Heroes After War: Angolan Scouting in a Country at Peace

Jess Auerbach

This talk marks the closure of my time at Stanford and is a combination defense/job talk/rite of passage, which is open to all who would like to attend. In the talk, I will briefly outline the scope of my doctoral dissertation, entitled From Water to Wine: the Transnational emergence of Angola’s middle class in the South Atlantic, before presenting material from the final ethnographic chapter pertaining to Angola’s (Boy) Scout movement. I will demonstrate how the Scouts are ushering in practices of “peace” as the country enters its second conflict-free decade, with much of the movement’s gravitas generated from the repurposing of the term “homem novo,” or “new man.” This term, found in the Christian bible, the Socialist Angolan National Anthem, and the Victorian English Scout Canon, brings together a diverse set of forces through symbolism, imaginary and socio-military structure. In so doing, a movement that in much of the world is now deemed somewhat anachronistic has found powerful traction: it has become, in the words of one of its leaders, “a mafia for good” that is able to effect change throughout the country. In the final segment of the talk, I will engage the stakes of the decision to focus on the ‘good’ in Angola. I will pose questions to the discipline as a whole pertaining to the uses of new technologies, specifically ethnographic websites, and so-called ‘humanistic’ expressions of fieldwork.

Friday, December 9, 2016
3:30 - 5:00 PM
Building 50, 51A
[After-party at the Center for African Studies, 5:15pm]