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# A National Symbol or a National Frustration: Academic, Artistic, and Political Perspectives of the African Renaissance Monument

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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# *A National Symbol or a National Frustration*

*Academic, Artistic, and Political Perspectives of the African Renaissance  
Monument*

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### *Abstract*

On 3 April 2010, President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal inaugurated and dedicated the African Renaissance Monument to the people of his country, the people of Africa, and the rest of the world. By far one of the largest and most ambitious of his “Grand Projects,” the Monument has been enshrouded in controversy since its inception. Some have called it an idolatrous statue that insults the fundamental values of Islam, while others have praised it as a beacon of freedom leading Africa into the future. The research focuses on this controversy, and we begin by understanding the background and underlying debate of if the Monument has transformed from a symbol of freedom to a symbol of the national frustration of the people towards their government. A variety of opinions and perspectives were collected from three important and conducive fields: artistic, political, and academic. In the end, the hope is to gain a better insight into the controversy through analysis of the three perspectives and come to a conclusion on the Monument’s actual representation. [Topic codes 523 & 528]

### *I. Introduction*

From the dusty streets and markets of Ouakam, Mermoz, and Mamelles, the glimmering and gigantic statue in the distance is something of a mirage. At first glance, you would believe that your eyes are fooling you when you see the massive statue perched high atop a hill. It seems like such a quagmire, especially considering your surroundings. These neighborhoods, located in Dakar, the capital and largest city of Senegal, are a hodgepodge of dilapidated apartments, an infinite number of boutiques, and a general sense of despair. A tour of these neighborhoods and their streets, or any other in the city for that manner, give a quite accurate depiction of what life is like in developing African nation. The roads and highways are nearly impassable due to massive potholes and are consistently clogged with traffic thanks to the overabundance of taxi cabs, city buses, and the colorful *car rapides*. The most basic infrastructures are crumbling, leaving the city covered in half-built buildings whose budgets ran out of money. The second you walk out of any restaurant or shop, you are also greeted by the *talibe*, the young boys sent to the streets by their Koranic teachers to roam the city begging for money or food, wearing only shreds of clothing. When your eyes finally settle on the statue, it is very easy to be taken aback from the interesting and strange dynamic that it presents to its viewers.

The gigantic statue that is being discussed here is the African Renaissance Monument, the fifty-three meter high bronze statue placed directly on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, on one

of the most westerly points of the African continent. In addition, the Monument is fixed atop the ancient volcano of the Petite Mamelle, making it viewable to the majority of the city's population down below. It is by far the largest monument on the African continent, and there are just a handful of others in the world, scattered across the former Soviet-bloc and Asia, that are larger (Gouvernement du Senegal n.d.). The Monument itself is supposedly the brainchild of the President of the Republic of Senegal, His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade, and has definitely come with its fair share of controversy (Monuraf 2010). During the construction and dedication of the Monument itself, protests erupted across the country, ushering in a very decisive and rocky time period for the Government of Senegal, one that has continued to today. The question then, that is to be asked, is whether Monument is a symbol of Senegal and Africa as it was intended, or whether it has become an outlet of frustration for the Senegalese people towards their government. To begin though, it is imperative to understand the history and composition of the monument itself first.

## *II. Introduction to the African Renaissance Monument*

As mentioned before, the African Renaissance Monument is built on top of the Petite Mamelle, an ancient inactive volcano on the northeast edge of the peninsula that makes up the city of Dakar. Prior to the Monument's construction, the hill was a vacant spec of land in the rapidly expanding city. The official brochure from the Monument, in agreeance with most Senegalese, states that the inventor and creator of the Monument was the President himself, with the help of the Senegalese sculptor Pierre Goudiaby Atépa (Ministry of Culture, Senegal 2010). The groundbreaking took place on 15 April 2002, and it took just under eight years to complete, being inaugurated on 03 April 2010 (Ibid.). It was on this date in which Senegal celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence from the former colonial power of France. The Monument itself was built not by the Senegalese, but rather the Mansudae Overseas Project Group of Companies of North Korea is listed as the architect (Ibid.). The Monument is composed of a man, women, and baby all strategically placed in a symbolic order.

Physically speaking, the Monument is something of a spectacle and a sight to see. The man is located in the center, is shirtless, and is raising his left hand in the direction of the west. The baby is sitting on the arm of the man, and the baby's left hand is also raised and pointing westward. Finally, the woman is trailing behind the two, gazing upwards and lovingly towards the man and baby. From its base to the top of the baby's head (the highest point), the monument

is a whopping 53 meters high, but from sea level, the statue rises 153 meters above the ocean (Ministry of Culture, Senegal 2010). In total, the Monument weighs an unbelievable 200 tons; with the man himself weighing 100 tons (Ibid.). The most interesting, and the largest point of contention, was the cost of the Monument itself. According to the official publication from the Government of Senegal, the Monument cost nothing, 0 Franc CFA; it was built by the North Koreans in exchange for a prime area of Senegalese government-owned land (Ibid.). To the chagrin of many, the Monument has an estimated lifespan upwards of 1,200 years (Ibid.). Only once you understand the Monument and get a good feel of its description can you begin to see into the controversy that surrounds it.

### *III. Insight into the Controversy*

The Republic of Senegal is, without a doubt, a developing country with few driving economic factors. What this means is that the Senegalese economy is heavily reliant on its few economic exports and a great deal of foreign aid for support. Interestingly enough, it is estimated that the Government of Senegal is carrying an over 3 billion USD debt burden to foreign governments and international banks (MacEwan 2009). While this money at first helped the country build its infrastructure and develop the nation ever so slightly, the debt now is draining the cash-strapped Senegalese government. Whatever revenue the government brings in, a large chunk of it must go to paying off the country's debtors, leaving even less for the day to day operations of the government and further development of the country.

When it was announced that this grand monument was going to be erected over the underdeveloped capital city of Dakar, many eyebrows were raised here in Senegal and abroad. It seemed like a giant waste of government funds, of which the government had very little of to waste. The paradox that arose was why the government would spend such a massive amount of money on something so unnecessary while streets in the capital city went unpaved, power cuts were a frequent occurrence, and there was an overall general lack of social programs. In response to the criticism, President Wade discovered the Mansudae Overseas Project Group of Companies from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Interestingly enough, the official governmental publication of the Monument brags about how Wade told the North Koreans how his country had no money to pay such a grand art project (Ministry of Culture, Senegal 2010). After this exchange, it was decided that instead of cash, the Government of Senegal would pay the North Korean company with a large portion of state-owned land; the

location of which is still unknown. The government estimated that the land was worth roughly 12 billion Franc CFA (24 million USD), but there is no way to verify this estimate other than the governmental source (Ibid.). The Senegalese Government justifies this handover by stating that it would be impossible to sell the land; the National Assembly would never accept it into their budget without a vote, and they believed a consensus would have never been made. Instead, the President just decided to give it over to the North Koreans, no questions asked (Nossiter 2010). After the land was handed over to the North Koreans though, they quickly turned it around and sold it for an unknown profit, but many experts agree that it was most likely worth far more than what the actual cost of the Monument would have been.

That, unfortunately, was just the initial price of the Monument, we must not forget about the price of upkeep and maintenance costs. There is no estimate on how much this will be, but the government is under the impression that the revenue drawn in from tourists and visitors to the Monument will cover those costs. Yet another point of contention though is allotment of the projected revenues received from the Monument itself. Several months prior to the dedication of the Monument, President Wade declared that since he was the sole creator and inspiration of the Monument, he would thus be entitled to one-third of all the profits generated from it, leaving the remaining two-thirds for its upkeep and for the government (Jnr 2010). This caused an uproar with the population of Senegal; one the main justifications for the Monument was because of the projected monies it would bring in, and now one-third of the revenue was going to go into the pocket of one man. Despite this, the President moved forward with his plan and the copyright was approved. It is unknown how much money the President has actually made off of it this far, but to ease a bit of the tension he has pledged to give a portion of the money to a foundation that he has started (Ly 2010). Whether that has calmed this aspect of the controversy down, well, that is still up for debate.

The controversy does not end there, however, and this really just the tip of the iceberg. We must now turn to the style of the Monument and how it was constructed; these two points have also created quite a stir and have only fanned the flames of controversy. Many people claim, mainly international observers along with some in the Senegalese population, that the Monument is very communistic in its style; it is eerily reminiscent of other statues and monuments of the former Soviet Union and China (Ba 2010). Gigantic bronze statues are unique to this area, and the commentary surrounding this has been interesting. Christina Passariello of

the Wall Street Journal has stated that as far as artistic movements go, the Monument is reminiscent of socialist realism by displaying the triumphs of man and the over-glorification of a single ideal (Passariello 2010). Much of the international community is in agreeance with this commentary, including MaryJo Arnoldi of the African Ethnology department of the Smithsonian Institute who claims that socialist realism is currently a large artistic movement in Africa, grossly represented by the African Renaissance Monument, because of its accessibility and its low production costs (Ibid.). What this shows us then, and adding to the controversy, is that while the Monument may fit in the socialist realism category it may not be very reminiscent of Africa or traditional African artistic movements.

Furthermore, the Islamic community has had a great deal of problems with the modesty and conservativeness (or lack thereof) of the Monument (Ba 2010). Well over 90% of the Senegalese population identifies as Muslim, and it is very apparent throughout the country. The two main Islamic brotherhoods, the Mourides and the Tidjanes, are strong political and social forces within the country (B. Fall 2003). In addition, other religious leaders hold a great deal of power over the population's popular opinion (Thurstion 2011). When the Monument was declared 'un-Islamic' by many of the local religious groups and leaders, controversy ensued. As the sculptor Atépa himself noted, "The problem was with her bare legs, they are not covered very well (Ba 2010)." The small bit of fabric that is barely covering the woman's body reveals a great deal of her breast and leg, which defies the Islamic tradition in Senegal of women dressing conservatively. There have also been reports of several influential imams in the city requesting the Monument be dismantled, saying that it is idolatrous seeing that human worship and glorification of anything or anyone other than God is forbidden. Interestingly enough, it rises far higher than the tallest minaret in the city, which some have interpreted as man being able to reach higher than God, which also is forbidden. Local clerics even went as far as issuing a fatwa against anyone who attended the inauguration of the Monument, asking God to punish those who did (Ba 2010). Finally, after the inauguration of the Monument, President Wade was quoted comparing the statue to Jesus Christ by saying that Christians have statues of Jesus, yet they don't worship him because he is not God (Jnr 2010). This comment angered the sizable Catholic minority in the country, causing violent protests between young Catholics and police. Religiously speaking, the Monument brought quite a storm of controversy.



Even after the intense criticism from the religious community and the questioning of the actual cost of the Monument, further criticism continued to arise. Simply put, very little input was accepted from the Senegalese people. The President didn't ask the people of his country whether or not they would accept and tolerate a giant monument, especially given the stylization of it. What's more, of the roughly 200 workers commissioned to build the Monument, only about 50 of them were Senegalese while the vast majority of the builders were North Koreans (Dehaas 2010). Given that the estimated unemployment rate is upwards of 50% of the population of Senegal, no one was really quite sure why more Senegalese did not work on it (MacEwan 2009). It is clear that this is yet another point of contention between those who opposed the monument and the President.

Needless to say, the African Renaissance Monument created a great deal of controversy from start to finish, and much of that controversy continues to this day. Though it has been well over a year since the dedication of the Monument, local Dakar newspapers continued to report on and bring to light issues regarding it. The Monument continues to be omnipresent in the lives of not just the Dakari, but every citizen of Senegal. There is no doubt that this controversy will continue on for many years to come. With that being said though, there are many people in Senegal and throughout Africa who accept the Monument, individuals for whom the Monument represents something more and different. While it may be controversial to some, others accept and understand the intended representation of the Monument.

#### *IV. Intended Significance and Representation of the African Renaissance Monument*

Politically speaking, the philosophical dogma of President Abdoulaye Wade is one that centers on Pan-Africanism and African unity. Throughout his eleven years in office, he has shown a keen interest in moving the African continent towards greater interdependence and unification (De Jong and Foucher 2010). The Institut Libéral, a political think tank based on the political teachings of President Wade, has deemed Wade as the "last great Pan-African theorist." That being said, President Wade has stressed time and time again that the African Renaissance Monument is not a Monument to Senegal or the Senegalese people; rather it is a symbol and representation for all the peoples of Africa. At times, he has even stated that the Monument represents all of the black populations of the world. At its dedication and inauguration, the President invited the heads of state from all African nations and other influential black leaders. According to the official publication, 22 African heads of state were present at the inauguration,

accompanied by well-known personalities such as the Reverend Jesse Jackson and a diplomatic delegation from North Korea (Ministry of Culture, Senegal 2010). It was on this day that President Wade stated that the Monument represents the “past, present, and future of Africa” and the “fight against racism” in the world (Seck 2010).

Wade decided to utilize the image of a family in the Monument for the fact that the family is the central nucleus of all African societies. The Monument, however, is intended to symbolize the “new” African family, with the young generation (represented by the baby) rising up and leading Africa into the modern world. The upward ascent of the Monument suggests the trajectory of upward movement on the African continent, leaving the dark past behind them. The family is not looking back or to the side, rather they are all focused forward, or the supposed representation of the future. Again, the representation of the family emerging from the rocky base suggests to the viewer that Africans are chipping away from the fragmented and terrible past of the continent into a free and glorious future. Wade puts it best when he states that the message of the Monument “is about Africa emerging from the darkness, from five centuries of slavery and two centuries of colonialism (Passariello 2010).”

In addition, the African Renaissance Monument is somewhat of an intended revival of the ideals and values of the African Renaissance itself. The African Renaissance is a concept conceived and popularized by the late President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, in the late 1990s (Sachs 1998). The idea of this movement was to show to the world that the African peoples and nations are united, and they are working towards a common goal: development and prosperity. In addition, it was an ideal that set out to reestablish the history of the African continent, among others (Ibid.). Mbeki, and other African leaders who followed these principals, were determined not to forget the terrible past that was the reality of Africa for many years. It was this common past shared by all Africans that the movement was built upon, all with the intention of developing the continent and raising it out of darkness. Interestingly enough though is that one of the fundamental foundations of the African Renaissance is the unison of the importance of culture and the role it plays in development (M'bow 2007). President Mbeki, along with President Wade, agrees that for development to occur it is imperative that African culture is integrated into the process. They recognized that the people and cultures of Africa are wide and diverse, but there are many common values inlaid within each ethnic group, religion, and nation. These values generally focused on the open dialogue of the continent, respect towards different

beliefs, and the spirit of mutual aid in the face of adversity (M'bow 2007). While the African Renaissance movement gained a great deal of traction in the 1990s and early 2000s, it was all but forgotten with the rapid introduction and development of technology in the modern age (Ibid.). President Wade is a product of the ideals and era of the African Renaissance movement, and he conceptualized the Monument in the hope of breathing new life into an important and unifying movement.

Finally, yet another intended representation of the African Renaissance Monument is to give testament to the cultural legacy of President Wade. It is obvious to most that he desires for the people of Senegal to remember him and his work developing the culture and arts of the country long after he leaves public office (Seck 2010). The President of Senegal is charged with defining and protecting the culture of the nation and the state, and this has continued from Senegal's first president, Leopold Sedar Senghor, to today. President Senghor is best remembered for his efforts truly presenting to the world the importance of Senegalese culture and the arts. His legacy, however, was not presented in the form of monuments or grand art projects. President Senghor was a poet, and his writings have become a symbol of and the embodiment of Senegalese culture. Additionally, Senghor recognized the importance of the French language in the process of developing the state, and the persisting use of French is yet another sign of Seghor's legacy in Senegal. With that being said, Wade also wanted to make his presidency and legacy remembered (Ibid.). Though he has gone about it in a completely different fashion, President Wade is following in the footsteps of Senghor in defining and recognizing his own cultural legacy.

Needless to say, the original significance and representation of the African Renaissance Monument is based and encapsulated in the political philosophy and ideals of the President himself. Naturally, the controversy did not arise from these suggested representations; rather the controversy erupted over differing opinions, as seen above. However, before we can delve further into the specific research of this paper, it is important to understand the recent political developments within the country and the frustrations that have arisen from the people.

#### *V. The Year of Political Upheaval: 2011*

The year 2011 has not been particularly kind to political figures and leaders throughout the world. Protests, riots, and revolutions have been an almost daily occurrence, met with varying outcomes. In the United Kingdom, protestors basically lit London on fire, causing a wide

range of destruction across the city. The Occupy protesters in the United States continue to be a headache for the police and other law enforcement agencies. This is nothing compared to what happened in the three Maghreb countries of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya where the governments of each country were completely overthrown. The people of the world have flexed their muscle and reminded governments that they are still the true holders of power, and the Government of Senegal has definitely not been immune from all of this.

From the beginning of his Presidency, Abdoulaye Wade has faced numerous critics on a variety of fronts. He has been criticized for the amount of money he has spent on a new Presidential aircraft, his “Grand Projects,” the lack attention being paid to the development of social programs, and the rampant nepotism and corruption seen throughout his government (Zounmenou 2008). It is important to recognize that though he has faced a great deal of scrutiny and criticism, he has also received a great deal of applause and recognition from individuals in Senegal and abroad. At a recent appearance at the Grand National Theater, President Wade commanded a great deal of respect and admiration from the audience. This demonstrated that a great deal of Senegalese people continue to accept his policies and leadership. As with anything political, there will always be an abundance of people on both sides of the debate, and we can see this is in every country on the globe.

President Wade faced the harshest and most severe criticism in June 2011 after an unsuccessful bid to try and change the Senegalese Constitution (BBC 2011). Mind you, this was also the time when the Arab Spring was at its peak with demonstrators bringing down the governments of both Tunisia and Egypt thus far, leaving the rest of the citizens of the world resistant and hesitant to dramatic changes made by their governments. In this instance, President Wade wished to create the position of a Vice President of Senegal, along with lowering the percentage from 50% +1 to 25% of votes needed to win the presidential election (BBC 2011). Many saw this as an attempt to win back the presidency in 2012 with very little support. Others saw it as an attempt to groom Wade’s son Karim for the Presidency, thus creating a quasi-monarchy in the country (BBC 2011). The citizens of Senegal recognized this blatant attempt to limit their democracy, and they refused to accept it. The streets of Dakar erupted with protesters and rioters, all calling for the resignation of President Wade and his government. The scene came to a climax on 23 June 2011, and Senegal, strangely enough, somewhat resembled the Maghreb countries whose governments recently toppled. It was on this day that the protestors clashed with

the police directly in front of the Presidential Palace and National Assembly building, causing uproar within the government and the nation. A month or so after these violent turn of events President Wade rescinded the legislation and banned all political demonstrations in the city (BBC 2011). The power and will of the people was forcefully demonstrated during this time, and the President had no choice but to back down.

To many, these protests demonstrated to the world that the Senegalese people are frustrated. They are frustrated with their government, the lack of social development, and the unconcealed nepotism and corruption throughout all levels of Senegalese society. The pot finally boiled over in June, and the national frustration was made public. Throughout all of this, the African Renaissance Monument remained a focal point of controversy and scrutiny towards the government, leaving the question now to be asked is whether or not it has become an outlet of the national frustration in Senegal or if it has transformed into the national symbol as the president and government hoped it would become.

#### *VI. Introduction to the Research*

Prior to coming to Senegal, I had read a great deal on the subject of the African Renaissance Monument and the controversy that enshrouds it. I distinctly remember the first time I learned of the Monument while I was still back in the United States. I was unable to form any conclusions or opinions on the Monument itself. I knew that I had to research it and gain a better insight and perspective. It was for these reasons that I decided to conduct my research on the African Renaissance Monument, but it was only after talking to dozens of taxi drivers and everyday citizens that I thought there may be something more to it. The riots and protests of June really gave a whole new perspective into the controversy, and it focused my research in the direction of trying to find what the Monument truly represented.

The research, however, is focused on three important and knowledgeable fields: artistic, political, and academic. These three domains were chosen for a variety of reasons, but first and foremost they were chosen because they are the most informed into the controversy and the Monument itself. I feel it is very easy to just stop random individuals on the street and ask their opinion of the Monument, but it would quickly become apparent that this opinion may not be the most informed. The goal of this was to ask individuals who had the most facts on the topic, rather than those whose opinions may have been swayed by the media and/or personal bias. On an individual level, I chose to interview artists and view it from an artistic perspective for the fact

that the African Renaissance Monument is by far the largest piece of public art on the continent. Senegalese and international artists who were familiar with African art movement would be able to provide an interesting and imperative perspective to the research. Secondly, individuals involved in the Senegalese political spheres were chosen because of their defining role in the creation of the Monument. A great deal of controversy regarding the Monument was dealt in part by Senegalese politicians, and with everything, the debate over it became a highly politicized topic. Lastly, I felt that the academic perspective was extraordinarily important for the pure fact that they are the one who will define Senegalese history in the future. Furthermore, academics tend to be the most informed persons and tend to hold off judgment until a full, informed opinion can be made. I felt that they would be most helpful in giving the least biased opinion for this research.

It was for these reasons and many more that academics, politicians, and artists were chosen for this research. The goal in the end was to give us an accurate, informed opinion that helps to paint the picture of whether or not the African Renaissance Monument is a true representation of Senegal and Africa as a whole, or whether it has become an outlet of frustration for the people towards their government.

### *VII. Methodology*

The collection of research for this project is simple and fairly straightforward. Thus being said, the methodology of this project was broken up into three distinct categories: article research, interviews, and observations. While there are many different ways to collect data and research on a topic like this, I found these three yielded the most significant and important information.

The first step in research for me has always been to dig around for background information. That is exactly what I did for this project, and I started by researching online databases from my university and elsewhere for articles regarding the African Renaissance Monument, the idea of the African Renaissance itself, Senegalese democracy, and the presidency of Abdoulaye Wade. In addition, I traveled to multiple research centers throughout Dakar to gain more information. I was extraordinarily lucky to find that there has been a great deal of information written on this subject. The information I found was both critical and supportive of the subjects, and I easily found articles and authors on all sides of the spectrum. What was most interesting, however, was the fact that the majority of the articles that I used for the research was

written abroad rather than in Senegal itself. Finding articles and prior research on the subject written by a non-Senegalese person was more likely than the opposite. While that was the case, I was also fortunate enough to find plenty of Senegalese authored articles. Finally, the official government-sponsored information packet from the Monument itself played a key role in giving useful background information and specifics. While article research did not yield the largest amount of research for this project, it played vital role in giving me an insight into the controversy of the Monument and a basis for the operations of the Senegalese government.

The second step of the research for this project was the interviews. In total, I conducted seven interviews, all of whom were important figures in Senegal in each of the three specific fields. Of these seven interviews, only one is omitted from this paper. Before conducting the interviews, I created a questionnaire of fifteen questions, all hand selected and tailored to focus on the thesis of the research. To begin, I asked each person to identify objects or ideals that represented and embodied the values of Senegal and its society. This was a good basis to finding whether or not anyone actually believes that Monument is a physical symbolization of Senegal. Following this, I asked their specific opinion of the Monument if they did not mention it in their first responses. After this, I directed the responses in a more political direction, asking them to describe the role the President of the Republic plays in defining the culture of the state and their opinions of Wade's tenure in office. To continue, I made sure that I asked about the recent display of public distress against the government, specifically the 23 June riots. To coincide with this, I asked in their profession opinion if they believe President Wade will be reelected to a third term, and, if so, there will be an outbreak of violence and protests in the streets. To round it all out, I specifically asked what they believe the Monument truly symbolizes for Senegal and the continent of Africa as a whole. In all, these questions directed my research in a very poignant and deliberate direction that produced very interesting data and information. It is of note that to augment my general knowledge and to aid the specific interviews, I conducted dozens of informal interviews with a diverse range of individuals. Their statements, however, are not going to be recorded in this essay as legitimate research.

The final aspect of my research was observation. I spent a great deal of time at a variety of places, but all were significant to one or more of the three areas of research. Overall, I would say that I spend the most amount of time at the National Assembly building. While I was there I watched many parliamentary debates, most of which focused on the budgets of various

ministries. The reason that I did this was to get an accurate depiction of how the Senegalese Government worked and to get a picture of what democracy in this country looks like. It was incredibly interesting, and in the end it was an experience that I am very thankful to have had. Moving forward, I also spend a great deal of time at the University of Dakar Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD). Every professor that I interviewed teaches at UCAD at some capacity, and I spent some time roaming the main library and observing classes. For a better artistic perspective, I did observations at Village des Arts in Grand Yoff, the state-sponsored artist community, to supplement my interviews with the artists. I wanted to see if there was any expression of frustration towards the government or of the Monument detailed in the current art forms. Lastly, I traveled to the Monument itself on two separate occasions, and this provided some of the most interesting and detailed research. Seeing the Monument in person and traveling to the top gives you a sense of awe, and actually being inside at the heart of the controversy only adds to the effect.

Only after this research was completed, which took roughly two and a half weeks, was I able to more fully understand the African Renaissance Monument and the different perspectives that surround it and shape public perception. I will begin with describing the artistic perspective, followed by the political, and then will finish with the academic viewpoint. Hopefully, when all the information is presented, we will have an accurate and conclusive opinion of the African Renaissance Monument.

#### *VIII. Artistic Perspectives on the African Renaissance Monument*

The first artist that was interviewed for this project was Amadou Makhtar Mbaye, or Tita as he is more commonly known, and naturally he gave a very interesting and insightful perspective on the African Renaissance Monument. Mr. Mbaye is one of the more famous modern Senegalese artists, and has had exhibitions across the world. More recently, he has traveled to the United States, Spain, and Italy with his work, and he has received praise and acclaim at each stop. In addition, he is a retired university art professor who taught painting and sculpture for many years and continues to be one of the leading interior/exterior designers in Senegal. Finally, he maintains a studio at the Village des Arts and it was there that I met up with him and asked his opinion on the African Renaissance Monument.

Broadly speaking, Mr. Mbaye held a very favorable opinion towards the Monument. With the first question, asking him what objects symbolize Senegal, he directly referred to the



African Renaissance Monument, along with the Baobab tree and the lion (Mbaye 2011). He sided with the President when he stated that the Monument, however, does not just represent Senegal, but it is a symbol for all of Africa. When asked to speak about the Monument from an artistic perspective, he was very keen in stating that as a sculptor and a plastic artistic, the Monument is a great expression of African art (Ibid.). He feels that it will elevate the culture and artistic movements of Africa, giving greater recognition to the triumphs of the African peoples. In all, he is in complete agreeance in saying that the Monument is a cultural object for Senegal (Ibid.). Foreigners and visitors will come and learn about the culture, values, and history of Senegal and Africa as a whole. Anything that can be used to teach and educate people is good for the world, regardless of what controversies may arise (Ibid.).

In the interview, we talked briefly on the subject of the President's role in defining and protecting the culture of the State. Senegal is an example where the culture is an integral part of both the society and the government, and Mr. Mbaye praised President Leopold Sedar Senghor and his efforts to develop the nation with the development of the arts and culture (Mbaye 2011). Mr. Mbaye stated that he believes President Wade has done a great deal to continue this legacy, and the African Renaissance Monument will be one of the lasting testaments to Mr. Wade's cultural legacy (Ibid.).

When the conversation turned to the government and democracy here in Senegal, Mr. Mbaye was optimistic and supportive. As a man who has traveled to many other countries around the world, he believes that Senegalese is very comparable. He is very proud that the Senegalese have the freedom of the press and freedom of speech, and mentioned that the Senegalese are much freer than the many others across the globe (Mbaye 2011). He gave the example of the Gambia, where the ruthless dictator Yaya Jemmeh has continuously limited the rights of the country's citizens. In addition, he touched on the case of Ai Weiwei, the Chinese artist who was jailed for criticizing his government through his art (Ibid.). Mr. Mbaye appeared to be very thankful that if he so desired, he could criticize his government without fear of repercussions.

In the end, Mr. Mbaye provided a remarkable perspective that he feels is reflective of many other well known contemporary Senegalese artists. He stated that while the Monument may not be entirely accepted by the Senegalese populace as of late, in the future he believes that the Monument will become the recognizable icon of Africa as it was intended to be

(Ibid.). It is interesting to note that in the gallery of the Monument, one of Mr. Mbaye's paintings is on display with several other well known Senegalese and African artists.

The second interview that was conducted with an artist for this project was with Ms. Betty Weber, a painter who holds a studio at Village des Arts. Ms. Weber was able to provide an extraordinary insight into the Monument and the African Renaissance for several reasons. First and foremost, Ms. Weber is not Senegalese; rather she is Swiss citizen of Senegalese decent. For the past 20 years or so she has been traveling regularly between Switzerland and Senegal to gain inspiration for her art and to visit the country of her ancestors. While she was highly educated on African art forms and art movements, she remained very critical of the African Renaissance Monument. When asked what object or ideal embodies the culture and values of Senegal, Ms. Weber never mentioned the Monument but referred to the peanut instead, stating that the peanut has been an important resource in the development of the agricultural economy of the country (Weber 2011). From here on though, she remained very critical and echoed the general opinion of the international community towards the Monument. When first asked her opinion of the Monument, she blatantly stated that it is extraordinarily ugly and highly representative of cold war-era statues (Ibid.).

What frustrated her most regarding the Monument was the use of North Koreans to design and construct the Monument. She posed the question of why would the Senegalese government use foreigners when there is an abundance of fantastic and renowned artists and sculptors here in Senegal (Weber 2011). She commented on how it was such a strange mentality to have North Korea, the most repressive and restrictive government on the planet, be the one to construct this grand monument dedicated to the freedom of the African people from their oppressors (Ibid.). The one thing she really could not understand was the cost of a ticket to the Monument for a Senegalese resident. The entrance fee is 3000Fcfa (~6 USD) for a resident of Senegal and 6000Fcfa (12 USD) for a foreigner (Monuraf 2010). It was very odd to her because Senegalese families have very little excess money for other expenses, which means that the vast majority of the Senegalese never would have the money to visit the Monument (Weber 2011). To Ms. Weber this is just another example, however small it may be, of how the Senegalese government does not take into account or respect the average citizen of the country. A grand Monument dedicated and intended to represent freedom isn't even free.

As soon as the topic of the government and the president of Senegal arose, Ms. Weber became very energetic and highly critical. Yes, she feels as though the President has done some good work for his country, but for the most part he is just a figurehead that wastes his country's money (Weber 2011). In her words, she has seen very little change and development in the twenty years that she has been coming to Dakar (Ibid.). She concedes that highways have been built and the standard of living for most Senegalese has risen steadily but slowly (Ibid.). For the most part though, the rest of the infrastructure that exists today is the same as it was twenty years ago, and it is now beginning to crumble. As a Westerner, she is baffled at the government's inability to help its people; she is disheartened to see all the young men and women go without work, rendering them unable to care for their families (Ibid.).

She feels that the government in Senegal is particularly corrupt, and while there are always a few exceptions, this inhibits true democracy from existing in the state (Weber 2011). She has read the newspapers and sees that the government is dividing the people of this country, breaking apart the underlying unifying fabric that once was Senegal (Ibid.). It is the sad but true reality of African states, and she again saw this as dilemma for the African Renaissance Monument. It is very awkward for her to see this giant statue symbolizing the end of oppression and the movements of freedom, yet at the same time the people who view the Monument on a daily basis are living under an oppressive and apathetic regime. According to her, the people of this country are energetic and desire change, and that was first demonstrated in June (Ibid.). She is worried though about the political future of the country, and what may happen should Wade get reelected yet again. While the Senegalese are a gentle people who desire peace, this political turmoil may just push them over the edge. The construction of the Monument first showed the world that the Senegalese do not take kindly to being ignored by their government, but in the end we will just have to wait and see how the situation plays out. As one can see, Ms. Weber provided an important look into the system of government in Senegal as well as a critical commentary of the Monument. With time though, she believes that the Senegalese will have no choice but to accept the African Renaissance Monument.

These two well respected artists gave the first insight into the controversy of the African Renaissance Monument, and we see that there a wide and diverse range of opinions when it comes to this subject. Seeing that these two artists held two very different viewpoints, we are left with fairly inconclusive results. Typically though, this is the reality of the art world. Art will

always be applauded and criticized until the end of time, and these two interviews resulting in very different opinions, is an excellent example of this. To get a better view, with more consistent results, we turn now to the political point of view on the African Renaissance Monument.

### *IX. Political Perspectives on the African Renaissance Monument*

To put it simply, the political scene in Senegal is both lively and ever evolving. Since being written in 1960, the Constitution of Senegal has been changed, added to, and rewritten multiple times. This has left the citizens and politicians themselves uncertain what actually is written in their constitution (Wiredu 2001). For example, the length of the President's term in office has changed from five years to seven years, then back to five years just in the last decade. The Senate was abolished to cut back on bureaucracy, but only recently was reinstated. The political scene is not a well established institution, and those who participate in it have to be very well versed and informed on the inner-workings of their government (Wiredu 2001). In addition, the African Renaissance Monument has played a decisive role in changing the political landscape of the country. Many argue that the Monument, along with many other of Wade's policies, have further deepened the divide between the ruling Parti Démocratique Sénégalais (PDS) and the opposition. It was for these reasons, and many more, that it was essential to study the political reaction to the African Renaissance Monument.

To gain this important standpoint, the first interview was conducted with Mr. Thiécoumba Diouf, the director of the National Archives and Documentation for the National Assembly. He has studied and analyzed the parliament and is highly knowledgeable of the Senegalese political process, as well as being an expert in Senegalese general history and culture. With this being said, it was interesting to see that he did not mention the African Renaissance Monument when asked to name the physical and non-physical symbols of Senegal. He was very adamant in making it known that "La Teranga" is the true symbol and embodiment of the people of Senegal, saying that it is the hospitality of his people that has advanced the state above others (Diouf 2011). It is a symbol that the Senegalese can be extremely proud of, and to the rest of the world it is an exhibition of the country's openness and tolerance (Ibid.). The question of the Monument, however, had yet to be raised.

Mind you, Mr. Diouf is a nonpartisan public employee who serves all of the parliament's members, so he has an extremely accurate depiction of the controversy regarding the Monument.

When the conversation turned in the direction of the Monument, it was very much apparent that Mr. Diouf was a large supporter. Mr. Diouf agrees with the President, and mentioned that the Monument is a representation of the past, present, and future of Senegal and Africa as a whole (Diouf 2011). It reminds the current and future generations of the struggles of their ancestors; from centuries of slavery to the colonial era. To him, it also symbolizes the present by showing to the world the rapid progress of development in Africa; the total advancement of the continent (Ibid.). Finally, it represents the future of Africa by presenting to the outside world the unity of its people and its upward ascent into the developed world (Ibid.).

He continued with nothing but praise for the president and his cultural policies. Interestingly enough, Mr. Diouf said that the cultural identity of Senegal all but ceased to exist under the policies of the former president, Abdou Diouf (Diouf 2011). He believes that President Wade is charged with breathing new life into defining and raising the cultural identity of the country, and he is doing an excellent job (Ibid.). Mr. Diouf praised the “Grand Projects” of the president, and feels that they are giving the Senegalese people something to be proud of. He stated that young Senegalese people can look up at the Monument and be reminded that it belongs to them, the youth (Ibid.). He has been studying and examining the cultural identity of Senegal all of his life, and he is very thankful that there now is a monument which defines the culture and values of Senegal (Ibid.).

What was extraordinarily interesting was that when he was asked about the protests and riots of June 2011, he used it as an example that democracy in Senegal is alive and well. He stated that every citizen has the right to assembly in the country, and this was their way to express their frustration at the Government (Diouf 2011). President Wade, whom the protests were directed at, heard the call from his people and backed down on his proposed legislations. This, to Mr. Diouf, shows that President Wade listens to the desires of his fellow countrymen and ensures that the will of his people is followed. He made note that every country has problems, people have been violently protesting in the United States, France, Canada, and the United Kingdom, so it is unfair to point out the protests here as anything more than just that (Ibid.).

His response to the criticism of the Monument from the religious community was extraordinarily interesting, and it showed that he has put a great deal of thought into this. He first acknowledged the religious aspect when asked to comment on several of the controversies he has

heard, but made sure to explain that the Monument is a secular piece of art (Diouf 2011). This was a very profound statement for a Senegalese person, especially seeing that religion is integrated into every aspect of Senegalese life, including the government. He acknowledged that since the Monument is a representation of all of Africa as well, it was important to note that not all people in Africa are Muslim (Ibid.). He reverted back to his statement that the Senegalese are a tolerant people, and though the controversy in Senegal had some legitimacy, they should be reminded that this is not the case for everyone (Ibid.). In the end, the Monument is an excellence piece that defines the culture of the country, and he finished by saying that it doesn't change his convictions as a Muslim. His beliefs will remain steadfast with or without the Monument, and the others should follow suit. In all, this interview gave a very poignant and positive look into the Monument and democracy in Senegal. It really opened my eyes to the varying opinions that exist, and showed that it is always possible to find individuals on both sides of the debate.

For the second political perspective, I traveled to the Institut Libéral, a political think-tank based on the political principals and teachings of President Abdoulaye Wade. The interview was conducted with Pape Sadio Thiam, the Director of Studies at the Institut. Mr. Thiam is very involved in the political scene of Senegal, and prior to joining the Institut he was a renowned journalist charged with covering the political events of Senegal. He has also written a book on liberal theory in the contemporary political rhetoric of the country. Needless to say, he is a very informed intellectual on the political process of Senegal, and was kind enough to speak about his beliefs on the African Renaissance Monument.

The Institut Libéral does focus on the teachings of President, and Mr. Thiam's rhetoric was very much in line with the President's. Though he spoke a little on the objects that represented Senegal, he concentrated much of his dialogue on the concept of the symbolization of Africa as a whole. He feels that Gorée Island is one of the most important symbols to the heritage and memory of Africa (Thiam 2011). It shows the world how much Africa suffered under the slave trade and colonialism, and it represents the life and the strong unwavering spirit of the African people. With that being said though, he later claimed that the African Renaissance Monument is the most important of all in the fact that it represents the future of the continent (Ibid.). If Gorée Island is the representation of the past in Africa, built by intruders and slave-owners, then the African Renaissance Monument is the continuation of this. In this case, it was built by an African and symbolizes the future of the continent (Ibid.). This was a very interesting

opinion, and he failed to mention that the Monument was actually built by North Koreans. In any case, to Mr. Thiam took the representation of the Monument a step further and said that it represents the entire black population of the world (Ibid.). He made it clear that there were a great deal of Americans at the consecration of the Monument, including the Reverend Jessie Jackson (Ibid.). What this demonstrates to him is that the rest of the world accepts and understands the Monument, leaving Mr. Thiam unable to comprehend why someone would be against it.

When speaking on the controversy of the Monument, Mr. Thiam basically said that their concerns and outcries no longer matter. The Monument is here to stay, and while there will always be people who are for it and those who are against it, they are going to have no choice to accept it (Thiam 2011). Why waste our time on such trivial matters when we have real problems to solve? This is the basic summarization of his stance on the controversy (Ibid.). He agreed with Mr. Diop, our first political commentator, when discussing the riots of June. That, to him, was an example of how a true democracy functions and the president responded in the correct manner by backing down and listening to his people (Ibid.). He again does not see a problem in this, and it is a topic that should no longer be discussed. Senegalese democracy, to Mr. Thiam and the others who are affiliated with the PDS, has been developing more and more with each president. He claimed that under Senghor, the democracy in Senegal was controlled, with the people having much less freedoms then than they do now (Ibid.). Under Diouf, the government started opening up a bit, but the situation did not become fully free until Wade, who introduced for the first time, true democracy to Senegal (Ibid.). This commentary was very interesting, and it was obvious that Mr. Thiam holds a very favorable opinion of the President. He would like to see Wade get reelected in February, but said that if he is reelected or not, it is God's will (Ibid.). Either way, the Senegalese will not protest or riot in opposition for the pure fact that the Senegalese people are gentle and peaceful, and they will accept the choice that God has made for them.

In the end though, he concedes that the older generations of Senegal do not accept the Monument or the policies of President Wade, but in the future he truly believes that coming generations will adore the Monument and look back to thank Wade for all that he has done for the country (Thiam 2011). Both Mr. Thiam and Mr. Diop agreed on the majority of the issues presented in the interview, and gave a fairly consistent political viewpoint. While this is by no means representative of all political opinion in the country, it was very interesting to hear people

strongly defend Wade, especially when many individuals on the streets and in the newspapers criticize him constantly. From here we are going to explore the academic perspectives of the African Renaissance Monument, and once again, the results are fairly consistent. They are, however, on the completely opposite side of the spectrum.

#### *X. Academic Perspective on the African Renaissance Monument*

In the highly traditional society that is Senegal, few cultural aspects or individuals are truly given a voice. The leaders of the Muslim brotherhoods that exist in Senegal are given a tremendous amount of influence over the populace, as well as elders and other religious individuals (Thurston 2011). Another group similar to this is the academics and intellectuals of the society, and though they may not wield as much influence as religious leaders, they are still highly respected. Senegalese society places high value on learned individuals and education is one of the main integral aspects of the basic society. For this reason it was important to garner their perspective on the Monument. Academics tend to be far less biased and objective than others, and are inclined to gather all the facts before making an informed opinion. For this aspect of the project, two interviews were conducted with well established and respected individuals in the academic community.

Dr. Djiby Diakhaté has several impressive titles; first off he is a sociologist and an expert on Senegalese society. He is also a regional expert for UNICEF, the academic director of the African Institute of Management, and is a professor at University of Dakar Cheikh Anta Diop. Needless to say, he is a well informed individual who proved to be an invaluable asset to this project. He agreed with most of the previous interviewees by saying that the baobab is the great symbol and representation of the state, and he was easily able to defend his position. The baobab, he claims, is solidly in place with its roots, symbolizing the attachment of the country to the ground (Diakhaté 2011). It shows resistance to outside forces and its unwavering spirit continues on. The open branches are an animation of the openness and tolerance of Senegal, but all the branches are connected to the trunk of the tree, representing the unity of the country (Ibid.). He effortlessly was able to transform Senegal into the baobab, and did not mention the African Renaissance Monument at all until prompted.

Dr. Diakhaté was able to see and understand the intended symbolism of the Monument, and he mentions this in his interview. He states that the Monument is supposed to shine as a light for all of Africa; to represent the elevation of the continent amongst the rest of the world



(Diakhaté 2011). While he understands this, he is able to see the controversy. He stated that there are two main controversies with the Monument, the first stemming from the religious community of Senegal (Ibid.). In Islam it is forbidden to erect statues of humans, and this goes against the socio-cultural dynamic of the state (Ibid.). Religion plays such a large role in the life of an average Senegalese person, and it is important to maintain warm relations between the main religious groups and the state (Ibid.). This upsets those relations. Secondly, he feels it is controversial due to the extreme poverty throughout the country, and it is obvious to him that the President erected this monument to gain popularity amongst the citizens (Ibid.). The poverty situation in Senegal is quite a problem for the government and the international community; such a problem that many young people are illegally immigrating to Europe; namely Spain, Portugal, and France (Ibid.). Life here is difficult for most people, and a glittering, gigantic statue is sure to enrage the population when they are having such a difficult time just feeding their families. There was one phrase that he said that really stuck out, and it was uneducated people tend to really hate the Monument (Ibid.). They don't understand the representation of the Monument, and though Dr. Diakhaté sides with them, he feels that it is hampering efforts to move past this controversy and start fixing the real problems in the country (Ibid.).

While Mr. Diakhaté remains critical of the President's policies and principals, he concedes that Mr. Wade has accomplished much throughout his tenure in office (Diakhaté 2011). President Wade is extremely interested and invested in the arts and culture of the country and this has been reflected throughout (Ibid.). He has been able to bring the diverse range of ethnic groups and religious communities closer than they have ever been, and played a large role in the development of the Senegalese nationality (Ibid.). President Wade is also an economic by training, and he recognizes the ability to develop the country through the development of the arts, and this is a goal that he is striving to move the country towards.

The main complaint that Mr. Diakhaté had with the President aligned with the protestors of June. Mr. Wade had no right trying to change the constitution to solely serve the needs of him and his family (Diakhaté 2011). According to Mr. Diakhaté, the President was setting the stage for his son to eventually succeed him, thus creating a system of government similar to that of Syria (Ibid.). He feels that since the democracy of Senegal is so well development, at least compared to the majority of African states, this is unacceptable. He is a bit fearful of what the upcoming elections are going to bring, seeing as that the candidacy of Wade is a contentious

political issue right now (Ibid.). He truly believes that Wade has a chance at winning too, especially seeing that he has the backing of the Mourides (Ibid.). It is a tricky situation, and he states that we will just have to sit back and see what happens. On a final note about the Monument, Mr. Diakhaté stated that as a whole the Monument is a good piece of public art; it was just built in an unfavorable time period (Ibid.). Like the Statue of Liberty, in which it took many years for the citizens of New York to accept, the African Renaissance Monument will eventually, with time, become an integral part of the society (Ibid.). This may not be in the near future, but he feels that in the long run it will occur. This was an interesting point to end the interview on, and it is a phrase that came up in many of the other interviews.

The second academic that was interviewed was Madame Rokhaya Fall, a history professor at the University of Dakar Cheikh Anta Diop. She has published a great deal on black African history, as well as being considered one of the leading scholars on Senegalese culture. She maintains an office at the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire (IFAN), a center dedicated to the study of black West Africa. She was able to give a historical perspective, as well as academic, on the African Renaissance Monument and remained very critical of the entire project. It was obvious that she was a historian because when asked what symbolizes and embodies Senegal she responded with the history and significance of Gorée Island (R. Fall 2011). She went into elaborate detail when discussing the symbolization of Gorée, and how it reminds the population of Senegal and Africa as a whole the terrible tragedy that was the slave trade (Ibid.). When asked about the Monument and what it symbolizes, she scoffed and said that it is a Monument to the President (Ibid.). She feels that he built this Monument as a lasting testament to his presidency, and while he claims it represents his people and his country, it really is just a representation of himself only (Ibid.). She understands that each president has had a role in defining and changing the culture of the country, pointing to the vast cultural legacy of President Senghor. Throughout his presidency, all twenty years, culture was an omnipresent force within his political decisions and he conceptualized the idea of developing a nation through cultural development (Ibid.). Abdou Diouf, the second president, turned away from this idea, and began to develop the nation on a purely economic basis and gave little notice to cultural development (Ibid.). With Wade, we have seen a mixture of the two, an economy heavily focused on the development and distribution of culture (Ibid.). This is an interesting opinion, and explains why the president has been giving a great deal of attention to the arts and culture.

When the topic of Senegalese democracy came up, she acknowledged that Senegal has a fairly advanced democracy when compared to the other African states (R. Fall 2011). Senegal is one of the only African countries that has not experienced a *coup d'état*, and all transitions of power have been peaceful and without violence (Ibid.). While this may be true, she feels that there is a great deal of work to be done. If the Constitutional Council approves the candidacy of Wade for the 2012 elections, she feels that democracy will have moved a step backwards (Ibid.). She thinks that it is definitely possible for violence to erupt if this should occur for the main fact that Wade has an extremely good chance at winning (Ibid.). The opposition is far too divided to present a worthwhile candidate, leaving Wade as the only viable contender (Ibid.). She was very worried about what will happen to the government if he is reelected, and believes that he will continue to agitate the people, leaving the country divided and angry (Ibid.).

Finally, you could continue to hear her frustration when we returned to the African Renaissance Monument. As a woman, she is slightly offended at the depiction of the mother in the Monument (R. Fall 2011). She feels that it is wrong for the woman to have such a short skirt and long hair because that does not accurately represent the women of Africa. As a historian, she feels that it is not truly representative of the past and it is more a representation of the desire of the people to become more like Europe and the United States (Ibid.). This is wrong, the Senegalese and the rest of Africa should be embracing their own future, not looking to these countries for guidance (Ibid.). This is, however, the sad reality that is Africa.

The academic perspective was fairly consistent, and both interviewees were extremely critical of the government and the President. They acknowledge that there is some worth in the Monument; it is not a complete tragedy. Unfortunately though, they both feel that the elections may bring an unprecedented amount of violence to the country, especially if Wade wins yet another term in office. They both agreed that the President has done well for the country and they recognize his ambitious nature, though they are a bit pessimistic for the future. Senegalese democracy is fragile, and the academics agree that there could be some major impediments to development in the future. According to both, we will just have to wait and see what the future holds.

#### *XI. Limitations to the Research*

Before we can analyze the results and come to a solid conclusion, it is important to briefly acknowledge the limitations to this research. Obviously speaking, the only sure way to

get an absolutely accurate and conclusive answer would be to interview hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals. This was impossible given the amount of time we had to conduct the research. It was for this reason I chose to research well educated and representative members of each community, hopefully giving the most precise and representative information available. This is a touchy and sensitive subject, and I feel as those some individuals may not have given their full and honest opinion due to the fact that their career or profession may have been on the line. Finally, this is really not a quantifiable subject, and the results we received are interpretations of this intangible data. With this being said though, I feel that the results that we did receive are fairly accurate and representative of a larger group had more interviews been made. Lastly, all interviews were conducted in French. While my own French is fairly advanced, giving me the ability to understand most conversations, it is possible for some information to have been mistranslated. If this did occur, it was kept to a minimum and did not infringe upon the final results.

### *XII. Analysis of Results*

Out of the six interviews recorded here in this project, three interviewees were in support of the Monument and the President's policies while the other three were on the opposite side of the spectrum. The artistic perspective was the only mixed opinion where one agreed and the other disagreed. In the political perspective both individuals were in support, in comparison to the academic perspective where both were in disagreement. This was very interesting to see, and I must admit that it came as a bit of a surprise. I definitely felt as though far more people were going to be in disagreement with the Monument, but instead we got somewhat of a mixed bag. At the beginning of this research, I wanted to record an equal amount of males and females for the interviews. While I only interviewed two females, the results between the two were fairly consistent. On average, and the interviews confirm this, it can be assumed that women are more likely than not to disagree with the Monument and the President. This is quite the interesting outcome, and it would be very interesting to further investigate the reasons behind this.

The most similar response between all the interviewees was whether or not the Monument would transform into the national symbol as it was intended to be. Each and every respondent said yes, but that it may take quite a long time for this to occur. They all recognized the fact, whether they were in support of it or not, that the citizens of Senegal are overall against the Monument, but with time future generations will learn to accept it. This then takes us to the

thesis of the project: is the Monument a symbol of the national frustration towards the government? It can safely be established that the Monument is, in this day, not the national monument or symbol that was hoped for. None of the respondents claimed that it was, for one reason or another. They either flat out stated that it is not a true representation of Senegal or that it symbolized the entire continent as a whole, rather than just the country. In addition, they all agreed in one way or the other that yes, Senegal has a democracy, though some were far more optimistic than others on its continuation. They all acknowledged that the Senegalese people are frustrated at their government in some capacity, but all had different reasons as to why this was. It is hard to solidly say what is the cause of this, but I believe what the research shows is that everyone has a varying opinion on the Monument, much like people do with the government. Individuals who have very little to say against the government and the President typically will have a favorable opinion of the African Renaissance Monument. While this may be the case for some, those who are angry and frustrated with the Government typically will have very little good to say about the Monument. Every person that I interviewed followed this model, and it is with this can I can safely say that this proves the thesis that the African Renaissance Monument is an outlet of frustration of the people towards the Senegalese government.

When looking at the background research as well, the thesis is further proven. The Senegalese people were fairly calm and content with the government prior to the construction of the Monument. If they were not content, the majority of the people at least understood that the situation was difficult and the government was doing all that they could to rectify it. With the building of the Monument, and the tense times that followed and continue to this day, the people began expressing their built up frustration towards the government. What this means is that while on the outward appearance, it at first seems as though the people are purely just discontent with the statue. When you dig a bit deeper, as I have done here, you can see that it stems from something more. The fact of the matter is the people are frustrated and tired with their apathetic government, and they are using the Monument to prove their point. As a taxi man told me as we drove past the highway bordering the Monument, “Who really cares what it looks like, it was just not a priority at the time.” This is the sentiment and emotion expressed throughout the interviewees and the citizens of Senegal. The moment the Senegalese Government looks after their own people will be the moment that the people begin to accept the African Renaissance Monument as the shining light of Africa.

### *XIII. Conclusion*

In the end, I would once again like to turn to the statement made by the taxi man who said that the African Renaissance Monument was just not a priority at the time. This is what the Senegalese people believe; as they drive or walk along the Route de la Corniche Ouest, many look up at the towering Monument and see failure. This failure is accredited to the government of their country, which for too long has spent such a great deal of time trying to forget the citizens. They have created such an overblown bureaucracy to deal with these problems, yet at the same time they can't prevent power cuts throughout the capital during the rainy season or feed the blind beggars on the streets. If the Monument was built in a different era, an era where Senegal was prosperous and the suffering of the people was reduced, then there is no doubt that the perception of the Monument would be drastically different. People may be able to look up and see the glittering triumphs of their country, but today, with the potholed roads of Ouakam or the crumbling international airport less than ten kilometers away the Senegalese just turn their heads in disbelief. Yes it is true that there are people who have a favorable opinion of the African Renaissance Monument, and the research proves this, but these are the well off individuals who have not yet been wronged by the government. This research shows that the wealthy and intelligent individuals, many of whom are interconnected with the government, take pride in the Monument and the accomplishment of the President. To an outsider though, this continues to show that the separation of the classes in Senegal is dividing further, and will continue unless drastic changes are made.

I sincerely hope that the Government of Senegal begins to hear the cry of the people, and that President Wade is reminded that many citizens of the country he governs are suffering. No one is really sure what the upcoming elections of February 2012 will bring for Senegal, but the Senegalese deserve only positive outcomes. If this comes in the form of a third term for Abdoulaye Wade, then so be it. I only want the country to continue to develop and be economically prosperous, bringing a sense of calm and peace throughout the nation. The Senegalese deserve to one day look up at the African Renaissance Monument and its surroundings and be proud of what they see. We can only hope that this day will come sooner than later.

### *Special Thanks*

I would like to extend a special thank you to Souleyman Ngom, a counselor within the Senegalese Ministry of Culture who served as my adviser on this project. He provided me with such great information and materials that this project would have not have come to fruition without him.

In addition, I would like to say thank you to the hundreds of Senegalese individuals I have met along the way that helped drive my interest in this project and willingly gave me their invaluable opinion.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to my family, who encouraged every step of the way. If it weren't for you all, I may have never stepped on that flight headed to Dakar.

## *Photos*



View of Monument from base of stairs



View of the woman from inside the man's cap

*All photos were taken by me*



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## *Schedule of Activities*

### *Key:*

F- Field Research  
O- Online Research  
P- Paper Writing  
A- Adviser Contact  
M- Miscellaneous

### *8 November- Tuesday*

Move into new apartment (M)  
Prepare for research- 2hrs (O)  
Adviser Meeting- 2.5hrs (A)

### *9 November- Wednesday*

Finish necessary documents to begin research- 2hrs (M)  
Touch up ISP proposal- 1.5hrs (M)  
Travel to US Ambassador's Residence to make contacts (M)

### *10 November- Thursday*

Develop questionnaire for use when conducting interviews- 3hrs (M)  
Meet with Bouna a Souleye for any IRB questions- 1hr (M)  
Call Adviser, discuss upcoming strategies- 0.5hrs (A)  
Call Professor Fall, set up interview for Monday- 0.5hrs (F)

### *11 November- Friday*

Finish consent form- 1hrs (M)  
Begin online research- 5hrs (O)  
Read several articles on the Monument- 2hrs (O)  
Visit the Monument- 3hrs (F)

### *12 November- Saturday*

Travel to Thies (M)  
Try to make contact with a professor there (F)  
Talk to people at the village artisanal- 2hrs (F)

### *13 November- Sunday*

Travel back to Dakar (M)

### *14 November- Monday*

Visit UCAD- 4hrs (F)  
Guest Lecture at ITECOM- 2hrs (M)  
Interview with Momadou Cellou Diallo- 1.5 hours (F)

### *15 November- Tuesday*

Interview with Thiecoumba Diouf- Head Archiver of the National Assembly- 2hrs (F)

Sit in on a Debate at the National Assembly, observe the institutions of Democracy here in Senegal- 3.5 hrs (F)

Research at the Library and Archives at the National Assembly building-1.5hrs (F)

*16 November- Wednesday*

Interview with Djiby Diakate at IAM- 1.5hrs (F)

Go to the National Theatre for the new Observatoire Nationale de la Partie to observe President Wade and the masked popularity of his legacy- 4hrs (F)

*17 November- Thursday*

Visit the headquarters of the PDS- 1hr (F)

Visit the Institut Libérale of the PDS, schedule interview for Monday- 1hr (F)

Travel to Village Des Arts (F)

Interview with Tita- 1.5hrs (F)

Interview with Betty Weber- 1.5hrs (F)

*18 November- Friday*

Travel to IFAN (F)

Research in Library of IFAN- 3hrs (F)

Interview with Rokhaya Fall- 1.5hrs (F)

Research online- 2hrs (O)

*19 November- Saturday*

Spend morning at the Institut Francais for research- 3hrs (F)

Evening Free

*20 November- Sunday*

Research democracy in Senegal at WARC- 4hrs (F)

Begin writing research paper- 3hrs (P)

*21 November- Monday*

Travel to Institute Liberal for research- 2hrs (F)

Interview Pape Sadio Thiam- 1.5 hrs (F)

Research articles online- 1.5hrs (O)

*22 November- Tuesday*

Continue Research Online- 2 hrs (O)

Travel to Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor (F)

Lunch with members of the Cultural community- 2.5hrs (F)

Talk with individuals with the Ministry of Culture- 1 hr (F)

One-on-one meeting with adviser- 2.5 hours (A)

*23 November- Wednesday*

Research at ACI Baobab- 2.5 hours (F)

Write paper- 4hrs (P)

*24 November- Thursday*

Continue to write paper- 4hrs (P)

Evening free for Thanksgiving celebration

*25 November- Friday*

Travel to Monument to further understanding- 3.5 hrs (F)

Casually talk at the Monument with people regarding their opinion- 1.5 hrs (F)

Continue to write paper 2 hrs (P)

*26 November- Saturday*

Continue to write paper- 3hrs (P)

Travel to Ouakam to visit family

*27 November- Sunday*

Write Paper- 2hrs (P)

*28 November- Monday*

Write Paper- 2.5 hrs (P)

*29 November- Tuesday*

National Assembly- 1.5 hours (F)

Write Paper- 3.5 hours (P)

*30 November- Wednesday*

Write paper- 3 hrs (P)

Attempt to go and see Wade at the inauguration of Mole 8- 1.5 hrs (F)

*01 December- Thursday*

Travel to Ministry of Culture (F)

Research documents at the Ministry- 2 hrs (F)

Meet with employees there (F)

Meet with Adviser- 2.5 hours (A)

Write paper- 2.5 hours (P)

*02 December- Friday*

Write paper- 3 hours (P)

*03 December- Saturday*

Write paper- 3 hours (P)

*04 December- Sunday*

Write paper- 3 hrs (P)

*05 December- Monday*

Finish paper, start presentation- 2hrs (P)

*06 December- Tuesday*

Final Meeting with Adviser- 2.5 hours (A)

Final Party @ SIT

*07 December- Wednesday*

Wrap up paper and presentation- 2 hrs (P)

*08 December- Thursday*

Turn in final draft of paper (P)

*09 December- Friday*

Give presentation

C'est fini!

Total Number of Hours: 137.5 hours

### *Budget*

Total Amount Received: 375,000Fcfa

Room: 150,000Fcfa

Payment to Adviser: 75,000Fcfa

Food and Drink: 65,000Fcfa

Transportation: 40,000Fcfa

Phone credit: 25,000Fcfa

Printing and Binding costs: 19,000Fcfa

Orange internet key: 15,000Fcfa

Admission to Monument: 9,000Fcfa

Total: 398,000Fcfa

Total out of pocket: 23,000Fcfa