

UFAHAMU

JOURNAL OF THE AFRICAN ACTIVIST ASSOCIATION

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UFAHAMU accepts contributions from anyone interested in Africa and related subject areas. Contributions may include scholarly articles, political-economic analysis, commentaries, review articles, film and book reviews and poetry. Manuscripts must be between 20-30 pages, clearly typed, double spaced, with footnotes on separate page(s). Contributors should keep copies of their manuscripts. The Editorial Board reserves the right to edit any manuscript to meet the objectives of the journal. Authors must submit two copies of their manuscripts and a brief biographical note, including position, academic affiliation and recent significant publications, etc. All correspondence - manuscripts, subscriptions, books for review, inquiries, etc. - should be addressed to the Editor - in - Chief at the above address.

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CONTENTS

Contributors

In Memoriam

Editorial 1

Articles

Film as a Weapon: The Cultural Question in African Liberation
Iyorchia D. Ayu..... 6

Cultural Heritage in African Films
P. M. Bouteba..... 17

Dancing With Absences: The Impossible Presence of Third World
Women in Film
Amie Williams..... 44

Narrative Strategies in Black Films: Spike Lee's "She's Gotta Have It"
P. M. Bouteba..... 57

Issues

The Horn of Africa: Myths, Misconceptions and Reality
Amare Tekle..... 78

On Africa and Classical Liberalism
Ali N. Mohamed..... 90

UFAHAMU

Review Essays

- "Robben Island: Our University." Produced and Directed by Lindy Wilson
Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane..... 92
- The Urban African Worker and the Crisis of Apartheid
Fassil Demissie..... 99
- The Young Hostages of Apartheid
Cheryl Dandridge-Perry..... 105

Book Reviews 110

- Religion, Intergroup Relations, and Social Change in South Africa*, by the Human Sciences Research Council
Judith Robb
- The Other Desert War: British Special Forces in North Africa, 1940-1943*, by John W. Gordon
William Acworth

Poetry 118

- Four Poems
by Ararat Iyob Teklu
- I Smell Earth
Francis Komla Aggor
- The Palestinian, A Slice of Moon, and Olive Oil
Cheryl Dandridge-Perry
- Two Poems
by Reuben Omweri Mekenye
- We Used to be Brothers
Felix Mnthali

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In Memoriam

*This issue is dedicated to the memory of the late
Fumio Omori,
the respected and competent Subscriptions Editor of
UFAHAMU*

*He was also the Subscriptions Editor of
Studies in African Linguistics.*

*His contribution in this capacity meant a rejuvenation of
the Subscriptions Department of our journal.*

*We are sure that his competence and sense of duty
was also felt by our subscribers.*

*The promptness with which he attended to their inquiries
will be missed.*

*Even more will be missed his friendliness and sense of humor
which suffused the corridors of the tenth floor of Bunche Hall
and the second floor of Campbell Hall.*

*For those of us who knew him,
we have lost a friend and a comrade.*

Goodbye Fumio, and may you rest in peace!

EDITORIAL

It shrills and shrills
he who has strived has not lost
but has not yet won
slow absurd and cruel
the African train

Agostinho Neto, "African Train"

This is the 20th anniversary of *UFAHAMU* and its parent organization, the African Activist Association. There is cause for celebration. So many organizations founded during the turbulent years of the late 60s and early 70s disbanded. So many journals from those times are now defunct. Yet, *UFAHAMU* has stood the test of time. As one former editor put it, *UFAHAMU*, like a snake, sloughs to grow. "But unlike the lizard, the journal does not remain the same again."

We had rainy seasons. We also had our share of dry seasons. We annoyed certain people. We were irritated by others. We argued. We fought. But never with malice towards anyone. Our mission was, to quote from Mao Tse-Tung, to "save the patient by curing the disease." A disease of ignorance. A disease of prejudice. Thus, the title of our journal, *UFAHAMU*--understanding and engaging in a meaningful discussion. Most of the times, the burden of proof was on us. Our endeavor was therefore, by necessity, twofold: to disprove what lies have been written/said about Africa, while at the same time stating our own version of the truth. We always believed in the importance of John Killen's book, *Black Man's Burden*. In it, a young boy asks his father why it is always man who wins the fight against the king of the jungle. The father answers the son that it will always be like that until the lion tells its own version of the story. It was and is not an easy assignment. But it is a challenge worth engaging in. The tone of these words should not be construed as a eulogy for *UFAHAMU*, but as a farewell to some members of the present editorial board who have, hopefully, contributed their share to keeping the flame burning. Indeed, the journal is as strong as ever. Least things become static, the injection of new blood is essential for the march forward. The new blood also attests to the existence of a large pool of resources for the cause the AAA espouses. It is a cause which transcends individual or group interests.

UFAHAMU's role in shaping events/opinions is all the more important as new world developments attest to. Africa is once again being acted upon. The events of the last few months are worth a close scrutiny. In the nomadic setting, a connoisseur is entrusted to lead the

community to where the grass is greener. If they fail, they lose their leadership role within the community. Most African leaders have been at the helm for more than 20 years. It becomes an insult to our intelligence to hear them now saying, "we've found out the bankruptcy of our ideas, so give us some more time to work things out." To expect a cure from the carrier of the disease is sheer naivete, if not outright stupidity.

The same thing is also true about Africa's last colony--South Africa. To expect that the apartheid monster will evolve into something more humane is more than wishful thinking. To let it reform itself is tantamount to letting it regroup so that it can slumber peacefully through the present season of anomie. Mandela's release is proof of the indomitable nature of the human spirit. It is also a clear testimony to the fact that human spirit does not flourish in a vacuum. It has to have the support of the people. Individuals are not feared as individuals, but as figures embodying the will of their people. We are sure that the South African people will not settle for palliative measures at this juncture of their history.

Going now to the contents of this issue, we hope that they will contribute to the dual role of *UFAHAMU* mentioned above. This issue is mainly about Cinema. In places like Africa, where the majority of the people utilize oral art forms, the need for a mass art such as cinema is great. Properly used, cinema can play a vanguard role in disseminating a dialogical education. It also helps in combatting stereotypes which denigrate the humanity of the "other." The denigration of the "other" is meant to propagate a belief that certain qualities are generic to some people. It is also meant to instill in the victim the immutability of such a belief. The internalization of a stereotype produces what Wilson Harris calls "victim stasis" and "victor stasis." Harmony becomes as elusive as ever in such a Manichean world. The creators of any stereotype would argue that art reflects the objective world. What they never tell is that art also contributes to the creation of the objective world.

In "Film as a Weapon..." Ayu clearly demonstrates that film is not a "neutral cultural product." He succinctly proves the need for a cultural revolution, since liberation is "an act of culture." This belief is one he shares with stalwarts like Cabral and Achebe. The importance of "cultural heritage in African films" is also delineated by Bouteba who analyzes a number of African films that return, as it were, to the source. By going back to their culture, African filmmakers once again bring into the open the pedagogical function of African Cinema. Yet the return to the source does not imply a complete and primordial visit to tradition. First, the source is not a static thing that is immune to change. Second, the coming is not a complete espousal of tradition by the returnee. In short, a mutual undermining of the source by the returnee, and vice

versa, is implied. Also, one must agree with Cabral that it is Africa's "captive intelligentsia" which should comprise the largest portion of the returnees.

In "Dancing With Absences..." Williams tackles a slippery issue. While Africa's women share the ills of patriarchy with their "sisters" all over the world, their plight must not be used as a stratagem to blunt the conspicuous injustices which center perpetrates against periphery. Williams deftly shows the interstices and overlaps which apply to issues of gender. She also observes with some uneasiness a trend that reminds us of the scramble for Africa by erstwhile colonial powers. This time, the stampede is for "film location and subjects." She concludes that there is a need for a new film language which can create new paradigms for effective feminist interpretation.

Moving from cinema in the continent to cinema in the Diaspora, Bouteba shows how film is used to bring about a change in consciousness by one of America's most talented directors. (That he was not awarded an Oscar nomination reveals the depth of his intelligence and consciousness.) Bouteba gives a detailed analysis of Spike Lee's "She's Gotta Have It." He uses a lot of repetition to illuminate his point(s). The repetitions border on redundancy. By redundancy we mean when, to quote from Roland Barthes, "meaning is excessively named." This is necessitated by a need on the part of the author to clarify and thus ensure an optimal retention of the message. We believe that he succeeds in this objective.

Leaving the domain of films, our eyes turn to the Horn of Africa where festering wounds have, occasionally, supplicated with devastating consequences for the people of the area. In "Myths, Misconceptions..." Tekle explains the need for a re-appraisal of the human tragedy in the Horn. We believe that the time has come for the war-weary nationalities of the Horn to embark on a peaceful mission towards co-operation and reconstruction. There is much to lose in war, and much more to gain in peace.

To conclude this editorial, we re-iterate the importance of the amalgamation of the popular and the intellectual as a pre-requisite for an African awakening. Fanon's words, quoted in Bouteba's article in this issue, are, as always, germane to this discussion: "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it." History will judge us according to the sincerity, content and character of our actions.

* * *

As I bow out of the Editorship of *UFAHAMU*, I would like to say a few words about the people I worked with. The production of a journal like *UFAHAMU* is a team work. No editor could have been

luckier than me for having had the pleasure of working with the likes of the late Fumio Omori, Subscriptions Editor of our journal, to whose memory this issue is dedicated. To Janice Carter, the outgoing Productions Editor, whose diligence and expertise in computers and editing enhanced the quality of the journal, to Joyce Boss, Mary Lederer and Yonas Admassu, who, without exaggeration, did more than their share in the delivery of this issue, go my special thanks. I would also like to thank Eddie Huckaby, MSO, Jean Moncrief and Alice Nnambalamba of the James Coleman African Studies Center for their undying support. To our alma mater, Donna Jones, we owe a debt that is hard to pay. To the former director of the Center, Professor Michael Lofchie, the present director, Professor Merrick Posnansky, the Associate Director, Professor Gary Hale, Sheilah Clark-Ekong, Assistant to the Director, and Assistant Graduate Advisor, Matilda Angel, our gratitude for respecting our opinions. Last, but definitely not least, our very special thanks to Professor Teshome Gabriel, Advisor to the Journal, whose efforts over the years helped *UFAHAMU* accomplish its mission. To Jennie Alvarado at the CSP and Karen Knapp at UCLA Publications, we extend our gratitude for their unreserved support. Finally, *UFAHAMU* welcomes the new Editor, Ahmed Nassef, with open hands. Welcome aboard!

Ali Jimale Ahmed