

Conference

Word, Image, and Power in Africa and the African Diaspora

Organized jointly by the College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY and Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY

April 1 & 2, 2016

In his 2003 essay “How to Write about Africa,” Binyavanga Wainaina parodies the representation of Africa that has pervaded the literary and cinematic production of Westerners reacting to Africa. These words and images are holdovers from a colonial perspective that saw the continent and its people as the embodiment of the “heart of darkness” (Conrad). These views posit the entire continent as forever lagging behind and, in the words of Wainaina, always seem to focus on the following figures: “the Starving African, who wanders the refugee camp nearly naked, and waits for the benevolence of the West. Her children have flies on their eyelids and pot bellies, and her breasts are flat and empty.” Increasingly, these imaginings veil and distort the realities of a continent that is constantly in flux and in the process of numerous changes.

African writers and artists, in their attempt to change this static vision, have set about re-writing Western views of Africa. They deal with issues like political oppression, the student protests in Senegal and Burkina Faso and the Arab spring, to name but a few of the upheavals that the continent has recently experienced. They also define Africa and Africans within the world in terms of Taiye Selasi’s coinage of the term “Afropolitan”, which aims at capturing the experiences of diasporic subjects. Africa, as a continent experiencing steady economic growth and the rise of a middle class, demands new perspectives.

This two-day conference will take place on Friday, April 1st at the College of New Rochelle and Saturday, April 2, 2016 at Manhattanville College. We invite papers on this emerging vision of Africa and re-writing of Western views of Africa and the African diaspora.

Abstracts of 250 words should be sent to Professor Nahed Noureddine at nnoureddine@cnr.edu no later than December 1, 2015.

Languages of the Conference: English and French.

Possible Topics

Images of diasporic subjects
Afropolitan vs Cosmopolitan
African art
African cinema
Graphic novels and *bandes dessinées*
Civil and religious unrest in Africa
Epidemics and their aftermath

The Arab/African Spring
African music
Student Protests
Pan Africanism
Gender and sexuality
The future of African Literature
Women writers in the development of African literature and society
Human Rights
African Francophone Literatures and Cultures

This conference is sponsored by the Departments of English, World Languages and Literatures, Art History, Political Science, and the African Studies and International Studies Programs at Manhattanville College, the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and the International Studies Program at the College of New Rochelle, and the Westchester Consortium for International Studies (WCIS).