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# UFAHAMU

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UFAHAMU  
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**CONTRIBUTIONS**

*UFAHAMU* accepts contributions from anyone interested in Africa and related subject areas. Contributions may include scholarly articles, commentaries, review articles, film and book reviews, poetry, prose fiction, and artwork. Manuscripts must be no more than 30 pages, clearly typed, double spaced, formatted following the most recent *Chicago Manual of Style*. Please include a brief abstract and a brief biographical note, including position, academic or organizational affiliation and recent significant publications, etc. We request that, when possible, articles be submitted on a diskette or as an e-mail attachment to the Editor-in-Chief.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to make minor changes to any manuscript to meet the objectives of the journal. All correspondence, manuscripts, subscriptions, books for review, inquiries, etc., should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief at the above address. We regret that once submitted, materials cannot be returned.

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Cover: Original artwork by Ajibu Ajebebs Kabba, Sierra Leone artist and poet, submitted by Hannah Wells.

UFAHAMU  
JOURNAL OF THE AFRICANIST STUDENT  
ASSOCIATION  
UCLA

**ufahamu-n. [Swahili] understanding**

Ufahamu, UCLA's multidisciplinary Africanist student journal, seeks contributions that challenge broadly accepted conceptualizations of African studies. Since 1970, Ufahamu has maintained its original vision of creating a forum for protest against the increasingly western-dominated and exclusionary African Studies establishment. The journal continues to publish the work of those marginalized by the academic press—Africans, people of African descent, students, and non-academics. Together with our readers and contributors, we reaffirm our commitment to create intellectual linkages and feature current critical views.



UFAHAMU  
JOURNAL OF THE AFRICAN ACTIVIST  
ASSOCIATION

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VOLUME XXVII NUMBERS I-III

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CONTENTS

Contributors

Editorial.....1

---

ARTICLES

---

Utopias, Transgressions and Hybridity: Amadou Secks's  
Representation of Postcoloniality in *Saaraba*  
Lifongo Vetinde.....5

Instructional Cinema in Colonial Africa: An Historical Reappraisal  
Femi Okiremuete Shaka .....27

The Politicisation of Trade Unionism: The Case of Labour/NCNC  
Alliance in Nigeria, 1940 - 1960  
Rotimi Ajayi.....48

---

OPINION

---

"Tribal" Conflicts in Africa: A Case Study of Rwanda and Burundi  
Stephen B. Isabirye and Kooros M. Mahmoudi.....63

---

POEMS

---

Poets and Poems of Sierra Leone  
Hannah Wells.....92

Echoes from the Past  
Benedicto W. Malunga.....115

---

---

REVIEWS

---

---

Brian Du Toit *The Boers in East Africa: Ethnicity and Identity*  
(Westport: Conn.: Bergin and Gravey, 1998).

Catherine Cymone Fourshey.....117

Ian Shapiro and William Kymlicka. *Ethnicity and Group Rights*  
(New York: New York University Press, 1997).

Darnell Donahue.....121



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Having studied the various forms of the English language in the past, we now find ourselves in a position to study the English language of the present.

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## **African Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The role of the Academic/ Activist Journal**

In reviewing the last few years of *Ufahamu's* publications in preparation for writing our first editorial for the journal, we were struck by the ways in which *Ufahamu* has continually explored the overlapping and intersecting of various fields of study in and about Africa. In this regard, particular issues of *Ufahamu* have focused on specific topics such as the expressive cultures of Africa, literature, religion, gender, education, philosophy, the African Diaspora and even regional issues. However, most of the editions of the journal have included a wide-range of topics. In a single issue, one may find contributions of a traditional academic nature, primarily those focusing on the critical issues in the various disciplines, including African politics, conflict and security, history, social and cultural issues, gender issues and health. In addition, *Ufahamu* has explored the literary and artistic heritage of historical and modern-day Africa by including critical discussions on film, literature, the arts and theater, as well as original submissions of fiction, nonfiction and poetry. Writers and editors alike strove to celebrate the beauty and strengths of the continent as well as provide a forum for honest and critical deliberation on issues of concern.

As our newly revised mission statement reflects, the present Editorial Board of *Ufahamu* has re-committed itself to the progressive agenda its founders articulated. This includes the conscious inclusion of diverse and divergent views and perspectives on African issues and the special attention played to providing a voice for Africans and Africanist scholars who are often excluded from the dominant discourses. Academics and students are challenged increasingly to be activists as well, and our commitment to African people requires deliberate engagement with the intersection of activism and intellectualism. We are particularly excited this year to have one of our Editors-in-Chief located in South Africa, thereby highlighting the connections which *Ufahamu* has continually tried to create between scholars and activists in Africa and those working in the west.

This is only one step, but more than a merely symbolic one. As an academic journal founded to advance an activist agenda, *Ufahamu*, and the Editorial Board at the heart of the journal, is in some need of new life. Throughout this year, we have poignantly felt the shortage of both submissions to the journal and active involvement

from graduate students in our community. This reflects a number of disparate but not unrelated issues, including financial and academic pressures for graduate students, as well as a diffuse and somewhat less politically-charged environment on academic campuses. Certainly, like any project of its kind, *Ufahamu* has always depended on the volunteer efforts of dedicated students and faculty, and this will undoubtedly continue to be the case. In this regard, the Editorial Board of *Ufahamu* is saddened to see the lessening of the activity of the African Activist Association (AAA), an organization which the journal has been affiliated with since its inception and which in the past has been an active voice for an African activist agenda. It is our hope that this organization will be given new life by interested students and activists. We believe there are many issues of vital concern for Africa and the African diaspora and we are confident that with strong leadership, the AAA could again become a prominent contributor to various Africanist causes. We are reminded of the words of Freedom Nyamubaya, a Zimbabwean freedom fighter, when expressing the challenge of transitions of objective and method:

Now that I have put my gun down  
 For almost obvious reasons  
 The enemy still is here invisible  
 My barrel has no definite target  
                   now  
 Let my hands work—  
 My mouth sing—  
 My pencil write—  
 About the same things my bullet  
                   aimed at.

This edition of *Ufahamu* celebrates the diverse voices which have always been the core of the journal and the strength of Africanist scholarship. Each of the contributors offers unique and thoughtful perspectives on past, present and future issues for Africa. The range of topics and political and geographic location of the writers illustrates the type of analysis which is still needed on African topics. The first two pieces look at very different aspects in the deployment and representation of film on the continent. Lifongo Vetinde provides a critical analysis of the postcolonial condition by exploring the use of

social realism in modern film. Amadou Seck's film *Saaraba* is, for Vetinde, an insightful vision of the position of citizens in postcolonial Senegal. Vetinde highlights not only the themes of the film and provides a relevant commentary, but situates the use of visual imagery and music within the film in a highly illuminating manner. Femi Okiremuette Shaka explores the use of instructional cinema in colonial Africa in a new and controversial way. In addition to a thorough historical accounting of the development of instructional film in a number of British and Belgian colonies in Africa, Shaka challenges other film critics who have grouped colonialist cinema and colonialist instructional cinema together. For him, instructional cinema differs in its representation of African subjectivity and, beyond the clearly paternalistic intentions of its creators, had differential effects in terms of propaganda and instruction.

Rotimi Ajayi's study of the development of political consciousness and activism among the labor movements in Nigeria during the later periods of British colonial rule shifts our attention from the cultural/political nexus to more directly economic/political relationships. Ajayi's central claim is that, despite the splits and fissures over the role of trade unions in politics, labor movements in Nigeria recognized the need to ally with prominent political associations, and that in fact, many early political and nationalist leaders were leaders of various labor movements. Though in some cases the involvement of labor has increased ethnic and regional rivalries, throughout Nigerian history labor has continually played a central role in shaping political outcomes. In their opinion piece on the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi, Stephen Isabirye and Kooros Mahmoudi engage several controversial and yet essential problematics of the nature of ethnic conflict. By attempting to articulate how class, regionalism, historical developments, and economic crisis contributed to the Rwandan Genocide, and defining key concepts such as genocide, the authors grapple with some of the contributing factors in ethnic conflict.

The political and military conflicts in various parts of the continent feature prominently in much of the creative and academic work about Africa today. Hannah Wells has gathered the writings of six Sierra Leonean poets, each of who stands as both a testament to the terrible toll that conflict has had on the cultural and economic production of the country, as well as the resilience and creativity present. Wells gathered the poems and biographies of the authors

and attempted to have them published but the war has prevented this effort. By connecting the poems with the brief biographical sketches we hope to highlight the motivations and objectives of the producers of these important literary contributions. We have also been able to include a poem by Benedicto Malunga, who has previously contributed several pieces of nonfiction to *Ufahamu*. Finally, the two book reviews in this issue explore a theme of central importance in contemporary discourse on Africa—ethnicity. Catherine Cymone Fourshey's review of Brian Du Toit's third volume on the history of the Afrikaner diaspora points to the increasing attention given to deconstructing and usefully analyzing white ethnicity, particularly Afrikaner ethnicity. Darnell Donahue's review of Ian Shapiro and Will Kymlicka's edited volume on ethnicity and group rights provides the theoretical frame within which we can discuss ethnicity. The dominance of liberalism in western thought tends to discount collectively held rights such as ethnicity, and Donahue points out the substantial moral and institutional concerns which this hegemonic model leads to.

At this time of transition, we would like to thank the outgoing Editors of *Ufahamu* for their many years of hard work. Under the careful guidance of Shobana Shankar, Editor-in-Chief, the journal maintained its commitment to intellectual excellence over the last two and a half years. Susanna Wing served as Production Editor for a number of years, ensuring invaluable continuity and professionalism. As the new editors, we will strive to advance the progressive and inclusive vision of the journal as well as its rigorous academic content. It should be noted that the first editions of *Ufahamu* actively solicited comments and criticisms and, in this spirit of exchange, we invite the thoughts and ideas of all of *Ufahamu*'s readers at this time. Please feel free to write or email your responses and comments to any of the editorial staff.

Judy Stevenson  
Lahra Smith