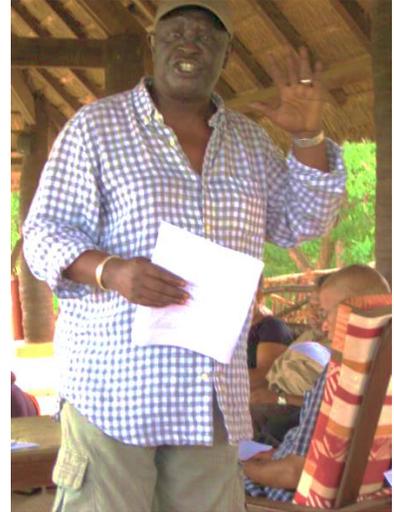


**Fulbright Hays GPA Senegal  
Week Two**

**Toubacouta – July 8, 2017**

The morning started with a lecture by Professor Sene in the pavilion overlooking Lake Saloum. In addition to being the Director of the West African Research Center (WARC), the host of our Fulbright Hays group, he is an African literary scholar at Cheikh Anta Diop University. Founded in 1918 as a medical college during Senegal’s colonial era, by 1957 the institution had become the University of Dakar, West Africa’s largest and most prestigious university. The Senegalese proudly embraced the name change of the university in 1987 in honor of the world renown Senegalese physicist, anthropologist, and philosopher Cheikh Anta Diop.



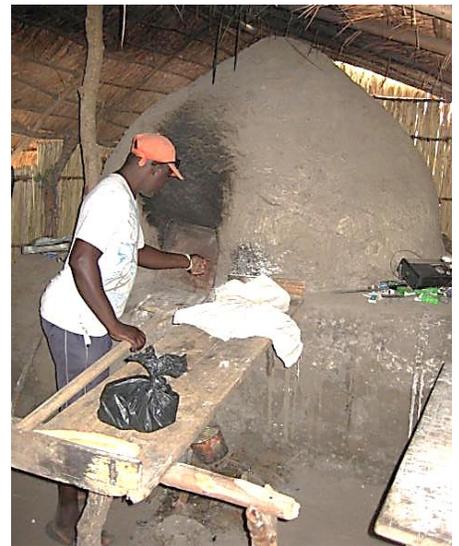
Professor Sene’s lecture is on *Négritude*, a literary and cultural movement founded by leading Francophone intellectuals from French colonies when they were students studying abroad in Paris during the 1930s: Léopold Senghor, who later became the first president of an independent Senegal; Guinea’s Léon Damas, who enjoyed a distinguished career as a professor at Georgetown University and later Howard University in Washington, D.C.; and Aimé Césaire, a prominent literary voice and politician in his native Martinique. As a cultural nationalist movement, *Négritude* protested both the political and cultural bondage of French colonial rule while celebrating and affirming African cultural identity. Its theorists were poets whose works echoed concerns about Africans’ cultural alienation. Professor Sene guides the group through a passionate

explication of Senghor’s signature poem “Femme Noire” or “Black Woman,” an ode to both black women and his native Senegal, peeling back layers of rich cultural contexts that had escaped my previous reading of the poem.



**Sippo Island**

We board a small boat that takes us across the lake to Sippo island, a small village off the coast of Toubacouta. An elderly woman, known as the Queen of Sippo, warmly welcomes us. It is a perfect segue to our



previous discussion of Léopald Seghor’s poem. Through an interpreter, she shares a brief narrative of her roots there.

She seems to be magnetically drawn to Joyce, our Project Director, who we surmise may resemble a family member or some other cherished person in the Queen’s life, for she clings to Joyce in a way that seems to say, “Welcome home, my daughter.” Before heading to the other side for a picnic, we tour the sparsely populated village, noting the work of a small NGO that promotes women’s empowerment and the island’s economic self-sufficiency. We discover the source of the bissap (hibiscus) jam and fresh bread served at breakfast at the hotel.