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African Studies Association Announces Ken Harrow ASA Film Fund and Sembène-Kelani Film Prize

PISCATAWAY, New Jersey – The African Studies Association is pleased to announce the establishment of the Ken Harrow ASA Film Fund to support scholarship, art, and the exchange of ideas about African film.

The Ken Harrow ASA Film Fund supports the new Sembène-Kelani Film Prize, formerly the ASA Film Prize, which is awarded to an outstanding film, whether fiction or documentary, made by an African filmmaker. The Ken Harrow ASA Film Fund also supports scholarly research and the dissemination of knowledge about African film by providing film festival attendance grants to African Studies Review Film Review Editors and Sembène-Kelani Film Prize committee members. The Fund will support the relocation of the Harrow library, including over 1000 titles and 450 films, in partnership with Michigan State University and Université Gaston Berger.

The Ken Harrow ASA Film Fund was made possible by a generous gift from Kenneth W. Harrow and Elizabeth W. Harrow. Dr. Kenneth Harrow (1943-2024) was Emeritus Distinguished Professor of English at Michigan State University (1966-2018). He received a B.S. from M.I.T in 1964, and a PhD in Comparative Literature from NYU in 1970. His work focused on African cinema and literature, Diaspora and Postcolonial Studies. He published six single-authored books, 10 edited and co-edited volumes, and over 60 articles and 25 book chapters. He served on the boards of the African Literature Association and the African Studies Association. In his years with ASA, he helped establish and organize the ASA Film Prize. In 2023, he received the ASA Distinguished Africanist Award.

The Sembène-Kelani Film Prize is named in honor of two prominent African filmmakers, Sembène Ousmane and Tunde Kelani. Senegalese filmmaker Sembène Ousmane helped define African cinema and has been called the father of African cinema. Nigerian filmmaker Tunde Kelani was similarly important in influencing Anglophone African cinema. Both filmmakers played crucial roles in establishing African cinema as an independent, creative, important segment of African culture. More complete biographies authored by Dr. Harrow can be found on the award page.

About the ASA
Established in 1957, the African Studies Association is the flagship membership organization devoted to enhancing the exchange of information about Africa. The ASA is based in the United States and aims to cultivate a better understanding of the continent, taking a holistic approach to its areas of focus. Members include scholars, students, teachers, development professionals, policy makers, and others. ASA provides access to path-breaking research and key debates in African studies and facilitates interdisciplinary exchanges with African scholars and institutions. The ASA Annual Meeting fosters global networks by convening people with scholarly and other interests in Africa, and ultimately broadens professional opportunities in the field. The organization publishes two leading journals on Africa, African Studies Review and History in Africa and promotes an informed understanding of Africa to educational institutions, as well as to the public. businesses, media, and other interested communities. Through a diverse number of initiatives and programs, ASA’s members have developed an expansive pool of experts, educators, policy makers, who positively impact the field.

Enhancing the Exchange of Information About Africa Since 1957