

Arts, Rituals of Congo and Zambia to Be Explored at UC San Diego

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An expert on the arts of Congo and Zambia, who notes that Zambian women determine men's behavior by controlling the domestic environment, will speak Feb. 20 at the University of California, San Diego as part of the university's 2009 Black History Month Celebration.

Elisabeth Cameron, an assistant professor in the history of art and visual culture at UC Santa Cruz, will talk on *Living Spirits, Walking Dead: Makishi and Ancestor Spirits in Congo and Zambia* at 2:30 p.m. in the Social Science Building #101. The event is free and open to the public.

"Cameron specializes in the arts of Congo and Zambia with an emphasis on gender issues and life change rituals, including initiation rites," says Bennetta Jules-Rosette, director of UC San Diego's African & African American Studies Research Project (AAASRP) which is sponsoring the lecture. "Her talk will include an analysis of rituals of life and death."

Cameron received a Fulbright-Hays research grant in 2003-2004 and traveled to Zambia to examine the visual culture, gender roles, and power relationships of African women. Prior to that, she visited the country in 1992-1993 conducting research for her dissertation under a previous Fulbright award.

She asserts that visual culture is essential to an understanding of how African gender roles are defined and negotiated. Among her observations is that Zambian women determine men's behavior through their control of the domestic household spaces, architecture, and ritual performances.

Women manipulate the rituals involved with marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, healing ceremonies, masquerades, political meetings, and funerals. Cameron concludes that gender roles and social customs in Zambia depend primarily on how women organize their environment.

Cameron received a doctorate in art history from UCLA. Prior to her appointment in 2001 at UC Santa Cruz, she was associate curator of African art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. She is the first speaker in AAASRP's *Cultures of Life and Death in Africa and the African Diaspora Lecture Series*.

For further information on the Cameron lecture contact Jules-Rosette at (858) 822-0265 or e-mail bjulesro@ucsd.edu. For further information on Black History Month activities at UCSD please visit <http://blackhistorymonth.ucsd.edu>.

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