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MAZRUI NEWSLETTER

A SPECIAL EDITION!

For friends, relatives and colleagues:

A Pentagon of Fate: A Self-Portrait

The first thing you will have noticed on this page is my new address. I have moved! I am now in Binghamton, New York state! This is my most important move since I resigned from Makerere University to join the University of Michigan in the 1970s. I do need the prayers, good wishes and support of all my friends.

I am now Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton. To mark this special event in my life, I am making this annual newsletter particularly comprehensive! Biographically, the letter may also be particularly revealing -- for better or for worse! I do hope you have the stamina to read it through!

Whatever you decide to do with this newsletter, I do wish you and your loved ones a joyful and wondrous year ahead.

Because of my television series, The Africans, and my general obsession with the triple heritage, most of you probably believe that my favourite number is three -- what I called "the trialectic" in a previous newsletter. I am indeed intellectually fascinated by the "trialectic" at work, as well as by Africa's triple heritage. However, my life has also been in the shadow of the numeral 5. In this sense, mine has been a pentagon of fate. This past year has been particularly illustrative of this pentafate. But in reality it all began with my being my mother's fifth born!

For much of my young life as a child I was also one of my father's five children. I was brought up a Muslim. Islam has five pillars of faith,

(a) Faith itself (the Shahada as witness)
(b) Prayer (five times each day)
(c) The Fast of Ramadhan
(d) The Tax of Zakat
(e) The Pilgrimage to Mecca.

I lived in the majestic shadow of these five pillars. I was indeed brought up to pray five times each day.

On the five fingers of my hand, I first learnt to count in an African language, Kiswahili: Moja, Mbili, Tatu, Nne, Tano. These first five are perhaps the most purely Bantu of all Swahili numerals. (Six, seven and nine are definitely Arabic. Eight -- though much changed -- could be Arabic.) In reality Swahili civilization (as distinct from Swahili language) is a product of five different civilizations. The primary basis of Swahili civilization is African and Islamic. These two are the deepest foundations. But Swahili cuisine and food culture have been profoundly influenced by the cuisines of India and South Asia. Swahili music has also felt the Indian impact -- in addition to the African and Arab influences.

Europe influenced Swahili civilization through both the Latin and the Germanic streams of Western culture. The Portuguese arrived in East Africa with the Latin stream and ruled my home town of Mombasa for a while. At about the time of the American revolution in the New World, there was a small Mazrui revolution in Mombasa! My family took on the Portuguese militarily -- and succeeded in evicting them from their fortress, Fort Jesus. My family then ruled Mombasa as a city-state from the Portuguese fort for about a hundred years. Fort Jesus is now a museum. Portuguese influence on the Swahili language survives in such Swahili words as pesa (money), meza (table), sapatu (slippers), and shimizi (a woman's undergarment). Latin culture has also come through the French language in Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi.

The fifth culture which helped to forge Swahili civilization was the Germanic stream of the Western heritage -- encompassing German rule in Tanganyika until the end of World War I and British rule in the region until the 1960s. I grew up when Mombasa and the rest of Kenya were under British rule. My anglicization began at school. I completed the Cambridge School certificate in Mombasa with passes in five subjects -- a mediocre performance. I finished high school in England and took five advanced level subjects in the General Certificate of Education -- well above average in effort. Two subjects would have been enough to get me admission to a university. I was subsequently educated in five different universities -- sometimes just taking courses, at other times taking degrees: University of Manchester (England), Columbia University (New York), University of Mexico (Mexico City), University of California (Berkeley), University of Oxford (England). **A pentagon of educational fate.**

Five countries I have lived in have profoundly affected my life and thought: Kenya (where I was born), Uganda (where I first became professor), Nigeria (where I have learnt much about

Africa), Great Britain (where I got my first and final degrees), the United States (where I have learnt, taught and raised my children). **A pentagon of national affiliation and nurturing.**

In 1988-89 three universities in the State of New York independently considered me as a possible nominee for the Albert Schweitzer Chair -- at a time when I was affiliated to two other universities (Michigan and Cornell). The number five was fractured in this case.

I have taught as a visiting professor in many places. But so far I have held non-visiting professorships only in five institutions: Makerere University in Uganda, The University of Jos in Nigeria, The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Cornell University at Ithaca, and now my fifth university, the State University of New York at Binghamton. **A pentagon of academic destiny**.

As a Schweitzer unit we aspire to study or teach cultural forces in at least five major areas: (1) Race in North-South relations, (2) Religion in North-South Relations, (3) Language in North-South Relations, (4) Gender in North-South Relations, (5) The Culture of Production in North-South Relations. **A pentagon of intellectual agenda.** Although this appears to be an agenda resting on five pillars, in reality each is a compound of many forces.

I am superstitious about my links with Albert Schweitzer too. The year Schweitzer died in Central Africa is the year I became a full professor in East Africa. Was this a semblance of reincarnation? The year Schweitzer died was also the year I first visited the United States as a professor. Was this a semblance of prophecy? The year Schweitzer died was exactly ten years after I left Africa for the first time to study abroad. Was there destiny in that? The year Schweitzer died had the figure five in it -- so did the year I left Africa for the first time. Schweitzer died in Africa in 1965. I left Africa for the first time in 1955. Was there fate in this?

Schweitzer's moral philosophy was based on the concept of reverence for life. Not long after Schweitzer's death I wrote a novel entitled The Trial of Christopher Okigbo (published in 1971). The action was set in the Hereafter. The novel was predicated on the concept of reverence for the dead. At the end of the novel, an accused in a court of law in Heaven is sentenced to exile. A woman who loves him offers to accompany him into exile.

Where was the exile? It was back on earth! But where on this earth did Hamisi and Salisha spend their sentence? In a baobab tree in Africa. But where in Africa? My novel places the exile in Gabon -- where Schweitzer too spent his years in medical

exile. His philosophy of reverence for life and my principle of reverence for the dead converged on the baobab tree in Gabon. And so it is that in a desolate part of Gabon, near a baobab tree, children sometimes hear voices reciting poetry to each other. It sounds like a man and woman, descended from heaven in punishment.

> "Then we must sing Tongue-tied, without name or audience, Making harmony among the branches."

I did visit five cities in Africa in 1989. My first African city of the year was Tripoli in Libya where I attended an international conference on "Ethnicity, Stability and Socio-Economic Development in Africa" sponsored by ACARTSOD, a subsidiary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Our main host was Dr. Duri Mohammed, whom I first met in 1983 when he was President of the University of Addis Ababa. Our other host was Professor Adebayo Adedeji who heads the ECA. Unfortunately Colonel Muammar Qaddafy was unable to open our conference, partly because of the competing pressures of the celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of the Libyan revolution (Qaddafy overthrew King Idris in 1969).

My second African city in 1989 was Kampala where I addressed a Joint Seminar of Ministers and Permanent Secretaries. Apart from the fact that President Museveni was touring the North of the country, accompanied by at least five ministers, almost every other ministerial figure in Uganda, and almost every top civil servant, attended this remarkable seminar. The agenda was to discuss how to make the government more effective in its efforts to deal with the enormous problems of the country. I was one of five speakers brought from abroad to address what was otherwise an entirely Ugandan conference. The speakers from outside included Ghana's de facto Prime Minister, the Rt. Honorable Comrade Obeng.

The Press Club in Kampala also invited me to address it and then answer questions from the nation's journalists. The English language newspapers publicized my remark that although Yoweri Museveni was probably the best speaker of Kiswahili of all the presidents Uganda had had, Museveni was less committed to the promotion of Kiswahili in Uganda than Idi Amin had been.

The Luganda Press in Kampala preferred to publicize my remark that the fall of the Kabaka in 1966 was not a revolution because the "Bastille" was torn down by ethnic "foreigners" rather than by the Baganda themselves. The King's palace was attacked by Northerners under the leadership of the Kakwa, Idi Amin, rather than by the Kabaka's subjects themselves.

My third and fourth African cities in 1989 were Nairobi and Mombasa. I had not been home to Kenya since my beloved sister,

Aisha, died in 1988. And in March of 1989 my best friend, Shariff Abdalla Abubakar Baalawy (Kim) had also died. To some extent I dreaded my visit to Mombasa after those deaths -- fearing that it would be a traumatic emotional experience. When another close friend of mine in Mombasa had died twenty years earlier in a road accident, I was emotionally so torn apart that I hovered over the brink of a nervous breakdown. I had actually needed psychiatric therapy from a doctor at Mulago Hospital in Kampala.

But fortunately by 1989 I was a much older man. I had also been disciplined by other tragedies in the intervening years -- from the death of my mother in 1972 to the anguish of my children going blind in 1979. These previous cruelties of life were, in a sense, a preparation for the agony of Aisha's and Kim's departure in 1988 and 1989. Every tragedy is a painful discipline which helps to prepare us for future anguish. Sister Aisha and Brother Kim, please rest in peace wherever you are.

My fifth African city in 1989 was Khartoum. I had a political mission as well as an academic one. The political mission was to address a national conference on problems of peace, consisting of Sudanese drawn from all regions and all walks of life, and held in the Great Hall of Friendship in the capital. The conference (officially known as "the National Dialogue") subsequently submitted a Report to the Head of State, General Omer el Bashir, with a specific agenda for national reconciliation. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter was involved the following month in a pre-mediation effort to bring General El-Bashir into direct negotiations with John Gorung of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in a neighbouring country. Prospects were not good.

I was delighted that President El-Bashir gave me an extended audience in October. Actually I had two separate sessions with him, covering a wide range of subjects about Sudan. I also added my voice to the appeals both for peace and for the release or fair trial of political prisoners, including the former Prime Minister Sadiq el Mahdi. The President gave me a patient and gracious hearing. Some detainees were later released, but other forms of repression persisted.

But all was not politics on my 1989 visit to Khartoum. I also participated in an international symposium on "Cultural Dimensions of Relations Between Africa and the Arab World". The conference was sponsored by the Association of African Universities, the Association of Arab Universities and the University of Khartoum. The symposium had a more substantial response from the Arab world than from Black Africa. There were a number of reasons for this imbalance. But was one of those reasons the sheer austerity and enforced sobriety of the city of Khartoum? Non-Muslim members of the jet-set prefer venues of

conferences with lavish restaurants, carefree nightclubs and availability of alcohol in the evenings. Has Sudan's capital become too austere for non-Muslims since President Numeiry initiated the neo-Islamic September laws? I am just speculating. Let us check the hypothesis against the level of attendance at the next session of the International Congress of African Studies, scheduled to take place in Khartoum in December 1990. I hope that I am wrong in my fear that Khartoum has become too austere for the international academic jetset, including non-Muslim Black Africans.

The Angola Peace Fund, based in Washington, D.C. invited me to a one-day symposium on "Reconciliation in Angola: Perspectives on Africa's Future". Guess how may people were scheduled to speak? Yes, five in all. Andre Franco de Sousa, one of the founders of MPLA (now the ruling party of Angola), made a moving case for genuine reconciliation. Ambassador Herman Cohen, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for African affairs, tried to explain the Bush Administration's approach to the problems of Southern Africa. Kwadwo O. Akpan spoke as the Executive Director of the Angola Peace Fund, a private organization, led by African-Americans. The Fund is committed to the search for reconciliation in Angola. Jonas Savimbi (leader of UNITA) was expected to turn up at the symposium, and was in the programme as one of the five speakers. Strict security precautions were taken towards the time of his scheduled arrival. At the very last minute he sent his apologies. He was indeed in Washington, D.C. - but the pressure of official business kept him from our symposium. The participants and journalists at the symposium were of course most disappointed.

My own speech to the symposium included a sub-section on "Heroic Villains in Recent African History". I compared the late Moise Tshombe of Zaire with Jonas Savimbi of Angola. Perhaps it was just as well that Dr. Savimbi was not present to listen to what I had to say! There might have been an explosion! On the other hand I did try to be fair and even-handed in my analysis.

I was involved in a variety of World Bank activities in the course of 1989 - definitely more than five activities. But these can be classified into five different categories. My most important role in the World Bank remained that of membership of the Bank's Council of African Advisors. As usual the Council met twice in the year in intense interaction with the Bank's senior officials in charge of its activities in the African region. Vice-President Jaycox of the Bank brilliantly chaired the sessions throughout.

Another role I played for the Bank involved participation as an external speaker in the special retreats that the Bank organized for its staff. Director Ismail Serageldin involved me in his department's retreat-conference on the theme of "Cultural

Identity, Social Change and Modernization". This was a particularly lively conference. Somewhat smaller in scope was the retreat for the Bank's West Africa division, led by Director Caio Koch-Wester. Again my task was to alert Bank staff to the cultural and political implications of such Bank policies as structural adjustment.

My third Bank role was an open lecture at the Bank's headquarters, unconnected with any conference or retreat. The Bank advertised a lecture by Mazrui on the theme "Is Africa Decaying?". My chapter on the same theme which had been published in the book Uganda Now (edited by Twaddle and Hansen) was made available by the Bank at the lecture. The attendance at the lecture was excellent (standing room only). I also greatly appreciated the hospitality of Senior Bank officer Agarwala, assisted by Ndugu Kariya.

My fourth category of World Bank activity was membership of the Bank's External Review Panel on the Social Dimensions of Structural Adjustment. This project too was led by Ismail Serageldin. Unfortunately I had to miss the meeting of the project which was held in Yaounde, Cameroon in December. The Yaounde meeting promised to be particularly significant and lively. The Bank allowed me to be represented by Dr. Omari Kokole, my colleague in the Schweitzer team at SUNY - Binghamton.

My fifth category of World Bank activity moved from the oral tradition to the written. I was encouraged to put some of my thoughts down in writing for the Bank. Dr. Dunstan Wai, Special Assistant to Vice-President Jaycox, has been crucial in encouraging me to write papers for the Bank. It is part of my philosophy of counterpenetration - Africa's effort to exert counter-leverage on the citadels of power in the global system. Fortunately the Work Bank has become increasingly attentive.

Yes, I was indeed invited to all the five inhabited continents in 1989. One of those I missed was South America. Cheddi Jagan's party in Guyana was organizing an international symposium on "Race and Class in Society". I was strongly tempted to go -- but the dates seemed too close to my return from Jordan. In the end I did not go to Jordan either. Jordan has had the jinx -- at least from my point of view. The invitation from the University of Jordan came more than a year ago as a direct result of the showing of my TV series, The Africans, in Jordan in Arabic. The Jordanians sent me a ticket in 1988 with the invitation to turn up in Amman in person. Unfortunately the dates clashed with the invitation from the Central Bank of Uganda for me to give the first Joseph Mubiru Memorial Lecture in Kampala on "Banking and Money" in October 1989. I turned down the Jordanians in order to go to Kampala, for both personal and political reasons.

This year Amman seems to have had its revenge. They got confused about my new dates -- and did not send the ticket in time. And so I missed the pleasure of not only visiting Jordan itself -- but of touching base in 1989 with yet another inhabited continent! (Of course I had been to Asia, as well as South America, a number of times in previous years.)

I attended five different conferences in Europe in 1989. My first European conference was the World Congress of the International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy held in Edinburgh in August. My own presentation was on "Post-Colonial Society and Africa's Triple Heritage of Law: Indigenous, Islamic and Western Tendencies." I believe this was the first conference I have ever attended at which the actual published proceedings of the conference were already available in the form of a printed book at the conference itself. Another pleasant aspect of the conference was that it was scheduled to coincide with the Edinburgh Festival of Arts and Culture. Edinburgh during the festival was certainly far less austere than Khartoum has been since the adoption of the September laws.

My second European conference of 1989 was a special international UNESCO symposium to mark the centenary of the birth of Jawaharlal Nehru. The meeting was held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. A sensational participant at the symposium was the former Director-General of UNESCO Moukhtar M'Bow. It was his first return to his former kingdom, I was told. For alphabetical reasons, Mr. M'Bow and Mr. Mazrui sat next to each other! It was easier for us to chat and catch up with each other's news during coffee intervals! Mr. M'Bow (a Senegalese) is currently based in Morocco as a guest of both the Moroccan Academy and King Hassan.

Another prominent participant at the Nehru symposium was the former Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Whitlam. In a private conversation I was amazed by how much he knew about the UNESCO General History of Africa. He knew precisely which volumes had already appeared and which particular volume was next. It was nice to see Mr. Whitlam again. He had once chaired a presentation I made in Australia on the subject of "Australia and the Third World." It seemed like ages ago.

My third European conference in 1989 was in Denmark -- and the subject was "Uganda: Structural Adjustment and Revolutionary Change" sponsored by the University of Copenhagen and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London. In reality the symposium was organized by Holger Hansen (Denmark) and Michael Twaddle (Britain), both of whom were once our colleagues at Makerere University in Uganda. The conference was able to bring in about ten scholars directly from Uganda plus one Minister. It was superb being able to catch up with so many old friends from my Makerere past -- Ugandans and friends of Uganda, former colleagues and former students. A previous meeting on

Uganda held in Denmark had resulted in an important book entitled Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development. The 1989 conference may also result in a book, hopefully published once again by my old friend, James Currey, in London.

My fourth European conference in 1989 was held in London, and was commissioned mainly by the British Commission for Racial Equality. The theme was freedom of expression in relation to Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses. Even for me, who fully understood the reasons behind the outrage felt by Muslims, the depth of feeling shown at the conference against Rushdie was awesome. Especially strong were the emotions of British Muslims of South Asian origin. They reminded me of the powerful analogy I had heard in Pakistan when I visited Lahore and Islamabad in November 1988. "It is as if Rushdie had composed a brilliant poem about the private parts of his parents, and then recited the poem in the market place to the cheers and laughter of strangers! These strangers then paid him money for all the jokes about his parents' genitalia". It was a concept of treason in a special sense.

My fifth European meeting of 1989 was a combination of a committee meeting and an international workshop. This was sponsored by the International African Institute, of which I am a Vice-Chairman. In this December event of 1989 the 62nd Meeting of the International African Institute was joined by African Studies Centres in the United Kingdom and a number of British publishers with strong African links. The agenda ranged from the book famine to Africanist museums. In many ways this meeting was the most Pan-African in scope of all the five meetings I attended in Europe in 1989, although only a few Africans were there.

As for the Pan-Islamic part of my heritage, that also was a five-apart equation -- apart from my participation at the London meeting under the Commission for Racial Equality. It started with what turned out to be my "momentous" lecture at Cornell University on Salman Rushdie's novel, The Satanic Verses. The lecture was tape-recorded, before long was distributed on tape world-wide from Sweden to South Africa.

I was invited to repeat the lecture soon after at Columbia University in New York. At Columbia I delivered the lecture outside in the open air. One white member of the audience kept on chanting "Freedom of Speech" in the course of my address. Three black brothers in the audience decided to drag the white man outside the assembly. I got alarmed and asked the brothers to leave the saboteur alone. Fortunately the Columbia University police in the background took my cue and rescued the white heckler. The man continued to be a nuisance -- but he became a little more cautious in the level of shouting he used in a bid to disrupt my lecture! He made his dissident point softly without disrupting the entire proceedings.

My third presentation of my Rushdie lecture was at my own basic base at the time, the University of Michigan. In Ann Arbor my Rushdie lecture was sponsored by the Pakistani students. Again there was an ugly moment at question time, but all was well in the end.

Perhaps my most unexpected Islamic opposition came at another meeting in New York city. It was at a conference on "Islam and Majority-Minority Relations" sponsored by the City College of New York, the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs in London and by the Association for the Study of Nationalities (USSR and Eastern Europe).

My own speech was at the final banquet. I was supposed to be the main speaker, and my subject was "Islam in World Affairs." But because of the presence at the banquet of a Saudi prince, royalty was given the last word for reasons of protocol. To almost everyone's surprise, the Saudi prince used the opportunity to criticize the presentation I had just made. Since my presentation was in the tradition of progressive Islam, the Prince's objections came from the right. At the end of the evening many in the audience came to support me. Even the Prince came to assure me that his remarks had been misunderstood.

As for my fifth Pan-Islamic presentation, this took the form of a purely literary presence without oratorical support. In November 1989 Abuja in Nigeria hosted an international conference on "Islam in Africa". Alas, I could not attend myself, but my colleague, Omari Kokole, presented my paper on my behalf entitled "African Islam and Competitive Religion: Between Revivalism and Expansion.". Dr. Kokole also tabled his own paper at the conference.

With regard to the UNESCO General History of Africa of which I am editor of Volume VIII, one central issue in 1989 was whether more than five chapters in the volume or less would be written by volume editor Mazrui! The volume was scheduled to contain exactly thirty chapters . Four of the chapters were already by volume editor Ali Mazrui. In 1989 he had drafted two more chapters, mainly because of lapses by other designated authors. One question which faced the Editorial Bureau in 1989 was whether they would allow five chapters by the volume editor, let alone six! The year was coming to an end without a resolution of this Pentagon dilemma. The additional chapters still in limbo were on the history of philosophy and science in Africa and the history of ideologies since independence.

The Mazrui nuclear family which arrived in the U.S.A. in the 1970s on the run from Idi Amin consisted of five members -- the two parents and three children. The mother was a woman who celebrated her birthday on the fifteenth day of the fifth month

of each Gregorian Christian year. In 1989 Molly celebrated her fiftieth year of life. Our eldest son, Jamal, was twenty-five years old through most of 1989, having first reached that age the previous December. Kim, the youngest member in age of the original Mazrui family in Michigan became the fifth to reach adulthood in 1989 -- Big twenty-one! His university grades were particularly good this year.

In 1989 I had three sons and two "daughters" -- five dependants in all! Al'Amin and Kim, my two younger sons, were completing their undergraduate work at the University of Michigan. Both boys were partly earning their way through school. Jamal, my oldest son, had completed his first degree from Princeton and his Masters in Public Policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. He got a new job in time for his birthday in 1989. My most active adopted "daughter" was pre-eminently Maureen (Maurier) Kiberu. I supported her education at Marygrove College in Michigan, and she in turn helped to look after me even when I moved from Michigan to Binghamton, New York. Maureen has visited me in Binghamton two or three times every month -- and then gone back to school in Michigan. I am expecting the three Mazrui boys to visit Binghamton soon.

As the year was coming to an end, my fifth dependant seemed likely to be Christine Kiberu, yet another "daughter" from the Kiberu family (Brenda was the first). Christine was scheduled to spend up to a maximum of three months visiting her sisters, Brenda and Maureen. However, everything is tentative at the time of writing. I hope Christine will also spend time at Binghamton. Does she have a driver's licence? If so, she is hired!!

Within the United States of America, I have received invitations from at least five sub-regions (east, west, north, south and mid-west). The University of Virginia in the south involved me in their series of lectures on the American Constitution. My own lecture concerned the influence of the American constitution on political engineering in Africa.

On the eastern seaboard the lecture which aroused the most-local interest was perhaps my convocation address at SUNY-Binghamton. It was a kind of Inaugural lecture after my appointment as Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities. I gave it as a keynote address at the annual convocation of the university. My topic was "Who was Albert Schweitzer? An African perspective". I divided racism into three categories -- malignant, benign and benevolent. I examined the career of Albert Schweitzer as a case of "benevolent racism."

In the mid-west of the country one address I gave was in Chicago, sponsored by the Center for Arts in Education and the Illinois Humanities Council. My topic was "Image and Information in North-South Relations". I argued that the most dangerous

image since 1945 had been based on the fallacy that the ideological divide between East and West was more important than the technological divide between North and South. The Gorbachev revolution and the changes in Eastern Europe had demonstrated how shallow the ideological divide was.

The nearest to the west I got in the United States in 1989 was Montana. I had a good audience on a snowy night. I was proud that I had once been addressed as "Professor Montana." It happened in Chicago in 1986 when I was expected at a Museum. The receptionist had been told to expect a visitor called "Professor Mazuri" (sic)! The receptionist translated it into the name of the state of Missouri. By the time I arrived at the museum, the receptionist could only remember that my name was the same as the name of a distant state which began with the letter M. And so the receptionist smiled and extended her hand, saying "Welcome, Professor Montana"! I wonder if she knew that the capital of Montana was also Missoula -- which is where I lectured in 1989!

Although Ann Arbor could be counted as northern United States (we could go for lunch in Canada from Ann Arbor and come back the same afternoon by car), perhaps I should choose for my northern sub-region Buffalo in New York state. My theme at the Buffalo Museum of Science was "The Arts and Africa's Triple Heritage: Indigenous, Islamic and Western Influences." My lecture was part of the background to an exhibition they had at the Museum of African art and artifacts -- including a special Kenyan selection. The event made me feel more guilty than ever that my TV series The Africans had not paid more attention to African art. I apologise to our ancestors for that omission.

Let me return to my new appointment as Albert Schweitzer Professor at SUNY-Binghamton. These special professorships were created by New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller and the New York State Legislature in the mid-1960s in order to attract distinguished talent to the state of New York. Some of you may remember the appointment of Conor Cruise O'Brien (To Katanga and Back) and Lady Barbara Ward Jackson to two of these professorships more than twenty years ago. Diaspora friends may also be aware that the chair I now occupy was Toni Morrison's, the African-American writer, until she moved to Princeton in 1988.

When Governor Mario Cuomo of New York telephoned my home in Ann Arbor in 1989 to persuade me to accept the Chair, Maureen picked up the phone. When the Governor introduced himself, Maureen laughed and said "Hello Kim!" She was sure the whole thing was a joke by my youngest son. When the telephone receiver was at last passed on to me, the Governor asked: "Who is this Kim who is mistaken for a Governor?" I replied, "Kim is my youngest born who is capable of introducing himself on the phone as the Maharajah of Jaipur." The Governor laughed -- and

confessed that he had a similar offspring. Then Cuomo proceeded to persuade me that the State of New York was the cultural, theatrical and intellectual vanguard of the nation. New York retained that leadership only by continuing to recognize and import talent from outside its own frontiers. If this man Cuomo one day becomes President of the United States, I for one will not be surprised! He is an eloquent persuader on the telephone, for one thing!

I was deeply flattered when the University of Michigan put such a spirited fight to keep me in Ann Arbor. In the final analysis Michigan was prepared to give me a two-year leave of absence in which to decide whether or not to return to Michigan. On the other hand, the President of SUNY-Binghamton was convinced that during those two years SUNY would convince me to stay put in Binghamton! Both universities have been most tolerant and most gracious. Let us keep our fingers crossed!

But what are these Albert Schweitzer Professorships? They are <u>state</u> professorships rather than positions in any particular university. When a Schweitzer professorship falls vacant by resignation, retirement or death, all the relevant 36 universities (both private and public) of the State of New York compete for the Schweitzer vacancy. This time SUNY-Binghamton won in the competition as the location for the Chair. And I was SUNY's nominee proposed. The Lord be praised!

But how many Schweitzer Chairs are there in the State of New York? You will not believe it. Governor Rockefeller and the New York legislature chose a number in the 1960s pregnant with destiny! That figure has distributed the Schweitzer Chairs among such private institutions as Columbia University and Cornell, and such public institutions as SUNY-Albany and SUNY-Binghamton. Yes -- the number of Schweitzer Chairs in the New York State system is <u>FIVE</u> -- no more, no less. The writing is on the wall!

While the Schweitzer professorships are for the humanities, the State of New York also created separate chairs for the natural sciences. These are called Albert Einstein professorships. How many are they? You have guessed it! <u>Five</u>!

But I must now bring to an end this pentagon saga. One thing is certain. My career in 1989 needed many more pillars than five. The Center for Afroamerican and African Studies and the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan were of course crucial. By the autumn support came increasingly from SUNY-Binghamton -- including direct presidential backing. I was deeply moved.

The two universities between them provided me with five graduate assistants in all in the course of 1989, for either

teaching or research. The young colleagues made an important contribution for this concluding year of the 1980s.

Administratively and secretarially I could not have coped without the unstinting dedication of Mary Breijak and Judy Baughn in Ann Arbor. They often went beyond the call of duty -- giving of themselves as friends. They continued to help me even after I left Michigan.

My administrative pillars in Binghamton were Ben Surovy and Nancy Levis. Ben was brought back from retirement by SUNY to help me set up shop. His familiarity with my new university was an invaluable asset. Nancy came to us from the UNICEF headquarters in New York city. Her long experience in an international organization was a different kind of asset for someone in my team -- especially since I also happen to be a member of the Pan-African Advisory Council of UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund).

My main intellectual pillars at SUNY so far have been Omari H. Kokole and Abisi Sharakiya, academic members of my Schweitzer team. Abisi is an African-American philosopher who was once a graduate student at Michigan, and then went to Oxford University for his D.Phil.

Darryl Thomas and his wife, Laverne, have been exceptionally helpful all along -- even before I actually arrived at SUNY. In fact Darryl (a professor of political science at SUNY) had a lot to do with my original nomination as a candidate for the Schweitzer Chair. He helped to compile the dossier, a crucial stage in the entire process. Since I arrived in Binghamton Darryl and Laverne have had me at their home a number of times (Laverne is a superb and enthusiastic cook -- in addition to being a computer wiz at Cornell.)

Immanuel Wallerstein and his Fernand Braudel Center here moved faster than almost anybody else at SUNY to give me an intellectual platform from which to introduce myself to the campus community. My first academic presentation at SUNY as Schweitzer Professor was in fact at a special colloquium at the Braudel Center. My Convocation Address came about a week later.

When Mary Breijak was on leave in Michigan, Rose Chinnock was my secretary. And in the fall after I had left Michigan Marcy Toon came to the rescue as my Michigan secretary in a transitional semester. Both Rose and Marcy picked up the essentials of the Mazruiana industry pretty fast! Shalane Sheley of CAAS was always there to help in times of crisis!

You must have noticed that my year at Michigan was administratively aided by <u>five</u> women (Mary, Judy, Shalane, Rose and Marcy). You will also have noticed my Schweitzer team at

SUNY in our first semester has so far been a team of <u>five</u> (Omari, Abisi, Ben, Nancy and Ali)! I rest my case!

I wish you a prosperous 1990 (a number, incidentally, which is divisible by 5!). Fare thee well, dear reader!

A pentagon of fate! This tape will <u>not</u> self-destruct in five seconds!