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Lessons from the Edge of the Village: Extending African Wisdom to a Turbulent World

In this lecture, which is adapted from my forthcoming book, *Wisdom from the Edge*, I attempt to show how anthropological insights about the human condition are important elements in any future blueprint for social and cultural change. It is no exaggeration to state that the world is in trouble. Our routine social, cultural, political and ecological expectations have been undermined. As David Vine recently wrote: "The Covid-19 pandemic, the global economic crisis, the unprecedented uprisings for justice have demonstrated the urgency of dedicating our skills, anthropological or otherwise, to healing the world." In this presentation, I suggest that anthropologists can produce rigorously researched narrative works that are attuned to an age of crises. Those works, in turn, can convey to the world profoundly important anthropological insights that embody much-needed indigenous knowledge—in my case West African knowledge—to a world in dire need of indigenous wisdom. In the end, a more intense focus on writing-as-art can ensure that our slowly developed insights can become fundamental elements in the public sphere, elements that contribute directly to healing a world confronting a set of life-threatening social, cultural, ecological, and political crises.

Paul Stoller is Professor of Anthropology at West Chester University, USA, and Permanent Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences/Friedrich Alexander University/Erlangen-Nuremberg. In his more than 30 years of anthropological research and writing, Stoller has focused on Songhay religion in Niger and the life of West African street traders in New York City. Professor Stoller's work encompasses money, religion, film, writing and medicine. In his most recent work, he investigates how indigenous wisdom can not only enhance social well-being but also help to heal a troubled world. Stoller has published 15 books, including ethnographies, biographies, memoirs as well as three novels.

Weitere Informationen: www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de



The Edge of the Village: Mehanna, Niger.

Photo by Paul Stoller.