



Adinkra Symbol
 "Changing oneself: playing many roles"

African Literature Association Newsletter

An independent, non-profit professional society of scholars, teachers and writers
 dedicated to the advancement of African Literacy Studies, Founded in 1974

African Literature Headquarters at Hobart and William Smith Colleges

In the coming months, the African Literature Association (ALA), an international organization of hundreds of African writers, scholars and artists whose primary goal is disseminating African literature and art all over the world, will have its new director and headquarters at HWS.

ALA recently elected Professor of French and Francophone Studies George Joseph as its new director. During Joseph's five-year term, ALA will have its headquarters right here on the Colleges' campus, bringing to HWS the basic operation of the organization, its official archives, special lecture opportunities and an interaction with the HWS academic community.

"Having Professor Joseph as director and the headquarters on our campus will put Hobart and William Smith Colleges on the map of the world, letting influential scholars, writers and artists across the world - from Cape Town to Kyoto to the Netherlands - know that this Geneva campus is an academic center," said Professor of Africana Studies Thelma Pinto, ALA 2008 past president, 2007 president and 2006 vice president.

The archive collection will provide a resource for students, not only those in the Africana Studies program, but also interested students from other departments, such as English and comparative literature and French and francophone studies.

English, French and Portuguese, the latter of which is taught in the Self-Instructional Language Program, are very important languages for African literature, Joseph noted. The collaboration will also impact students who go abroad, particularly for the Senegal and South Africa programs. Additionally, the Colleges will host the yearly retreat for ALA's executive board. This will include sessions and paper readings with various scholars that will be open to the entire campus.



New Director George Joseph with Past President Thelma Pinto

"We plan to involve students in various capacities in the operation of the headquarters, which will provide a focal point for Africana studies majors and other students interested in Africa," explained Joseph. "Students will have the opportunity to work as research assistants who will look for job announcements, biblio-

graphical entries, and other materials we plan to publish in the newsletter."

"For me personally, the most exciting things about the ALA are: its close contact between scholars and writers and its focus on activism - both are unique for a literary organization," Joseph said. "As incoming director, I'm looking forward to the possibilities."

Joseph, who joined the faculty in 1986, holds a bachelor's from Oberlin College and his master's and doctorate from Indiana University. He also holds a Certificat des literatures d'Afrique et de Madagascar from the University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Sénégal.

The author of several works including "Centralité centrique: la maison comme e'interface dans Une Si Longue Lettre de Mariama Bâ," "Bible Translation and African Audiences" and more. His other works include conference papers, book reviews, and contributions to specialized volumes as well as articles in periodicals such as *French Review*, *Romanic Review*, *Oeuvres et critiques*, *Research in African Literatures*, *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, *The Journal of American Semiotics*, and *Diagonales: La revue de la francophonie linguistique, culturelle, éducative*. (HWS Daily Update, posted on December 8, 2009) ●

What's Inside

President Eke's Inaugural Address.....2
2009 Membership Dues Information.....5

Final Report, 2008 Annual Conference.....6
EC Minutes, 2008 Annual Conference.....9
Business Meeting Minutes, 2008.....18

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The newsletter can also be accessed online at www.africanlit.org. (WebMaster: Mark Lilleleht, web@africanlit.org)

“(Re)Considering Home, African Literature, and the African Literature Association (ALA)”

Maureen N. Eke, ALA, Presidential Inaugural Address, Western Illinois University, Macomb, April 2008.

Good evening honored guest, Madame President, Dr. Thelma Pinto, colleagues.

On behalf of the African Literature Association, I wish to welcome everyone, especially our guests, many of whom have traveled across miles of ocean and air to be with us at this year’s annual conference. I hope that future ALA conferences will continue this rich and productive exchange of ideas and friendship.

I wish to thank the following:

- Members of the Executive Council, but especially, the outgoing members of the ALA Executive Council for their dedication to the organization, and those who are continuing (waking up for a three-hour meeting that begins at 7:00 a.m. each day is not an easy feat). I thank you for your support and devotion to the association.

My most sincere thanks also go to:

- Our host institution, Western Illinois University,
- Dr. Al Goldfarb, President of Western Illinois University,
- Dr. Jack Thomas, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost,
- Dr. Inesa Levi, Dean of Arts and Sciences
- Our conveners: Drs. Abdul Rasheed N’Allah and Dr. Igolima Amachree as well as the hard-working organizing committee for putting together this conference and for providing us with another “literary” home for this year. Congratulations on a successful conference.
- Congratulations also to our Fonlon-Nichols award prize winner, Dr. Chukwuemeka Ike
- Distinguished Service award winner, Dr. Kofi Anyidoho, and
- The Lifetime of Commitment to the ALA award winner, Dr. Abiola Irele.

I understand that there are about 350 people who attended this conference, and we have noted the large contingent of women writers from Africa. Isn’t that exciting?

I wish to recognize and thank all of the Past ALA Presidents present here tonight for their commitment to the organization. These people are the pillars of the ALA and without their efforts we would not be here today.

As you can tell from the richness of the panels and the diversity of the affiliate caucuses and interest groups, the ALA is a growing organization. Congratulations to the recently inaugurated TRACALA (Translation Caucus of the ALA).

As we know, change is often unavoidable; change can be either self-willed or forced upon us. It is perhaps appropriate at this point to mention, with tremendous sadness, the members of our organization and profession who passed away this past year. Among these, we can list: Aime Cesaire, Hilarious Ambe, Bate Besong, John Conteh-Morgan, Oyin Ogunmba, Oyekan Owomoyela, and Ousmane Sembene. At this time, I ask that we rise for one minute of silence in remembrance of those who came before us, who have helped to shape our discipline, and on whose shoulders we stand. Again, I thank them and you on behalf of the association.

In this first decade of the 21st. century, we have witnessed three key events:

--- 2007 marked the 200th. Anniversary of the ending of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (British 1807);

--- 2007 was also the 50th. Anniversary of Ghana’s independence; and

--- 2008 marks the 50th. Anniversary of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the work whose publication, I would claim, signaled the formal emergence of African literature as a field.

Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, as we all know, helped to globalize African literature. Teachers and students in places as far as China, Japan, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur or even middle America who have come into contact with African Literature often refer to one text first: *Things Fall Apart*. Sometimes, they may not remember the text’s author, but they certainly remember the central character of the narrative, Okonkwo.

The three events I have highlighted are important because they are linked to our presence here today. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade dispersed or forcibly transplanted Africans in the “new world” and centuries later made it possible for us to speak of the “black Atlantic” and/or Diasporan literary and cultural connections. Today, we are able to read and discuss the works of writers such as Aimé Césaire, Maryse Condé, Frederick Douglass, Olaudah Equiano, W.E.B. DuBois, Alain Locke, Derek Walcott, Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, and Phillis Wheatley (the list is extensive and not chronological) within the framework of the Black Atlantic and in relation to Africa.

Indeed, Achebe’s publication of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) helped not only to transform the way the rest of the world saw Africans and African experiences, especially of colonization, but also to create a literary model for African writers where none existed, particularly, for Achebe.

--- At this time, I would like to acknowledge Mr. James Currey for his role in bringing *Things Fall Apart* to birth and for helping to initiate African literary studies.

A question that needs to be asked is this simple one: Did Achebe foresee the impact of his work when he put pen to paper half a century ago? Achebe has stated that “Although [he] did not set about it consciously in that solemn way . . . [his] first book, *Things Fall Apart*, was an act of atonement with [his] past, the ritual return and homage of a prodigal son.”¹

Fifty years after its publication, I wonder whether as Africans and as those who study this work and others like it, we have made enough atonement for the continent, its past, our pasts? I also wonder if it is ever possible fully to atone for that which we have lost, which continues to be lost to us, either through our own agency or lack of it? Can we compensate for lost history, homeland, cultural identity, memory, current or past trauma, or generations lost to genocides?

¹ Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays* (London: Heinemann, 1975).

My talk this evening, however, is not about *Things Fall Apart*. I certainly do not believe that I have much to contribute to your extensive knowledge of the work. My engagement with *Things Fall Apart* here is with the way in which it has helped and continues to help me locate myself--and perhaps, help many of us locate ourselves--in a sort of literary and cultural home or space, here, within African literature and Africa, respectively.

It would not be too far-fetched to suggest that Achebe helped define our discipline, African literature, our literary and career home; as such we are forever grateful to him for registering dissent against the devastating experience of colonization, for giving us some voice, some space from which we could even begin to articulate our own perceptions of the nightmare we had experienced, for insisting that the "subaltern" can and does speak and has something important to say!

Like Ghana, whose independence in 1957, one year before the publication of *Things Fall Apart*, declared that Africans were taking control of their own affairs, Achebe's text declared the agency of Africans in constructing their own narratives. We might say that it delivered the first rhetorical or literary salvo in what many of us today refer to as postcolonial literature; Achebe was writing back to the Empire!

The first African literary text that I read as a critical thinker was Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, almost in defiance of our heavily British Literature course in the secondary school. Of course, in my secondary school days of the 1970s, reading an African writer was not really kosher, unless you were a rebel. I was a rebel, but I was also at home, because Achebe's narrative helped me make those cultural connections which were and are still important for some of us who find ourselves far from motherlands or homelands. I was raised in northern Nigeria which for a southerner created a sense of cultural displacement. So, you can see the significance of *Things Fall Apart* in my life.

In line with the influence of *Things Fall Apart*, teaching or working with African literature here in the United States also helps me to locate myself within a specific cultural and ancestral, real and imaginative landscape—Africa. The African Literature Association (ALA) assures me that each year I can return to a place that has become home; I am sure the ALA is home for many of us—I hope so!

In the past year, as Vice President/President elect, I have been thinking about home, what it means to be at home in the ALA, culturally and politically.

I also have been thinking about "home" both as a literary and spatial location. I have been thinking about home as a cultural and historical reality, in an attempt to understand why so many of us are here in a diaspora, either forced or self-imposed, and to understand what we must or should do to counter the seemingly expanding threats that our African homelands face.

Many of us who are here today probably did not envision spending a lifetime in a distant land; we had dreams of returning to serve our nations. But here we are some several decades later, still in a land which we call "home," and which often does not see us as belonging to it. We continue to hope that our homelands would return or recapture some semblance of peace some day so that we could return to re-establish roots. But, those hopes are often dashed by the emergence of new threats either from our own governments or from angry and disempowered / disillusioned persons within our immediate African communities.

Each time I speak to my African friends, they have painful stories to tell, and each time, I am plagued by an incredible sense of guilt that I and those like me living here are not doing enough to help those left behind. I had that feeling two nights ago after watching the film *Ezra*. It is a feeling of hopelessness, of being overwhelmed by events that do not make sense, and whose agents one does not recognize or know.

It may not be safe or even advisable to write political and social criticism against one's government, without bartering one's life away. And even if one felt secure in the hope that international pressure would secure one's life, the leaders will execute the individual and dare the world to try to do something. The case of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Abacha regime comes to mind and so does the dilemma of Nawal el Saadawi who can no longer go home because her nation wants to kill her.

The political climate of some of our home nations is tyrannical and traumatizing for those brave enough to live and work there. In the past few months, Kenya and Zimbabwe have come close to the verge of explosion and I have been worried about Tsitsi Dangaremba. Each year seems to unearth new threats from

and for Africa. We barely recovered from the throes of civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia before Somalia, Rwanda, and Burundi exploded, then Congo, which remains unresolved, and now Kenya and Zimbabwe.

Really, it seems to me quite clearly that the only place where one comes close to connecting to an Africa or home that makes sense is through literature, film, art, and music.

I do not wish to depress you with a catalog of the horrors affecting Africa, but I mention these because we have to be concerned about what happens to the continent, beyond our usual academic interests. After all, Africa is really our literary home; its writers are the reasons why we are here in the first place, why so many of us have a career in African literature. Consequently, it seems to me that what threatens the continent should concern us. What threatens the continent also threatens us! We have a responsibility to help move the continent beyond the brink of destruction or this persistent experience that some people insist on calling "afro pessimism."

While I do not wish to prescribe a cure, I do believe, however, that the African Literature Association (ALA) needs to return to its activist origins or roots by claiming and demonstrating agency on issues that affect the survival of our colleagues, especially those who have stayed on the continent. Otherwise, we face the risk of becoming academic or literary tourists—simply studying the continent on paper and only traveling to those African sites that make us feel comfortable.

How do we address these concerns, you might ask?

Here is a glimpse of my vision for the ALA:

Establish databases of African scholarly articles: The advancement in technology has expanded the nature and study of African literature. And to remain relevant, we must take advantage of the technological advancement before us. Like the bird *Eneke nti oba*, we must also learn to fly without perching—take advantage of the technology before us to expand the scope, nature, and presence of African literature.

Any one who has tried to conduct research from Africa knows how frustrating that can be. Scholars and students are often unable to locate useful research materials to help them

with their research. Students pirate copies of texts, thereby infringing on copyright laws and denying writers of the pirated texts their monetary rights. Additionally, most university libraries no longer fulfill the function for which they were created and they are lucky if the books we send to them reach them.

As President, I will work with the Executive Council to establish a secure data base (if necessary, several databases) of literary sources to which each member could contribute an article once a year or as one chooses, which can be accessed by ALA members, university students and faculty in Africa and elsewhere for research purposes. Such resources can only help to improve and sustain research on African literature in its continental home—Africa—and also provide up-to-date scholarship in the field.

ALA overseas: I realize that there may be those who wish to return to Africa every two years for a conference. But the reality is that sometimes our African colleagues have more difficulty attending the Africa-based conferences than they do coming to the US. The ALA has a policy in place that we return to Africa or overseas for a conference every four or five years.

I wish to underscore the value of maintaining that policy so as to assure the survival of graduate students and junior faculty who may not be able to secure funding for frequent conferences overseas. It is not only important to mentor graduate students and junior faculty in our discipline, but it is also important to follow a policy that does not disempower them fiscally. Additionally, we need to make sure that they are fully represented in the association, for they will sustain our discipline in the future.

Mentoring graduate students and junior faculty: During my tenure, the ALA Executive Council will continue to mentor graduate students and junior faculty by supporting activities such as special workshops on job searches, the challenges of publication, and strategies on preparing for tenure and promotion. Those of us who are senior colleagues (faculty) should intervene positively in nurturing our junior colleagues. We can do that not only by identifying job opportunities, but also by being actively involved, when necessary, in the tenure and promotion processes of our junior colleagues.

Continuing ALA's expansion of its focus through collaboration and inclusion of new topics: The changing global culture and politics necessitate that we assess our place and role in today's society. The ALA's survival will depend on the extent to which we are able to expand our scholarship to include or address existing or emergent and previously elided topics such as sexuality/sexual orientation, the increasing contribution of African women in the production and dissemination of knowledge, the role of Africans in slavery, the presence of AIDS/HIV as a new subject of African literature, the place of African language and non-Anglophone literatures in our discipline, the intersection of literature and the environment, and finally, the relationship between African cinema and literatures. Also important is our continued attention to the relationship between African and African Diasporan literary studies. I hope the conveners of future conferences will consider some of the topics I have mentioned as topical or thematic interests.

Collaborations with African scholars, institutions and projects: I have stated this point elsewhere, but it needs reiteration. I will continue to work with the ALA Executive Council to explore ways to increase our organization's support for African scholarship through collaborations with our colleagues in Africa.

We will develop strategies for mentoring graduate students and junior faculty in Africa who will form the foundation of the ALA in the future.

Future conferences: We need to remember that because we are a small organization, we are always searching for a conference "home" or site each year. We have been lucky in some years to return to some sites a second time. But, that may not always be the case.

Unlike the African Studies Association (ASA) or the Modern Languages Association (MLA), we are nomadic, traveling only where we have been invited. I believe that hosting a conference also acts as service to the organization, in addition to helping to internationalize your institution and making you the favorite of your Dean and Provost, even if it is only for one year! So, this is a plea to everyone: Consider inviting us to your institutions! You know we would love to come!

Another way to serve the association is by serving on the Executive Council. I wish to encourage anyone who has not served on the

Executive Council once to consider running for a position. Serving on the Executive Council provides you with a tremendous opportunity to better understand the working of the ALA, engage in networking, be involved in policy making, as well as get to know your colleagues as distinct individuals.

Human Rights: The ALA has an Issues Committee which eagerly needs more active members. Although there were several panels this year that dealt with Human Rights in African literature, film, or in general, we need to do more. It is not sufficient to wait for the critical crises before we act. We need to speak out, even before the issues reach crisis point.

As ALA President and a member of the Issues Committee, I will work with the membership to foreground the ALA's activism either by vigorously lobbying the politicians in the US or by extensive public criticism which will hold the African governments accountable for Human Rights violations. We need to engage in the "politics of forcing accountability."² We will foreground Human Rights issues at the ALA and/or ASA conferences and, if necessary, work with other national and international Human Rights groups such as Amnesty International, Medecins sans frontiers (Doctors without Borders), and Human Rights Watch to highlight Human Rights issues in Africa.

In deed, we need to become more active or public in our efforts to safeguard the survival of our colleagues and writers in Africa or elsewhere who try to hold their societies and leaders accountable, for without these writers we would not have these texts which bring us together each year. The ALA needs to become more than a seasonal home to these writers whose works sustain us.

We have to be dissident scholars or engage in a scholarship of dissidence, to borrow the words of Nawal el Saadawi, because dissidence is at the heart of the beginnings of the ALA. Recall our activism in the struggle against apartheid or in drawing attention to the fate of Ken Saro Wiwa, Sony Labou Tansi, Dennis Brutus, Wole Soyinka and so many writers whose struggles the ALA actively supported.

² Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics*, Boston: South End Press, 2001.

Perhaps, we can not return fully to our roots as with South Africa, but we must act; we must choose agency for ourselves and for many who are not able to do so safely, for as Arundhati Roy has suggested:

It is the writers, the poets, the artists, the singers, the filmmakers who can make the connections... Who can translate cash-flow charts and scintillating board-room speeches into real stories about real people with real lives. Stories about what it's like to lose your home, your land, your job, your dignity, your past, and your future to an invisible force. To someone or something you can't see. You can't hate. You can't even imagine. (32).

It is "we" who can help give substance to these stories that inform the texts of African Literature that we teach. I hope that with your support we can collectively work towards a stronger and more active African Literature Association (ALA)

Thank you for indulging me this evening and for being here today. I hope this year will bring us great productivity and that I can learn from your wisdom. ●

May/June 2008

Dear ALA Colleagues,

When I laid out my vision for the ALA at Macomb, Illinois in April, I hoped that my vision would provide the ALA with a starting point to help us reposition ourselves. I realize that I did not underscore that the goals I had delineated are long-term, and as in business discourse, we can see them as part of our vision plan. Their purpose is to help energize the Association. I realize also that it would be unrealistic to expect the ALA to attain these goals within the limited one year of my tenure as President, but we need to begin somewhere. It is my hope to try to attain, at least, one, if not several of these goals before the end of my tenure as President and Past-President. My successors can continue the progress, giving some of these goals their own imprint or adding their own goals. I also realize that I cannot as President attain any of these goals alone. Hence, in my speech I have highlighted the collaborative nature of this project. I come to the membership again, soliciting its support, as many of you offered after my speech, to implement some of our goals. Although these goals are part of my long-term vision for the

association, clearly, there are goals of high priority, which we must try to implement as soon as possible. They include:

1. *The database of research resources or some version of it:* I seek your assistance in locating ways of initiating this goal. We are faced with two difficulties currently a) copyright and b) database location. I solicit your help here. We need volunteers and suggestions. If anyone is interested in working on this project with the ALA Executive Council, please contact me at: eke1mn@cmich.edu and/or Folabo Ajayi-Soyinka (Vice President) at: omofola@ku.edu.
2. *Mentoring graduate students and junior faculty:* Some conversation has already begun in this direction. I solicit the assistance of our senior and emeriti members to move this forward. Please contact me if you are interested in volunteering for this project. We plan to provide some of these mentoring sessions at ALA 2009.
3. *Human Rights:* This is urgent. Please contact Mark Lilleleht (mlillel@wisc.edu) if you are interested in serving on the Human Rights Committee.

I thank those who have already offered to help and hope that those who have not will volunteer their support. This is our organization. Its future depends on all of us. So, please join the ALA Executive Council to strengthen our organization.

Thank you.
Maureen N. Eke
President, ALA
May/June 2008 ●



Thelma Pinto and Maureen Eke

ALA Membership

The African Literature Association's dues structure for 2009.

Membership Levels/Dues

- Sponsor African student in Africa - \$5
- African student in Africa - \$5
- Income under \$20,000 - \$20
- Income \$20,001 - \$45,000 - \$50
- Income \$45,001 - \$75,000 - \$75
- Income \$75,001 and over - \$100
- Sponsor - \$120
- Life Member (May be paid over 5 years \$300/yr) - \$1500

All ALA dues are for the calendar year. The ALA welcomes additional contributions for books for African libraries. Please specify the amount and include it with your payment.

ALA members can also receive the following discounted individual rates for subscriptions to Research in African Literatures:

Addresses within the US - \$34

Addresses within Africa - \$42

Addresses outside the US / Africa - \$48

All ALA members receive the Journal of the African Literature Association (JALA) twice a year. All correspondence is sent by airmail at no additional charge to members.

Members should send the following information along with their payment: institutional address, home address, email, and phone. Specify which mailing address you would like the JALA sent to.

Checks must be written in U.S. dollars and drawn on a U.S. bank or U.S. correspondent bank. Send check or postal money order payable to "ALA" to the following address:

Fahamisha Patricia Brown, ALA Treasurer
Metropolitan College of NY
ACSHE
431 Canal Street
New York, NY 10013

Payment may also be made through PayPal, a website which allows electronic transfer of funds. This will allow you to use your bank account or credit card. You will receive an automated receipt stating that your money has been received. You must establish your own free PayPal account. Once you have done that, you may send the ALA dues via the following email address:

African_Literature_Association_Treasurer@notes.cc.sunysb.edu

In order to facilitate the fee structure incorporated into PayPal, we request that you add \$1 to the membership dues. Also, please enter your mailing address, email address, and phone number in the space provided by PayPal, or send this information in a separate email to the address above.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, do not hesitate to contact the ALA Treasurer by email (fbrown@mcny.edu) or by phone at 212-343-1234, ext. 2419. ●

34th Annual Conference of the ALA ~ Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL ~ April 22 to 27, 2008

A. Stats:

- 350+ attendees
- 33 states represented from the United States
- 15 countries represented other than the United States
- 360 paper presentations,
- Daily Panels and events: at least 28 panels per day, and a host of workshops and live and often dramatic performances every day
- Tuesday, 2 panels/events
- Wednesday, 31 panels/events
- Thursday, 47 panels/events
- Friday, 38 panels/events
- Saturday, 34 panels/events
- Sunday, 11 panels/events

Awards presented:

1. The Professor Igolima Amachree ALA Membership Award. The Organizers of the 2008 ALA conference are delighted to announce the names of five Undergraduate Students who have won the Professor Igolima Amachree ALA Membership Award, which pays their ALA membership fee for the 2008 calendar year. They won by virtue of being the first five Undergraduate Students whose abstracts were accepted for presentation at the 2008 ALA conference. The ALA Membership is a requirement to present at ALA conferences.

The winners are:

- Sarah Groeneveld, Westmont College
- Jessica Julius, Hobart and William Smith Colleges
- Nneka Edwards, Medgar Evers College
- Stephanie F. Gordon, Western Illinois University
- Nicole Karr, Western Illinois University

2. Life Achievements Award Winners

- Haki Madhubuti, Third World Press, Chicago, USA
- James Currey, James Currey Publishers, Oxford, United Kingdom
- Kassahun Checole, Africa World Press & Red Sea Press
- F. Abiola Irele, Harvard University

3. Fonlon-Nichols Award. Fonlon-Nichols Award for excellence in creative writing and contributions to the struggle for human rights and freedom of expression. It is given every year to an African writer.

Fonlon-Nichols Award:

- Chukwumeka Ike

Outstanding Member Award

- Kofi Anyidoho, University of Ghana-Legon

4. Celebrations/Memorials:

- Conference Opening
- Things Fall Apart 50th Anniversary
- Africa World Press 25th Anniversary
- Sembene Ousmane Memorial
- Oyekan Owomoyela



Kofi Anyidoho receives Outstanding Member Award from President Thelma Pinto and past president Eustace Palmer.

B. Hundreds From Across Globe Help Make African Literature Conference Memorable

By Pearlie Strother-Adams

A team effort from the campus and community last spring resulted in hundreds of scholars from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe coming to Macomb, where workshops on African literature ranged from a Harvard professor's panel on *Things Fall Apart* to sessions for local school children. The 34th annual African Literature Association (ALA) Conference attracted about 350 teachers, critics, writers and publishers in April, when participants from as far as Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Britain, China, Germany and Japan spent six days sharing studies of African literature and culture. "It was wonderful to have the presence of colleagues and scholars from around the world on Western's campus and in the Macomb community," said Dr. Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah, the Chair of Western's African-American Studies (AAS) department and a longtime ALA member who co-organized the event. Open to WIU faculty and staff, and the public at large, the ALA conference featured high-profile scholars whose well-researched works included 360 paper presentations, 15 panels per day, a host of workshops and even spirited live and often dramatic performances, all finding unity around the conference theme, "African and African Diaspora Women Writers, Global Challenges and Cultural Identity." "It was the most successful conference I have attended," said Dr. Igolima T.D. Amachree, a WIU sociology Professor, also a longtime ALA member and co-organizer of the conference. "People related one to another," he continued. "Feedback indicates people were pleased. There were conversations inside and outside." The cordial, collegiate atmosphere was set the first night.

The conference came alive with a special presidential reception at the University Residence; accelerated on the second day in the Sherman Hall auditorium with a festive welcome celebrating traditional African culture, dress, food, art, oratory, poetry, dance and music; and continued in the tradition of the African marketplace — with vendors with lively displays of various books and CDs, jewelry and art, and clothes and other goods — and climaxed with an outstanding array of presentations. "The

quality of papers was extraordinary," Amachree added. "A number dealt with the literary as well as social aspects of women and minorities. Papers given by women are germane in linking women's roles in literature and their roles as creators of literature." Conference planners had a goal, they said. They wanted to share their work about African literature, but also to celebrate — celebrate "the creativity, versatility and vibrancy of women of Africa and the African Diaspora by foregrounding their writings, oratures and creative imaginations through all forms of literary genres, performance explorations, cultures, languages, styles, critical paradigms and more," was the ALA's mission statement of sorts.

The conference also recognized the 50th anniversary of *Things Fall Apart*, the internationally acclaimed novel by world-renowned author and scholar Chinua Achebe. A conference highlight was a panel led by prominent Harvard University scholar Abiola Irele, who led a discussion on the significance of the novel, which has been translated into various languages and is taught in universities throughout the world as one of the most important literary works emanating from Africa. Associate Professor Safoura A. Boukari of WIU's AAS Department offered background support for the conference, saying that the conference was very good for WIU and the region. "It was good to see so many well known intellectuals and scholars venture to this small place," Boukari said.

"These are the writers and scholars that are read and studied here at the university," Boukari said that the conference also was exciting because it offered African women who'd never had a comparable platform an opportunity to showcase their works. Boukari herself presented on three panels; two in cooperation with WIU graduate students.

Cooperation was key from the outset, organizers said. "Participation was great," Na'Allah said. "We intentionally involved the community and Western faculty and staff. We went to the mayor, the Rotary Club even sent members over to help regis-

ter people. We contacted hotels. Many academic departments on campus provided faculty assistance. It was an all-out effort." Amachree agreed. "The support from the administration was extraordinary," he said. "This was a first where the university was involved at such an extensive level. I don't remember ever meeting with a president or provost at a university during conferences in the past. "President Al Goldfarb, Provost Jack Thomas — former Provost Joseph Rollo, who set some things in motion before his departure— and Dean Inessa Levi, who was very helpful, are all deserving of praise." Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and local officials, such as Macomb Mayor Mick Wisslead, also were praised for their help. Local schools benefited, too, and Na'Allah said he was most proud of the success of workshops organized for Macomb schools, Grades K-12. "We saw this as an opportunity to reach out," Na'Allah said. "Presenters introduced African literature, culture and tradition to Macomb's children and also gave teachers ideas for how they can include African works in their curriculum. Many of the Macomb teachers maintain contact with the presenters and continue to use them as a resource." The conference ended with social activities that mirrored the way African traditions supported by ALA create and celebrate community, Na'Allah said. The conference ended with a reception and dance in the Union Lamoine Room that began at 7 Saturday evening and lasted until 2 the next morning. About 200 people dined on African cuisine and engaged in spirited communal dancing. "The performers from Chicago played a mix of African Caribbean music," Na'Allah said. "The communal dance shows how we feel like family. It was a celebration of knowledge, which is vital." Amachree also recalled the finale with affection. "It was wonderful. The place was packed," Amachree said. "People were excited to get awards, to be included. The little things can make a difference." ●

Pearlie Strother-Adams is an associate professor of journalism at WIU. She presented a paper on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* at the conference.



Veronique Tadjo and Tanure Ojaide discuss works at ALA Annual Conference in Macomb, IL.

We would like to thank President Mark Gearan and Provost Teresa Amott for generously accepting to house the ALA Headquarters at Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

We are especially grateful to the Provost for asking Dorothy "Dot" Vogt, Faculty Secretary in Smith Hall at the Colleges, to be the Administrative Assistant for Headquarters. Members of the Executive have already realized how well Dot has used her superb skills and sense of organization to help us keep things flowing.

NKYIN KYIN



Adinkra Symbol
"Changing Oneself:
Playing Many Roles"

MINUTES OF THE ALA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETINGS

AFRICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

MACOMB, ILLINOIS, APRIL 22-27, 2008

Wednesday, April 23, 2008

The meeting began at 7:14 a.m.

Present: Niyi Afolabi, Oty Agbayoh-Laoye, Folabo Ajayi, Ada U. Azodo, Nana Ayebia Clarke, Amy Elder, Maureen N. Eke, Tony Hurley, Anthonia Kalu, Keiko Kusonose, Mark L. Lilleleht, Lokangaka Losambe, Eustace Palmer, Thelma Pinto, President.

1. **Ratification of the Agenda:**

The Agenda was ratified.

2. **President's Opening Remarks:**

Thelma greeted the EC, welcomed it to the 34th meeting of the ALA, and thanked all for their help this past year. She said that the main difference between this year's Conference and others is the presence of undergraduate presenters on panels.

3. **Ratification of the EC Minutes from meetings at the ASA in NYC, November 2007:**

The 2007 EC/ASA Minutes were approved.

4. **Matters arising from the EC/ASA 2007 Minutes:**

A. The EC agreed to accept the offer from Hobart and William Smith Colleges to house the ALA Headquarters. This recommendation will be offered at the ALA Business Meeting for a vote.

B. It was agreed that the Past President be made a member of the Awards Committee.

C. Discussion of future plans for ALA meetings at ASA, a necessary conversation due to the treatment this year of affiliate organizations during the ASA Conference in NYC.

- One idea is that the EC no longer meet at the ASA but, instead, at Headquarters. It was suggested that before we take this action, we ask the President to draft a letter to the ASA EC expressing our views of being excluded from presentation of panels at the 2008 ASA.

- It was decided that an ALA Committee consisting of the Past and present Presidents, and the Heads of the Media/Publicity and Awards Committees be formed as a liaison to the ASA EC to discuss these issues. Once this meeting takes place, we could decide whether to substitute a meeting at ALA Headquarters for one at ASA.

- Motion: The fall ALA EC meetings should be held for one day at some location outside the ASA location as soon as such a meeting is practically possible, but not conflicting with the ASA meeting.

The Motion passed unanimously.

5. **EC Officers' Reports:**

A. **Treasurer's Report: Tony Hurley; Auditors' Reports: George Joseph and Ben Lindfors**

- Tony passed around copies of the "ALA Combined Financial Statement, February 28, 2007 – March 31, 2008" and pointed out its salient features. In summary, ALA revenues for this period amounted to \$54,209.71; expenditures to \$29, 526.84; assets as of March 31, 2008 (Wachovia checking, account activity not yet cleared, Wachovia Money Market, and PAX World Funds Balance): \$97,482.79. Total assets amounted to \$127,165.66. Membership numbers, including those received after March 31, 2007: 207: 365; 208:261; Lifetime: 23; Institutional 2007: 30; Institutional 2008: 47. The full "Financial Statement" itemizes these categories and provides explanations.
- Tony informed the ALA that the IRS contacted us to file a tax return; his accountant will take care of this issue; he reminded us that we need to identify new Auditors as soon as possible; because of budget cuts at SUNY Stonybrook, all of his institutional support will be eliminated after this school year; therefore, he is asking the EC to provide \$1,000 to support the remaining Treasurer's expenses for miscellaneous office costs and student intern help; Tony also reminded us that his term finishes in 2009, so the EC needs to be considering nominees for the position.

Discussion:

- The ALA voted to grant Tony a one-time amount of \$1,000 to cover the rest of his Treasurer's expenses.
- George Joseph and Ben Lindfors were nominated to be new Auditors; Joseph McLaren would be backup.
The Motion passed.
- A question was raised about the purpose of the PAX World Fund account. It appears that the account was established to maintain our status as a non-profit organization; the IRS requires ALA to file as a non-profit, which is no problem as long as we do not exceed a profit of \$25,000.
- Folabo volunteered to find out why the 2006 Fonlon Nichols Award check to Femi Osofisan has not been cashed.

The EC thanked Tony for his financial report.

- George announced that the Treasurer's Report appears to be in good order. There are only two matters that the EC should consider:
 1. a more efficient method of collecting dues *before* the annual conference (with allowance made for members coming from Africa).
 2. an examination of the interest rate on funds held in the ALA's bank account; those funds should be earning more.

The EC thanked George and Ben for their work as auditors.

B. JALA Editor's Report: Abioseh Porter

- Abioseh requested that the Conference Convener guarantee that copies of *JALA* be included in the registration packet.
- *JALA* is on track; the early technical problems have been resolved.
- He asked for a volunteer to be the new Web Master for *JALA*

Discussion ensued.

- Mark Lilleleht expressed interest in making the ALA electronic presence more attractive but couldn't help until the fall.
- It was suggested to form an Electronic Committee to come up with a solution.
- No ALA member should be paid as the Web Master because doing so creates a "two-tier possible conflict of interest" among members.

- It was suggested the Web Master be made a member of the Publicity Committee.
- Eustace moved that the Publicity Committee be expanded to include Mark as the new *JALA* Web Master; the Motion passed.

The EC thanked Abioseh for his Report.

6. Standing Committee Reports:

A. Finance: Folabo Ajayi-Soyinka
(Postponed)

B. Issues: Mark Lilleleht

Postponed; Mark invited all to attend the Issues Committee meeting on Thursday.

C. Awards: Oty Agbajoh-Laoye

- Oty thanked the EC for its prompt response to her questions concerning the awards.
- This year's Fonlon/Nichols Award winner is Chuwuemeka Ike of Nigeria; the Distinguished Member Award winner is Kofi Anyidoho; there was no Student Award this year. At the Awards Ceremony, we will recognize Kassahun Chicole for the 25th anniversary of Africa World Press.
- Oty expressed the need for early nominations for the Distinguished Member Award. She reminded members the award was set up to honor African writers who are known as social activists.

Discussion:

- The creation of an African prize to complement the Fonlon-Nichols Award was suggested. It was decided that the Awards Committee will discuss and decide on this possibility.
- Oty expressed the problem of creating appropriate times in the Conference schedule for our Awards Ceremony. She explained the difficulty she had attempting to secure such time by attempting to contact this year's Convener.
- Dealing with conference Conveners is solely the responsibility of the Past President, one of whose duties is to serve as liaison with conference hosts. There was agreement from the EC on this point.
- It was recommended that the Past President also create a checklist for future Conveners of their necessary responsibilities.

- Maureen suggested that this year's letters sent to the Awardees should be saved to serve as templates for such letters in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Thursday, April 24, 2008

The meeting began at 7:15 a.m.

Present: Niyi Afolabi, Oty Agbayoh-Laoye, Folabo Ajayi, Ada U. Azodo, Debra Boyd, Fahamisha P. Brown, Maureen N. Eke, Amy Elder, Tony Hurley, Anthonia Kalu, Keiko Kusunose, Mark Lilleleht, Lokangaka Losambe, Mimi Mortimer, Eustace Palmer, Abioseh Porter, Thelma Ravell-Pinto, President

7. Continuation of Leftover Business from April 23

A. Finance: Folabo Ajayi-Soyinka

- Folabo reported on a letter from Kassahun saying that the ALA Annuals are not self-supporting and that he needs \$4,000 per issue to publish them. The Finance Committee met and recommends instead a \$2,000 subsidy per issue, dependent on Kassahun's giving the ALA a breakdown of exact costs and sales figures. Another recommendation is that we add the Annual as an option on the membership form for a cost of \$30.
- The Committee also recommends an incremental rise in membership dues to be reviewed every five years:

0-\$20	\$20
\$20-\$45	\$50
\$45-\$75	\$75
\$75	\$100
Institutional	\$100

Discussion:

- It was suggested adding \$5 to the registration fee for future conferences to provide an Annual for everyone who registers.
- We should invite Kassahun to an upcoming EC meeting to speak with him in person.
- It was recommended we give Kassahun \$2,000 up front, then an additional \$2,000 once the Annual is published.
- Mimi Mortimer reported that she has received only five papers from the Boulder Conference; therefore a solution to this situation needs to be reached.

- On a somewhat different topic, it was determined that there is no mechanism in place for distributing the funds contributed by Ada's students to support ALA conference attendance by undergraduates.
 - The Treasurer requested that the Finance Committee come up with a specific plan for distributing funds, including awards. It was agreed that the Committee needs to develop a standard form for our different Committees to use when requesting funding.
 - Past President Eustace Palmer asked about the state of the long-discussed Revenue Enhancement plan. He then moved that the ALA grant a subvention to Africa World Press for up to \$4,000 for publication costs of each Annual upon receipt of an itemized accounting. The Motion passed.
 - Eustace then moved to increase the ALA membership fee as suggested by the Finance Committee. The Motion passed.
- ##### **B. Electronic Voting: Maureen Eke**
- Vice President Maureen Eke recommended that we move to electronic voting to reach more members and to cut costs.

Discussion:

It was suggested someone put together a package that guarantees our electronic voting would be secure. It was suggested that Mark and Abioseh investigate this possibility and present their conclusions as an Agenda item at our fall meeting.

C. Travel Grants: Anthonia Kalu

- Anthonia reported that the Committee's work for the year is finished; Tony has written checks for the Awardees. All three Awardees are present at the Macomb Conference and are presenting on the program. The EC thanked Anthonia and the Awards Committee for their work.

(Out of Place): Heritage Project: Debra Boyd

- Debra announced that she has created collages for sale of pictures from past ALA Conferences: Egypt (\$6); Morgantown (\$10). She requested a reimbursement of the \$200 production cost and said the ALA could recover these funds from the sales of the collages.

Discussion:

- Tony moved that the ALA purchase the photographic copy of the collages and provide them to the Conveners of future conferences for display.
- Debra commented that Donald Morales and Joseph McLaren have promised to provide video taken at past conferences for showing at next year's 35th Anniversary Conference. A slide show at that conference would also be welcome. In addition, she is asking ALA founders to contribute to a history of the organization.
- Debra agreed that she would give a CD of the collages and a hard copy in exchange for the \$200 production costs.

The EC thanked Debra for her report and her work on the Heritage Project.

D. Publications: Anthonia Kalu

- Anthonia reminded the EC that Janis Mayes is Co-Chair of this Committee.
- The Committee has nothing to report; she requested that it be reviewed at a future meeting.

The EC thanked Anthonia for her work and asked if she would be willing to be Chair of the Publications Committee. She said that she would.

E. Teaching and Research: Ngwarsungu Chiwengo

- Chiwengo was not present, and there was no report.

F. Publicity and Media Relations: Fahamisha P. Brown

- Fahamisha announced she will have a full report at the fall meeting.
- She proposed a packet for this year's Conference Conveners.
- The Committee will work with the Heritage Project for the 35th Anniversary meeting.
- Fahamisha regularly sends out information to scholarly journals and other appropriate sites.

Discussion:

- It was observed that this year's Program did not publicize the invited speakers properly.
- It was agreed that there exist other issues with the Program, as well, and with the way in which the Conference was run.

The EC thanked Fahamisha for her work and her report.

G. Revenue Enhancement Committee: no presenter

- Anthonia volunteered to chair this Committee and to write a grant proposal to help fund ALA projects. She was reminded to submit any such proposal to the EC for approval.
- It was suggested a 'wish list' of funding for EC projects for future committee chairs.
- It was requested to place support of African universities on this 'wish list.'

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Friday, April 25, 2008

The meeting began at 7:15 a.m.

Present: Niyi Afolabi, Oty Agbayoh-Laoye, Folabo Ajayi, Irene D'Almeida, Ada Azodo, Fahamisha P. Brown, Anne Carlson, Nana Ayebia Clarke, JoAnne Cornwell, Maureen Eke, Amy Elder, Wangui wa Goro, Tony Hurley, George Joseph, Anthonia Kalu, Keiko Kusunose, Mark Lilleht, Lokangaka Losambe, Eustace Palmer, Thelma Pinto, President, Abioseh Porter, Pam Smith,

Thelma recognized Abioseh, Ada, and Eustace, all of whom published books this past year.

8. Leftover Business from Thursday, April 24
No leftover business.

9. Ad Hoc Committee Reports:

A. Employment: Huma Ibrahim
Postponed.

B. Heritage Project: Debra Boyd
Already reported.

10. Caucus Reports:

A. WOCALA: Ada Azodo

- The Women's Caucus Luncheon was a huge success
- WOCALA has seen a significant increase in membership this year.

B. Graduate Student: Laura Murphy
Postponed.

C. TRACALA: Wangui wa Goro and Pamela Smith

- TRACALA was launched at a luncheon meeting at this 2008 ALA Conference. Daniel Kunene was honored as the 'father' of ALA's understanding of translation as a serious interest at its conferences.
- On the Conference Program, the caucus presented two panels, a roundtable, and a reading of *Things Fall Apart* in a number of different languages.
- TRACALA would like an expanded presence on the ALA website.
- The Caucus would like a special edition of *JALA*, an inaugural issue to publish papers presented by TRACALA at this Conference.

Discussion:

- The question was raised as to whether the special TRACALA edition of *JALA* would affect the ALA Annuals. This issue will have to be discussed further. It was recommended that the TRACALA papers be included in the Annuals, since all papers presented at conferences are, technically, ALA papers.

The EC thanked Wangui and Pamela for their report and for the successful launching of TRACALA.

D. Francophone: Anne Carlson

- The Francophone Caucus held a well-attended Luncheon. Alek Baylee Toumi was the Keynote Speaker, and a panel was organized on his work, however, the Francophone panels were not included in the Program.
- The Francophone Caucus coordinated with TRACALA to present a public reading of Toumi's work in French and English.

11. Present and Upcoming ALA Conferences:

A. 2008: Igolima Amachree and Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah:

Conveners not present.

B. 2009: Lokangaka Losambe:

- Lokangaka handed out flyers advertising the 2009 Conference at the University of Vermont, Burlington in 2009.

- He announced that the Conference is well-funded, with confirmed speakers; accommodations are at the Conference hotel, the Sheraton, five minutes from the airport.

The EC thanked Lokangaka for his report and expressed its anticipation of a successful 2009 Conference in Vermont.

C. 2010: Irene D'Almeida

- Irene proposed the University of Arizona, Tucson as the site for the 2010 ALA Conference, with a tentative date of April 7-11, 2010; she presented a letter to the EC providing details about Tucson as an appropriate locale; she also offered a letter of support from Chuck Tatum, Dean of the College of Humanities.
- The theme of the Conference will be "Eco-Imagination: Africa and Diasporan Literature and Sustainability."
- She is working on a financial commitment, which she believes will be forthcoming.

The EC thanked Irene for her presentation and her continuing work to secure the 2010 Conference at the University of Arizona.

D. 2011:

- Eustace announced that there has been interest expressed in holding the 2011 Conference by the following universities: the University of Mississippi, Ohio University, the University of South Africa, and the University of Toronto.

E. 2012:

- Oty announced that she and Abeya will be working this summer to hold an ALA conference in Nigeria, possibly in 2012

Discussion:

- Maureen updated us on the possibility of a conference at the University of Durban in South Africa. She reported that South Africa is not yet ready; there is no institutional support at this time. She further explained that many of the formerly segregated institutions in Durban have recently merged, and they are preoccupied with working out problems of this transition.

- She said that the EC is also conferring with the University of Cape Town.

12. Leftover Business:

A. Graduate Student Caucus: Laura Murphy

- Laura reported that the Caucus presented two panels at this Conference and held its Business Meeting today.
- Tony has provided her with a list of paid-up ALA graduate student members, and she has created a list-serve from the list.
- She is working with the Awards Committee to present a graduate student paper prize; the winning paper will be published in *JALA*.

The EC thanked Laura for her report and congratulated her for successfully defending her dissertation and acquiring a teaching position at Ithaca College.

B. Headquarters Report: JoAnne Cornwell

- JoAnne distributed copies of the most recent *ALA Handbook*.
- She suggested that it would be good to publish the *Newsletter* on the web, rather than absorb the expense necessary to produce hard copies. She would like feedback on this possibility.
- She informed the EC that, as she had mentioned earlier, she would like to phase out of her position as Headquarters Director; her institutional support is drying up.

Discussion:

- George Joseph informed the EC that Hobart and William Smith Colleges has bid for the ALA Headquarters. Joanne will confer with Thelma and George about the details.

The EC thanked JoAnne for her report and work as Headquarters Director.

C. Employment: Huma Ibrahim

- Huma reported that for the last three years the Committee has held panels at the annual ALA Conferences.
- She has not been able to acquire materials for the projected archives.
- She wishes to step down as Chair, since she is located outside the U.S.

The EC thanked Huma for her report and for chairing the Employment Committee

13. Leftover Business: Report on the 2008 Macomb Conference

- Fran Hairtine, 2008 Conference Coordinator, came to the meeting to explain some of the discrepancies in the Conference Program. She requested that the EC let the Conference planners know how they wish the two dinners to go. Also, there will be a luncheon in honor of Chinua Achebe that was not publicized; tickets are being printed now. She will publicize these changes.

Discussion:

- Audio equipment for our business meeting on Saturday was requested.

The EC thanked Fran for her information and help.

14. Other Business

- Fahamisha moved to double the \$500 travel awards to \$1,000, since the awardees are coming from Africa and to give the awards regularly at the Business Meeting. The Motion passed.
- Mark read a draft of a proposed policy for making the ALA mailing list available for purchase for at least \$100. During discussion, it was decided that the ALA President will determine how much to charge in each instance, and members will have the opportunity to opt out of having their names on the list. Fahamisha moved that we approve Mark's proposed policy statement with the EC's revisions. The Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 a.m.

Saturday, April 26, 2008

The meeting began at 7:15.

Present: Oty Agbayoh-Laoye, Folabo Ajayi, Ada U. Azodo, Fahamisha Patricia Brown, Anne Carlson, Kassahun Checole, Nana Ayebia Clarke, Carroll Coates, Maureen N. Eke, Amy Elder, Tony Hurley, George Joseph, Anthonia Kalu, Keiko Kusunose, Mark Lilleleht, Lokangaka Losambe, Jean Ouedraogo, Eustace Palmer, Thelma Pinto, President, Abioseh Porter.

15. ALA Panels at ASA: Maureen Eke

- Vice President Maureen Eke contacted the ASA EC to ask if the ALA is allowed to sponsor panels, if so, how many, etc., but has received no response, except the standard information sent to every ASA member. Consequently, she feels we are still bound by the member-

ship requirements of 10% ALA members being ASA members, as well, to sponsor panels.

- Our current affiliate status does not accord us any particular privileges. If we submit panels, they must be vetted individually; we cannot simply vet them ourselves and expect them to be accepted automatically because we have approved them.

Discussion:

- The EC decided to designate one member to coordinate our panels and submit them despite this problem of ASA vetting them. Having papers rejected when one must pay to join the ASA before discovering this fact and making travel and hotel arrangements early are a huge financial issues for members. This is a moot point for the upcoming ASA. We will, however, have this conversation again at that conference's EC meeting.

16. Report on Election Results: Maureen Eke

- Vice President: Folabo Ajayi Soyinka
Deputy Vice President: Anthonia Kalu

EC Members: Greg Thomas, Mohamed Kamara, Adeleke Adeeko

17. Agenda for the Annual Business Meeting:

To be determined later. There will be some Resolutions from the floor.

18. List of those persons who have passed away since the last ALA Conference, to be read at the Business Meeting: Abioseh Porter

- Abioseh read off his list and asked to be notified of others; he also asked for volunteers to offer eulogies at the Business Meeting.

19. Leftover Business:

A. Auditors' Report: George Joseph and Ben Lindfors

- In general, the ALA books look fine.
- It needs to be reinforced, however, that individuals who present papers must be ALA members.
- Also, the PAX fund is accruing low interest.

Discussion:

- The Treasurer replied that some members pay very late and that membership surges after the annual conference.

- The Vermont Conference Convener suggested that people be reminded to pay their membership at the Conference registration desk before they pick up their Conference packets.

B. Report of the 2008 Convener cont.: Rasheed d'Allah

- Rasheed reported that no exact figure for Conference attendance is available yet, but he estimates approximately 350 people have been here.
- Conference housing and food service have gone relatively smoothly, but he acknowledged shuttle problems that had not been anticipated and that have resulted in inconvenience for participants and unexpected expense for the organizers.
- The University is very grateful for the Conference and feels that its success will enhance its globalization efforts. For example, a liaison has been signed with the University of Ghana.

Discussion:

- Rasheed was asked to supply the EC with an eventual, detailed report of 1) attendance numbers; 2) names of invited speakers; 3) payment arrangements for invited speakers.
- Rasheed replied that because the organizers began so early, most guest speakers were informed early about passport problems, etc. He is hoping that the rest of the speaker payment checks will be sent in a few days; the University Provost has cooperated in the signing of contracts with speaker.
- It was asked if all the expected financial commitments from the University have been honored.
- Rasheed answered that the main sponsors have been the President and the former Provost, although small amounts have been obtained from other universities. So far, there have not been problems with funding, and he does not think his expenditures will exceed income. The College has promised to pick up any unfulfilled debts. He has all commitments in writing.
- There was a query concerning the particular financial commitment to a guest from Paris who has complained about not receiving funding.
- Rasheed remarked that he has given this speaker the promised accommodation, food, and travel. He will look into giving her a small stipend as well. This individual was invited to interact with other colleagues, not to give particular talks. Others in this position who have not been paid already will have checks mailed to them. He suggested that the

ALA should have a policy not to pay regular members to come to conferences.

- It was explained that ALA never pays members to appear on panels.
- It was stated that it is the responsibility of the Convener to determine the honoraria for everyone invited to a conference.
- It was asked if there were problems with the website, since it was extremely hard to access.
- Rasheed commented that the only problem of which he was aware was the size of the font.
- Rasheed will serve as Editor of the 2008 Annual. A volunteer would be called for from the floor at the Business Meeting to assist him.
- The motion was made that the EC thank and congratulate Rasheed for his work on the Conference. The motion passed.

C. Future Conferences, cont.: Harry Garuba

- He reported on the possibility of the University of Cape Town, South Africa hosting a conference in 2012. He will inform the Vice President of the University of Cape town that the ALA EC is encouraging.
- He was informed that before the EC can accept the bid, we will need to see a specific commitment in writing. Also, he was advised to consider a figure in the region of \$75,000 for a conference cost.
- The EC thanked him for his proposed bid.

D. Annuals

Carroll Coates, Annuals Editor: reported that he has received no information from the past Editor. He suggested that changing to electronic files plus one hard copy of authors' manuscripts would mean that there would be no need for six copies, as before. He will report on the benefit of this change to the Business Meeting.

20. Other Business:

A. Discussion with Kassahun Chicole

- Folabo, on behalf of the Finance Committee, informed Kassahun of the EC decision to ask for an itemized cost of production of each Annual.
- Kassahun agreed to provide such an inventory and thanked the EC for its support. He reminded the EC that it made a commitment that we haven't been fulfilling to send copies of the Annuals to African libraries. He had agreed to give us a 50% discount, and the ALA would pay for shipping. This agreement was to begin with Volume 11 and continue.

Discussion:

- It was agreed that the EC have regular meetings with Kassahun at each ALA in order to obtain a progress report. This meeting will be a regular Agenda item.

B. Awards

- It was agreed that all awards should be passed through the Awards Committee.
- It is also important that the awardees be kept confidential. In this regard, it should be kept in mind that everything at an ALA conference is sponsored by the organization, not the conveners or different caucuses; therefore, it is the EC and members who will make essential decisions.

C. Ayebia Press

- Becky Clarke thanked the EC for its continuing support of Ayebia Press.

D. Life Memberships

- A letter from Steven Arnold, with a proposal about changes to Life Memberships, to be presented at the Business Meeting for discussion and a vote was passed around to the EC. The primary point of the proposal was to honor retirees with Life Memberships in the ALA.

Discussion:

- A modification to the letter was suggested to require a retiree who so wished to indicate in writing a desire to remain an ALA member in good standing but an inability to pay the dues for his/her salary range. This person, then, would automatically become an Emeritus Member.
- It was noted that there is a situation now where young faculty are threatened with job insecurity and might have difficulty joining organizations.
- Ben Lindfors suggested forming an Emeritus group to aid, through its experience, in guiding the EC; he said that this group could hold workshops and panels about faculty issues at ALA conferences, specifically, covering two employment areas: 1) graduating Ph.Ds; 2) untenured African literature faculty.
- The EC agreed to this modification. It was proposed that both Stephen Arnold's proposal and the amendment be presented at the Business Meeting.
- The Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Sunday, April 27, 2008

The meeting began at 7:25 a.m.

Present: Folabo Ajayi, Ada U. Azodo, Anne Carlson, Maureen Eke, President, Amy Elder, George Joseph, Thelma Pinto.

21. Ratification of the Agenda:
Agenda ratified.

22. Ratification of any Unratified EC Minutes
No Minutes to ratify.

23. Remarks by the New President: Maureen Eke

- Maureen welcomed Folabo as the new Vice President.
- Her immediate plan is to set up a data base of research resources for the ALA. This accomplishment would be especially helpful for our overseas colleagues, as she discovered from personal experience.

Discussion:

- It was suggested that we investigate a "sister library" exchange.
- Maureen will expand on this idea and send a proposal out to the EC for suggestions.

24. Assignment of Tasks Resulting from the Annual Business Meeting Decisions

- Issues Committee proposal to investigate civil rights issues around the Macomb region: The Committee needs to investigate these issues now that the Conference is completed.

25. Review of Committee Chairs:
Issues: Mark Lilleleht
Finance: Folabo
Awards: Oty
Travel Grants: Anthonia and Debra Boyd
Publications: Anthonia
Teaching and Research: Chiwengo
Media Relations: Fahamisha
Constitution and Policy: Vice President (Folabo)

- Maureen will write to the Chairs to ask them to identify members.
- We may have to reactivate the Revenue Enhancement Committee when we get to the point of grant writing to initiate the electronic data base of resources.
- The EC agreed that, from here on, the Committee Chairs will rotate every two years.

- The following appointments as Members of Standing Committees were made:
Adeleke: Finance Committee
Kamara: Travel Grants
Greg: Publicity
Eustace: Publications

- Discussion arose about Debra selling the pictures from which she makes her collages of ALA Conferences. We will discuss this issue further at the EC meeting at the ASA.

26. Review of the 2008 Conference and Recommendations for the one in 2009

- The Past President is the liaison with conference conveners and should be informed of any problems that seem to be occurring.
- Coordination of activities: EC members' panels should not be scheduled at the same time as the daily EC meetings; Business Meetings, also, should not be scheduled at the same time as panels; conveners should be careful not to call all hotels booked for attendees "conference hotels"; the readings of invited writers should not be placed in competition with each other.
- The Publicity Committee should look at past conference programs in order to create a template to send to future conveners.
- The EC wishes to review a draft program early to check on the times and dates of major ALA events.
- The long standing rule that members should be a Chair of only one panel and a member of only one panel must be upheld; so must the requirement that caucuses can have only two panels.

27. New Business:

- Nominations for next ALA Elections
 - Beginning in 2009, the Awards Committee will be permanently chaired by the Deputy Vice President.

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Elder
University of Cincinnati

**MINUTES OF THE ALA BUSINESS MEETING
AFRICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
MACOMB, ILLINOIS, APRIL 26, 2008**

The meeting began at 3:10 p.m.

Present: Adeleke Adeeko, Moradewun Adejunmobi, Oty Agbayoh-Laoye, Folabo Ajayi, Bose Ayeni-Tsevene, Ada U. Azodo, F. Odun Babogum, Fahamisha P. Brown, Robert Cancel, Anne Carlson, Kassahun Checole, Michele Chossat, Helen Chukwuma, Carrol F. Coates, JoAnne Cornwell, Joyce Dixon-Fyle, Irene d'Almeida, Aaron Eastley, Amy Elder, Adeola Faleye, Wangui wa Goro, Olabisi Gwanna, Ken Harrow, Tony Hurley, Rebekah Hurt, Huma Ibrahim, Marjolijn de Jager, Phebe Jatau, Toyin Jogede, George Joseph, Larry Jost, Anthonia Kalu, Kasongo Kapango, Keiko Kusunose, Regina Kwakye-Opong, Renée Larrier, Lokangaka Losambe, Mark Lilleleht, Bernth Lindfors, Joseph McLaren, Donald Morales, Dana Nard, Jean Ouedraogo, Felicity Palmer, Sandra Richards, Mahriona Rofheart, Irene Salami-Agunlsye, Halima Sekula, Pam Smith, Michèle Vialet, Patricia Jabbeh Wesley, Joy Wrolson

1. Ratification of the Agenda

The Agenda was ratified.

2. Ratification of the Minutes of the Business Meeting of the 2007 ALA Conference

The Minutes were ratified.

3. Business Arising from the 2007 Minutes

No business arose.

4. President's Report

• **Recognition of 2008 Conference Conveners**

1. Thelma celebrated the major accomplishments of the 2008 ALA Conference. She mentioned the ceremony awarding of the Fonlon/Nichols Prize to Professor Ike; the Awards Dinner where Professor Kofi Anyidoho was named 2008 Distinguished ALA Member and Kasahun Chicole was honored for twenty-five years of publishing. She moved that the assembly recognize the hard work of the 2008 Conveners; the Motion passed.
2. She was pleased to see the most recent ALA publications, *JALA*, the ALA literary journal, and the *ALA Newsletter*; Thelma congratulated Abioseh Porter, Editor of *JALA* and JoAnne Cornwell, Director of ALA Headquarters, respectively.

3. ALA Travel Awards for 2009 will be announced later.
4. She concluded that the ALA must be doing well, judging from the attendance at this conference and the fact that we have possible bids for four future conferences. These bids will be presented during this Business Meeting.
5. The issue of moving the ALA Headquarters from San Diego will also be addressed later. Thelma thanked JoAnne Cornwell for her many and varied contributions as Headquarters Director.

• **Recognition of Outgoing EC Members**

Thelma moved that the assembly recognize the service of Mark Lilleleht, Keiko Kusunose, and Becky Ayebia Clarke; she said Eustace Palmer should be recognized but, although his term as President is over, he definitely should not stop helping the EC.

The assembly recognized their service.

• **Report on Elections of New Officers and EC Committee Members**

1. Those elected are:
Vice President: Folabo Ajayi Soyinka
Deputy Vice President: Anthonia Kalu
EC Members: Greg Thomas, Mohamed Kamara, Adeleke Adeeko
2. The motion to destroy the ballots passed.

• **Series Editor's Report: Carrol Coates**

1. Carrol reported that he has conversed with the former conference conveners whose *Annuals* are outstanding, and he and they will work together to produce the volumes in the near future.
2. Authors should submit one print copy of their essays along with one electronic submission to the convener of the conference where they presented.

Discussion:

- Thelma asked if anyone would volunteer to help Carrol Coates; the conference conveners would have the first opportunity.
- Huma Ibrahim was elected by acclamation.

• **Standing Committee Reports:**

1. Treasurer and Auditors: Tony Hurley and George Joseph and Ben Lindfors

- Tony passed around the Treasurer’s Report of last year’s ALA revenues and expenditures and explained it.
- In summary, ALA revenues for this period amounted to \$54,209.71; expenditures to \$29, 526.84; assets as of March 31, 2008 (Wachovia checking, account activity not yet cleared, Wachovia Money Market, and PAX World Funds Balance): \$97,482.79. Total assets amounted to \$127,165.66.
- Tony informed the assembly that he intends to rotate out of the office of Treasurer and encouraged members to think of a replacement.
- Ben Lindfors reported that he and George Joseph found the ALA books in good order; George concurred.

Discussion:

- A question arose concerning the effect of stock market fluctuation on ALA investments. Tony replied that the advice he was given was to do nothing at this point, the policy followed by former Treasurer, Bob Cancel.
- There was a question about The Ohio State University failing to provide promised copies of *RAL*. Tony replied that he was advised to contact *RAL* about this matter. He reminded the assembly that *RAL* subscriptions do not remain in the ALA treasury.

The Motion to accept the Treasurer’s and Auditors’ Reports passed.

2. JALA Editor: Abioseh Porter

- Abioseh remarked that he has consulted about twenty-seven ALA members to use their expertise in various areas to help him read manuscripts.
- Previous production glitches have been taken care of.
- The EC decided to support Mark Lilleleht as *JALA* Webmaster.

3. Finance: Folabo

- Folabo proposed that membership fees be raised, except for African stu-

dents studying in Africa; the dues would be reviewed every five years:

0-\$20 \$20

\$20-\$45 \$50

\$45-\$75 \$75

\$75 \$100

Institutional \$100

- She further proposed that the ALA give our Series publisher, Kasahun Chicole, an amount up to \$4,000 direct subsidy for future volumes of the *Annuals*, on the condition of his providing the EC with a detailed inventory of production costs.

Discussion:

- There was a question about the reason for membership fee increases. Folabo replied that it is because of the increased cost of ALA activities.
- Another questioner asked what discussion there had been between the 2008 Conference Conveners and the ALA Treasurer. Tony noted that the EC has no control over conveners.
- It was asked why ALA membership was required for presentation at the Conference when it wasn’t enforced. Tony assured the assembly that such a discrepancy would not happen at the 2009 Conference in Vermont. Bob Cancel observed that this problem is also linked to the deadline for publishing names in the conference program.
- The dues proposal passed with one abstention; the subsidy to publish the *Annuals* also passed.

4. Issues: Mark Lilleleht

- The technical problems with the Issues Committee website will be resolved soon.
- A Resolution on Somalia is being provided to members at this Business Meeting for consideration.
- The Issues Committee will provide classroom resources on sex trafficking to anyone who requests it.

Discussion:

- The issue of human rights in the area of sex trafficking was raised. Shouldn't the ALA respond to this situation?
- It was asked that we document this situation.
- Others suggested contacting the NAACP, ACLU, and Southern Poverty Law Center to gain information.
- It was also suggested that the ALA should not take an active role in this issue.
- It was agreed that we need to document the veracity of all issues before taking an active role about them.

5. Awards: Oty Agbajoh-Laoye

- Oty requested nominees for the Fonlon/Nichols and Distinguished ALA Member Awards for 2009

6. Travel Grants: Anthonia Kalu

- Anthonia announced that the Committee granted three awards of \$500 each for members from Africa to attend the 2008 Conference. The recipients were: Adeola Faleye, drama/African language orature, Afafe Awolowo University, Nigeria; Vusi Benedict Mchunu, independent scholar, translations/poetry, South Africa; Iniobong Uko, literary criticism, focus on gender, University of Uyo, Nigeria.
- \$500 is not enough for this award because of travel costs from Africa. The EC agreed to increase the funding to \$1,000 for each of the three grants.
- Anthonia noted that members send in nominations for the 2009 awards and that the application information is on the ALA Website.

7. Publications: Anthonia Kalu

- Dr. Carroll Coates has begun as the Annuals' General Editor.
- Anthonia promised there will be a fuller report next year.

8. Teaching and Research: Ngwarsungu Chiwengo

There was no report.

9. Publicity and Media: Fahamisha Patricia Brown

- Fahamisha asked members to get in touch with her to publicize their activities and to involve their university media officers.

10. Revenue Enhancement: no Chair

There was no report.

• **Ad Hoc Committee Reports:**

1. Heritage Project: Debra Boyd

Debra requested that members provide her with photos they wish to be included in the 35th Anniversary celebration.

2. Employment: Huma Ibrahim

Huma announced that Natasha Vogel will be the new Chair of this committee.

• **Future ALA Conferences**

2009: Lokangaka Losamba

Lokangaka passed out flyers for the Conference and gave a Media presentation on the University of Vermont at Burlington; the theme of the Conference is "Africa and Blackness in World Literature and the Visual Arts"

2010: Irene D'Almeida

Irene presented a bid from the University of Arizona, Tucson for April 7-11, 2010; she gave a media presentation. [The date was subsequently changed to March 10-14.]

The Motion to accept this bid passed.

• **Caucus Reports:**

WOCALA: Ada Azodo

- Ada reported that the Caucus membership is upwards of 100.
- The WOCALA Luncheon was very well attended; Akachi Ezeigbo was the speaker.
- The present Secretary, Carol Kroll, and Treasurer, Fahamisha Patricia Brown, will continue in their posts.

Graduate Student: Laura Murphy

- Laura said that the Caucus membership is growing.
- The Caucus held mixers at both the ASA and ALA and plan a publishing panel at the 2009 Conference.
- It intends to solicit papers from graduate students in order to present a Graduate Student Essay Award at the 2009 Conference.
- Rebecca Hunt is the Caucus' international liaison.
- The Caucus, also, now has a Face Book presence.

TRACALA: Pamela Smith

- Pamela remarked that TRACALA had a very successful launch at a luncheon meeting at this year's Conference, despite the expected Key Note Speaker being unable to attend. Daniel Kunene was honored as the 'father' of ALA's interest in translation as a serious concern at its conferences.
- On the Conference Program, the caucus presented two panels, a roundtable, and a reading of *Things Fall Apart* in 8 different African languages.

Francophone:

- New President, Jean Ouedraogo, acknowledged out-going President, Anne Carlson.
- The Francophone Caucus held a very successful Luncheon with Alek Baylee Toumi as the invited Keynote Speaker. Another Luncheon is planned for the 2009 Conference.
- The Caucus coordinated with TRACALA to present a public reading of Toumi's work in French and English.
- The Caucus hopes to draw works from the French film festival in Montreal to screen at the 2009 Conference.
- The new Officers are:
 - Vice President: Samuel Zadi
 - Secretary: Michele Shores
 - Treasurer: Michele Vialet

5. New Business:

• **Headquarters Move:**

Thelma asked the assembly to thank JoAnne for her service as Headquarters Director and for the newly redesigned *Newsletter*. Eustace moved that the Headquarters be established at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in the fall; George explained the EC recommendations for the needs of the Headquarters.

The Motion passed.

• **Constitutional Amendment: Maureen Eke**

Maureen introduced the Amendment concerning filling unexpected EC vacancies and moved that it be accepted.

The Motion passed.

• **Emeritus Dues: Maureen Eke**

Maureen presented the following Motion submitted by Stephen Arnold to the EC for consideration at the Business Meeting:

"On retirement from his/her professional position, any member in good standing with twenty or more years of paid membership will automatically become a Life Member in the African Association. The member will continue to receive annual dues notices, and while it is hoped that the member would continue to support the ALA through annual contributions, the member may at this point ignore the notices but remain a member in good standing by indicating such a wish in writing."

She also present the Motion as amended by the EC:

"On retirement from his/her professional position, any member in good standing with twenty or more years of paid membership will automatically become an Emeritus Member in the African Literature Association. For such members, payment of annual dues will be optional."

The amended Motion passed.

6. Other Business:

- **Remembrance of Scholars/Writers in African Literature who passed since our last conference:**

Abioseh Porter spoke for Hilarious Ambé and Bate Besong; JoAnne Cornwell, Irene D’Almeida, Ken Harrow, and Tony Hurley spoke for Aimée Cesaire; Abioseh Porter and Eustace Palmer spoke for John Conteh-Morgan; Ben Lindfors spoke for Cyprian Ekwensi; Folabo Ajayi Soyinka spoke for Oyinka Ogumba, and joined Adeola Faleyé in a dirge; Ben Lindfors and Abioseh Porter spoke for Oyekan Owomoyela; Ken Harrow spoke for Ousman Sembene.

• **Resolutions of the EC:**

Mark Lilleleht passed around copies of the Issues Committee Resolution calling upon the ALA President to write to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, the State Department Special Representative to Somalia, John Yates, the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, and the Congressional Black Caucus

“to reverse its policies that have made [the US] complicit in [Somali] devastation and to constructively re-engage and actively support the rebuilding of a Somali civil society that defends the rights of all.”

Discussion:

Ken Harrow spoke in favor of the Resolution and presented additional recent history about the Somali situation.

The Motion passed unanimously.

• **Announcements:**

1. Call for Papers for the 2009 Conference:
Lokanga Losamba reminded members to submit proposals for panels and papers for the Conference.

2. Announcements from the Floor:
There were no announcements.

7. Motion to Adjourn:

The members moved and passed a Motion to Adjourn; the Business Meeting ended at 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Elder,
University of Cincinnati



ALA Members at 2008 Macomb meeting

WHAT IS ALA?

The African Literature Association (ALA) is an independent non-profit professional society open to scholars, teachers and writers. Its existence is to facilitate the attempts of a worldwide audience to enjoy the works of African writers and artists. The ALA encourages the participation of all who produce the object study and wishes for productive interaction between scholars and artists. The organization asserts the primacy of the African peoples in shaping the future of African literature and actively supports the African peoples in their striving for liberation. ●