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## By Way of Conclusion: Convergence of the Chesapeake and the Gambia River

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It is not unusual to hear of collaborative research efforts between institutions such as the National Council for Arts and Culture and St. Mary's College, but it is completely a different matter if two regions, The Gambia and the United State of America, thousands of kilometers apart, can share something so similar and yet so distinguishable. Climatic similarities aside, the two rivers (The River Gambia and the Chesapeake) are similar in two folds: the shape of their vegetation and the meandering nature of their waters. It is no surprise that visitors from St. Mary's and that part of U.S. fall in love with The Gambia as soon as they come into contact with it. America and Americans in retrospect share a lot more in common with the Gambia. It is fervently believed that many Africans transported to Southern Maryland came from Western Africa and largely from The Gambia. The publication of the book 'Roots' and the subsequent release of the 'Roots Film' brought Juffureh (a village in The Gambia) into prominence and placed the Gambia in the hearts of Americans in the African Diaspora.

This book, the product of a learning program between the Gambia and St. Mary's College, carried out at the National Council for Arts and Culture, is a beginning of an intended collaborative research program which includes ethno-history, socio-economic history, and archaeology on Gambian's colonial past. It is also about building capacities on both sides of the Atlantic first to enable Gambians to better pave their own destinations, and to help our partners better equip themselves with adequate tools so that they

can advise us better.

Much of the collaboration centers on sustainable development initiatives. Students from St. Mary's College who took part in the last two programs have shown proof of such initiatives. The reader would have already noticed a tremendous contribution in 1998 by students in working closely with the National Council for Arts and Culture, Gambia government civil servants, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in their various fields of interest. What is striking is the way the students dealt with their new environment and new CO-workers. Despite our students first appearance in a predominately African community, they had good inter-personal relation with community members, through which they were able to share their experiences and learn from Gambians. The students must have had a good orientation before their departure from the United States, based on the experience of the course director.

By way of conclusion, this research collaboration opens up a lot of opportunities for all parties involved and those interested in Africa's development. The Gambia is a small country of which so little has been researched, written, and documented. For example, no serious archaeological excavations have been done, especially on colonial Gambia. There is little existing historical and ethno-historical material. Because of its uniqueness, this collaboration has the potential of discovering new educational material and the potential of expanding because of its uniqueness.

