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MAZRUI NEWSLETTER (ABRIDGED)

For Friends, Relatives and Colleagues

Summary of a Year

This year I am experimenting with two versions of my Annual Letter - a shorter version which goes out to all my regular recipients, and a full-blown version which will be sent later, but only to those who send me a postcard to ask for it! Clearly there are degrees of Mazruiphilia (and Mazruiphobia)! Only a few friends and colleagues are masochistic enough to want to know almost every professional detail in a Mazrui year! Other friends and colleagues are offered this version - which, long as it is, is only a fraction of the full document!

Professionally, the four most important events of my year were as follows:

- (a) I resigned from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, after more than 16 years as a professor there.
- (b) I confirmed my commitment to the State University of New York at Binghamton as Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities and as Director of my newly established Institute of Global Cultural Studies. Please note my new official address in this text.
- (c) I accepted a new academic commitment at Cornell University not only as Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large but also as a regular teaching faculty of the Africana Studies and Research Center, Ithaca, New York.
- (d) I was appointed Albert Luthuli Professor-at-Large by the University of Jos, Nigeria -- a new relationship with an old university-base of mine.

The saddest event of my year was the death of Maureen Kiberu in June. Maureen was Brenda's sister. When Brenda left my household in 1987, Maureen remained behind to look after me first

in Ann Arbor and later in Binghamton. When her blood disorder became very serious, she moved to her sister's in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Maureen and I spoke often on the phone. I visited Minneapolis when I could. Her death at the age of 27 was absolutely shattering. Something in me died that night. I know it. But I am still not sure of the scale of the damage.

The Central Bank of Barbados invited me to give the 1991 Sir Winston Scott Annual Memorial lecture. An old West Indian friend of mine - Sir Fred Phillips - acted as a liaison between the Bank and me. My lecture in Barbados was entitled "The World with One Superpower: Is it a More Dangerous Place?". It was exceptionally well received by the large audience, but almost totally ignored by the local Press! Did you know that Barbados has the oldest continuous parliamentary tradition in the Western hemisphere? The tradition goes back some 350 years. (The U.S. parliamentary tradition was interrupted and later transformed by the revolutionary war of independence in the late eighteenth century. Barbados is therefore ahead of the United States in uninterrupted parliamentary history)!

Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka and I brutalized each other in the pages of the newly revived Transition magazine (edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr., Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Finder from Harvard University and published by Oxford University Press). Soyinka had been irrationally attacking my TV series The Africans: A Triple Heritage for several years - seemingly without ever having looked at more than one part of one programme. (There are 9 programmes in all)! At last I have answered his attacks. He has since answered back!! Can you imagine? However, in spite of my very precise challenge, he has failed to provide the evidence ("chapter and verse") for his charges against my TV series. No evidence at all!

The State University of New York at Binghamton had to investigate a vastly different kind of attack on me - an anonymous circular using lavatory language, denouncing and threatening me in extremely racist terms. I was supposed to be "nigger shit"! The campus rallied to my defence - with letters and oral expressions of support. The Dean and Provost came personally to my office to affirm their solidarity with me. And a public meeting on campus denounced such racism, and gave me an applause of support. I was deeply moved.

In an unrelated move, the state-wide system of the State University of New York (SUNY) invited me to address the several dozen Presidents of the SUNY campuses at the Chancellor's Forum in Cooperstown, New York. My lecture was on the controversial subject of the Gulf Crisis, which was a very hot subject at the time. I was a strong critic of the military action against Iraq. The diverse presidents of the SUNY system gave me an enthusiastic applause, in spite of differences of opinion. This liberal event

more than compensated for the odious racist circular distributed on the Binghamton campus and at Cornell against me earlier in the year!

The Committee on Syllabus Review and Development of the State of New York, of which I was a member, submitted its report to the State's Board of Regents after a year of research and deliberations. The report basically concluded that education in U.S. schools was still too Eurocentric, even Anglocentric. We recommended specific steps towards making both syllabus and curriculum in New York schools more multicultural in the future. The Report had a national impact, and was widely debated. My own personal appendix to the Report was entitled "Multiculturalism and Comparative Holocaust." I argued that U.S. children needed to be taught at school that holocausts did not simply occur in distant Nazi concentration camps, but also occurred on American soil with genocide committed against native Americans and with the brutal enslavement of African-Americans. The word "Holocaust", I argued, should not be restricted to the Jewish experience under the Nazis only.

The Chairman of the Republican Party of the State of New York, Mr. William T. Powers, was so angry with me that he called upon the State University of New York and Governor Mario Cuomo of New York to have me dismissed from my job. So much for Mr. Powers' concept of freedom of speech. Fortunately his call for my dismissal was ignored.

Politically, an even more momentous event occurred in Kenya. The authorities stopped me in July from giving a lecture in Mombasa, my hometown. In response, I gave a Press conference in Nairobi where I asked President Daniel arap Moi to step down and hand over to a new pluralistic constitutional order by 1993. This precipitated a political storm in Kenya - but I was allowed to leave the country unmolested after a few days. I was nevertheless roundly abused in parliament, by ministers, and in the Press. In December 1991 Archbishop Trevor Huddleston and I jointly opened a pro-democracy African conference in London, sponsored by King Moshoeshe II and the International Institute for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa.

I gave the annual lecture of The Guardian newspaper in July in Nigeria. My topic was "The Black Woman and the Problem of Gender." It was a highly publicized event. I was also able to have an audience with the Head of State of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida, and to have lunch with the former Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo. I was also warmly received by Chief Bashirun M.K.O. Abiola in Lagos.

I made two trips to South Africa during the year - both authorized by the African National Congress. In August I was a guest of the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and

Industry. I addressed a meeting of approximately two thousand Black entrepreneurs in Sun City, the "Las Vegas" of Southern Africa.

My second trip to South Africa in September 1991 was sponsored by the University of the Witwaterstrand and the Weekly Mail newspaper. I was a keynote speaker for the University's spring Festival on Culture and Ethnicity. For the Weekly Mail I was one of the book-authors who spoke at their Book Festival. It was a triple heritage trip -- I went for advice to a Sangoma (indigenous diviner), addressed large Muslim audiences, and gave Western-style Press and radio interviews. I met Mrs. Winnie Mandela for the first time on this trip, and renewed old friendships with other South Africans. What did I consult the sangoma about? It was personal, rather than professional. I needed to know what the ancestors had to say about a particular aspect of my future.

I went to Denmark to give the closing address to a six month Cultural Festival entitled "Images of Africa", sponsored mainly by Non-Governmental organizations in the main cities of Denmark. I was impressed by how much interest there was in Africa, especially Kenya. I was interviewed for television, newspapers and magazines. My main lecture was on "The Changing Frontiers of World Culture", held curiously at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I also lectured at the University of Copenhagen and elsewhere.

In Norway I was the guest of the Norwegian Nobel Committee and the Norwegian Nobel Institute, but I had occasion also to meet a few old friends from my Makerere days. I also met Norway's Prime Minister, Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland. When in an excited sentence I accused her country (Norway) of having broken off diplomatic relations with mine (Kenya), she promptly corrected me! She said it was Kenya which finally broke off the relations!

I was one of the official speakers at the 90th Anniversary Nobel Jubilee Celebrations in Oslo, Norway. The Nobel Prize for Peace was first awarded in 1901. The celebratory symposium this year was on the theme "BEYOND THE COLD WAR: FUTURE DIMENSIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS". Papers presented at the symposium came from scholars like me and from Nobel Peace Laureates like the Dalai Lama of Tibet, Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, Former Chancellor Willy Brandt of Germany and former President Oscar Arias Sanchez of Costa Rica. I spoke on "RACE AND RELIGION IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER".

Other celebratory events held in Oslo to mark the 90th Anniversary Jubilee included a Royal Gala performance of Henrik Ibsen's play THE WILD DUCK, which was attended by the King and Queen of Norway at the National Theatre in Oslo. We were hosted to special banquets by the Norwegian Parliament and by the Norwegian Nobel Committee which selects the Peace Laureates. (Members of the

Nobel Committee are appointed by Parliament in Norway).

The 1991 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Aung San Suu Kyis of Burma (Myanmar). We were to attend the Award Ceremony of the Prize to her. Unfortunately this courageous woman-laureate was under house arrest in her country and was prevented by the military government from going to Norway to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. At the ceremony the Prize was received by her son, Alexander, and his younger brother Kim. Her husband also came to Oslo.

Pauline Uti has started her graduate work at the University here in Binghamton. She is specializing in the education of the hearing-impaired children. She spends long hours studying. When I was in Jos in June 1991 I visited her mother, grandmother and other members of the family.

Visiting professors at the Office of the Schweitzer Chair (i.e. my unit) during the year included A. Adu Boahen, Jonah Elaigwu, Abdalla Bujra and Diana Frank. We inaugurated a new Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton, with myself as Director and Omari H. Kokole as Associate Director. We hope to explore the impact of such cultural forces as religion, race and gender on world affairs. Our official address is as follows:

INSTITUTE OF GLOBAL CULTURAL STUDIES  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BINGHAMTON  
BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK, 13902-6000  
Telephone: (607) 777-4494  
Fax: (607) 777-2642

Other family news includes the extremely happy possibility of a young Mazrui being born in January 1992. The prospective mother and the little "tenant" in her body are doing very well. It is all hush-hush until the great event itself, but we shall need your prayers for the health and happiness of the mother and child.

Al'Amin, my middle son, is planning to drive over in his own car from Ann Arbor to Binghamton for the Christmas holidays. We look forward very much to catching up with his news. His younger brother, Kim, is doing very well in Law School at the University of Michigan - including Kim's editorial involvement in the Michigan Law Review. I saw Jamal, my oldest son, when I went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to pay public tribute to Reverend Leon Sullivan, author of the famous (and controversial) Sullivan principles which once governed the behavior of American corporations trading with South Africa. It was wonderful to see both my son, Jamal, and this old civil rights crusader, Leon Sullivan. Indeed, both the young man and the old veteran were fighters for public causes.

My visit to the Mombasa side of the family in July 1991 was, as usual, a great social success - thanks mainly to my very

hospitable family members. My brother Harith came down from his farm in Takaungu, and my sisters and their children spread out the proverbial red carpet to the returning relative from Binghamton, New York!! It was deeply gratifying.

From all of us to all of you - may you prosper in joy and happiness. Amen.