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UFAHAMU

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Editorial

Whenever we lament the frequency of wars on the continent of Africa, we often overlook the activities, both within and without the continent, that are at the root of the crises. Upon closer analysis we find that these crises are repeatedly occurring in "democracies." Democracy, it would seem, is a word that is cherished and condoned by world powers, regardless of the inadequacies and inaccuracies associated with it.

Amidst internal crises, countries such as Algeria, Nigeria, and South Africa are witnessing elections at various levels of government. At the same time, "democracy" is crumbling—overtaken by war and insecurity in other countries—namely, Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Congo, Sierra Leone. The irony of the situation is that the so-called guardians of democracy, while cheering elections in the countries of the former group with promises of monetary assistance, at the same time remain adamant against, or even threaten withdrawal of, support to those currently facing insecurity.

A reflection on this kind of "double talk" leads one to question the motives of the champions of democracy. Although these current issues require contemporary solutions, one also needs to look to the past to study the historical underpinnings of such activities. This responsibility rests on the shoulders of all Africanists.

However, we find ourselves at a time when current academic fashion dictates the destabilization of universalistic historical models. Whether such projects concern the modern, the colonial, or the Enlightenment, the 'post' studies of such simplistic periodizations seek to decenter Europe and its effects. Unfortunately, they often tend to further reinvest dominant discourses, dissolving into binary discussions of center/periphery, subject/object, etc. The worst of such studies give readers the impression that contemporary scholarship and scholars have been immaculately conceived, that is to say, with no connections to the trials and errors of previous generations. At best, many new-school scholars and studies acknowledge their antecedents for the purposes of contrast, thereby downplaying the process that enables their revisionism.

For African studies, as with other fields of endeavor, this focus on the contemporary diminishes the importance of historical causality, as is the stated goal of those 'post' scholars who call for the end of

history. However, two problems arise from this untimely demise. First, scholars ignore Africanist works deemed outmoded, whether to challenge or uphold these works. Second, those who evaluate work in such a short-sighted manner deepen the divide between themselves and other scholars, thus further entrenching the vanguardism that plagues international Africanist enterprises and politicization.

The authors of the following pieces offer us various approaches to contextualize that which appears to be given. That is to say, whether the discussion concerns the current situations facing institutions of higher learning or the position of a given scholar within a particular field of study, the discourses surrounding these issues have precedents and patterns that must be recognized. For those who seek to move beyond history, perhaps you may be convinced otherwise. For those who recognize history's indefatigability, enjoy.

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza's compelling paper explores contemporary historical developments to explain trends of events that affect African Studies in our contemporary world. He describes a veritable scramble for African studies. His outline of the players and their respective agendas, against the backdrop of the institution, reminds us of the ways in which power is diffused and often held by organizations and constellations of individuals, not necessarily in the hands of a single luminary or select celebrities of a given discipline. Zeleza's careful assessment of the history of African studies in institutions of higher learning problematizes the picture of a 'beleaguered area's studies' and ends with recommendations for further action, often absent in critical scholarship. He includes the call to create true, sustainable linkage by intellectual collaboration between scholars on the African continent and elsewhere.

We trace the theme of institutional power to Ruth Otunga's piece as she pointedly discusses the ways in which Kenyan higher education reflects and reproduces the male advantage over women in that country. Otunga opines that the genesis of the imbalance stems from cultural features, such as myth and morality, that function normatively to effect a socialization of Kenyan girls and boys that leads to patterns of gendered work and education. We too may find at our own institutions evidence of the impact of educational curricula and tracking in restricting women's access to certain professions and opportunities, as Otunga describes in the Kenyan context. Her prescriptions for strengthening the process of women's educational

Finally, as this issue is our first as co-editors, we would like to thank Matt Christensen and previous editors of *Ufahamu* for all of their hard work and continued commitment. Nearly thirty years after the founding of the journal, we will continue to work, as the previous editors have, to uphold the philosophy and aims of the founding editorial board. To do so, we rely on our editorial board, members who are no longer with us and new members, who have been inspired by their political and scholarly engagement with African studies. In addition to thanking the editorial board, we wish to recognize the previous production editor Meghan Moore and to welcome Susanna D. Wing back after being on leave for a year. As *Ufahamu's* production editor, Susanna's relatively long association with the journal has given it an invaluable sense of continuity. We also would like to thank our readers, whose support has been unflagging. We welcome your continued submissions as well as any other comments or suggestions. We would also like to recognize Doran Ross of the Fowler Museum of Cultural History, at UCLA, whose generosity has provided us amazing art for our covers. With such a supportive team, we anticipate the productive, creative future of the journal.