

For Immediate Release

Contact: Joy T. Williams
From: Dance Chapel Hill
Phone: 919-259-8831
Fax: 919-869-1842
Email: joytwilliams@yahoo.com
Webpage: www.webtheword.com

Mixing Dance and Disease: Saving Lives and Bringing Joy to the Land of Timbuktu *Triangle Dance Instructor Traveling to Mali to Aid in Malaria Prevention Efforts*

Chapel Hill, North Carolina. July 25, 2008. If seven Boeing 747s full of children were deliberately crashed into a mountain every day, famously asked noted malaria researcher Wen Kilama, would the world do anything to stop it? This horrifying scenario in essence plays out every 30 seconds when a [child dies from malaria](#) in sub-Saharan Africa. It kills over one million people annually, 90% of them in Africa, and 70% of them children under the age of five.

Chapel Hill dance instructor and performer Joy T. Williams, [who specializes in African dance](#), will travel to the West African country of [Mali](#) at the end of July to help fight this monstrous killer. She will join a unique collaboration between art and science, university and government, and public and private, in a health and educational effort focusing on malaria prevention.

A constitutional democracy only since 1992, the Republic of Mali – best known to Americans for its historic city of Timbuktu – is a beacon of social and political stability on the volatile African continent. But as one of the poorest nations on earth, public health issues, especially malaria, threaten Mali's ability to continue to exert a positive influence in the region.

Transmitted via mosquito bites, the number of deaths could be significantly reduced through widespread use of cost-efficient insecticide treated bed nets.

A 70% illiteracy rate – one of the world's highest – makes it a challenge to spread the word about the personal, economic, and societal benefits of preventing malaria using treated bed nets. Performance art helps bridge the communication gap. Joining the world-wide fight against this killer is [New Works/World Traditions dance troupe](#), whose members share a strong passion for public service and global harmony. Every year, founders [Michelle Bach-Coulibaly](#), a Brown University professor of dance, and her husband, renowned native Malian dancer [Seydou Coulibaly](#), host cultural trips to Mali to study drumming, dance, and Mande traditions. In 2006 the then Minister of Culture invited New Works/World Traditions to participate in this year's Biennale Festival of Art and Culture in Kayes. Seizing the opportunity to educate as well as to entertain, members of the troupe, joined by invited American guest artists and Malian dancers, will perform a reworking of their piece, "Bloodline."

Offering an in-depth look at malaria, [The Bloodline Project's](#) objective is to bring and distribute insecticide treated netting to Mali. This summer's trip is sponsored by The Watson Institute, the Office of International Affairs and the Creative Arts Council at Brown University, and private donors. Others assisting include the faculty of the Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown, health care professionals in Mali, and some of Mali's finest artists. Michelle Bach-Coulibaly and Dr. Bruce Becker of Brown co-direct the project.

While a small number of The Bloodline Project team of Brown students are being funded by the University, other participants are self-funding, including Chapel Hill resident [Joy T. Williams](#) who is making her second trip to Mali with the Coulibaly's. According to Bach-Coulibaly, "Joy is in good company, with a PhD candidate from Harvard, a medical student from Harvard, a retired school teacher who directs Build-A-School Project in Mali with Save the Children, a recent RISD graduate, and a Fulbright Scholar (in addition to Joy, who is also a [Fulbright Scholar](#)). The team is grateful to have Joy with them."

This time around, Joy goes to Mali with her eyes open and no expectations. "When I went in 2002," she says, "As a black American of African heritage I thought I would have a deep connection with the land and the people, almost as one who was lost and came home. I romanticized it. But I didn't have that experience. Our luggage got lost and it was HOT. I wanted to kiss the ground and run my fingers through dirt like a friend had done the year before. When we got there I first saw concrete. We have that here. I didn't want to kiss concrete!"

Although personal and professional development take second place to the good she will be doing in Mali, Joy takes the Biblical imperative to increase her talents literally (Matthew 25:15-29). "God has given me the gift of dance," she relates, "And I must cherish it, nurture it, and share it. The rigorous dance training from Malian dancers – seeing the movements performed by natives – is invaluable and is only available on those rare occasions when professional West African artists hold workshops in the triangle. It's also my choice to participate in social service

as an expression of my faith," continues Joy, "which Michelle has incorporated into her program by working with orphanages and bringing awareness on preventing Malaria."

Joy gives her time generously to the local community, presenting workshops and programs, serving as an intern with the American Dance Festival, currently housed at Duke University, and teaching dance classes that are almost a form of therapy. Through her studio housed at the church she attends, Church of the Harvest (corner of corner of Pleasant & Hillview, Carrboro), Joy provides a safe place for those who need to express themselves freely and makes dance available to underserved communities such as physically or developmentally differently-abled folks. Others just come for fun and exercise.

Because she is self-funding, Joy will gratefully accept any size contribution. Although donors do not receive the tangible benefit of a tax deduction, supporting her trip provides direct cultural benefits to Chapel Hill/Carrboro citizens. In addition to generously sharing her experiences with the community at large, Joy is working with area youth in preparing pictures, letters, and video dances to exchange with children and youth in Mali. Joy believes that, "This Chapel Hill/Carrboro-Mali cultural exchange is a good way to involve our youth in world politics, via relationships"

Joy barter for dance lessons, often charging only what her students can afford to pay. "It doesn't make me a very good business person," she smiles, "But it does make me an active member of our community." Whether teaching at home or dancing abroad, she just can't help but spread Joy.

Joy will be in Mali July 30 – August. Upon her return, she will gladly share her experiences in word, dance, drum and video to interested groups. Contributions can be mailed to 100-A Hillview St., Carrboro, NC 27510 and will be deposited during her absence to help with travel expenses. Joy's website is dancechapelhill.webs.com. Reprints of this article and links to learn more about fighting malaria and visit www.webtheword.com.

RELATED WEB LINKS

Joy's Trip to Mali

www.webtheword.com

Joy T. Williams

<http://dancechapelhill.webs.com/>

<http://carrboro.com/africandance/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEzGu3gYeiU>

Project Bloodline

<http://www.dosomething.org/node/172981>

New Works/World Traditions Dance Theatre

http://www.brown.edu/Students/Body_and_Sole/newworks.htm

<http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/Theatre/dancebios.htm>

<http://www.ridance.com/rico2.html#newworks>

Mali & Malaria Sources

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/06/0612_030612_malaria.html

http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/mali/

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mali>

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=70594>

<http://www.scienceinafrica.co.za/2004/march/malaria.htm>

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/health_cast/uploaded_files/KILAMA.pdf

<http://www.fightingmalaria.org/>