



## Post Fellowship Reporting - Project Summary

**Report Title:** Rhythms of the Gambia      **Name:** Amanda Krause  
**Other Team Members:**  
**Program:** Washington DC Program  
**Trip Dates:** 11/30/-0001 - 11/30/-0001      **Location Visited:** the Gambia, Africa  
**Post Fellowship Reporting Template:** PFR Template 02

**Project Summary:** This August, Fund For Teachers gave me an opportunity to follow my passion to the Gambia. By traveling across the ocean to Africa, I was able to pursue my goals of learning and experiencing West African drumming traditions. For two weeks, I lived and played music with a master drummer from Guinea. Through lessons, I learned to play the djembe, dun dun, and balafon. Taught using an oral tradition, I broke free of my western trained background, and grew both as a musician and teacher. Because I traveled to the Gambia for my musical instruction, I also got to take advantage of where I was. I spent my afternoons and evenings experiencing life how it is there-- eating meals and drinking tea as a member of the family and community. Additionally I was able to see some of the culture and history of the Gambia. I walked around town, ate local treats, shopped at the city market, watched the sun set over the ocean, pet crocodiles at an enchanted pond, and took an amazing journey through the bush to learn about Kunta Kinteh and the slave trade.

**Career Impact:** Having neither traveled abroad by myself nor experienced African life, I grew both personally and professionally as a result of my fellowship trip. The intriguing sounds of the djembe and balafon took me to the Gambia, and left with an even bigger fascination and an enhanced passion. I learned and acquired new performance skills with respect to the djembe, dun dun, and balafon as a musician; but beyond that, I am returning with a broader worldview. Because I am better musician, my students will become better musicians. I now possess a stronger playing ability but also a better understanding of being a music student. This trip reversed my daily role; I was not the teacher during my music lessons; I was the student. Learning with no visuals, relying on my ears only provided me with a great insight into how my students learn which has led me to alter some of my teaching strategies with my students. My experiences beyond the drumming while I was in the Gambia also give me a wealth of authentic stories of history and culture to share with my students. The stories along with the photographic images will complement my cultural lessons as well as my school's focus on a community structured learning environment.

**Classroom/Community Impact:** Talking about the music of West Africa prior to my fellowship consisted of information that, while it related and linked to our current and relevant learning, remained distant and abstract. After my trip to the Gambia, the sights, sounds, and traditions of West Africa are now alive and closer to my students because of my personal experiences. This not only enhances my credibility and teaching ability, but it also charges me with passing along what I was able to learn and experience. My school community can benefit from the history and cultural artifacts and images that I have brought back. This includes foremost the musical lessons that I learned. My students will experience authentic drumming patterns, songs, and performance techniques as a part of the tradition I studied while on fellowship. Further, their communal way of life has a lot to offer related to how we interact and learn as a school community. Eating as a family, as a community; for example, seems almost trivial but the reasons and knowledge presented to me regarding eating have so many implications to how we live here and educate our students. The history, of the slave trade for example, I experienced while there can be added into our curriculum spanning multiple subjects and will provide our students with a deeper understanding of our history and our world.

**Open Response:** As a part of the fellowship, I developed a web log (blog) to detail my trip and while I was in the Gambia it was more difficult to use the Internet than I had anticipated. So I recorded my thoughts and experiences by hand. As a result, I am now working to take my written work and post it onto the blog, placing the pictures I took along side of the corresponding text. Additionally, I am creating a photographic collection of the images I took of my Gambian experience. These digital images will also be combined with some video footage into a multi-media presentation that I will be able to share both personally and professionally. More specifically, after my visit to Juffureh and James Island, I will create cross-curricular lessons related to Kunta Kinteh and the slave trade. With regard to my music program, the songs and playing techniques that I studied with my teachers in the Gambia have been folded into the curriculum so that my students gain that experience as well. Finally, I will make a presentation to my fellow colleagues about my fellowship and encourage any further collaboration or discussion that may result.

**Quote:** It is my hope that by sharing my fellowship experience with my students that my passion will shine through and add to their passion for music and learning.



Photos:



Libon demonstrates how to cross the river.



Early morning fishing boats on the river.



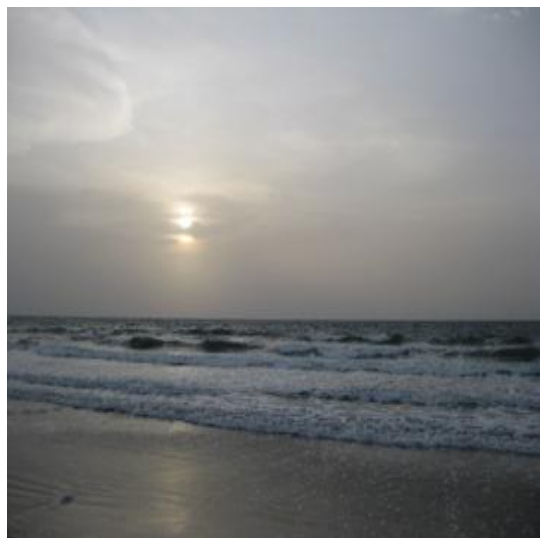
The "Never Again" statue at Juffreh commemorating the end of slavery.



View from the taxi while driving through "the bush."



A drummer demonstrating the part for me to learn.



The sun sets while at the beach.



Petting the crocodile at the Kachikally pool.



My teacher, Libon, and me.