

ALA ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

Draft of Unratified Minutes of the ALA Annual Business Meeting, St. Catherine's Ontario, May 1, 1992

(Corrections and Additions are Requested)

Present were Cecil Abrahams, Rashidah Abu Bakr, Anne Adams, Kofi E. Agovi, Tuziyline Allan, Susan Andrade, Stephen Arnold, Chukwuna Azuonye, Ibrahim H. Badr, Sandra Barkan, Richard Bjornson, Henri Boyi, Dennis Brutus, Abena P. A. Busia, Odile Cazenave, Neville Chotoono, JoAnne Cornwall-Giles, Irene d'Almeida, Claire L. Dehon, Margolijn de Lager, Michael J.C. Echeruo, Phannuel Egejuru, Arlene Elder, Susan Gasser, Thomas A. Hale, Ken Harrow, J.B. Hossy, Mildred A. Hill-Lubin, Naana Banyiwa Horne, E. Anthony Hurley, Huma Ibrahim, Abiola Irele, Biodun Jeyifo, Lemuel A. Johnson, Yvonne Vera Jose, George Joseph, Eileen Julien, Modupe Kolawole, Gerald Moser, Christine Loflin, Maurice A. Lubin, Lee Nichols, L. Nwadiuto Odozor, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, Ferni Osofisan, Amelia Blossom Pogram, Cosmo Pieterse, Thelma Ravell-Pinto, Peole, Josna Rege, Michelle Rice-Maximin, Anne Scarborough, Mineke Schipper, Aliko Songolo, Janice Spiehl, Lindy Stiebel, Louis Tremaine, Hal Wylie.

I. CALL TO ORDER

President Abiola Irele called the meeting to order at 2:50 P.M. and established that there was a quorum.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Panel participants are to deliver 6 hard copies of their paper and, if possible, a copy on diskette to *Bulletin* Editor Steve Arnold whose address is in the *Bulletin*.

Abiola Irele will send flowers to Bernadette Gaillet on behalf of the ALA.

III. ELECTIONS

Elections have not been held for various reasons.

Since the *Bulletin* announcing the March 15 deadline came out after March 15, the deadline for nominations has been extended to June 1.

Those providing nominations should have already obtained the consent of the nominees to stand for election and to provide a biographical profile and candidate's statement by June 1. Five signatures of paid-up members are required to nominate a candidate.

Information is to be faxed to Aliko Songolo.

Ballots will go out on June 10. Election results will be published in the Summer bulletin (by September 1992).

A call for 1994 nominations will be sent out in the fall 1992. Nominations must be submitted by November. One reason for the late elections is that over the past couple of years there has been a dearth of candidates. Members of the ALA are encouraged to present themselves for office.

IV. 1992 CONFERENCE REPORT

Cecil Abrahams thanked the members of the ALA for coming and announced details for transportation back to the airport. He also thanked Brock University for bankrolling the food services. Exact figures for attendance and finances had not yet been calculated.

V. VENUES

A. 1993 — Guadeloupe. Michelle Rice-Maximin announced that the ALA has been officially welcomed to Guadeloupe for 1993.

Dates: 15-22 April (week after Easter) People come from the 16th to 17th. Work starts on Monday April 19.

Theme: Atlantic Crosscurrents (inspired by Niyi Osundare's poem)
Administration: In the absence of a single convenor the following will be responsible for the conference:

Program Chair and Paper Proposals:

Eileen Julien
140 Pearl St. #2
Cambridge, MA 02139
Tel.: 617-353-4975
Fax: 617-353-4975

Paper Proposals from Europe:

Mineke Schipper
Bowenkerkade 29A
1185 Cr Amstelveen
Holland

Registration:

ALA Headquarters

Those who wish to participate in panels must be paid-up members of the ALA. Details of lodging and transportation will be settled by May 1992 and information will be sent with elections material by June 10, 1992. It was suggested from the floor to check out complaints about Timbuktu.

B. 1994 Ghana.

A bid from Ghana has been accepted for mid to late March 1994.

The theme will be "Beyond Survival: African Literature and the Search for New Life."

Funding has been provided from UNESCO

The conference will be co-hosted by the Dubois Center and the University.

C. 1995

Dennis Brutus presented a bid to hold the 1995 conference in South Africa, political circumstances permitting.

Because the ALA will have held two consecutive meetings abroad it was requested that the South African bid be pushed forward to 1996.

Other bids were requested for 1995.

It was asked whether or not the ALA should postpone the Accra meeting, but since funding from UNESCO is already forthcoming and arrangements have been made in Ghana, this conference cannot be moved.

Mineke Schipper agreed to explore the possibility of holding an ALA meeting in Europe.

VI. SOUTH AFRICA POLICY COMMITTEE

The following amended resolution originating from the South Africa Committee moved by Dennis Brutus and seconded by Abena Busia was adopted unanimously except for one abstention.

RESOLVED

1. The ALA is a democratic, non-racist, non-sexist, non-discriminatory organization, and its existing policy of cultural and academic boycott of South Africa reflects these principles.
2. In light of developments and changes taking place, it has become necessary for the ALA to review this policy. In conforming with our principles, we want

to reaffirm our commitment to the democratic struggles against apartheid racism in South Africa and to acknowledge the gains which these struggles have made in the past two years. At the same time we urge that our members not become complacent; apartheid is still deeply entrenched in South Africa.

3. Considering all these facts, the boycott is now amended to reflect these new developments and it is now recommended that the ALA and its members establish contacts with writers, critics, scholars and institutions involved in the democratic changes taking place in South Africa and that at the same time the ALA and its members continue to distance themselves from these individuals and forces resistant to ending apartheid.

4. Consequent on this review, the standing South Africa Committee of the ALA now becomes a committee whose function will be to monitor the situation in South Africa by coordinating contacts with anti-apartheid writers, scholars and organizations in South Africa, receiving information from the country, and channeling the results of its inquiries to members of the ALA through the *Bulletin* and periodic fact sheets, so as to establish which institutions are racist and which are non-racist.

Following a discussion concerning the precise status of the South Africa Committee, the following resolution moved by Stephen Arnold and seconded by Ken Harrow was adopted unanimously:

RESOLVED That the South Africa Committee is an Ad Hoc Committee the members of which serve three-year terms.

VII. TREASURER'S REPORT

ALA portion of registration fees.

After the report it was asked why the ALA cannot enforce that a percentage of Conference registration fees be given to the ALA.

It was answered that although such enforcement was impossible this time, in the future registration fees will be sent directly to headquarters which will reserve a percentage for the ALA treasury.

RAL to Trinidad — Barbados — Jamaica.

It was determined that the omission of these universities was an oversight. Stephen Arnold agreed to put them on the list and forward the *Bulletin*, RAL and the annuals to them.

VIII. Women's CAUCUS

Thelma Rawell-Pinto reported that because of the relocation of the officers the Women's Caucus did not do all that it set out to do this year. It nevertheless held a very productive meeting and made the following recommendations:

1. The statutes of the Women's Caucus be published in the *Bulletin*
2. Abena Busia has been elected to serve as the Women's Caucus liaison officer for the Guadeloupe and Ghana conferences.
3. At all future conferences there should be
 - a. a meeting scheduled at a decent hour
 - b. speakers for a luncheon
 - c. an artistic event pertaining to women
 - d. panels sponsored by the Women's Caucus

4. Dues for the Women's Caucus are \$10 per year to be paid separately from ALA dues. Rashidah Abu Bakr, the treasurer, will receive checks for dues made out to the Women's Caucus.
5. Men are welcome.
6. Names and addresses of persons who attended the meeting are available for those who attended.

IX. RESEARCH & TEACHING COMMITTEE

Eileen Julien reported that the committee is open to any ideas on how to promote the teaching and research of African literature and that the committee had decided to recommend the following as some of the ways to promote the research and teaching of African literature:

The ALA should include annually a panel about teaching, a panel about a writer, artist or film maker seen from different disciplinary perspectives (religious, sociological, etc.)

The ALA should determine ways in which African literature has been integrated into the curriculum. For example, the ALA could put announcements in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* requesting syllabi, course descriptions and curricular descriptions. It could then in turn offer to distribute these to interested parties.

The ALA could sponsor a panel on the uses of African literature in teaching at the ASA meeting.

X. HUMAN RIGHTS AND WRITERS COMMITTEE

Minnie Schipper reported that it is difficult to get information on the situation of writers and academics who are having problems. She issued a call for information concerning:

1. possible individual contacts for information
2. networks of information
3. persons in prison, harassed or fired for political reasons.

One should contact networks such as Amnesty International to obtain information to be checked upon when one travels to a country.

Minnie Schipper also recommended subscribing to *Index on Censorship*, the only world magazine on freedom of speech. She will publish details on how to subscribe in the *Bulletin*.

XI. EDITORS FOR 1992 CONFERENCE PAPERS

The following persons as moved by Anne Scarboro and seconded by Thelma Rawell-Pinto were selected by unanimous acclamation to edit the 1992 conference papers:

- Cecil Abrahams (Editor-in-Chief)
- Susan Gassler
- Tuzlyne Allan

It was recalled that the title of an annual is not always the same as the theme of the conference, editors can solicit additional papers, and editors should be elected in order to place them in a good position to get travel money from their universities to attend ALA meetings.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

Cosmo Pieterse requested that members inform him of the possibility of a university position for the South African writer Achmat Dangor in the United States. Without a position, his visa would expire after three months.

Susan Gassler said that those who could receive Cameroonian writer Tierno Monemembo as a guest scholar or lecturer should contact her at Aquinas College in Michigan.

Heni Boyi will be staffing ALA headquarters while Anne Adams is on leave next year. He is doing a Ph.D. at Cornell under a Fulbright.

Lee Nichols commended the smooth running of the meeting which was the best he had attended except for the meeting in New Orleans.

The following resolutions moved by Eileen Julien and seconded by Lee Nichols was adopted by unanimous acclamation:

1. To warmly thank Cecil Abrahams for hosting the ALA meeting.
2. The Memorial Committee for Emilie Snyder consists of Edris Makward, Stephen Arnold and Mildred Hill-Lubin. Anyone interested in honoring Emilie should contact one of these members.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

ALA CONSTITUTION

- I. The name of the organisation shall be the African Literature Association.
- II. "The ALA is an independent professional society open to scholars, teachers and writers from every country. It exists primarily to facilitate the attempts of a world-wide audience to appreciate the creative efforts of African writers and artists. The organisation welcomes the participation of all who produce the subject of our study and hope for a constructive interaction between scholars and artists. The ALA as an organisation affirms the primacy of African peoples in shaping the future of African literature and actively supports the African peoples in their struggle for liberation."
- III. The specific aims of the African Literature Association are the following:
 - A. Bring together African literature scholars and teachers from all levels of instruction — primary, secondary, junior college, college, and university — and from all parts of the world.
 - B. Promote the teaching of African literatures at all levels of instruction.
 - C. Encourage and foster scholarship about African literatures.
 - D. Disseminate information about African literatures.
 - E. Affirm the organisation's belief in freedom of expression, freedom to pursue truth in research, and the freedom and dignity of all people in Africa. The ALA membership, either directly or through its Executive Council when time factors render a referendum impractical, will decide whether to take a stand and determine the nature of the stand to be taken on all issues affecting this principle.
- IV. Organisation of the African Literature Association.
 - A. Officers
 1. President to serve for one year.
 2. Vice-President to be elected for one year, with automatic succession to Presidency.
 3. Secretary to be elected for two years.
 4. Treasurer to be elected for two years.
 5. Editor to be elected for three years, with an annual review by Executive Council and occasional Executive Council appointment of an Associate Editor.
 6. Conference Organiser: will be selected by the institution hosting the annual meeting, will be separate from the position of President, and will be an ex-officio member of the Executive Council.
 - B. Executive Council
 1. Officers of the ALA
 2. Nine members elected for staggered three year terms.
 - a. a member failing to attend two consecutive semi-annual meetings or failing to provide an alternate for those meetings shall be deemed to have resigned.
 - b. vacancies shall be filled by Executive Council appointment, with an elected replacement to fill the remainder of the term on the next annual ballot.