

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 21, 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 is in essence played out in sub-Saharan Africa where a child dies every 30 seconds from malaria. 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 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 the 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. Enter 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 Malian dancers, will perform a reworking of their piece, "Bloodline." Offering an in-depth look at malaria, Project Bloodline'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. Only nine members of New Works are being financially supported by the project; all other participants are self-funding.

Joy T. Williams, one of those self-funding, is making her second trip to Mali with the troupe. This time she goes 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 got there I first saw concrete. We have that here. I didn't want to kiss concrete!"

Although personal and professional development place second 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."

Joy welcomes any size contribution, no matter the size. Although donors will not receive the tangible benefit of a tax deduction, supporting her trip will provide intangible cultural benefits. 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.

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

Upon her return, Joy will gladly share her experiences in word, dance, drum and video to interested groups. To learn more about Dance Chapel Hill, Project Bloodline, or how you can help bring Joy to Mali, call 919-259-8831 or go to www.webtheword.com.

###

RELATED WEB LINKS

Joy's Trip to Mali

www.webtheword.com

Joy T. Williams

<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/>