



Winners of the Roberta Ann Dunbar Graduate Student Prize Southeastern Regional Seminar in African Studies 2008 – 2020

The Roberta Ann Dunbar Graduate Student Prize is awarded to graduate students whose presented conference paper is judged superior among those presented at a SERSAS Conference. SERSAS strives to give graduate students the opportunity to share scholarship in an open and collegial forum. Occasionally, competing papers are accorded honorable mention. The Dunbar Prize carries a cash award and recognition of the invaluable scholarship of rising Africanists. A summary of Roberta Ann Dunbar's Africanist career follows the prize winners.

Courtney Micots, "Did Jesus Build the Posuban?: The Effects of Colonialism and Christianity on Fante Shrines," Department of Art History, University of Florida. Voted best graduate student paper at the Spring 2008 SERSAS Conference, Middle Tennessee State University.

Jatin Dua, "The Work of Piracy: Rethinking Economies of Circulation and Exchange along the East African Coast," Duke University. Voted best graduate student paper at the Spring 2012 SERSAS/SEAN Conference, co-hosted by UNC-Chapel Hill and the University of Florida; conference site UNC-Chapel Hill.

Birthe Reimers, "The Effectiveness of Gacaca Courts in Post-Genocide Rwanda," Kennesaw State University Fall. Voted best graduate student paper at the Fall 2012 SERSAS Conference co-hosted in Savannah, Georgia by Armstrong Atlantic State University and Georgia Southern University.

Jeneva Wright, "Soul Songs: Origins and Agency in African-American Spirituals," Maritime Studies Program, East Carolina University. Voted best graduate student paper at the Spring 2013 SERSAS Conference, East Carolina University.

Cacee Hoyer, "African or Indian? South African Identity Construction, 1946-1952," Department of History, University of Texas at Austin. Voted best graduate student paper at the Spring 2014 SERSAS Conference, Georgia College and State University.

Nathaniel King, "Global Maritime Icons on South African Shores: Case Study of a Beached US Liberty Ship in Cape Point Nature Reserve, South Africa," Maritime Studies Program, East Carolina University. Voted best graduate student paper at the Fall 2014 SERSAS Conference, College of Charleston. Special Recognition of an Undergraduate Paper: David Medley, "Somali Nationalism, 1940s-1950s." College of Charleston; David Medley was an undergraduate student of Tim Carmichael.

Koffi Yao-Kouame, "Civil War in Liberia as the Prequel of Côte d'Ivoire Civil War," Africana and Latin American Studies Program, UNC-Charlotte. Voted best graduate student paper at the Spring 2015

SERSAS/SEAN Conference, co-hosted by UNC-Chapel Hill and the University of Florida; conference site, UNC-Chapel Hill.

John Hames, "'Heroes' and 'Traitors': The Politics of Pulaar Language Loyalty in Senegal and Mauritania," University of Florida. Voted best graduate student paper at the Spring 2017 SERSAS Conference, College of Charleston.

Andrew and Anya Bonanno, "Family Farms, Family Land: National Land Policy, Customary Tenure Arrangements and Change in Northern Sierra Leone," Department of Anthropology, University of Georgia. Voted best graduate student paper at the Fall 2017 SERSAS Conference, co-hosted by Tuskegee University and Auburn University. Co-winners of the occasional SERSAS Undergraduate Prize for the best paper are Tuskegee undergraduates Jasmine Johnson, "Youth Empowerment Organizations in South Africa" and Courtney Peavy, "NGOs and the Idea of 'Poverty to Opportunity' in the United States and South Africa."

Conor Wilkinson, "The Ancestors and Family Life in Eastern Tanzania at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," Columbia University. Voted best graduate student paper at the Spring 2018 SERSAS/SEAN Conference; co-hosted by the University of Florida and UNC-Chapel Hill; conference site, University of Florida. Honorable Mention graduate student winners are (in alphabetical order):

Kelsey Dwyer, "Black Female Slaves in the Caribbean: An Archaeological Observation on Culture," Maritime Studies Program, East Carolina University;

Ryan D. Marr, "An Historical and Ethnographic Study of Cultural Change and Continuity in the Use and Construction of Dhows and Outriggers in the Tanga Region, Tanzania," Maritime Studies Program, East Carolina University;

Jesse Miller, "Mossi Funerals and the Negotiation of Autochthonous and Allogeneic Forces," Florida State University;

Adele Oyediran, "The Maritime Cultural Landscape of Slavery in Badagry, Nigeria," Maritime Studies Program, East Carolina University;

Denis Waswa, "The Purge of African Politics: A Wave that is Reclaiming Africa," UNC-Chapel Hill;

Shari L. Williams, "William Butler Fagg and African Art: Dualism, Controversy, and Commodification, 1946-2017," Auburn University.

Mark Reeves, "A Gilded Cage? Nnamdi Azikiwe's Pan-Africanism as Governor-General of Nigeria, 1960-1963," UNC-Chapel Hill, and Denis Waswa, "Constructing Afropolitanism: A Response to the Clash of Cultures in Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*," Louisiana State University. Voted co-winners for the best graduate paper of the Spring 2019 SERSAS/SEAN Conference; co-hosted by UNC-Chapel Hill and University of Florida; conference site, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Riley Ravary, "Disorder as a Political Instrument in Transboundary Protected Area Governance: The Case of Mt. Elgon National Park," University of Florida. Voted best graduate paper of the Spring 2020 SERSAS/SEAN Conference; co-hosted by UNC-Chapel Hill and University of Florida; conference site, University of Florida.



Dr. Roberta Ann Dunbar
14 February 1938 – 6 July 2010

(Edited from the memorial comments of Barbara Anderson,
the "History of SERSAS" by Joe Miller, and Dr. Roberta Ann Dunbar's obituary.)

Africanist and SERSASian that she was, in the months and days before her death, Roberta Ann Dunbar was determined and involved in sending her library of books on women in Africa, Niger, and Islamic/African family law to a new Women's Center in Niger. The books were cataloged and boxed the week before her death and shipped in the days following. Ann (as she was known by her friends and colleagues) hoped that this library would be a resource for the many women in Niger who held her great respect, and she hoped that her gift might be a model for other colleagues considering what to do with their personal libraries upon retirement.

Roberta Ann Dunbar born in Clarksburg, West Virginia. Ann graduated from Wellesley College in 1960 with a bachelor's degree in history. She attended graduate school at UCLA, receiving her master's degree in 1964 followed by her Ph.D. in 1970, both in History. Ann worked at the George School in Philadelphia, performed fieldwork in Niger and Senegal in West Africa, and taught Hausa language to Peace Corps volunteers.

Coming to UNC-Chapel Hill in 1969, Ann taught in the History Department, and joined the African and Afro-American Studies Curriculum in 1974. She co-chaired that curriculum for 10 years, and then developed courses laying the groundwork for the Department established in the 1980s. Teaching in African literature, art, and comparative studies in global culture and gender, Ann also espoused the "service-learning" movement in the 1990s and taught participatory development courses in that field.

Shortly after arriving at Chapel Hill, Ann and her Africanist colleagues began to discuss creating a loosely associated group of Africanists in the Southeast. Their collective efforts helped inspire Rutledge Dennis (Sociology, Virginia Commonwealth University) and Joseph C. Miller (History, University of Virginia) to propose a "Southeastern Regional Seminar" on "Approaches to Social and Economic Change in Sub-Saharan Africa" in June 1973 to the Social Science Research Council. SERSAS, as it eventually became called, was approved by the SSRC later that year.

As a member of SERSAS's founding core group, Ann had supported the application to the SSRC and arranged not only for UNC-Chapel Hill sponsorship but also its hosting of SERSAS at the close of its first

year in the spring of 1974. The conference theme was the discussion of Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. She later helped arrange SERSAS conferences at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1977, 1978, and 1980. From 1985 to 1987 Ann served as a coordinator of SERSAS. Roberta Ann Dunbar was instrumental in shaping the character of SERSAS to reflect mutual support, empathy, scholarship, and all matters African until she retired.

Ann Dunbar's research interests were in twentieth and twenty-first-century social history of West African Muslim areas, focusing on law and political movements as they have been influenced and shaped by women. Continuing education and department programs led to travel and in some cases residence in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and South Africa. At home, Ann's long involvement with the Dispute Settlement Center of Orange County paralleled her intellectual interest in social justice.

Throughout her academic career Ann's tireless mentoring of countless students not only helped guide them to productive lives but also created a rich network of progressive colleagues both in Africa and domestically. SERSAS thrived in part because of her strong support. Professor Roberta Ann Dunbar retired in 2009 as the longest serving faculty member in UNC-Chapel Hill's Department of African & Afro-American Studies.