



BOSTON UNIVERSITY AFRICAN STUDIES  
Newsletter

SPRING/SUMMER 2018 | ISSUE no. 9

## MORE THAN LIQUID GOLD

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Swahili FLAS Fellow Brian Woerner explains his obsession with pollinators and why he believes that social entrepreneurship can bring honey money to Tanzanian farmers.



# Taking Over the World, One Jar of Honey at a Time

by Hafzat Akanni

Brian Woerner discovered his passion for beekeeping while serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guinea. After returning to the United States to earn both an MA and MBA here at Boston University, he stumbled upon a life changing shop in Harvard Square that was all about social justice through honey. Since joining the Follow the Honey team, Woerner has cofounded Follow the Honey Tanzania where he works to bring fair wages to the rural beekeepers he sources his Tanzania Asali



from. This social entrepreneurship has gained a loyal following and has inspired both local and foreign apiculturalists who hope to share their liquid gold with the world.

Brian Woerner began following his dreams and ended up following honey. The California native came to Boston University in 2015 with his mind set on pursuing his Master's Degree, but little did he know that he would soon become invested with the world of bees and the art of honey-making.

Woerner was first exposed to beekeeping in 2013 during his time in Guinea working for the Peace Corps. "I did not set out to become a beekeeper," said Woerner. "I just went to investigate it." While in Guinea, Woerner lived in a small village of about 800 people.

"The people there didn't really speak English," said Woerner, "So I had to learn French."

Not only did Woerner learn to speak a new language, but he also learned a lot about Guinean product management, Guinean agriculture and Guinean people.

Woerner loves putting himself in uncomfortable situations. However, these uncomfortable situations haven't hindered Woerner's journey, but rather they have helped him.



Not too long after he moved to Boston, Woerner locked himself out of his apartment while taking out the trash - an incident that seemed unfortunate at first, but soon turned into a defining moment in his life.

While locked out of his apartment in Harvard Square, Woerner remembered that his friend had gifted him a jar of honey from a nearby store. Woerner, who now had some free time on his hands, decided to feed his curious mind by following the honey, a task he didn't know he would be doing for years to come.

Woerner found himself at "Follow the Honey," a start-up company that opened its doors in 2011. Since 2011, Follow the Honey has served to help African farmers escape poverty by selling their honey here in the United States. Woerner was drawn in by the mission of Follow the Honey and has been working with the company since then.

Woerner isn't just good at building relationships with bees; he's also good at building relationships with people. Currently, Woerner serves as the Chief Operating Officer of Follow the Honey where he does work in human resources, such as managing the accounts, selling honey and hosting events.

"Follow the Honey gives the farmers more money which in turn help them protect the areas in they are living in," said Woerner. "The honey sells itself because it's an amazing story."

In August of 2015, Woerner began his career at Boston University (BU). While at BU, he planned to get his MBA/International Relations degree with the Questrom School of Business and Pardee School of Global Studies.

Woerner had planned to be at BU for two and a half years; however, he began taking Swahili with the African Studies Center (ASC) and fell in love with the language, so much that he decided to extend his time at the University by an extra semester.

Not too long after discovering the ASC, Woerner learned about the Foreign Language Area Studies Program (FLAS) - a fellowship that provides students studying African Languages with funding to assist them with their language studies.

Woerner, who had been eager to travel back to Africa since he had finished with the Peace Corps in Guinea, grasped onto this opportunity and applied.

"It wasn't until I had been here that I realized that FLAS was a thing," said Woerner. "So I kept taking Swahili to improve my understanding and relationship."

Woerner received the FLAS award and has continued to enhance his language skills in the classroom and abroad. After the completion of his first year at BU, Woerner used







*Honey comb inside a traditional bark hive, Tanzania. Brian Woerner, QST'17 GRS'18*

his FLAS funding to travel to Tanzania.

While in Tanzania, he was also able to expand Follow the Honey, once again integrating his love for Africa with his love for honey.

“The fellowship is what has allowed me to improve my working knowledge of Swahili,” said Woerner. “It also helped me build these two businesses.”

Woerner says that he is grateful for the opportunities that the ASC and FLAS have awarded him during his time at BU.

“Programs like [FLAS] are so important,” said Woerner. “Languages are powerful and can help people explore their interests.”

The ASC and FLAS have allowed Woerner to continue pursuing his dreams. However, the road hasn’t always been easy.

“There are so many ways to get discouraged,” said Woerner. “But when we look at the support we have, it encourages us not to give up.”

The Follow the Honey team may be small, but they are dedicated. “None of us are taking in a paycheck, said Woerner. “We had to invest our time, and sometimes our own money. But, we are doing what we love.”

Follow the Honey allows Woerner to connect cultures. “Something is being built and people see the value in it,” said Woerner. “Money is a vehicle to transfer narratives and I want to use it to continue Follow the Honey in other countries.

In five years, Woerner sees Follow the Honey “taking over the world, one jar of honey at a time.”

“My experiences during during the past couple of years have been amazing,” said Woerner. “We couldn’t have done it without everyone who believed in Follow the Honey.”

I didn’t plan for any of this to happen,” said Woerner. “I just followed the honey.”





# From the Director's Desk

It gives me pleasure to address and thank again the ASC community for its commitment to Africa-focused area and language studies. I am pleased to report that the ASC continues to live up to its motto: to be the best in whatever it does on Africa.

There are several highlights this year. These include student-led initiatives such as the 2018 Annual Graduate Students Conference, Records of Africa. The papers of the conference illustrate both the diversity and significance of African sources of knowledge and the need for new approaches to access their insights. Another highlight is the 2018 Theater Night, which was quite successful thanks to our committed students, language teachers, Dr. Zoli Mali, Dr. Eric Schmidt, and Joaquin Dominguez. I am pleased to report that the African language program has also expanded. One Amharic, one Twi, and two Swahili instructors joined the program. I am happy to announce a new initiative led by Hafzat Akanni and other students that will bring the ASC and the African American Studies Program closer together. So stay tuned for this new important initiative planned for fall 2018!

The Diaspora Studies Initiative led by Dr. Daivi Rodima-Taylor continues to engage African diaspora communities in the Boston area and the African Union. Our Walter Rodney Seminar continues to enrich our community with fresh insights on Africa. The ASC is grateful to Professor Bustin for overseeing the seminar series. Eight visiting scholars from various disciplines have also been appointed. The ASC continues to work with WARA and its overseas office in Dakar (WARC) in joint projects. With a grant from the British Library, 12,000 pages of precious manuscripts dealing with religion, history, astrology, and poetry—among other subjects—that have never been accessed by Western scholars are now being digitized in Casamance, Senegal.

Finally, I am pleased to introduce Dr. Eric Schmidt, the new ASC Assistant Director. I thank everyone who has served in committees and the leaders of the ASC's units. Special thanks go to Dr. Michael DiBlasi for serving as Assistant Director ad interim from September 2017 to April 2018.

With a dynamic team committed to excellence and innovation, the ASC prepares for the Title VI competition with confidence. With your support, the ASC will continue to be a national leader in high-quality Africa-focused teaching, research, and service for years to come.

Fallou Ngom

April 2018



# A Semester to Remember

by Hafzat Akanni

Elizabeth "Libby" Pell, is a senior in Boston University's College of Arts and Sciences majoring in Linguistics and International Relations. This past fall, she traveled to Morocco for a study abroad internship on a FLAS Fellowship (Foreign Language and Area Studies) through the BU African Studies Center. Libby had so much to share with us about her experience in North Africa.

**Q: How did you hear about FLAS?**

**A:** I heard about FLAS through Professor Ngom. He seriously promoted it. I had him for Arabic class and he spoke so highly of the program that I just had to apply.

**Q: Why study abroad in Morocco?**

**A:** I decided to study abroad in Morocco because of limitation in the courses offered in the Middle East and because of the fact that Morocco isn't in the news for a lot of negative reasons. My parents consider Morocco to be safe in comparison to many of the

countries in the Middle East and Africa, and the location of the country, the fact that it's right next to Spain, gave them the security they needed to send me away.

**Q: What is Morocco like so far?**

**A:** Morocco is different. I've been able to meet a lot of really great people but things are just different here. For example, people don't really speak English so I have a language barrier. I have learned certain terms in Arabic to help me get around but it's still kind of challenging.

The North of Morocco is a lot easier to navigate because I can speak Spanish there.

**Q: What types of classes are you taking?**

**A:** Before the fall break I took two electives and one Arabic class. Now [after the fall break], I'm taking two electives and an internship. On top of the internship and the two classes I'm also writing a thesis for IR [International Relations]. Why I decided to write a thesis and study abroad at the same time, I'm not sure, but I've already started so I have no choice but to finish.





**Q: What do you do for your internship?**

**A:** I teach people English. I teach three times a week with another girl from BU. Both of us were kind of just thrown into the position, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. I teach mostly adult men in a free non-enrollment program where we sit around a small classroom table.

**Q: What do you do for fun?**

**A:** Sometimes I go out, but Morocco is a Muslim country so alcohol is expensive. You can buy drinks at restaurants and specific places but that's about it. My host mom is in her 40s and my host dad is in his 50s. They are such nice people but

sometimes coming home at night is a struggle because I don't want to seem disrespectful. Besides going out and hanging with friends, I've been able to travel a lot this semester, especially during my weekends. I have been to Marrakesh, Segura, the desert, Fez, Casablanca and some other small cities. I went to Madrid and Toledo for fall break and it was so fun! I still wants to visit places like the south of Morocco and Essaouira before I head back to the States.

**Q: Has studying in Morocco influenced you in any way?**

**A:** Traveling makes me respect home. It makes me grateful and it makes me want to go home and that says a lot

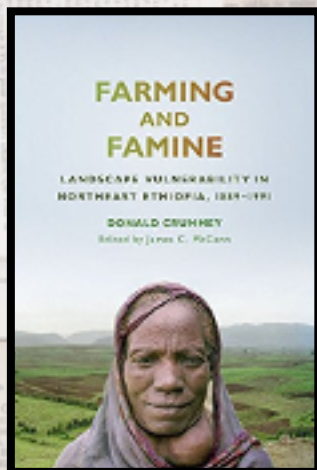
coming from someone who always wants to leave home. I think Morocco specifically gave me a new perspective on life. Traveling here has allowed me to open up and it has allowed me to get out of my comfort zone. If given the opportunity, I would definitely come back to Morocco. There are a lot of things I still haven't gotten to see, not only in Morocco but in other parts of Africa too.

**Q: Where do you go from here?**

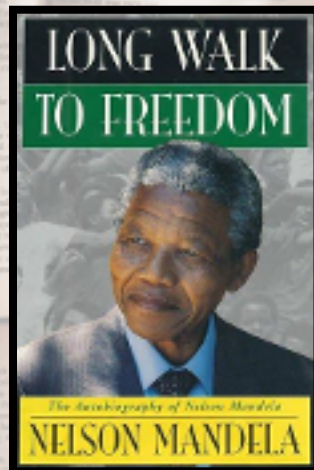
**A:** Well, I want to graduate. I don't really have any plans for post-graduation yet, but I know I want to graduate. I also want to travel a lot and possibly visit some more Arabic speaking countries.

# Summer Reading

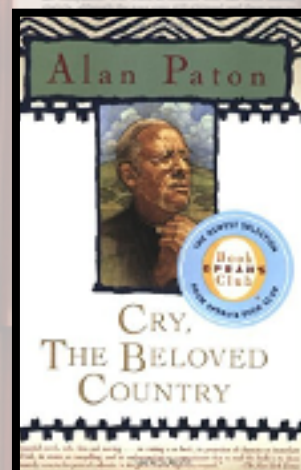
We asked our community for their favorite Africa reads and here is what what they had to share.



Farming and Famine by  
Donald Crummey  
Recommended by Prof  
Jim McCann



Long Walk to Freedom  
by Nelson Mandela  
Recommended by  
Lawrence Mwanayanda



Cry, the Beloved  
Country by Alan Paton  
Recommended by Rich  
Feeley



The Flame Trees of Thika  
by Elspeth Huxley  
Recommended by Prof Les  
Kaufman





Jess Thai , CAS '20

# Congratulations!

## CERTIFICATE GRADUATES

Brian Woerner, MA, Pardee, Global Development\*  
 Sarah Dymecki, MA, Pardee, Environmental Policy\*  
 Lauren Eleanor Kinsman, MA, Pardee, Envir. Policy\*  
 Stephanie Thermora, MA, Pardee, Global Dev.  
 Suegatha Kai-Rennie, MA, Pardee, Global Dev.  
 Jennifer M. Kelley, MA (Pardee/IR)\*\*  
 Francis Mafike Salomé, MA (Pardee/Global Dev. Policy)\*\*  
 Alan Todd Meskil, MA (Pardee/IR)\*\*  
 Anthony P. Reinhardt, MA (Pardee/IR)\*\*\*  
 Daniel Taylor Flanagan, MPH (SPH)\*\*\*

May 2018\*  
 January 2018\*\*  
 September 2017\*\*\*

## DISSERTATIONS

Mustapha Kurfi, Sociology, "Religion, Gender and Civil Society: The Role of a Muslim Women's Organization in the Evolution of the Nigerian State."  
 Derrick Muwina, Theological Ethics, "Kenneth Kaunda's Philosophy of Christian Humanism in Africa from the Perspective of Christian Ethics."  
 Martha Lagace, Anthropology, "Farming the Tarmac: Rootedness, and Longing for the World in Postwar Northern Uganda."  
 Lara Ayad, Art History, "Picturesque Peasants: Painting Egyptian Identity at the Fuad I Agricultural Museum in Cairo, 1934-1938."  
 Sarah Davis Westwood, History, "Military Culture in Senegambia and the Origins of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais Army, 1750-1910."

## UNDERGRADUATE MINORS

Faridat Ilupeju, BS, Health Science\*  
 Tae'Shaona Matthews, BA, Anthropology\*  
 Sabrina Hassan, BA, International Relations\*

## 18-19 FLAS FELLOWS

Amy Pollard, Swahili, MA, Pardee\*  
 Laura Wiggins, Wolof, MA, Pardee\*  
 Josh Castillo, Swahili, PhD, History\*  
 Anya Bounar, Wolof, PhD, Anthropology\*  
 Emily Hammel, Swahili, MPH\*  
 Mackenzie Hine, Wolof, MPH\*  
 Faridat Ilupeju, Hausa, MS, Questrom\*  
 Teferi Tadesse, Amharic, BS/MPH, Public Health\*  
 Wangeci Ndirangu, Swahili, BS, Human Physiology\*  
 Jessica Thai, Swahili, BA, Psychology\*  
 Oelmis Fermin, Arabic, BA, Middle Eastern and North African Studies\*\*  
 Michelle Megala, Arabic, BA, Sociology\*\*  
 Brian Barone, Igbo, PhD, Ethnomusicology\*\*  
 Aichatou Seckm BS, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Wolof\*\*  
 Avery Ofoje, Igbo, BA, Biology\*\*  
 Y-Binh Nguyen, Zulu, MA, Teaching and Education (Tufts University)\*\*  
 Nathaniel Ash Morgan, Akan/Twi, PhD, Ethnomusicology (University of North Texas)\*\*

\*2018-2019 Academic year  
 \*\*Summer 2018





Eric Schmidt

# Warm Welcomes

by Jess Thai

Spring is a period of transformation, revitalization, and inspiration. This sense of dynamic change has influenced us here at the Center as well, and in early April, we were delighted to welcome Eric Schmidt as our new Assistant Director. Both a gifted musician and ethnomusicologist, Eric is also a researcher in African studies. Although he only recently joined us, Eric's research in Niger has tied him to our community for many years. In many ways Eric's integration into the Center has happened seamlessly.

Within his first few weeks, Eric has already expanded upon the intellectual momentum of the Center. In addition to receiving his BA in Jazz Studies from American University in 2009, and his MA in Ethnomusicology from UCLA in 2013, Eric conducted extensive ethnographic research in Niger and Mali for fifteen months. His research examined the relationship between the music of the Tuareg people of Niger and global neoliberal capitalism. His doctoral dissertation, "Rhythms of Value: Tuareg Music and Capitalist Reckoning in Niger," was successfully defended earlier this year in March. Eric has been awarded an impressive array of fellowships throughout his academic career including the Fulbright, FLAS, and the Critical Language Scholarship. His extensive language studies include French, Hausa, Arabic, and Spanish. Beyond Eric's passion for the arts, language, and Africa, we see his ability to merge these fields together into an interdisciplinary study as a demonstration of the innovation that he will surely bring to the Center.

As we continue to grow and advance, our community is fortunate to embrace Eric as our newest member. His warmth, affability, and authenticity establishes him not only as a great leader, but also as a refreshing force in the Center. It is easy to spend an afternoon chatting with him about his time learning Arabic in Morocco, or laughing at his puns. He is a traveler, storyteller, and good-natured jokester. His ability to shift the attitude of a room, and to create an energy that is filled with discovery, congeniality, and creativity is a special talent. Moreover, his creative ingenuity and commitment to building programs at BU that integrate the arts distinguish him as leader for our Center. Eric, we look forward to how you will continue to transform and inspire our community. Welcome!





## LIBRARY

### **An Update from the African Studies Library**

The BU Libraries are home to 2.4 million physical volumes, 45,000+ unique journals and 77,000 media titles. A staggering amount of information - and this not even considering the materials accessible via consortial agreements or on the internet. With more information available to us than ever before, keeping track of what is out there and how it can be accessed is a daunting task!

The African Studies Library began offering “Rodney Minutes” in response to this issue. The goal of this once-a-month, 25-minute session following the Rodney Lecture is to create a time and a space for librarians, faculty and students to engage with one another about these very issues.

To date, the African Studies Librarians have brought specific topics to the sessions, including: how to embed videos in Blackboard, showcasing our film resources, how to access Cooperative Africana Materials Project collections, a discussion of fair use and copyright and finally, highlighting our own new and special collections in the African Studies Library.

As a relatively new initiative by the African Studies Library, the “Rodney Minutes” have met with mixed success. At each session, the librarians encourage faculty and students to suggest ideas and topics to be addressed in the hopes that these will drive future sessions.

If you have questions about the library or information and research, you are probably not alone. Please share these with the library staff at [asl@bu.edu](mailto:asl@bu.edu) so that they can plan a session around that very topic.

## PUBLICATIONS

The **International Journal of African Historical Studies** celebrates its 50th anniversary with discounted prices on all hardcopy issues of the journal published from 2004 (IJAH vol. 37) to 2015 (IJAH vol. 48). Copies can be purchased for \$5.00 each, plus shipping. This includes the following **special issues**:

**Colonial States and Civic Virtues in Africa** (Luise White, guest editor), IJAH 37:1 (2004)

**Continuities in Governance in Late Colonial and Early Postcolonial East Africa** (Andrew Burton and Michael Jennings, guest editors), IJAH 40:1 (2007)

**The Political Ecology of Trade, Food Production, and Landscape Transformations in Northeast Tanzania: 1850-2000** (Mats Widgren, N. Thomas Hakansson and Lowe Borjeson guest editors), IJAH 41:3 (2008)

**Current Trends in the Archaeology of African History** (Ann B. Stahl and Adria LaViolette, guest editors), IJAH 42:3 (2009)

**Toward a History of Violence in Colonial Kenya** (Matthew Carotenuto and Brett Shadle, guest editors), IJAH 45:1 (2012)

**Incorporating Medical Research into the History of Medicine in East Africa** (Melissa Graboyes, guest editor), IJAH 47:3 (2014)

**Violence in the Contemporary Political History of Eastern Africa** (Øystein H. Rolandsen and David M. Andersom, guest editors), IJAH 48:1 (2015)

**Exploring Post-Slavery in Contemporary Africa** (Baz Lecocq and Éric Komlavi Hahonou, guest editors), IJAH 48:2 (2015)

**Wealth in Pluralities. Intersections of Money, Gender, and Multiple Values across African Societies** (Charlotte Walker-Said and Andrea Felber Seligman, guest editors), IJAH 48:3 (2015)

Supplies are limited. Contact us at [ascpub@bu.edu](mailto:ascpub@bu.edu) to order and arrange for shipping.





Alix Saba, Pardee '11 '13

## OUTREACH

This spring, in collaboration with our colleagues at National Resource Centers across world regions, we launched the Global Read Webinar Series. Sponsored by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs, the South Asia National Outreach Consortium, the Middle East Outreach Council, and the African Studies Outreach Council, the Global Read Webinar Series features monthly 60-minute webinars on an award-winning book suitable for 7th-12th grade classrooms. In each webinar, award representatives facilitate a discussion with the author on how to incorporate the book into the classroom and encourage teachers to participate virtually in question and answer sessions.

In the coming year, we are looking forward to expanding the initiative to include curriculum resource development and teacher workshops at annual conferences. This spring also saw two additional runnings of our Modern African History online course co-developed with Primary Source that offers teachers either graduate credit or professional development points for their enrollment. As the semester concludes, we are very excited to work with our five 2018 Curriculum Development Grant recipients and look forward to the lesson materials they will create as a result of their participation in our co-sponsored education trip to Madagascar this summer!



## WARA

The West African Research Association, housed in Boston University's African Studies Center, continues to promote the dissemination of current knowledge on West Africa and the diaspora through its lecture series, research fellowships, and programs at the West African Research Center in Senegal. This past fall, WARA invited guest lecturer Dr. Aliou Niang, of Union Theological Seminary, to ASC to discuss the parallels in the messages of St. Paul and of Aline Sitoué Diatta, the prophet of the Diola faith tradition of southwestern Senegal. Our Youtube channel showcases this lecture and other events.

This April, we announced the awardees of the WARA Predoctoral, Postdoctoral, Residency, and WARC Library Fellowships. Additionally, we award 8 WARC Travel Grants per year to West African graduate scholars conducting research on the continent. Grant announcements can be found on our website: [www.bu.edu/wara](http://www.bu.edu/wara). Our newsletter will be published by September 2018, and regularly showcases work from our fellows and members, and can also be found in electronic form on our website. Our affiliations include the ASA, CAORC, and AASP. Follow us on Facebook for grant announcements, calls for paper submissions, and event updates.

## THANK YOU

The African Studies Center would like thank our editorial board: Alix Saba, Michael DiBlasi, Breeanna Elliott, Hafzat Akanni, and Jess Thai. We would also like to thank all of our contributing authors and editors. Cover Photos: Alix Saba, Pardee '11, '13



