

Africana Annual: Editorial Introduction

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In the archives of the Department of African & African-American Studies (AAAS) at the University of Kansas (KU) is a 1973 letter from the International Secretariat of the 2nd World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (known also as “FESTAC” or “FESTAC ‘77”) formally inviting the University of Kansas “which is already renowned for the importance it attaches to African studies and research [...] and for the quality of [...] publications” to attend FESTAC and contribute to the “success of the colloquium” on “Black Civilization and Education.” As a world festival, FESTAC was a periodic homecoming of peoples of African ancestry in its widest sense in order to celebrate their various artistic, cultural, intellectual, and myriad contributions to the world and world civilization. *Africana Annual* (a Journal of African and African Diasporic Studies) aspires to accomplish on a smaller scale what FESTAC and its predecessor have done periodically on a larger scale. It is an international, peer-reviewed academic journal established by AAAS at KU (an intensive research university and a member of the select group of distinguished universities admitted to the AAU) to publish once a year, some of the intellectual, educational, cultural, artistic, literary, and humanistic accomplishments and contributions of, and about, Africa and the African Diaspora, and as part of the global and international community. The journal thus invites articles from all parts of the world.

The journal is intentionally interdisciplinary in nature to accommodate many fields and branches of research and knowledge as long as their diverse contributions find a thematic and epistemological relationship to Africa and its far-flung Diaspora. While this encompasses the more traditional and established studies in history, literature, music, politics, geography, philosophy, education, economics, business, fine and performing arts, anthropology, communication, linguistics, sociology, culture, and religion, the journal also invites articles from other academic fields such as gender and sexuality studies, global and inter-

national studies, comparative studies, environmental studies, film and media studies, digital and emerging social platforms, international and national laws, and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Reports from the world of science and medicine that relate to Africa and the African Diaspora are also considered.

While the *Africana Annual* is open to studies of a single area or phenomenon in the Africana world, it also aspires to reflect the intellectual and broadly-defined “political” connections between Africa and the African Diaspora, offering critical space for scholarly explorations of their shared historical and contemporary realities, and of future possibilities. Authors are thus invited to submit works that examine key issues that deepen interdisciplinary and global conversations on topics about Africa (north and south of the Sahara), African America, the Americas (North, South, and Central), the Caribbean, Asia, and Europe. The journal also visualizes an interconnected world with Africa as its center of inquiry, and welcomes profound articles that elucidate that vision.

In this issue of *Africana Annual*

1. In “‘So rude and so crude’: Charlotte’s history with urban renewal and the annihilation of the African American community and culture of Brooklyn, 1960-1970,” Maverick Huneycutt gives a fascinating vivid account of the lively and unifying culture that existed in the Brooklyn community of Charlotte, North Carolina, and the targeted destruction of that culture by city leaders under the guise of urban renewal. He asserts that the destruction of Brooklyn’s physical community contributed to the forced displacement of people and the disappearance of their culture. His article links the past with the present by explaining that it is the historical experience that “has shaped the current residential landscape of Charlotte.” The article is a valuable contribution to the growing body of literature on gentrification.

2. An important tenet of postmodernism is the allure of epistemological and cultural relativism, among other things. Elias Adanu’s article, “Learning to be Black in America: Heuristics of racial enculturation and fraternal nervousness between African immigrants and African Americans,” is a postmodernist examination of how immigrants from continental Africa experience race and blackness differently from African Americans. This, the article contends, complicates relations between the two groups. The author contrasts Chimamanda Adichie’s *Americanah* with Ta-Nehisi Coates’ *Between the World and Me* to support his reading of blackness. The “variance in the historical experiences of colonialism, slavery, and apartheid among different groups of Black people globally,” Adanu argues, “has material implications for how we represent and theorize race and racism.”

3. African women who accomplished so much and exhibited unimaginable courage and dexterity in political, commercial, and military leadership of their countries have been left out in most historical accounts or, at best, given a marginal reference. The incomparable Sayyida al-Hurra of Morocco is one such leader. In “Sayyida al-Hurra: A forgotten North African Queen and military leader,” Amal El-Hameur goes into the depths of the sixteenth century to resurrect a North African queen and military strategist, Sayyida al-Hurra, to take her deserved place and recognition in African, Moroccan, Arab, and European historical accounts. A multilingual expert even at her time, al-Hurra’s enviable skill and success in naval warfare struck terror among Spanish and Portuguese naval forces in Western Mediterranean and the Iberian Peninsula to earn her the nicknames, “pirate queen” and “princess of jihad.” El-Hameur also argues that al-Hurra was an astute politician who used political marriages to forge alliances, respect, and favorable intrigues.

4. In Hassan Mbiydzenyuy Yosimbom’s “Doublespeaking American immigration: The language and politics of asylum-seeking in Imbolo Mbue’s *Behold the Dreamers*,” attention is drawn to one of the compelling and frustrating issues of our time, migration, in its two components of emigration and immigration. Using the analysis of *Behold the Dreamers* as a point of departure, the article examines the presence of manifold ordeals and perils to immigrants in their Western-bound “promised land” where immigration laws bring disillusionment and leave the desires of immigrants unfulfilled. The article’s conclusion is harrowing and haunting—that immigration to the West “both kindles and kills hope, and (re)builds and destroys lives,” depending on the particular Western government and political leader in power.

5. Seun Abimbola reviews Abimbola Adunni Adelakun’s book, *Powerful devices: Prayers and the political praxis of spiritual warfare*, published by Rutgers University Press, 2022. Abimbola sums up his review by pointing out that the author “pushes the boundaries of the conventional discourse on Pentecostal [Evangelical?] power, uncovering a diverse range of critical narratives and experiences within the realm of spiritual warfare.” The review opens a window to view “the relationship between religion and power structures,” even if what is revealed is an uncomfortable truth.

The various topics covered in this issue are meant to signal the beginnings of something new, solid, and exciting in Africana scholarship. We are committed to curating an interdisciplinary experience that can be truly relied upon for the most critical and innovative ideas in our time. We hope you can rely on the *Africana Annual* to be a generative space for global conversations on Africa and its diaspora.