

Introduction: In the Spirit of FESTAC 77 and E Pluribus Unum

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In a world where big money and material gains seem to matter more than intellectual ideals and principles, the minting of the US penny (1-cent coin) and its circulation will cease to be in 2026. Although it is economically prudent to discontinue the production and circulation of the coin, the lowly penny has historically borne far greater value than its monetary worth. On the reverse side of the current iteration of the Lincoln cent, the Union Shield bears the nation's unofficial motto, "E Pluribus Unum." The solemnity, dignity, and import of that phrase, translated as "Out of many, one" or freely as "Unity in diversity," may have been lost on most Americans who use the penny daily or rarely, or save it in some jar or, as some Generation Z, also known simply as Gen. Z (what a generation!) tend to do, just discard it on sidewalks or parking lots or just roll their eyes, and at other times stare vacant (the so-called "Gen. Z stare") as they ignore the salesclerk at the supermarket, the coffee shop, or the canteen trying to give it to them as change. There are some versions of the five-cent coin and the one-dollar coin that both carry the Latin inscription, but the shield is gone. All the coins do carry the word, "Liberty." In the unmitigated effort to strip Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) of value and meaning, the initial American ideal of "out of many, one," conceptualized by the Great Seal committee of 1776 as the traditional and original motto of the United States, and perceived, until recently, as one of the cornerstones of the making of the great nation that America is, becomes occluded, and, at best, opaque. With the penny on its way out, DEI gone, and the Department of Education dismantled, it is not out of place to be worried about a people's gradual recession and devolution into the dark days of ignorance.

Why this sudden love of the penny that is almost evocative of an ode to it? It is because the heavy motto carried by the little penny and the meaning of FESTAC have a conceptual similarity – that of making one "people" out of many "peoples." The diverse "peoples" of the Black Diaspora, coming "home" as it were from far-flung countries and continents, become united as a people and are recognized as such by FESTAC. The magic of FESTAC molds these "peoples of the world" into "one people." Thus, we begin our

introduction to this volume by referring readers to a part of the general introduction to the 2024 volume of the *Africana Annual* in which we elucidated the spirit of FESTAC 77 as a guiding principle:

As a world festival, FESTAC was a periodic homecoming of peoples of African ancestry in its widest sense [...] 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 to publish once a year some of the intellectual, educational, cultural, artistic, literary, and humanistic accomplishments 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 (see Volume 1, p.1, for details).

Amal El Haimeur has embraced that FESTAC spirit of intellectual rigor to conduct research that has uncovered a great leader whose accomplishments have been forgotten by African and Arab historians, and who has been perfunctorily dismissed with unflattering nicknames for women by European historians. The research yielded acclaimed results.

We knew that *Africana Annual* was destined to make an important scholarly impact, but we never expected it to come so soon. That impact came from El Haimeur's intellectually arresting article, "Sayyida al-Hurra: A Forgotten North African Queen and Military Leader," (*Africana Annual*, Vol. 1, 2024, pp. 44-60). An intriguing history about "a largely forgotten sixteenth-century" exceptional political and military leader in Morocco at a time of internal political fragmentation and frequent external threats and attacks from the powerful and intimidating Portuguese and Spanish naval forces from the Iberian Peninsula, al-Hurra succeeded in bringing stability to Morocco and warding off the external foes. So impactful has been this article that a publisher approached the author and sought the permission of *Africana Annual* to translate and publish an Arabic version of the article as a monograph in Morocco. It has been so published and distributed in Morocco and available to the Arabic-speaking regions of Africa. The potential of the publication reaching an ever-increasing readership in the whole of the African continent, the Middle East, and Europe via Morocco's northern neighbors of Spain, Portugal, and France exists. After all, al-Hurra fiercely and successfully rebuffed Iberian naval threats and encounters that earned her the pejoratives of "princess of jihad" and "pirate queen."

As in Sayyida al-Hurra, power dynamics in various manifestations play out in the articles of the present volume of *Africana Annual*. Whether it is the German Empire as it

operated in Africa, the collision of powers that led to the formation of Africana Studies, the harmonious working of spiritual/religious and material/secular powers in a religion, the harnessing of the inner powers of the visually impaired in the creation of the Blind Blues form of the genre of Blues music, the #hashtag generation of revolt against power abuse by governments, W.E.B. Du Bois' application of intellectual power to the so-called "Negro Problem," or the incessant demand over the years by the descendants of the enslaved for reparations from governments and institutions who inherited wealth and power in that process, the *Africana Annual* provides an intellectually stimulating forum for unique academic and scholarly views. Thus, **In This volume of *Africana Annual*:**

1. **Patrick Hunter Graves**, in "Racial Capitalism and Imperial Germany's African Territories," gives readers a rare insight into the socio-political and economic operations of the Deutsches Kaiserreich (German Empire) in Africa. While it existed, the "boundaries between White and Black, European or Native, in the Schutzgebiete [Protectorates] were constantly in flux to accommodate continued labor needs. Racial categorization and recategorization in the Kaiserreich [Empire] reveal that socio-economic status was fundamental to determining race [...]." A few Germanic words and phrases side-by-side the English translations give the paper some added value. The inclusion of a long line of thinkers of the "black radical tradition" such as W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, Eric Williams, Oliver C. Cox, and Cedric Robinson gives the article a truly diasporic touch that places Africa, Europe, and America in contiguity.

2. In a skillful manipulation of the oxymoron as a figurative language where spirituality is happily wedded to materialism, and with an opening vignette so dramatically rendered as to stamp it indelibly in the reader's mind, **Rahina Muazu**, in "Sacred Sound, Public Wealth: Female Qur'an Recitation and Capital in Nigeria," leads an exploration of "how public female Qur'an recitation in Nigeria functions as a powerful form of capital that extends beyond spiritual merit into economic, social, and symbolic realms." The article intersects gender, religion, and capital in an examination of Qur'anic competitions in which the female voice becomes both capital and empowerment. Muazu's concept of "vocal nudity" is comfortably couched in Pierre Bourdieu's theories of capital and combines with it to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of scholars of gender, religion, materialism, politics, and sociology in Africa and the Middle East. There are some Arabic, Islamic, and Hausa words and phrases to broaden one's knowledge.

3. In an article that all those engaged in Africana Studies in any capacity should read, **Elise Johnson** takes the reader through the crucible and baptism of fire from which Black Studies in America emerged. The author attempts to gaze through the crystal ball for the future of the Africana discipline during these troubling political times. "On

Strike, Shut it Down: The Past, Present, and Future of Africana Studies” is a vivid account of the “history of Black Studies, which began as a result of student protest movements – spurred on by the student strike at San Francisco State College in 1968 – and spread across the country to hundreds of colleges and universities.” Though that history is told through prime examples and experiences of the consortium of liberal arts colleges called the Claremont Colleges (5Cs) of Southern California, the author believes that revealing that history “through various archival documents helps to illustrate a path forward for the discipline, both at the Claremont Colleges and elsewhere.” This is a timely article that university authorities and state university governing boards should also read to help inform their actions, decisions, and attitudes towards Africana Studies. The editors of *Africana Annual* interject here that at the University of Kansas, a student, Rick “Tiger” Dowdell, was shot and killed on July 16th, 1970, in the struggle to establish what is now the Department of African & African-American Studies. “A Luta continua,” one might say.

4. “The Hidden Transcripts of the Blues: Subaltern Readings of Blues Music and Lyrics,” is **Jonathan Lower’s** critical analysis of the Blues musical genre, both from historical and meaning-making perspectives. The author delineates the many musical forms within the Blues genre, but it is the songs of Blind Blues musicians that is understandably the central attention as the author finds a common ground between the lyrics of Blind Blues and Disability Studies. In a touching way, Lower informs the reader that “There is no other American popular cultural form with as many blind entertainers than the Country Blues. Nor is there any other genre of music with as many songs about being down-and-out as the Blues. The Blues represents the constant highs and lows of life—the worried mind [...]. What many of them have in common, as Langston Hughes once wrote, is ‘the kind of humor that laughs to keep from crying.’” Lower’s analysis informs us that the “hidden transcript of the Blues takes place [not on the stage at performance] but offstage, outside the intimidating gaze of power and is a dissonant political culture.” While the public transcript or meaning of the Blues is, at the surface level, often a formalized and polite exchange between the “dominant and subordinate” where the latter accepts the social class and position allotted him in the hierarchical order of society, one encounters the hidden transcript hitherto veiled during performance, “on the way through the alley to the rear of the theater [where] black patrons often remarked on racist treatment with anger, sadness, or satire.”

5. “From #Hashtags to the Streets: The Rising Tide of African Protests and the Quest for Leadership Accountability,” discusses anti-government protests in Africa organized through social media, with examples drawn from Nigeria and Kenya. **Sampson Adese** argues that the advantage gained from the use of social media networks that “rapidly convert grievance into global visibility” has the negative impact of reducing protests to

“theatrical, instinctive reactions” that are not durable for institutional reform. He proposes an intellectual approach that re-orientes and re-educates “culturally entrenched modes of leadership” because “true transformation [...] requires a ‘Revolution of Thought’” He contends that when that intellectual approach is absent, “protest movements merely replicate the unfulfilled promises of earlier revolutions, becoming fleeting spectacles rather than catalysts for accountable states.”

6. Combining their intellectual power as distinguished historian and philosopher, **Dominic I. Capeci, Jr. and Jack C. Knight** render an interpretive understanding of the formative years of W.E.B. Du Bois as an intellectual and scholar. In their co-authored article, “The Awakening of W.E.B. Du Bois,” Capeci, Jr. and Knight acquaint readers with Du Bois’ development of thought that recognized the “primacy of African American ‘feeling’ and its importance in rejuvenating the American personality as well as the regeneration of Africa.” The study of sociology in Germany had imbued Du Bois with humanism that he brought to an analytical understanding and appreciation of Africana artistic, cultural, and spiritual values. Adopting an “inside-out” attitude towards scholarship, he approached the solution to the so-called ‘Negro Problem’ with a personal understanding as “one who lived the strain and stresses afflicting African Americans, sharing their hopes and failures in the search for recognition and respect, thereby introducing an alternative to the traditional definitions of thought and reality” that one found in academic philosophy and sociology. Thus, the authors open a window from which to view the gradual evolution of Du Bois’ acclaimed work, *The Souls of Black Folk*. They reveal Du Bois’ deep understanding of the strength of the diasporic connection with Africa that becomes obvious in *The Souls of Black Folk*, where Du Bois “pointed to the sorrow songs of African and African American origin as a means of spiritualizing western life. Regarding them as the ‘greatest gift of the Negro people,’ their integration of hope and struggle stood to rectify the strife increasingly apparent in western civilization.”

7. In “A Conversation about Reparations in America with Professor Amilcar Shabazz,” **D. Caleb Smith** shares with readers a privileged, exclusive interview of a man who has played, and continues to play, significant roles on the American and Africana stage. Shabazz is “a past president of the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) [and still serves as a Board Member of the organization] as well as a founding member of the New African People’s Organization, the National Coalition for Blacks for Reparations in America, and the African Heritage Reparation Assembly of Amherst, Massachusetts. His advocacy surrounding reparations has been covered by major media outlets such as the *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, and *NBC News*.” He tirelessly attends numerous meetings and frequently gives lectures related to reparations. But the interview is not only about reparations; questions related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Black Studies

are also fielded and answered. The interview was conducted at the New Africa House, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

8. Tafannum Karim reviews Christina Sharpe's *Ordinary Notes*. The book is about life – Black Life – in America, written in a series of 248 notes. Published in 2023 by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, the book has won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction, among others.

9. Can anything new be said about Nat Turner? In an intellectually stimulating book review of Anthony E. Kaye and Gregory P. Downs' *Nat Turner, Black Prophet: A Visionary History*, published in 2024 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, **Anthony Zacchino** plays the mind-reader with an answer to that probing question in the opening paragraph that makes reading the book irresistible – that the authors “have produced a compelling new history of Nat's rebellion.” Continues Zacchino, “Their work is much more than just another study of the uprising. Rather, Kaye and Downs have restored ‘three central aspects of Nat's story: his life as a Methodist, as a prophet, and as a man his followers called General.’” The book, then, “is as much a history of religion as it is a history of slavery or rebellion” that “takes Nat's faith and visions seriously.” It gives central recognition to the “personhood of enslaved people while also emphasizing the active role of enslavers.” Zacchino also shares with the reader some touching and personal moments and the circumstances that led to the co-authorship of the book. “Kaye was already immersed in the research [...] before learning about his sickness. As it became increasingly unlikely that Kaye would be able to finish the work, he recruited Downs to assist him in completing the project. Through long conversations, shared research and notes, and parts or sections of previously written chapters, Downs attempted to produce the history that Kaye planned on telling.” Thus, the book is also a validation of enduring and endearing friendships.