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PART I

Interviews

UFAHAMU Interviews Dr. Sondra Hale

For this special retrospective issue commemorating 52 years of Ufahamu, the editors had the unique opportunity to interview the journal's co-founder Dr. Sondra Hale, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Gender Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Ufahamu republished Dr. Hale's powerful 1972 article "Radical Africanism" in this issue—here Hale explains the context of the piece and the political climate in which it was originally published. As a dedicated educator and accomplished academic, Professor Hale's wide-reaching research includes investigating conflict, gender, citizenship, political movements, diaspora studies, and feminist art across Africa and the Middle East. Dr. Hale's career is marked by a life-long commitment to both local and international feminist, anti-imperialist, and anti-racist organizing, making her a scholar-activist in the truest sense. In this interview, Hale takes us on a personal journey from Los Angeles to Sudan, guiding us through the history of Ufahamu, beginning with its contentious origins in 1970.

UFAHAMU: Maybe we can begin by talking about the start of your experience at UCLA.

HALE: I didn't know anything about universities back when I was applying. I had no idea that UCLA was so much better than USC in those years, and it was only really the money that made a big difference in my choices. I remember that it was \$50 a semester.

UFAHAMU: So a \$100 a year for tuition. Wow. Incredible.

HALE: Yeah, it was pretty special. It should be that way now.

UFAHAMU: What years were you an undergrad at UCLA?

HALE: I graduated high school in '55, and then spent a year at the University of Omaha, which is now the University of Nebraska Omaha, so that must mean that I was here by '57, something like that, and I was still an undergraduate technically when I married Gerry Hale.¹ That's the reason I went to Sudan. I followed him all the way to Sudan. He would laugh if he heard that. So about 1957 to the time we went to Sudan in '61.

UFAHAMU: So you went to Sudan after you had graduated from undergrad, after you got married?

HALE: I had not finished yet because in those years if you didn't want to have certain subjects in high school, they would not let you in conditionally, and I had refused to take Geometry. And I mean, they've done away with that rule now because they consider it so silly, if someone passes all the other kinds of things you have to pass and all that to hold you to high school Geometry. So, I got married in '60 and I'm old, very old. I can see you calculating here. I'm eighty-four.

UFAHAMU: You've talked a bit about how the trip to Sudan was transformative. Do you want to tell us a little bit about the ways it transformed you and how it impacted the rest of your career?

HALE: Well, I suppose the most obvious thing, this is just a cliché, is that people were so friendly, I mean, unbelievably friendly. Sometimes it was negative, if you were sick in the hospital, 25 to 30 people at the time would come and visit you. I didn't have that experience, but I was among the 25 to 30 people. So that was one thing. And that was a different time in Sudan. Even if I could, even if they would let me in, and I'm not sure if they would, I'm not sure they would let any Americans in right now. But I'm also not sure if I would go. I mean, I talk daily with my close friend there, someone I write with, and she talks about crime there now. Sudan has never had anything like a bank robbery. I might not have gone downtown after nine o'clock to ten o'clock. Even then I didn't hear about any rape. Coming from a large US city that was something unusual. No pickpockets. So, there was lack of crime and a general feeling of safety that you felt.

UFAHAMU: Tell us about Gerry Hale and how you two met.

HALE: Gerry Hale existed here in African studies. He was the head of the inmate program for a while. I had to take a Geography class. When I went to have my credentials for graduation evaluated, here I go again, you know Geometry, and I had to take a lower division Social Sciences class, so I decided to take Geography 1B and he was the TA. And you know, it was a classroom romance almost. We were very careful though, not dating while I was still a student, but that's another story.

Well, back to Sudan and how different it was. You know the politics; it was very British then. British people were still there:

consultants, bosses, and heads of medical establishments. I didn't like that at all. They were pretty colonial.

In Sudan, I learned about socialism for the first time. I learned that I was a socialist, which was a bit of a surprise—what I was had a name. Anyway, Gerry, back when we met, he wanted to study agricultural terraces. I thought it was pretty boring. I think he thought it was pretty boring as well. But he wanted to go to Lebanon to work on agricultural terraces, and there was a slot for him. He heard that Ethiopia has some really interesting terraces and interesting places. We were ready to take off for Addis when the University of Khartoum offered him a position. Everything in a way was accidental and sort of fell into our life. I was reading the paper on Monday, on the inside page of the New York Times, which is one of my favorites, they have this column on romances, one hundred words or less. I thought about writing about Sudan, my romance with Sudan because that's what it was. I mean it was very idealistic. There wasn't anyone I disliked. I loved all Sudanese. It was just really corny.

We stayed for three years on the first trip. Then we went back in '66 for a short time, I don't remember how long, but three months or something like that. And then I went back without Gerry to do my dissertation research in '71 and '72. He and I returned in '72, which is when I wrote "Radical Africanism," and I returned to UCLA to do my graduate work.

UFAHAMU: I think I have a copy of it. It says in the front matter, "Sondra Hale has, for the past three years, been in Sudan. After a long sojourn, she rejoined our ranks," and this is 1972.

HALE: Teshome Gabriel and I locked horns many times. We started out as friends. I found his politics too conservative. I mean he wasn't a conservative, but I mean within the broad spectrum, liberal to radical. And we had very different ideas about Ufahamu, and he started to resent me because I wasn't technically on the board or whatever. So, we had a little difficulty, although I liked him.

UFAHAMU: You were one of the founding members of *Ufahamu* and the African Activist Association. Could you speak about the beginnings, the origin stories of these two things?

HALE: Yeah, I was one of the founders of AAA. But many of us or few of us were impatient about what we were doing – just meeting and talking and a small handful of us wanted to do something more material. And I kept saying, “Journal! Journal! Journal!” but that seemed almost impossible because we had zero money, we didn’t even charge dues, I think.

I should say that AAA was not as radical as I would have liked. That’s an *understatement*. Like all student organizations that went through generations of change, all of that depended on who the activists were. But it just was not an organization that did anything. So *Ufahamu* was our first sort of material experience, and then the Montreal conference came. It was in ’69. It was an important impetus for the foundation of *Ufahamu*. The relationship between African Activist Association and Ufahamu was not great, and that was a political fact. Some of the African Activist Association members wanted it to be a scholarly organization, and that was not a period of time in UCLA to have a scholarly organization.

The second most exciting thing in my life after Sudan was being at UCLA in the 1960s. We did everything in a radical way. We wanted, for example, jumping ahead just a little bit now, but one of the things we wanted was to have students have more power in the Department of African Studies. Leo Kuper was the director at that time, and he was also my advisor.

We sat outside his office until he agreed to give us a position, paid position, to bridge African Activist Association and the African Studies administration. Leo, who had always wanted to be more radical than he is, considered to be the South African liberal party, gave in, but I suppose if a student is sitting outside your office for days and days, one might want to give in.

UFAHAMU: Following up on that, it would be interesting to hear about the relationship between Ufahamu, the African Activist Association, and other formations, like the African Heritage Studies Association that was formed after the walk-out or other local organizations here in Los Angeles that might have interacted with other radical campus politics during that period.

HALE: The Ufahamu Editorial Board, the first board, had the Panthers and a couple of other Black organizations—very, very radical people at that time. Our relationship with the Black

Student Union was iffy. They wanted us to be the African Activist Association, to be a part of them.

So, we fussed over who should consume, who should be more powerful over things on campus. We named some other organizations that were active in the local area. We were in and out of those organizations. We mainly interacted with the people who represented the board. One of the major questions we had on the board was about having white people on the board, and I was on the board with one other white guy, who had a stammer, and therefore, he hardly talked.

I was the talkative one. You wouldn't guess that, of course. Anyway, so there was a lot of discussion about race, and my colleague and a slight friend dropped out because he couldn't take the pressure. I don't know what my thing was because if we did it now, I would thoroughly agree it should be an all-Black organization. I would move off and that's not exactly where I would want to be, politically, I think, but back then that's where I somehow thought it was right.

But there was enormous tension, and also the men on the board didn't do any work, they just talked. So, we have these 3-hour meetings twice a week. It's very time-consuming for graduate students. And we'd spend a lot of that time fighting. We didn't have an editor-in-chief since we were against hierarchy. But Renee Poussaint was a good friend, and she complained to me all the time about us two women doing all the work. A familiar story in those years.

She said, "I think we should have an editor-in-chief and I think it should be me"—her, Renee. And I thought she was highly qualified, wonderful, creative and all that. She worked part-time for *African Arts*, which is how we got this design that we kept for years and years. Not the editor-in-chief, but one of the editors of *African Arts* was fond of Renee. And Renee talked to her about being our consultant. That was a big boom for us, really, to be next to a journal as slick as *African Arts*, and to have someone willing to help us. A white woman whose politics were just, you know, but she was just wild about Renee. Renee became an anchor, and she went to Columbia and took a Journalism Public Speaking course. She's very attractive and very personable. Her family is from the Caribbean. She was very popular, and she got this job as an anchor in one of the top TV stations, it was this channel in New York, and stayed there for a long time. She met Henry Richardson in law

school, who was also on *Ufahamu*. The two of them got married and went to New York. African Activist Association, one of their problems was that they were more political than they wanted to be. They were kind of scared. They were afraid of their advisors. I wasn't afraid of mine; I was willing to sit outside his office. But, you know, I understood that.

So, Ufahamu, forming right after the Montreal conference, was a big breakthrough in a lot of ways. You know, the Ufahamu people captured the podium at the African Studies Association. And that was a big event for the nearly all-white-controlled African Studies Association at that time. And we jolted them by saying that they were all white, all of their officers were white, and that there was something wrong with that. There were a couple of very powerful African-American women in the African Studies Association, who formed a funded union and began to change things.

The organization started to change just a little, but I was still unhappy with the organization and it's the reason why I went into Middle East Studies. Because when I looked at MESA, I saw that people in positions of power were often Arabs or people from the Middle East, just an enormous difference between MESA and African Studies. So, I made the switch, after which African Studies began to change a bit. But it took a long time—ten years.

Some of our professors on this campus were very much enamored with the African Studies Association. Ned Alpers told Teshome Gabriel that my little article on “Radical Africanism” is silly. He used the word, “silly.” And I loved him thereafter. He was active in African Studies Association and active in everything.

I haven't been to an African Studies meeting for a very, very long time. I think more than 10 years or something like that. Much more than 10 years. So, I've said that people in African Activist Association wanted the organization to be more scholarly. And these were some of the more senior members. A few graduate students, for example. I guess it was mainly a graduate organization. We fought about that and in terms of the people on the board, there were conflicts that the people on the boards had, the different Black organizations—like the Panthers and so on didn't exactly get along. I didn't understand the politics at that time, so I didn't know what was going on. I couldn't figure out why these guys were at each other's throats. I was pretty naive about that.

The African Activist Association went in and out of its radicalism. That can never be properly radical.

The Organization insisted that *Ufahamu* belonged to the African Activist Association, and you probably know that the history is that we've been in and out of good or bad relationships with each other. To a point where I think we split at one point, but once *Ufahamu* became successful, you know in a student-driven way, African Activist Association became more interested in *Ufahamu*. I was still a member of both organizations, but the Triple A just drove me crazy. And they were trying to grab power from the *Ufahamu* editors. "Why should we be this elite little group?" There was that issue. And you know, there was an awful lot of talk about race = it's the '60s, even though by then it's the '70s—without any real helpful discussions about race.

You got a lot of money as a student organization if you're registered, a lot of money. *Ufahamu* had, as I said, zero. We insisted we weren't going to charge for subscriptions. And we were going to send all these free copies to Africa, which we did, a lot of them. But we needed money, so I think it was Leo Kuper who gave us \$500 a year with which we produced what we did.

You know, that's why we needed *African Arts*. I think we did a fundraiser with faculty at some point. I don't think the faculty was that wild about us, of course, so we didn't raise a lot. I think it was during this period of activism that I became disappointed with the faculty. Even my husband wasn't radical enough for me. We went around a few times about it. He was doubting the role of scholars, and shy, so that really affected his ability to demonstrate, for example. We participated in a lot of demonstrations. You know, a few of us insisted that we be represented. So African Activist Association is exactly what I thought it would be in 2022. Not very active, more scholarly than the activist community, with a very tenuous relationship with *Ufahamu*.

In our 3-hour board meetings, we argued about revolutionary leaders in Africa. Everybody had his or her favorite revolutionary. I was a Cabral person. We thought about that a little bit. The fact that we brought wine to the meetings probably fueled some of our arguments. Of course, it was the women who brought the food and the wine. So stereotypical. Then, Renee and I started to complain about why we were the only women in the boardroom. Is that a list of board members there?

UFAHAMU: The list says Gwen Brown, Edward Okwu, Albert Williams-Myers, Alice McGaughey, you're here, Teshome Gabriel's here. This is 1972, so it might be different.

HALE: Alice McGaughey was the one who gave us the design and helped us put the journal together. Do you still have an office on the 10th floor?

UFAHAMU: Yeah. The same office.

HALE: That's one of our accomplishments.

UFAHAMU: I imagine you couldn't have meetings there—it's tiny.

HALE: No. We didn't love each other that much. We met in the African Studies library on the 10th floor of Bunche.

UFAHAMU: Regarding the struggles you faced in masculine spaces and these kinds of challenges of gender roles in organizing spaces—was this something that you were constantly having to deal with? Were there any protocols that were put in place? I know that Renee became editor-in-chief, that was one way. Did that help to resolve some of these issues?

HALE: I suppose so. I mean it caused a lot of trouble. Renee announced that she was editor-in-chief. Just announced it. I was her assistant, but I didn't say anything about that because having a white woman be in any role like assistant editor-in-chief would've caused a lot of trouble. I was always treading lightly around certain things. I didn't talk with representatives of the Black organizations fighting among themselves, I just kept quiet. It was very hard for me to keep quiet. I did that. We didn't have any rules. We couldn't even decide when we would adjourn. That's why three hours. We didn't have any rules about voting. I'm not sure we voted. I think we decided things by consensus, which was considered pretty radical in theory. That consensus was very hard to come by, thus the three-hour meetings. We argued about such things as which colonial power was worse than the other, politically. So, issues like that, you know, did take front stage in a sense. We thought about everything that was going on at that time, race issues in particular. Also, we read the names of people on the board. I didn't think there was anyone on that board except Teshome who was African. So that was another issue on the board, which was the conflict

between Africans and African-Americans. That was a really serious one. Africans were highly resentful of the swagger, if I can use that verb for a moment, and militancy, a particular kind of militancy, of the African-Americans. They wouldn't come out and say so in the meetings. But they would grumble to women, Renee and me for example, outside the meetings. These guys talk about Africa all the time, they don't know anything about Africa. We are the Africans. I think this still lives on. The accusation that African-Americans steal Africa and don't know enough about it.

We thought about what organizations we wanted to be affiliated with. I don't know if I should be constantly using the word "fought" because we also had moments of unity and so on. When Cabral was assassinated, we had a conference in his honor. And it was almost always *Ufahamu* that was carrying the brunt of the work. As I said AAA faded in and faded out.

UFAHAMU: I have a question. I guess going back to the "Radical Africanism" piece, and just like the whole era, post-Montreal. You're having interviews with members of the PAIGC. Thinking of your 2015 essay, you mentioned that like in 1969, things had not yet fallen apart, in reference to, I guess, the hope of the '60s, like the revolutionary hope and all these different radical social movements and liberation movements.

So when you wrote "Radical Africanism" in 1972, I guess thinking also about Cabral's assassination in 1973, was there a kind of shift in the mood amongst people in *Ufahamu*? Or just generally, I guess in the radical wing of African Studies—had that mood shifted by the time you wrote that piece? I guess the question is, what inspired you, what was happening at the time, to write that piece?

HALE: Well, I didn't think we were doing anything. As I said earlier, I was disappointed in our African Studies faculty. Indeed, I think we could say that the directors became increasingly liberal. I can't remember, but anyway, the guy in the law school, its director, has no radical politics at all. I think we embarrassed him. He wanted us to be nice and well-behaved students and we weren't. I guess you're asking me about the atmosphere when I wrote all those essays.

Well, the one in 2015, must sound a little bit discouraged and disappointed. But I also have to acknowledge that this is one of

the longest-running student journals in the United States. Maybe in the world. And that's something to be proud of, to have volunteered for that. The politics of *Ufahamu* will change according to the editors. Again, we're in and out of radicalism.

I wish I could remember 1972. But I think I was discouraged by the act of that association, and *Ufahamu's* politics changed according to the editorial board. The faculty that was hired was polished and accomplished and were not activists at all. I can't think of a single. . . Ned Alpers might think of himself as an activist, and by that, he would mean that he had been doing a lot in the African Studies Association.

We had a big falling out in *Ufahamu*, with each other, about whether or not we will move forward with the anti-war movement in Vietnam. And I just could not understand how we would not enter into some politics around the war because it was so brutal and awful. I remember Bob Cummings, who's dead now. He was a nice guy, saying, "We're Africa. Vietnam has nothing to do with us." And I was much more of an internationalist, I suppose, in that sense.

We did vocally and physically support the Anti-Apartheid movement, of course. One might expect that, but even that, I didn't think that we had any strategy for how to build that movement, any strategy that could come from us, any contribution that we might make. So, we went to a few meetings. I think the Black Student Union probably was much more active in the Anti-Apartheid movement than we were in the African Activist Association. I can't quite explain that because, of course, that was the issue in Africa at that time. Some revolutions were going on that I thought were more important. I thought the leadership of Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, not Sudan, was much more important in terms of the thought and activism. Again, I'm going to stray from the question. I don't think I answered the question because I don't know how to get into my skin in '72. I could just tell you that it seemed to me that nobody was radical anymore—neither faculty nor students. About 2015 is when I wrote another article with Talia before the pandemic. By the way, what has the pandemic done to activism on campus?

UFAHAMU: Yeah, I know for us, the *Ufahamu* board has never met in person. There's a handful of us that have met in person. I think, it's kind of kicking up again. The graduate student union has

been sort of a little bit active. Here and there, especially regarding contract negotiations. We will also be represented at the People's Summit in L.A. and the Workers Summit, both are counter mobilizations against the Summit of the Americas. There's one in LA and there's one in Tijuana, that is going to be in June. So, we are trying to get the grad student union involved and also *Ufahamu* involved in sending delegations and learning from organizers.

HALE: A whole segment that we've left out so far is the relationship of *Ufahamu* and AAA with the unions. There wasn't much at all. We had a couple of people on the board from time to time who were strong unionists. I think people were very afraid of being observed by outside organizations. You know, it was around this time that we're talking about when there were these assassinations of two people, two students off campus, and one was once a student, right outside the window of the library where. . .

UFAHAMU: Campbell Hall?

HALE: Yeah. I didn't see the assassinations, but I saw the police cars, you know? You know how they are. No reason to have 50 police cars there, but they were streaming in and the word was spread and so quickly. And I remembered one of our editors ran into the library and said, "There's been a shooting. Look down the window." And that's when we started looking down. It was very disturbing and it's two black groups. It reminded me of our editorial board meetings. Anyway, I hope you succeed in getting people to broaden that perspective of it.

UFAHAMU: Yeah, we'll see. Was there any actual relationship between the African Activist Association and Bunchy and John with the Panthers on campus. They were board members of AAA, in particular? Or was it of *Ufahamu*?

HALE: I don't think the Panthers and US and other black organizations, local black organizations were active in the AAA. So we just had a few on the board. And I could be wrong about that. There might have been one or two. The dynamics were just fascinating. I'm really glad I lived through it and I'm glad it still exists. I'm sorry the pandemic cut into all this activism, but I guess it affected everybody at home most of the time. I'm starting to go out more, but with my age and some health issues, it's just

insane for me to go out. And Gerry is not well. I've taken Gerry to emergency three times in the last month. I wouldn't want to carry anything back to him. He's more vulnerable than I am these months. Also, you can see I'm walking with a cane. It's very difficult for me to go to demonstrations now unless there's a place for me to sit like a wall or lean against a tree or something like that. So a lot of my activism has been curtailed.

UFAHAMU: How did you manage throughout your career to make activism a priority alongside all your scholarly work? How did you find ways to balance these things? At times, it's something that we talk about a lot, that there are very few scholars we can look up to that are actually like scholar-activists in what they do. So I was curious about that throughout your career. How you did that?

HALE: Well, it's unfortunate that I had to watch what I wrote about Sudan or I wouldn't get back in. But I liked to think of my scholarship for the most part as radical and therefore as activist. So I didn't see any separation. I had to be a little careful of Gerry because he was in Geography, which was a very conservative discipline at that time. I remember I was demonstrating outside the Bunche Hall elevators with a group about something, I don't remember what. His colleagues, because they're in that building, were passing by and looking at me and gave Gerry a hard time about his wife being out there demonstrating. So, those were some of the dynamics that I had to be careful of. In no way did I want to affect his getting tenure. Selfish and unselfish reasons. But that doesn't fully answer the question. I considered my scholarship to be itself somewhat radical. Tried very hard not to draw a line. Because once you do, you're kind of sunk.

I do a lot of activism on behalf of the Palestinians, which just put me on lots of lists. It has probably deprived me of some things I might have gotten otherwise, like prizes and that sort of thing. But really if we start to back away, as I said earlier, we just sink. I won't say we're not worth anything because of course everyone's worth something.

Back to how Sudan changed my life. It changed it because I started out saying I learned what socialism was. I hadn't understood anything about colonialism, but once I understood what it was and what these British creatures were like, then I started to

work on colonialism a bit. Or at least had it be a part of the things that I wrote.

UFAHAMU: You had this sort of growth of socialist consciousness in Sudan. What was your experience of growing your feminist consciousness like? Was that something that happened later after Sudan? What were the conditions that shaped your views?

HALE: Well, my feminism has given me a lot of trouble in terms of the kind of activism that I used to do. I think that's changing a little bit and that if you are a feminist, you're not automatically thought of as whatever. People have very different views, people say "you can no longer be radical, you hate men, etc."

UFAHAMU: When did you sort of come into your own in your feminist consciousness and feminist practice? And how did you relate that to your Marxism?

HALE: Well, it's a problem. But I called myself a Marxist-feminist and then I thought that I might get more done if I called myself a socialist-feminist. No, that's a cop-out. About the organizations that I participated in, feminists were very unpopular in the '70s and that did change. In Sudan, I have not met anyone who is a feminist. Certainly not any men and only just a few women who lived in Britain for a long time or whatever. Now it's a little different, but only a little different. Feminists are still frowned on and distrusted. We're all lesbians, we're all as I said, "We hate men." But I think that the UN conference in the '80s that was held in China was a bit of a breakthrough in terms of views on feminism. I went to that conference and heard those discussions. I now can't imagine not being a feminist. My mother would've been called a feminist if she lived now. She was the primary person in my life. Many of her teachings were, in fact, feminist teachings. Simple things like, "Don't learn to type. Because if you learn to type, the men will always want you to type their term papers." We're talking about the 1940s and '50s when she said those things. As silly as that sort of sounds now, it was true. But then there were all these mixed messages about, "I hope you don't smoke dear, but if you do smoke, let him light your cigarette or let him win. You will know that you're in charge, but when you're playing cool, let him win." So there was that sort of really mixed messages, but the most important one is that she thought

that women should have their own income, their own livelihood. So it started then. But I didn't have a name for it.

I didn't become an activist-feminist until I returned from Sudan in probably the '70s. I went to a few workshops and it was kind of like, "Oh! That's what I am." I'm being silly, but that was sort of my attitude: I've been this all along—now, I know what to call myself. Then, I would go to my Marxist group meetings. Only to be taken back from feminism and women and about certain feminist views, especially about sexuality, but not only about sexuality. Misunderstanding what feminism is about. The other thing was that US feminism was very white in those years. It was only in this century that women of color were more willing to call themselves feminists because before those circles were too white.

UFAHAMU: Tell us about your intellectual terrain as both an Africanist and a scholar of Middle East Studies.

HALE: Yea, as a Sudanist I am both African Studies and Middle East Studies. There are some of my Sudanese friends who are angry with me for being at all in Middle East Studies, saying positive things about Arabs, sticking up for Arabs. Some of that is just intense anti-Arab stuff here. But my truly left-feminist Sudanese friends consider themselves African and resentful of people who try to make it otherwise. That's an important dynamic and one that I'm still struggling with. It's too bad in a way that we have to have these identities.

UFAHAMU: We talked a little bit about the challenges of doing, trying to do Afro-Arab studies and if there's anything else you wanted to talk about, we're actually in preparation of doing an Afro-Arab issue for *Ufahamu* come next year or next academic year. Palestine as well. Do you remember *Ufahamu* or the African Activist Association taking a stand for Palestine or any sort of activism around that at all?

HALE: No, which was very disturbing. No, it was like trying to get people to be interested more in Vietnam. The general response was, "This is not our struggle. It'll detract from our struggle, it'll take our energy and we have enough trouble as it is." All the years that I knew anything about *Ufahamu* and AAA there was this kind of attitude, which I think really. . . I'm glad you're doing that issue.

UFAHAMU: Yeah. I have one other related question as well, which is, I think, you've spoken about a lot of moments of struggle within these organizations. But I'm not sure if you have any perceptions of any of kind of real victories that you felt, like these moments of unity, right, across the years that you were involved in these organizations.

HALE: It reminds me of starting to do a kind of study of youth movements in Egypt and interviewing a couple of youth leaders. And one of them said that, when we asked them, the friend I was with, this person I write with, "What are you doing now? What are the sorts of things that you're most proud of?" because it's difficult for them to do much activism now. One of them said, "Well, we have a project that we call small victories." And she said, "We report to each other. We have a website and we report to each other, just the smallest of victories." I thought that is a cool thing to do, and I tried to sort of retrain myself to think of small victories, but I think my head is too big. I still can't bring things down to everyday victories. During the pandemic, it's been very difficult to think of victories, and yet we know there are small victories. So, I think that was a kind of answer to part of your question. But yes, there are small victories.

For one thing, the victory is that this journal still exists. It's a really big one. And okay, African Activist Association is like almost every other student organization, very ephemeral and scrambled in terms of ideological approaches. I don't mean to be disrespectful of student organizations, but that's been my experience. And also not passing one's wisdom on to the next generation of students. So people just have to kind of start over. You must feel like you're starting over.

UFAHAMU: We're starting. We try. We were very inspired by your radicalism article and one thing is that we all came to UCLA and we were excited to be a part of *Ufahamu* and sort of try to reorient the journal to recover some of its past radicalism. What you said about the editorial board playing a large role in the trajectory of the journal and its political orientations, that's something we take very seriously, and we hope to see some possible changes to the journal.

HALE: Sounds like it. So, these small victories, as I said, *Ufahamu's* been in existence for a long time. It's going up and down

in terms of its radicalism and in terms of the quality of the journal. That's something. That was an important thing that we fought about on the board. Renee and I did most of the editing. One of the Panthers, Fritz Pointer, said, "I don't want any white person editing my reports." This was pretty difficult to take. I hadn't thought of it as a political act. That was about the time that Black English was sort of coming onto the stage. And he definitely wrote Black English. So I was really careful about editing any of his work. I probably handed it to Renee. She felt that we should be correcting and changing his articles the same as we would anyone else, but he strongly felt that we shouldn't.

I don't know where he is now. I said that Bob Cummings is dead. I've lost track. For a long time, I wanted us to keep in touch with each other because we can trace where we went from *Ufahamu*. And I've lost track of almost everyone, even Renee. Life's busy and difficult, we move on and so on. But I think a small victory would be if we kept in touch, checked out each other's politics as we went through the years, who ended up being in corporate America. I would really like to know that. I sometimes feel that by being a faculty member at UCLA before I retired, I'd sold out. When I got tenure, that was it because I was a lecturer for a long time. And I was quite happy as a lecturer. Most people didn't even know I was a lecturer, not a tenure-track faculty. And that was fine. I did almost anything. In fact, when I went up for tenure, I was told that people said, "I thought she was already tenured." But I did feel that, and I told some of my friends, I didn't want to be tenured because then that would mean I was truly a member of the establishment. So these people, these friends of mine, some of whom had really good politics, who were saying things like, "Don't be silly. It gives you more power and don't you want more power to put across your ideas?" That was the idea. But I still thought I was a part of corporate America. The state school, and the regents are something else.

UFAHAMU: Still the regents.

HALE: Still the regents, exactly. And I think just lately the faculty has been more radicalized. For one thing, the more people of color that have been hired, that doesn't necessarily mean more radical, but it's tended to be that. I'm still on the board of the Near Eastern Languages Center. I probably shouldn't be, but I am. I mean

in a sense I'm retired. Should my voice be heard because I'm retired? This is your school now. Both in terms of grad students and undergrad students, and certain faculty. I have some conflicts about this sort of thing. It sort of ties in with your question about how can you be both [scholar and activist].

UFAHAMU: I had heard you were involved in a lawsuit regarding the LAPD on UCLA campus, is that true?

HALE: No, but that doesn't sound like a bad idea. There was a lawsuit when I was teaching at Cal State, Long Beach. I was head of the Women's Studies program. And we were attacked by very right-wing Christians on campus. The objection was about all the lesbian faculty that we had in our program. There was a complaint about one of our radical teachers. She was attacked and so we had to defend her, of course. Even though I didn't like what she was teaching, she taught the Women and their Bodies class. But we had to support her and we did. It's one of the most radical women's studies programs in the country. The dean was upset with me, and he said, "Look, I hired you because I thought you could bring those people in line because you're a scholar." I thought, "Oh, God." He sacked me and the ACLU took our case. We stayed in the courts for 11 years or something like that.

UFAHAMU: Wow.

HALE: It really affected my so-called career. Cal State Northridge hired me to direct the Women's Studies program, which was very brave of that dean. And I said so, when he was interviewing me, and hired me. I said, "I really thought that that was it, once you sue the university." I was the named plaintiff in the case. Sondra Hale versus the state of California.

UFAHAMU: I also wanted to ask a general question about your mentors. You haven't talked about who you had looked up to. I know you were disappointed with a lot of the faculty during your time at the grad school at UCLA. But was there anyone that made a positive impact on your training?

HALE: Yeah, there's a fellow named Epstein in the anthropology department who was one of the youngish radicals. I really looked up to him. But he became an opponent in Santa Monica of rent control. I thought, "Okay, mark him off my list." I think that the people

that I really respected, I respected maybe because of their scholarship. I respected Leo Kuper because he and Hilda Cooper, who was the chair I ended up with, had to leave South Africa. Okay, they weren't fire-breathing radicals, but they did a lot of stuff that the apartheid government found objection to. Leo Kuper's books were banned, for example, in South Africa. And I had to respect that.

Hilda Kuper was part of the Black Sash movement. They were South African women, mainly white, who went out and were called "black sash" because they wore black sashes and demonstrated against various sorts of things that the government did. As you know, from any reading about South Africa during that time, that was a dangerous thing to do. You could just be thrown in jail. I had to try to put myself in their position in South Africa in that period and respect them for what they did. Leo Kuper was, at best, a liberal. But they were people who stood their ground, who made their politics known. Also, they're supportive of the Jewish and their support of Jews in South Africa, who were important to the Anti-Apartheid movement.

UFAHAMU: Were there also like related intellectuals, activists, maybe people of *Ufahamu* who you turned to? Because you said you debated what a revolutionary African leader is. I don't know if you went to this Rodney conference or this Rodney Speech at UCLA or like the Cabral Conference in '73, those kinds of figures that you looked up to the most. Were there other people that maybe we don't remember as well now?

HALE: I remember Cabral very well. And the conference, I was part of the organizing committee for that conference. That was one of our important events. It wasn't just *Ufahamu*, it was a combination of people interested in him, who shouldn't be interested in him? It was just magnificent. Geo Fernandez, when he came to UCLA, was coming on behalf of PAIGC and Cabral. What he had to say to us in that interview was pretty important and pretty interesting. It's one of our more interesting ones. Actually, Basil Davidson, who doesn't strike you as a fire-breathing radical, actually was pretty radical. Our interview with him, which was a long one, was important. I think it was published in *Ufahamu*.

Note

¹ Dr. Gerry Hale, former professor of Geography and Associate Director of the James Coleman African Studies Center at UCLA, sadly passed in October 2022 between the interview and the publication of this issue. *Ufahamu* extends its deepest condolences to the Hale family.

