



## THE AFRICA INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES COUNTRY-FOCUSED SCHOLARLY AND CULTURAL SEASON: 'GLOBAL GHANA'

**The second season of the Africa Institute's (AI) country-focused series will focus on Ghana and will be convened by leading scholars Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Jean Allman, Carina Ray and Joseph Oduro-Frimpong, who will work in tandem with the AI to develop a detailed cultural and scholarly program.**

As part of its annual public programming, the AI organizes a season of scholarly, cultural, and artistic activities in various media and genres that focuses on one country from the African continent, or one of the African diaspora communities worldwide (North and South America, Europe, The Middle East, Caribbean, and Asia among others). This series of country-focused activities highlights the complex history of the African world, while also providing a forum for creatively engaging its present and imagining new futures.

The commissioned scholars **Akosua Adomako Ampofo** (University of Ghana, Legon); **Jean Allman** (Washington University in St. Louis); **Carina Ray** (Brandeis University) and **Joseph Oduro-Frimpong** (Ashesi University) have proposed a program that will include a two-part interdisciplinary scholarly conference held in Sharjah, titled *Global Ghana: Sites of Departure/Sites of Return*, and *Global Ghana: In Search of Africa's Black Star*, to be held in Ghana. The multidisciplinary program also includes a film festival and series of musical performances, a staged theatrical performance and an exhibition showcasing dynamic work by contemporary Ghanaian artists. The season will be inaugurated with a major lecture and press conference, followed by a musical concert featuring an eclectic mix of popular Ghanaian musicians.

The AI's Ghana-focused season aims to critically and creatively engage Ghana's history and contemporary condition in ways that push beyond the conventional narratives that oversimplify the nation's profound significance to its citizens, continental neighbors, and to the diaspora. The season seeks to reveal the complex and contested forces that have shaped Ghana, past and present. Held in Sharjah, the conference ***Global Ghana: Sites of Departure/Sites of Return*** will examine the ways in which Ghana has emerged over the last century as a focal point of diasporic engagement beginning with early twentieth century 'Back to Africa' movements, followed by Pan-Africanism, anticolonial liberation movements, and more recently, with

heritage tourism. One of the focal points of the conference will be Ghana's efforts to cultivate and curate diasporic engagement among African descended people in the diaspora and Ghanaians living abroad through the recent "Year of Return" and "Beyond the Return" campaigns. The season will push beyond Ghana's Atlantic world connections to open a wider field of enquiry about Ghana's relations with the Arab world, and examinations of the past, present, and future of Afro-Arab relations. *Global Ghana: Sites of Departure/Sites of Return* seeks to welcome and engage audiences in Sharjah and throughout the UAE with compelling and thoughtfully developed dialogue.

Held in Ghana, ***Global Ghana: In Search of Africa's Black Star*** will explore 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. We seek to eschew racially essentialist interpretations of the Black Star in favor of diverse perspectives informed by Ghana's complex history — a history that includes being one of the most significant sites for the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to being one of the most significant sites for Afro-Arab solidarity in the twentieth century, a place from which to challenge the artificial racial division of the continent enacted through its bifurcation into North and Sub-Saharan Africa. Deep historical perspectives will inform our 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 the visual and performing arts. To this end, the two-part scholarly conference will be complemented by a dynamic range of musical, theatrical, and filmic performances and an exhibition of contemporary Ghanaian art.

*The health and safety of our guests and participants are of utmost priority to The Africa Institute. We will continue to monitor developments on COVID-19 and the program will be subject to modification depending on how the pandemic evolves and travel is impacted.*

### **Co-Convener Biographies**

**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. She is the immediate past Dean of International Programs at the University of Ghana, was the foundation Director of the University's Center for Gender Studies and Advocacy (2005-2009) and from 2010-2015 was Director of the Institute of African Studies.

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. Another project, "An Archive of Activism: Gender and Public History in Postcolonial Ghana" seeks to constitute a publicly accessible archive of, and documentary on gender activism and "political women" in postcolonial Ghana (with Kate Skinner, University of Birmingham; funded by the British Academy).

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 Center 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; 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.

**Follow her: @adomakoampofo**

**Jean Allman** is 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 nineteenth and twentieth 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 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*. Her work has also appeared in a range of journals, including the *Journal of African History*, *Africa, Gender and History*, the *Journal of Women's History*, *History Workshop Journal*, the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *African Studies Review*, the *American Historical Review*, and *Souls*.

Allman co-edits the New African Histories book series at Ohio University Press and for six years co-edited the *Journal of Women's History*. She was the President of the Ghana Studies Council (now Association) from 1992-1998 and 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. She was the President of the African Studies Association in 2018.

**Follow her: @jeanallman**

**Carina Ray** is the H. Coplan Chair of Social Sciences and Associate Professor of African and African American Studies at Brandeis University, where she also serves as Director of Faculty Mentoring. 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 focusses 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 finalist for the United Kingdom African Studies Association's Fage and Oliver Book Prize. Her work has also appeared in *Gender and History*; *PMLA*; *American Historical Review*; and *Journal of West African History*, among others. She is a series co-editor of *New African Histories* (Ohio University Press) and *African Identities* (Cambridge University Press), and recently completed a three-year term as editor of *Ghana Studies* and as a member of the Board of Editors for *The American Historical Review*.

**Follow her: @sankaralives**



**Joseph Oduro-Frimpong** is a media anthropologist and Director of the Center for African Popular Culture at Ashesi University. He received his PhD 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 Everyday Life* and *Taking African Cartoons Seriously: Politics, Satire, and Culture*.

**Follow him: @drodurofrimpong**