Sarah Zimmerman
Proposal Narrative: Summer Grant Application 2013

In the summer of 2013, I would like to travel to Senegal to conduct archival, oral, and educational research for six weeks. This research will contribute to scholarly and pedagogical objectives that I will meet in the next two or three academic years—a completed draft of my first book manuscript and paving a foundation for a summer study abroad program in Senegal.

In terms of scholarly objectives, archival research in the National Archives of Senegal will immediately contribute to the completion of a forthcoming scholarly article. This article analyzes processes of decolonization and deterritorialization affecting French colonial soldier veterans in West Africa during the 1960s. Perhaps more momentously, I will collect oral interviews and consult archival sources that will be evidence for my first book manuscript, which I intend to complete by the end of the 2014-2015 academic year. My first book manuscript is tentatively entitled, “Married to the Tirailleurs Sénégalais: Marriage, Colonial Women, and Migration, 1880-1960.”

In this manuscript, I trace the evolution of marital unions between tirailleurs sénégalais and West African women, as well as women from other French colonies.\(^1\) Marriage lies at the heart of this project because it is social and political institution central to the reproduction of West African society. In my project, marriage becomes a site of contestation as a result of colonialism, migration, and the French colonial military. Spouses and the colonial state imbue conjugality and domesticity with overlapping and contradicting meanings at various moments in the colonial and post-colonial past.

One crucial chapter of the manuscript analyzes marriages between Vietnamese women and tirailleurs sénégalais serving in the French-Indochinese War (1945-1954). Remarkably, Vietnamese women migrated with their husbands to West Africa after Vietnam became independent in 1954. Interviews with these women (many are now octogenarians) and their Vietnamese-Senegalese adult children will provide anecdotal evidence for obstacles and possibilities these women faced as they integrated into Senegalese communities. Archival evidence will provide evidence pertaining to how their marriages negotiated shifting legal and political regimes as spouses experienced Vietnam’s decolonization in 1954, as well as Senegal’s decolonization in 1960.

In addition to using interviews for my manuscript, I will place copies of interview transcripts with the Senegalese National Archives and the Normal School in Dakar. Both institutions have been working to archive oral histories and memory related to the tirailleurs sénégalais. Donating transcripts will make these valuable resources available to future generations. Once complete, my book will contribute to debates related to marriage, colonialism, migration, and African history. My monograph will serve future scholars by pushing some of the related debates in new directions.

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\(^1\) *Tirailleurs sénégalais* were West African soldiers who served in the French colonial army. They participated in the expansion, maintenance, and defense of French empire between 1857 and 1962.
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When I was a senior at Ohio University, I studied abroad in Dakar for a semester. Without question, this was one of the most formative experiences in my life. Western students should have the opportunity to explore history and cultural diversity through experiential education on the African continent. The successful summer course in South Africa, led by a colleague in Political Science, may only be offered sporadically in future years. Summer courses in Senegal would offer Western students an alternative, or replacement, to this program. While conducting research in Senegal in the summer of 2014, I will lay the groundwork for a summer study abroad program that will take place in Dakar (the contemporary capital) and Saint-Louis (the former colonial capital).

Once in Senegal, I will consult with Senegalese colleagues at the University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar and the University of Gaston Berger outside of Saint-Louis. In collaboration with them, I will identify the possibilities and obstacles for offering rigorous coursework in historical and contemporary humanistic/social science disciplines to study abroad students in the English language. In addition information-based courses, future Western students will have the opportunity to learn Wolof. Wolof is spoken by eighty percent of Senegalese people and there are several options for language instruction in Dakar. In addition to content-based courses, students will also participate in field trips to a slave castle on Gorée Island and visit sites of Islamic revival and revolution in Podor. I will also begin making inquiries into classroom space and homestays.

By the conclusion of this research trip to Senegal, I will have collected the evidence needed to complete a scholarly article and to complete a draft of my book manuscript. I will also be better informed regarding the logistics and possibilities of creating a summer study abroad course in Senegal. The Summer Research Grant will underwrite the expenses of traveling to and within Senegal, as well as the cost of accommodations in Dakar and Saint-Louis. In the summer, trans-continental and international travel will likely amount to $2,000-2,300 dollars. Lodging in Dakar and Saint-Louis will total at least $1,500 dollars. Supplies and local and long-distance travel in Senegal will bring trip expenses close to $5,000 dollars.

A Summer Research Grant for the summer of 2014 will enable me to fulfill publication requirements for advancing to tenure. The grant will also allow me break ground on a study abroad program that will add diversity to Western’s curriculum and provide students with extra-curricular experiences that will challenge them in multifaceted ways. Please strongly consider my application for the 2014 Summer Research Grant.