

Fulbright and Nigeria

IN 1946, soon after the end of World War II, the American Senator J. William Fulbright had a vision that one way to prevent another similar conflict was to increase understanding between citizens of different countries.

One way to fulfill this, he believed, was through educational exchange. This vision developed into what has become one of the world's most well known and appreciated educational exchange programs.

Since its inauguration the program that bears Senator Fulbright's name has given out 250,000 grants for Americans to study abroad and for non-Americans to study in the United States.

The American recipients of the grants are a combination of students and faculty from American universities wishing to go abroad for research or teaching purposes.

This year, 112 Fulbrighters will be going to Sub-Saharan Africa. The largest numbers are going to Ghana and South Africa, while a total of seven will be heading for Nigeria.

What, you may wonder, would prompt Americans to come to Nigeria for a year of academic exchange? For two of this year's grant recipients going to Nigeria - Dr. Chimalum Nwankwo of North Carolina State University, and myself - the reasons are obvious, as going to Nigeria is a sort of homecoming.

For others, however, the reasons are more varied. Let me therefore take this opportunity to introduce them to Nigerian readers, so that when they come to do their research they will be received with the warmth and hospitality Nigerians are known for.

Lillian Trager of the University of Wisconsin - Parkside will be spending her year at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife where she will



be teaching anthropology and researching the life's work of artist Agbo Folarin.

Professor Trager's involvement with Nigeria began in the 1950s when her father worked in Vom in what is now Plateau State. She returned to Nigeria to conduct research for her doctoral dissertation in the 1970s, and then again in the 1980s to work for the Ford Foundation.

She continued to spend time in Nigeria in the 1990s through research and academic exchange programs. She is now looking forward to spending more time in Nigeria, this time as a Fulbright Scholar.

Professor Trager is one of those numerous expatriates who after experiencing Nigeria always wants to go back. When asked what it was about Nigeria that she loved so much, she responded, "Nigeria is a very dynamic, vibrant place with rich cultural traditions. The people have always given me so much warmth and

Wiebe Boer

Perspective of a Nigerian-American



hospitality."

Andrea Skyberg, on the other hand, has never even been out of the United States before. She recently concluded a degree in fine arts at the Maryland Institute College of Arts, and will be going to Nigeria as a Fulbright Student to study female circumcision.

Although she realizes that the practice is rare in Nigeria, her decision to conduct her research in Nigeria was because of her fascination with Yoruba culture.

Another of this year's Nigeria Fulbrighters is Shobana Shankar, a graduate student in history at the University of California, Los Angeles. Shankar first became interested in Nigeria when she

was opportuned to spend a semester there while an undergraduate at Wesleyan University. The great relationships she made during her first visit in Nigeria made her want to return for more.

She will be affiliated with Bayero University Kano, and will be studying the history of missions and Christianity in Northern Nigeria, especially as it pertains to family and gender relations.

Marilyn Gottlieb-Roberts is another Fulbrighter who, like Andrea Skyberg, has never been to Nigeria before. Presently an art professor at Miami-Dade County Community College, Gottlieb-Roberts will

be in Nigeria to teach Theatre Arts at the University of Jos.

She will also be furthering her research in how African astral traditions (studying the stars) are currently applied.

She has already conducted research in this area in Mali, Senegal, and Gambia where she studied fishermen, hunters, and farmers. She now wants to study how pastoral nomads of Nigeria study the stars. So, if you see an *oyinbo/baturiya/onyocha* woman trekking along with a group of Fulani herders over the next year, more than likely that woman is Professor Gottlieb-Roberts.

Last but not least is Solimer Otero of the University of Pennsylvania's graduate program in folklore.

Her study, entitled 'Rethinking the Diaspora', will focus on Cuban and Brazilian communities in Lagos. Known as 'Aguda,' Brazilian and Cuban families in Lagos are centered around Campos Square.

Miss Otero spent two months in 1999 based in Yaba conducting preliminary research, and is looking forward to returning to Nigeria as a Fulbright Student attached to the University of Lagos.

The bulk of her research, however, has been in Cuba where those who identify themselves as connected to the Yoruba are known as 'Lucumi'. Otero, of Cuban descent herself, remarked how similar she found Nigeria and Cuba to be.

According to her, the music, food, religion, family relations and many other aspects of Cuban society are heavily influenced by and similar to that of the Yoruba.

As this article shows, there are a wide variety of different aspects of Nigeria that interest students and professors from abroad. As this article also shows, many foreigners who visit Nigeria are deeply enriched by the experience and seek ways to return. I trust that the same will be the case for this year's Fulbrighters, especially those who have yet to experience Nigeria's unique vitality and charm.

Faith Manna

— Dr. Deji Fatile

Love God!

LET nothing - absolutely nothing - stop you from loving God. Let no situation of life slow down your course in loving God. Let not your devotion to God depend on whether you see results or not. Let no sickness or condition diminish your love for God. Pour out love to God within you all the time - no matter where you are and no matter what is happening to you and anyone around you. Let nothing disturb your love for God and you will see all things working together for good for you. Always focus your life on the character and nature of God and praise and worship for this. Serve God with your life and He will service your life. Rest in God all the time and you will always be happy, fearless, loving and calm. Joy is the proof that you have the life of God in you. Peace is the proof that you are sharing God's life. Love is the proof that you are in God. Faithfulness is the proof that you are connected to God. Long suffering is the proof that you are walking in the presence of God always. Meekness shows you know God. Goodness is a vital sign of a healthy relationship with God. Self control is a proof that God has become the strength of your heart. Let the Lord be your only portion. Let Him be your rock - your salvation - your refuge - your fortress - your deliverer - your defence - your all. You can never love God and lose in this world and in the world to come. Those who love God are no longer living for time but for eternity. When you truly believe in the unconditional love of God for you, you cannot but love Him with every fibre of your being. Do everything you do in life for the love of God and you will never be bored - you will never be depressed and discouraged - you will never give up in the path of duty. One of the greatest secrets of victory is to love God with every fibre of your being. Occupy yourself with God all the time. Sing unto Him. Praise Him. Adore Him. Serve Him by serving His children. Work for Him by winning souls to Christ. **Do nothing to break His Church. Love God!.**

'Nigeria is a very dynamic, vibrant place with rich cultural traditions. The people have always given me so much warmth and hospitality'