

PRESS RELEASE

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE CONCLUDES "GLOBAL GHANA": A SEASON OF SCHOLARLY AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS WITH CONFERENCE IN ACCRA, GHANA, OCTOBER 27-29, 2022

The second edition of The Africa Institute's annual country-focused program continues in Accra, Ghana, convened by leading scholars Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Jean Allman, Carina Ray and Joseph Oduro-Frimpong.



Global Ghana panel in Sharjah, UAE. Photo courtesy The Africa Institute.

October 27, 2022 (Sharjah, UAE)—The Africa Institute presents *Global Ghana*, the second edition of its "country-focused season"—an annual initiative exploring one African country or African diaspora community through a range of scholarly and public programs. The *Global Ghana* programs conclude with a conference in Accra, Ghana from October 27 through October 29 themed *Global Ghana: In Search of Africa's Black Star*.

Global Ghana is organized by The Africa Institute in collaboration with leading scholars **Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Carina Ray, Jean Allman and Joseph Oduro-**



Frimpong, and explores topics such as Pan-Africanism, anticolonialism, contemporary art in Ghana, restitution, independence, and more. Along with panel discussions, the multidisciplinary program also includes music, performances, and more.

“Our country-focused season furthers our commitment to the study and understanding of Africa and the African diaspora,” said The Africa Institute Director **Salah M. Hassan**. “We look forward to continuing our momentum this year focused on Ghana, expanding scholarship through this robust program of panels and performances. We engage a variety of perspectives from artists, scholars, students, and activists to discuss where Ghana was then, where it is now, and where it may be in the future.”

The Africa Institute’s Ghana-focused season aims to engage Ghana’s history and contemporary condition, critically and creatively. Pushing beyond conventional narratives that oversimplify the nation’s profound significance to its citizens, continental neighbors, and the larger African diaspora, the season seeks to reveal the complex and contested forces that have shaped Ghana, past and present.

The Africa Institute created this annual series to highlight the complex history of the African world while also providing a forum for creatively engaging its present and imagining new futures. Inaugurated in 2019-20 with *Ethiopia: Modern Nation/Ancient Roots*, the country-focused season is an integral part of The Africa Institute’s year-round work to develop and support original scholarship and programming that expands understanding of African and African diaspora studies among the academic community and the broader public.

Global Ghana began in Sharjah, UAE with an inaugural event in November 2021 that included convenor presentations and a music performance by traditional Ghanaian band Hewale Sounds, accompanied by singer Ruth Ama Williams. It continued in March 2022 in Sharjah with *Global Ghana: Sites of Departure/Sites of Return*, a series of panels, visual art exhibitions and music and theater performances by Ghanaian artists such as dramatist Elisabeth Efuia Sutherland and rapper M.anifest. The programs in Accra in October 2022 conclude the year-long exploration.

GLOBAL GHANA: IN SEARCH OF AFRICA'S BLACK STAR
Accra, Ghana | October 27-29, 2022

The second part of the two-part scholarly conference, ***Global Ghana: In Search of Africa’s Black Star***, explores the multiplicity of meanings that have been and continue



to be invested in Ghana as a beacon of African emancipation, African unity, and continental innovation. The program aims to eschew racially essentialist interpretations of the Black Star in favor of diverse perspectives informed by Ghana's complex history—from Ghana's role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 17th and 18th centuries to its place as one of the most significant sites for Afro-Arab solidarity in the 20th century. Deep historical perspectives inform the program's consideration of how younger generations in Ghana today are reimagining what and who constitutes the Black Star nation and its possible futures through a range of different media, including visual and performing arts.

Additional information on the panels follows below and can be found at theafricainstitute.org.

About the Panels:

The Archival Diaspora of African Liberation: In Search of Ghana's Postcolonial Past

Moderator: Jean Allman, Professor of History, The Africa Institute, Sharjah, UAE, and J.H. Hexter Professor in the Humanities and Professor of African and African American Studies at Washington University in St. Louis, USA

Much has been written over the past three decades about the colonial archive, particularly as a technology for reproducing state power. But what of the anti-colonial archive, the archive that documents the challenges to colonial state structures, the struggles to disassemble them? As Ghana's postcolonial past so vividly illustrates, coups and countercoups, structural adjustment, and economic precarity have wreaked havoc on the making of postcolonial archives in Africa. And yet there are fragments of documentation dispersed around the globe that constitute a vast transnational, postcolonial archive of African liberation. Featuring archivists, activists, and academics, this panel explores the archival diaspora through which current and future generations will reconstruct Ghana's postcolonial past – from the early years of Nkrumah through the close of the Rawlings' Presidency in 2001.

"When Women Speak": Film Screening + Talk

Moderator: Shamima Muslim – Founder and Convener of the Alliance for Women in Media Africa (AWMA)



This documentary film, "When Women Speak" focuses on Ghanaian women's organizing and campaigning strategies under military, single-party, and short-lived multi-party governments, particularly in the under-studied period between the mid-1960s and the early 1990s. During this time, Ghanaian women negotiated national priorities, cultural particularities, and universalist ambitions, both at home and as part of an international women's movement. Ghanaian women were important players in the creation and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and they campaigned for new national laws on marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child maintenance. By highlighting their ideas and their strategies, this film challenges the representation of women as passive bearers of timeless and essentialized "African culture" and reshapes public understanding of gender activism as an integral part of Ghana's national history and international relations. The roundtable brings the film's producers and director to discuss the film and the wider field of political, social, economic, and gender justice and activism that it seeks to portray.

At the Cutting Edge of Ghana Studies

Moderator: Carina Ray, A.M. and H.P. Bentley Associate Professor of African History at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

Over the last half-century, Ghana Studies has witnessed tremendous growth. Its areas of scholarly inquiry have pushed far beyond the Akan-centric world that characterized its earliest thematic interests and it has opened up to disciplines beyond history. Gone too are the days when just a handful of scholars from the global north held sway over the field in journals of record and in elite African Studies programs in the US and UK. This sea-change has ushered in successive waves of vibrant research agendas pioneered by scholars who have continued to expand the purview of Ghana Studies and African Studies writ large. This panel brings together 4 early career scholars who will discuss what their work heralds for the next half-century of Ghana Studies.

On the State of Contemporary Art Practices in Ghana

Moderator: Joseph Oduro-Frimpong, Director of the Center for African Popular Culture, Ashesi University, Ghana

Within Ghana's contemporary art scene, one witnesses an interesting trend. Here, some of the respected and young artists are locating their expansive 'studios' within the very communities they live in. In these spaces, it is not uncommon to observe locals being



hired to work in these studios. In others, artists purposefully bus young students from under-resourced communities into their artistic work environments to let them make and experience varying art forms. What motivates such emerging practices in contemporary Ghana? What do these artists, who currently spearhead these practices, hope to achieve (or have achieved) with such endeavors? In this panel, we explore these questions and other new practices with the following creatives: Ibrahim Mahama, Serge Attukwei and Kwame Akoto-Bamfo.

“Fati’s Choice”: Film Screening + Talk

Moderator: Carina Ray, A.M. and H.P. Bentley Associate Professor of African History at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

This moving documentary explores the challenges faced by one woman, Fati, when she decides to leave Italy and return home to Ghana to take care of her five children. “Fati’s Choice” draws much-needed attention to the theme of return migration and centers the experiences of African women in the migration crisis, which is often portrayed through the stories of young men. This panel features discussants who bring a unique set of perspectives to the film’s subject matter: Professor Akosua Darkwah’s research probes the intersection of gender and migration; Abdullah Osman is a Tamale-based entrepreneur, who, like Fati, made the difficult decision to return home to Ghana after finding disappointment in Europe; and Fatimah Dadzie is the filmmaker responsible for bringing Fati’s story to the screen.

From the Black Star to the Black World and Back

Moderator: Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Professor of African and Gender Studies at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Ghana

The Gold Coast nationalists, and especially those at the forefront of the independence movement were relatively young by today’s standards of formal leadership—Kwame Nkrumah was 43 when he became prime minister in 1952 and Mabel Dove Danquah was only 26 when she started writing for The Times of West Africa, Ghana’s first daily newspaper. From Pan-African political engagement and the promotion of African popular culture to African-centered scientific, culturally relevant innovations, the years leading up to independence and immediately thereafter were rich with hope in ways



that resonate with what we might today call an Afro-futurist agenda. While some Ghanaians today still see the Black Star as a relevant symbol for many Pan-African projects, it is also a very Ghanaian symbol, perhaps due to its pride of place on our flag. However, a rather checkered national psyche has emerged in the intervening years. Today, despite choreographed efforts such as the Year of Return that brought much cultural excitement and some diaspora connections, a flagging economy and growing state repression, alongside obvious corruption and wealth disparities, seem to have generated a sense of hopelessness and cynicism among many young people. Strikingly, one response to this has been a youth-driven explosion of creativity and innovation. This panel brings together a group of dynamic young Ghanaians to explore what the Black Star means to them today.

About The Africa Institute

Established in 2018, The Africa Institute in Sharjah, UAE, is an interdisciplinary academic research institute dedicated to the study, research, and documentation of Africa and the African diaspora. As the only institution of its kind located in the Gulf—the historical nexus of African-Arab cultural exchange—The Africa Institute is uniquely positioned to expand understanding of African and African diaspora studies as a global enterprise. The Africa Institute’s curriculum of postgraduate studies is designed to train the next generation of critical thinkers in African and African diaspora studies, through its program of international symposia and conferences, visual art exhibitions and artist commissions, film and performance series, and community classes and outreach events. The Institute is expanding public understanding of Arab and African exchange within not only the scholarly community but also the local Sharjah community, the region, and around the globe. The Institute has commissioned Adjaye Associates to design a new campus that, when complete in 2023, will allow for significantly expanded programming. The Institute is led by Dr. Salah M. Hassan and Hoor Al-Qasimi.

About Dr. Salah M. Hassan

Long active in Sharjah, the larger Gulf region, and Africa through his research, conferences, and curatorial work, including many projects developed in collaboration with Sharjah Art Foundation, Dr. Salah M. Hassan played a foundational role in the development of The Africa Institute. He currently serves as the Institute’s founding Director, where he continues to spearhead its academic, research, artistic, and public programs in collaboration with The Africa Institute President Hoor Al Qasimi.

Hassan concurrently holds positions at Cornell University as the Goldwin Smith Professor of African and African Diaspora Art History and Visual Culture in the



Department of Africana Studies and Research Center; in the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies; and as Director of the Institute for Comparative Modernities. Hassan also served as Professor of History of Art in African and African American Studies and Fine Art at Brandeis University, where he was previously awarded the Madeleine Haas Russell Professorship in the Departments of African and Afro-American Studies and Fine Arts (2016-2017).

About Hoor Al-Qasimi

Hoor Al Qasimi has been spearheading the establishment of The Africa Institute into a major international institution, building upon the rich legacy of Afro-Arab cultural and scholarly interchange in Sharjah, including the landmark 1976 "Symposium on African and Arab Relations" that envisioned a future nexus for learning and collaboration between the two regions. Working in partnership with Africa Institute Director Dr. Salah M. Hassan, she continues to shape its programming and future endeavors.

A practicing artist and curator, Al Qasimi is also President and founding Director of Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF), which was established in 2009 as a catalyst and advocate for the role of art in Sharjah, the UAE, regionally, and internationally. With a passion for supporting experimentation and innovation in the arts, Al Qasimi has continuously expanded the scope of the Foundation over its 10-year history to include major exhibitions that have toured internationally; artist and curator residencies in visual art, film, and music; commissions and production grants for emerging artists; and a wide range of educational programming for children and adults in Sharjah. In 2003, Al Qasimi co-curated Sharjah Biennial 6, and has since continued as Biennial Director. Under Al Qasimi's leadership, the Sharjah Biennial has continued to grow as an internationally recognized platform for contemporary artists, curators, and cultural producers. Her leadership in the field led to her election as president of the International Biennial Association (IBA) in 2017.

About the Global Ghana Co-Conveners

Akosua Adomako Ampofo is Professor of African and Gender Studies at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana (UG). Adomako Ampofo is President of the African Studies Association of Africa; an honorary Professor at the Centre for African Studies at the University of Birmingham; and a Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences. An activist scholar, Adomako Ampofo's areas of interest include African



knowledge systems, higher education, race and identity politics, gender relations, masculinities, and popular culture. In her current work on Black masculinities, she explores the shifting nature of identities among young men in Africa and the diaspora.

Adomako Ampofo is the Editor-in-Chief of *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* and Co-Editor of *Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa* blog. She serves on the board of several organizations including the U.S. African Studies Association; The Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, University of Pretoria; Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, University of Bayreuth, of which she is Chairperson; Perivoli Africa Research Centre, University of Bristol; and the Institute for Humanities in Africa, HUMA, University of Cape Town. Adomako Ampofo's work has been variously recognized by, among others, the Fulbright Scholar Program and the Sociologists for Women and Society (SWS), which awarded her the Feminist Activism Award.

Carina Ray is the A.M. and H.P. Bentley Associate Professor of African History at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. A scholar of race and sexuality, comparative colonialisms and nationalisms, migration, and maritime history, print cultures, bodily aesthetics, and the relationship between race, ethnicity, and political power, Ray's research focuses on Ghana and its diasporas, while also branching out to include a long-term oral history project documenting the experiences of Cubans who served in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. She is the author of *Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex, and the Contested Politics of Colonialism in Ghana*, winner of the American Historical Association's 2016 Wesley Logan Book Prize; the African Studies Association's 2017 Aidoo-Snyder Book Prize; and a finalist for the United Kingdom African Studies Association's Fage and Oliver Book Prize. Her work has also appeared in such journals: *Gender and History*; *PMLA*; *American Historical Review*; and *Journal of West African History*, among other publications. She is a series co-editor of *New African Histories* (Ohio University Press) and *African Identities* (Cambridge University Press) and recently completed three-year terms as editor of *Ghana Studies* and as a member of the board of editors of *The American Historical Review*.

Jean Allman is the Professor of History at The Africa Institute, Sharjah. She is also the J.H. Hexter Professor in the Humanities and Professor of African and African American Studies at Washington University in St. Louis, where she directs the Center for the Humanities. Allman's research and published work engages 19th- and 20th-century African history, with a geographic focus on Ghana and thematic interests in gender, colonialism, decolonization, and the racial politics of knowledge production. Her work has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, Fulbright-Hays, the Social Science Research Council, and



the Mellon Foundation. She was the President of the Ghana Studies Council (now Association) from 1992-1998; has served on the Board of Directors of both the African Studies Association (USA) and the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora; and was the President of the African Studies Association in 2018.

She is the author of *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an emergent Ghana*, *"I Will Not Eat Stone": A Women's History of Colonial Asante* (with Victoria Tashjian), and *Tongnaab: The History of a West African God* (with John Parker) and has edited several collections, including *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*. Allman co-edits the New African Histories book series at Ohio University Press, and her work has also appeared in a range of journals, including the Journal of African History, Africa, Gender and History, Journal of Women's History, History Workshop Journal, International Journal of African Historical Studies, African Studies Review, American Historical Review, and Souls.

Joseph Oduro-Frimpong is a media anthropologist and Director of the Center for African Popular Culture at Ashesi University. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Anthropology at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (2012) and also holds degrees in Information Studies (University of Ghana, Legon) and Human Communication (Central Michigan University). He is an American Council of Learned Societies/African Humanities Program Fellow. He has held postdoctoral fellowships at Rhodes University and at the University of Cape Town.

Widely published, his research has appeared in respected journals, including *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *International Journal of Communication*, and *African Studies Review*, and in a number of edited volumes, including *Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday* and *Taking African Cartoons Seriously: Politics, Satire, and Culture*.

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