

TAKING AFRICA TO THE CLASSROOM

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Part of the mission of the Center for African Studies is to promote the teaching of Africa in schools, colleges and universities outside the University of Florida. The Center with the assistance of its affiliated faculty provides various levels of training and assistance to teachers at K-12, two-year colleges, and universities. At college level, the Center provides workshops and institutes to enhance the teaching of Africa and assist instructors in developing courses or sections on Africa. In addition, the Center holds an annual summer institute for K-12 teachers. The objective is to help teachers increase their knowledge about Africa and develop lesson plans to use in their classrooms. In the last ten years more than 100 teachers have taken part in the summer institutes and more than 6,000 have participated in our in-service training. Part of the objective of the summer institute is to produce a publication for teachers. Teachers who participate in the institute design lesson plans and write articles which are published in the *Irohin: Bringing Africa to the Classroom*.

Thus far, we have published more than 15 editions of the *Irohin*, most of which are available online. The *Irohin* serves as a valuable resource for teachers locally, regionally and nationally. Print copies are provided to teachers at workshops and in-service training sessions. The articles in the publication are written by teachers for other teachers. The objective of the publication is to provide teachers with



accurate information about Africa and offer effective ways for teaching about the continent. The *Irohin* also explores topical issues pertaining to Africa. The 2014 *Irohin* edition included: Reflections on Nelson Mandela; Ngungi wa Thiong'o; a comparative look at the cities of Lagos and Gaborone; Sudanese attempts to rebuild the country; conflict diamonds and the Kimberley process; great African leaders and social movements; the clash of traditional and modern cultures in Guinea; a look at African women authors; body adornment in selected regions of East Africa; Western versus African Hip-Hop; and the origin of the African Cup of Nations.

In 2014 CAS held its 10th Jambol Summer program for area high school students. The objective is to introduce the students to an African language and

contemporary Africa and thus sow the seed for future Africanists! So far, we have taught an average of 20 students each summer the basics of the Swahili language, introduction to the continent, music and dance. At the end of the institute the students demonstrate their knowledge of Swahili through performances including self-introductions, riddles and songs. They also demonstrate their newly acquired African music skills through the creative playing of drums, singing and dancing. Parents and families are invited to the graduation celebration.

Agnes Ngoma Leslie is the outreach director and senior lecturer at the Center for Africa Studies. She directs the summer institute for teachers and Jambol! She is also the editor of *Irohin: Bringing Africa to the Classroom*.