences and supported several major research projects that resulted in publications. These publications included:


**Educational reform in Africa in the 21st century.** Since 2013, the Africa Studies Center has been leading a multiyear education reform project with colleagues at the University of Rwanda College of Education and the UCLA Center for Women’s Studies. Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development through Higher Education for Development, the initiative is helping Rwanda educators address gender bias in their education system. Its specific goals are to train Rwandan teachers in gender-sensitive pedagogy, encourage more girls to complete secondary school, and attract more women into the teaching profession.

Although focused on education, the UCLA-University of Rwanda partnership ultimately seeks to empower women in all spheres of life. ASC is currently leveraging the grant to pursue additional partnership activities beyond the USAID award cycle. In October 2013, for example, it teamed up with the 4Afrika Initiative of Microsoft.

The 4Afrika Initiative specifically seeks to actively engage in Africa’s economic development in order to improve its global competitiveness. Its work concentrates on three pillars: skills development, innovation and access to technology. As part of its work with the initiative, ASC has launched its UCLA in Africa Initiative, which seeks to develop distance learning programs with African institutions in order to expand educational access to people living in rural areas, as well as develop alternative teacher training models.

**Education**

The African Studies Center spearheaded the creation of UCLA's undergraduate and graduate interdisciplinary African Studies programs, for which it continues to develop courses.1 Once housed and undergraduate specialization in African Studies to students pursuing degrees in anthropology, economics, geography, history Near Eastern languages and literature, political science, and sociology.

In 1966, the program became part of the college’s Social Sciences Division. Subsequently renamed the African Studies Specialization in 1987, the “specialization” became an African Studies minor in 2000. The administration of that minor was transferred

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1 An Interdepartmental Planning Committee on African Studies was established in 1956, one year before the UCLA Institute of International and Foreign Studies was created. In 1958, the committee was renamed the Faculty Advisory Committee on the African Studies Program and, under the guidance of Founding ASC Director James Coleman, established a Special Undergraduate Program in African Studies in 1959 within the UCLA College of Letters & Science. The program offered an East Africa to expand educational opportunities and skills development in Africa.
administered by ASC on behalf of the UCLA College of Letters & Science, these programs were transferred to a dedicated unit of the UCLA International Institute in 2002 (now the “Academic Programs” department). Both the undergraduate and graduate programs offer courses on Africa in a wide range of disciplines, including the fine arts, humanities, social sciences, and certain professional fields.

Today, UCLA undergraduates may pursue a minor in African Studies, or major or minor in Middle Eastern and African Studies at the International Institute. The African Studies M.A. program can also be pursued in conjunction with a master’s in public health, enabling students to complete an M.P.H. and an M.A. at the same time. Students in both programs are eligible to attend universities in Egypt, Ghana, and South Africa through University of California Education Abroad Programs, which permit them to take courses that transfer directly to UCLA.

In addition to supporting UCLA’s African Studies and study abroad programs in Africa, ASC draws on its own extensive ties with colleagues and universities across Africa to periodically sponsor student and professor exchanges with African institutions of higher education. ASC also advocates for the hiring of African specialists in the humanities and social sciences departments at the university, invites leading scholars of Africa to speak at lectures and conferences (benefiting undergraduate and graduate students in many departments), and employs many African Studies students in work-study positions.

Among the many African students who have studied at UCLA is Ethiopia’s Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Tekeda Alemu (B.A. 1973, M.A. 1976 – political science).

While UCLA does not offer a Ph.D. in African Studies, M.A. graduates can enroll in Ph.D. programs in specific disciplines at the university and focus their research on Africa. In fact, the interdisciplinary Africa Studies M.A. program has consistently channeled exceptional students into UCLA’s Ph.D. programs in history and political science.

Doctoral students with research interest in Africa are, however, enrolled in a wide variety of departments at UCLA, including anthropology; linguistics; geography; folklore and mythology; comparative literature; ethnomusicology; art history; the schools of public policy and graduate education; public health; theatre, film and television; and arts and architecture.


UCLA’s master’s degree program in African Area Studies was first created in 1963 in the College of Letters & Science, where it became part of the Social Sciences Division in 1966. That program was renamed the African Studies M.A. program in 2001; the administration of the program was transferred to the UCLA International Institute in 2002.
Two other African Studies M.A. students who completed dissertations in African history at UCLA are T. J. Desch-Obi (UCLA Ph.D. 2000) of Bernard Baruch College of the City University of New York, author of *Fighting for Honor: The History of African Martial Art Traditions in the Atlantic World*; and Eritrean scholar Awet Tewolde Weldemichael (UCLA Ph.D. 2008) of the University of Kentucky, who authored a comparative study of revolutions in Africa and Southeast Asia (he learned Indonesian in the process), *Third World Colonialism and Strategies of Liberation: Eritrea and East Timor*.

Among the many Africanists who completed Ph.D.s in political science at UCLA are Kipkorir Aly Aza Rana (1990) of Kenya, a senior representative of the World Trade Organization, where he served as Deputy Director-General in 2002–2005; Suzanna Wing (UCLA 2000), associate professor of political science, Haverford College; Rev. Robert Dowd (UCLA 2003), assistant professor of political science, Notre Dame University; Lahra Smith (UCLA 2005), associate professor of political science, Georgetown University. Senait Woldu Tesfamichael completed an M.A. in African Studies at UCLA in 2002 and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at University of California Santa Barbara.

**Scholarships.** As a National Resource Center for African Studies for many decades, ASC consistently won competitive grant funding from the Department of Education that funded undergraduate and graduate students to study Africa and African languages at UCLA. The center has also distributed numerous faculty and graduate student fellowships through the various “institutes” it created to address specific topics over the course of its history (see “Historical Overview” section above).

Scholars at UCLA also work to make additional funding available to students in the field. In the late 2000s, for example, ASC director and UCLA historian Andrew Apter and his UC Berkeley colleague Percy C. Hintzen submitted a successful proposal to the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in New York to fund dissertation proposals on “Black Atlantic Studies,” a field that addresses black culture in the Atlantic region as a unified culture. As a result, SSRC accepted competitive applications and awarded $5,000 grants to students to develop dissertation proposals during their second or third year of graduate study.

More recently, current ASC Director Steven Nelson and former ASC Director Françoise Lionnet co-directed the UCLA Mellon Postdoctoral Program in the Humanities, “Cultures in Transnational Perspective,” which awarded two-year fellowships to newly minted doctorates studying transnational identities from a contemporary or historical perspective from 2006 through 2014.
Student participation in ASC activities. ASC has a strong partnership with the African Activist Association (AAA) of UCLA, a student group dedicated to education and activism in the realm of African social, cultural, and political issues. The center also encourages African Studies students, including Ph.D. students from a wide variety of disciplines, to become involved in local community outreach activities through its “Africa in the Classroom” program, which organizes live performances of African music and dance, as well as academic presentations, at schools in the Los Angeles area. The center’s graduate student-written and edited journal, *UFAHAMU*, is another key component of ASC’s engagement with the student body at UCLA.

Faculty experts. More than 50 faculty members teaching in approximately 30 disciplines at UCLA have significant interest and experience in Africa. UCLA has long been known for leading Africanists in its history, political science, and ethnomusicology departments, not to mention its music and dance departments, but African experts can be found throughout the campus, including in health and medical sciences schools on South Campus.

In addition to the distinguished faculty who have served as directors of the African Studies Center (see “Leadership” section below), well-known experts on Africa at UCLA include/have included anthropologists Walter Goldschmidt, M.G. Smith, Hilda Kuper, and Sondra Hale; historians Boniface Obechere and Robert Hill; theatre historian and African American folklorist Beverly Robinson; African linguists Wolf Leslau, William Welmers, Russell Schuh, and Thomas Hinnebusch; anthropologist, ethnomusicologist, and musician Chris Waterman — who became a long-serving dean of the School of the Arts and Architecture; and internationally recognized post-colonial film expert Teshome Gabriel, who also taught Amharic and headed the African Studies M.A. program at ASC for many years.

Among other notable faculty members with a specialization in Africa at UCLA are/were political scientists Richard Sklar and Daniel Posner; the great African ethnomusicologist Kwabena Nketia and his talented student, Jacqueline Djedje; historians Edward Alpers, William Worger, and Christopher Ehret; geographer Judith Carney; Congolese novelist Alain Mabanckou (French and Francophone Studies); law professor Richard Abel; urban planning expert Stephen K. Commins; theater historian and folklorist Beverly Robinson; folklorist Don Cosentino filmmaker and ethnomusicologist Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy; and art historians Marla Berns, Z.S. Strother, Arnold Rubin, and Mary (Polly) Nooter Roberts.

Among the many South Campus experts with significant research interests in Africa are/were Dr. Derrick Jeliffe, a professor of public health and pediatrics who worked tirelessly to raise the profile and importance of pediatrics in the medical schools and teaching hospitals of East Africa; Dr. Martin Shapiro, a professor of internal medicine and public health who earned both an MPH and a Ph.D. in African history at UCLA (his research focused on
health care services in Portuguese Africa); and Dr. Thomas Coates, director of the UCLA Program in Global Health and infectious disease specialist at the Geffen School of Medicine, who has conducted large research projects on HIV prevention in Africa for many years.

Publications

ASC currently sponsors two major publications in the African Studies field: African Arts, one of the only magazines in the world dedicated to African visual and performing arts, and UFAHAMU, the oldest and longest-running graduate student journal on Africa in the world (published since 1969). Both titles are now published in digital form, with African Arts available through Kindle. On the heels of its 50th birthday, African Arts is considered the vehicle for disseminating research on Africa’s artistic heritage; as such, it plays a major role in educating the U.S. public about Africa.

In addition, many conferences sponsored by ASC over the years have resulted in significant publications in the field, including Pluralism in Africa (1969), edited by UCLA sociologist Leo Kuper and UCLA social anthropologist Michael Garfield Smith; and The Archeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History (1982), edited by UCLA historian/linguist Christopher Ehret and UCLA historian/archaeologist Merrick Posnansky.

Finally, ASC published Occasional Papers by faculty and visiting scholars for many decades; those papers, together with the James Smoot Coleman Memorial Papers, are available online through the California Digital Library.

Library and Cultural Resources

UCLA Library. One of the top academic research libraries in North America, the UCLA library system possesses an exceptional Africana collection of over 175,000 volumes. The collection is overseen and enhanced by Ruby Bell-Gam, African Studies Librarian at UCLA. It has special strengths in African government documents, maps, newspapers, manuscripts, and publications in African languages. Over 10,000 full-text theses and dissertations on Africa and related topics are also held or licensed online, while hundreds of foreign dissertations are available on interlibrary loan from the Center for Research Libraries (CRL).
The African Studies Center has consistently supported the African collection at UCLA, initially funding a dedicated African bibliographer at the university’s research library (later, the Charles E. Young Research Library, or YRL) for many years and hosting occasional conferences of Africana librarians at UCLA.

UCLA’s African studies collections are located and accessible throughout its library system. The Arts Library, Music, Law, Biomedical, Management, and Science & Engineering libraries provide Africa-related resources for teaching and research in their subject areas, complementing the more expansive humanities and social sciences holdings in YRL and the undergraduate collections in the College (Powell) Library.

The UCLA Instructional Media Collections and the Ethnomusicology Archive include recorded African language material, music recordings and text, artist interviews, dance performance videos, and state-of-the-art facilities for viewing and listening. The YRL also subscribes to both regional and local newspapers and archives from Africa.

African language resources of the UCLA Library include digitized manuscripts in Ge’ez and Amharic, as well as learning and reading materials in Oromo, Tigrinya, Arabic, Akan-Twi, Bamana/Bambara, Wolof, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Kinyarwanda, Somali, Swahili, Chichewa, Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans, and the Cape Verde and Seychelles creoles. A major gift from Gerald and Barbara Weiner to the YRL included a unique collection of 239 Ethiopic bound manuscripts and scrolls, which complement the library’s renowned special collections and general holdings in Ethiopian languages and cultures.

Through an innovative library fellowship program, UCLA Library Special Collections offers qualified graduate students a unique and mutually beneficial opportunity to apply their language skills and subject knowledge in processing and describing these collections and creating much-needed finding aids, while receiving professional training in archival manuscripts processing.

YRL’s cartographic resources includes rare historical manuscript and facsimile maps of Africa, hundreds of printed and online maps, atlases and a growing database of digitized Southern African maps from published books. African photographs and slide collections include Jacques Maquet’s Central African collection, Ralph Bunche’s photographs of Southern and Western Africa from the early to mid-20th century, and the microfilm edition of the Royal Commonwealth Society collection of more than 900 photographs.

**Fowler Museum.** Founded as the Museum of Cultural History in 1963 to house various collections of non-Western art and artifacts on campus, the Fowler Museum explores global arts and cultures with an emphasis on works from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Americas—past and present. In addition to active collecting, the museum initiates research projects, fieldwork, exhibitions and publications. Its collection and exhibits frequently highlight the arts and peoples of Africa, including the work of contemporary artists. As such, it offers a unique campus resource for Africanists and African Studies students at UCLA and the greater Los Angeles region.

**Public Outreach**

ASC is dedicated to educating the campus and the greater Los Angeles metropolitan community, including its large African population, about contemporary and historical Africa. It accordingly offers a robust schedule of lectures, symposia, conferences, and public education forums on Africa each year. The center also makes a number of resources available to the general public on its website, including online country profiles of every nation in Africa and the Global-Links online...
curriculum on Africa and globalization. Finally, it maintains a collection of films on Africa for public viewing at its offices upon request.

Renowned African musician Baaba Maal gave a special concert at UCLA on April 17, 2010 in honor of the African Studies Center’s 50th anniversary. (Photo: ASC-UCLA Live brochure.)

The center’s public events series continuously responds to critical contemporary issues of Africa, which have included gender discrimination, HIV/AIDS prevention, the environment, and specific political crises. In the 2013–2014 academic year, ASC continued this tradition by sponsoring a series of lectures on expanding ties between China and African nations. Co-sponsored by the Asia Studies Institute of the UCLA International Institute, the series featured presentations by African scholars, together with experts on Africa and China, that explored the many aspects and impacts of this relationship in Africa and China, both of which currently host considerable expatriate communities of one another’s citizens.

Among the many notable speakers and visiting professors who have delivered lectures at the African Studies Center are **Idayat Bolarinwa Udehge**, a Nigerian professor of psychology from the University of Ibadan; **Chris Hani** and **Ahmed Mohamed Kathrada**, members of the African National Congress Central Committee; noted writers **Wole Soyinka** (Nigeria, Nobel Laureate/ Literature, 1986), **Ngugi wa Thiong’o** (Kenya, novelist and playwright), and **Aminatta Forna** (Sierra Leone/UK); **Kenneth Kaunda**, former president of Zambia (1964–91); **John Kofi Agyekum Kufofour**, former president of Ghana (2001–09) and former chairperson of the African Union (2007–08); **Raila Odinga**, former prime minister of Kenya (2008–13); and **Susan Rice**, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (1997–2001) and currently the U.S. national security advisor; and **Wangari Maathai** (Nobel Laureate/ Peace, 2004) and head of the Green Belt Movement, a grassroots environmental organization in Kenya.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o spoke about the English translation of his book, "Wizard of the Crow,” at ASC on November 1, 2006. (Photo: Kevin Matthews.)

As part of its outreach effort, ASC hosts an annual James S. Coleman Memorial Lecture in honor of the center’s founder. Past speakers at the center’s annual Coleman lecture have included **Ali Al’amin Mazrui** of Kenya, a renowned expert on Africa and Islamic studies and longtime friend of James Coleman; **Callisto Madavo**, vice president for the African Region at the World Bank; **Eddah Gachukia**, a Kenyan educator, academic and parliamentarian who founded and directs the Riara Group of Schools in Nairobi, Kenya, which today include a kindergarten, two primary schools, a girl’s secondary school and a university. Gachukia was also the first executive director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists, an international NGO.
founded in 1992 to empower girls and women through gender-responsive education in over 30 African countries.


More recent featured speakers include historian Mamadou Diouf of Columbia University, who spoke on Islam and the making of public space; African economic historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza of Quinnipiac University, who addressed the developmental and democratic challenges of post-colonial Kenya; Adams Bodomo of the University of Vienna, who presented recent research on the growing African diaspora in China conducted over a five-year period; political scientist Pearl T. Robinson of Tufts University, who spoke on Mama Kiota, a Sufi spiritual leader who has been educating and empowering rural African Muslim women in Niger for 40 years; and historian Caroline Elkins of Harvard University, who recounted how her book, Imperial Reckoning, inspired a court case by survivors of colonial-era torture in Kenya that ended in a settlement and an apology by the British government for the use of torture.

Outreach to schools. The African Studies Center has always devoted a significant part of its resources to outreach to public schools, aiming to expose young school children to Africa and provide their teachers with accurate, up-to-date knowledge about its many countries. Although these activities center primarily on public schools in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, they occasionally reach further—one notable program was conducted in Atlanta, for example.

Regular summer teacher workshops have addressed such topics as the representation of African descendants in Latin America, food as a way to teach lessons of world culture, and African influence on artistic expression in the Americas.

In the late 2000s, ASC led an initiative in Southern California to improve instruction on Africa in K–12 classrooms. Created by the Africa Society and funded by USAID, “Teach Africa” addressed the lack of Africa education in American curricula by providing both young people and teachers a better understanding of the continent and its central role in the global community. The initiative encompassed presentations to school leaders and education stakeholders in Southern California; training workshops for K–12 teachers; and large youth forums to stimulate young people’s interest in Africa. As part of the program, three educators and three students from schools in Southern California went to Uganda, where they met their counterparts in local schools during a four-day visit that was filmed by the Disney Channel and later made into a documentary.
Since 2009, ASC has also regularly offered a summer Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program in Morocco for roughly a dozen primary, middle, and high school teachers. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the intensive five-week, summer program combines intensive Arabic-language study, academic training, cultural site visits, direct personal experience, and curriculum development workshops. The goal of the program is to expand teachers’ capacity to teach about Africa and Muslim societies. U.S. teachers are paired with a Moroccan teacher as a mentor, and have the chance to observe teachers and students interact in summer school sessions. ASC then supports participants to develop curricular units upon their return to the United States.

Other outreach initiatives. As early as 1962, ASC began offering regular training workshops for Peace Corps volunteers prior to their deployment in African countries, including Ethiopia, Uganda, and many others. This training, which occurred throughout the calendar year, included instruction in African history, politics, and culture, as well as in African languages. The center continued to provide such instruction until the mid-1970s, when the Peace Corps began to offer volunteer training in country.

A major outreach program conducted in the 1960s sought to enhance the ability of faculty in smaller higher education institutions in the United States to teach courses on Africa. The two-year program, which involved a summer of coursework at UCLA followed by summer study trip to Africa, was attended by some 30 faculty members from a variety of smaller colleges and universities around the country. A few program participants, including economic historian Robert Cummings (1940–2007), went on to become accomplished Africanists in their own right. Cummings later headed the African Studies Department at Howard University and served as chairman of the African Studies Association. The program was subsequently run by historian Robert Edgar of Howard University, another UCLA graduate.

During the 20 years of Tom Bradley’s tenure as mayor of Los Angeles (1973–1993), ASC served as an advisor and resource for the city’s Task Force on Africa. During those decades, the task force established a broad array of contacts and exchanges with many African countries in the spheres of trade, business, and culture, including cooperative activities in LA’s sister city of Lusaka, Zambia.

Leadership

The UCLA African Studies Center has benefited from the leadership of an array of impressive scholars of Africa in different disciplines, many of whom have left a lasting impact on their fields and African Studies in general. (The years of each director’s tenure immediately follow his or her name.)
May 1, 2016. The Annual James S. Coleman lecture brought together seven of the eight scholars who have served as director of the African Studies Center. From left: Edmond Keller, Allen Roberts, Françoise Lionnet, Steven Nelson, Andrew Apter, Merrick Posnansky and Mike Lofchie.

As noted earlier, founding director James S. Coleman (1959–65) almost singlehandedly established African Studies as an academic discipline in the immediate post-colonial era, educating a generation of African and American political scientists who specialized in the continent. Coleman, who later directed the institutional predecessor of the UCLA International Institute, was an exceptional scholar and impressed all who met him with his charismatic leadership and commitment to both building higher education in Africa and teaching the world about Africa. Several of his works remain foundational texts in the field today, including “Nationalism in Tropical Africa” [American Political Science Review 48 (2): 404–26/1954], Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (1958), and Education and Political Development (1965).

Benjamin E. Thomas (1965–67), an economic geographer of North Africa who was known for his work, Trade Routes of Algeria and the Sahara (1957), penned a highly useful ASC Occasional Paper on field work methodology for geographers working in Africa. Law professor Paul Proehl (1967–68), a well-known scholar of African law and former head of the UC Education Abroad Program in Bordeaux, was instrumental in expanding ties between American scholars of English-speaking East Africa and French scholars of French-speaking West Africa at the African Studies Center. Proehl’s most longstanding contribution to ASC was, however, the creation of the journal African Arts, which in its first few years was published in both English and French. Proehl went on to become vice chancellor for university relations and public programming at UCLA under Chancellor Charles E. Young.

Leo Kuper (1968–73), a South African of Lithuanian Jewish heritage who was a longtime professor of sociology at UCLA, pioneered the field of comparative genocide, publishing such works as Genocide: Its Political Use in the 20th Century (1981) and The Prevention of Genocide (1985). Kuper also had a lifelong interest in ethnic relations in Africa, publishing such works as Race, Class, and Power: Ideology and Revolutionary Change in Plural Societies (1974) and the above-mentioned edited volume, Pluralism in Africa, with M.S. Smith.


Political scientist Michael F. Lofchie (1978–88) has been associated with the African Studies Center for almost 50 years. Lofchie has written extensively on the political economy of Africa and comparative African politics; his works include The Policy Factor: Agricultural Performance in Kenya and Tanzania (1989), The Political Economy of Tanzania’s Decline and Recovery (2014), and numerous journal articles contributions to edited volumes. Lofchie helped create and, as of 2014, was the academic chair of the undergraduate International Development Studies
Program of the UCLA International Institute; he also regularly leads undergraduate summer travel-study programs in Europe for the political science department.

**Merrick Posnansky (1988–1991),** a specialist in West Africa and longtime professor in both the history and anthropology departments of UCLA, is a pioneer in the linguistic history of African. His co-edited volume mentioned above, *The Archaeological and Linguistic Reconstruction of African History* (1982), was a foundational work in the field. Trained as an archaeologist, Posnansky worked as both an archaeologist and a professor in Uganda and Ghana for 20 years before coming to UCLA, where he also headed the UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology. Posnansky published findings from a 25-year longitudinal, ethno-archaeological survey of a traditional Hani community in Ghana under the title *Reflecting on Benho and Hani, 1970–1998* (2010).

**Edmond J. Keller (1991–2001),** a political scientist specializing in comparative African politics, is the author of *Education, Manpower, and Development: The Impact of Educational Policy in Kenya* (1980), *Revolutionary Ethiopia: From Empire to People’s Republic* (1988), and *Identity, Citizenship, and Political Conflict in Africa* (2014), as well as several coedited volumes and more than 80 scholarly articles and contributions to edited volumes. Keller has been a visiting research scholar in number of African higher educational institutions and consults widely on issues of African development, public policy, and regional security. He has been a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Development Studies (University of Nairobi), the Bureau of Educational Research (University of Nairobi), the Institute of International Studies (UC Berkeley), and the Africa Institute of South Africa.

Keller has been on the editorial board of several political science and African Studies journals; vice president and president of the African Studies Association; and a member of the board of Oxfam America and USA for Africa, as well as several professional organizations, including the American Political Science Association and African Political Science Association.

Anthropologist **Allen Roberts (2001–2007)** specializes in the arts and humanities of Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa and the African diasporas, especially that of the Indian Ocean World. He teaches in the UCLA departments of World Arts and Cultures and French and Francophone Studies, as well as for the African Studies Program of the UCLA International Institute (for which he was academic chair from 2011 through 2014). While ASC director, Roberts initiated a project with Tom Smith of the UCLA Center for Tropical Research to found an interdisciplinary research center in Yaoundé, Cameroon, thanks to a major UCLA International Institute grant. Roberts has curated many museum African art exhibits, including several for the Fowler Museum, for which he has edited or co-written a number of books. Among his publications are *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo* (2013) and the co-authored volumes (with Professor Mary Roberts), *Visions of Africa: Luba* (2007) and *A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal* (2003). His 2012 book, *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo,* was given the Arnold Rubin Outstanding Publication Award by the Arts Council of the African Studies Association.

Anthropologist **Andrew Apter (2007–2011)** holds appointments in both the UCLA departments of anthropology and history and the UCLA International Institute, where he teaches courses for the African Studies and International Development Studies programs. From 2006 through 2011, he chaired the African Studies M.A. program. Apter’s ethnographic research focuses on Yoruba


Steven Nelson (2015–present), is Professor of African and African American art history at UCLA and the author of the award-winning From Cameroon to Paris: Mousgoum Architecture in and out of Africa (Chicago, 2007). His writings have appeared in numerous venues. Nelson’s current research includes monographs on the history of modern Dakar, Sénégal; the Underground Railroad; and the use of geography in contemporary African and African American art. Under Nelson’s leadership, the center turns a new and exciting page of its distinguished history.

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