

Forum Brings Experts on Africa to Alameda

The complex history, uncertain future and mercurial actions of some African states are issues anyone interested in international politics should pay attention to, say a group of academics who will speak in Alameda this weekend.

A trio of leading scholars in African politics will speak Saturday night in Alameda as part of the Alameda Public Affairs Forum series.

Three professors from local universities will briefly introduce their areas of expertise before the panel opens itself to questions. The forum is called "The Crisis in Africa: Oil, Islam and Darfur."

As global competition for oil reserves becomes increasingly fiercer, the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa will play an important role, says former state department official Barry Schutz, one of the forum's speakers.

Schutz, now an adjunct professor at Mills College, is also a visiting scholar at Stanford University. He was formerly a senior analyst on African affairs with the U.S. state department in Washington D.C. Schutz is an Alameda resident.

He is currently working on a book about oil in Africa. With Nigeria and Angola capable of producing large amounts of oil, the contest between the United States and China over rights to extract the resource is intensifying, he said.

Eighteen percent of U.S. oil comes from the Gulf of Guinea, Schutz said.

In the future, that amount could rise to 25 percent.

Joining Schutz on Saturday night is fellow Alameda resident David Skinner, a professor of history and politics at Santa Clara University.

Skinner's research focuses on Islam in West Africa. He received a doctoral degree from the University of California-Berkeley in 1971.

The Alameda Public Affairs Forum has been around since 2004. Chairman of the forum, Arthur Lipow, said he expects each panelist to speak for no longer than 20 minutes.

The event is free, but donations will be accepted at the door.

The third panelist is the associate director of the Center for African Studies at U.C. Berkeley, Martha Saavedra. Her areas of research include agrarian politics and conflict in Sudan.

The forum, which will weigh heavily toward the question-and-answer portion, is from 7 to 9:30 p.m. on Saturday at 1300 Grand St. The next scheduled forum is "Nuclear Arms Proliferation" on May 19.

The forum's Web site is www.alamedaforum.org.

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