

editors of *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Time*, specifically endorses this usage and even compares these groups to the Brahmans of India.

As the letter correctly notes, the groups in Rwanda and Burundi were based on occupation. But the similarity to India stops there. The social system in Rwanda and Burundi before European intervention was too open to be called a caste system: people from the two groups intermarried (although it was not usual to do so); people changed from one category to the other according to their skills or fortune (although it might take more than one generation for the transition to be complete); people did not view social divisions as integrally tied to their religious beliefs (the religion of *kubandwa*, in theory anyway, united people across categories).

The Committee rightly points out that the term "tribe" is a hold-over from the colonial period, but they fail to see that the same is true for the notion of "caste" as applied to this part of Africa. The image of these societies as rigidly and racially stratified was created by Europeans who first misinterpreted what they saw and then introduced policies that made their distorted image into the reality. By their constant and heavy-handed favoritism of the Tutsi—whom they saw as "white men in black skins"—they transformed strata into antagonistic classes and fostered such grave oppression that revolution seemed the only recourse.

The New York Times on October 15 published a letter from Alison L. Des Forges criticizing the use of "tribes" in writing about Burundi. But five days later they published a short news article about cabinet changes in Burundi that once again identified the Hutu and Tutsi as "tribes." Obviously, they do not learn quickly and we must be persistent.

Finally, please note that since independence, the nation of Rwanda has spelled its name Rwanda, not Ruanda.

Sincerely,
Alison Des Forges
Catharine Newbury
David Newbury

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to ask you to contribute to a worthy cause. Please take a minute to read this letter.

No doubt you have heard of the "book famine" in Africa. Educational institutions throughout the continent are unable to obtain publications from abroad either because they cannot afford them or because they cannot pay for them in a convertible foreign currency. As a consequence, libraries—especially university libraries—are suffering a severe shortage of basic research materials, and scholars working in such libraries are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with new developments in their field.

Seventy university libraries in Africa have not had the means to subscribe to *Research in African Literatures*. The Journals Division of the University of Texas Press recently donated the first ten volumes (1970-79) of *RAL* to these libraries free of charge, and it is willing to supply them with the next ten volumes (1980-89) at a rate substantially below cost: one dollar per issue plus fifty cents per issue for postage. In other words, sixty dollars will buy forty issues of *RAL* (Vols. 11-20) for an African university library.

I am looking for seventy donors willing to purchase a ten-year African university library subscription at this price. Smaller donations are also welcome. If you wish to designate a particular library as the recipient of your gift, we will be happy to send the ship-

ment to that library in your name. Our hope is to provide every university in independent Africa with a complete run of *RAL* from 1970 to 1989.

Please join us in this effort by sending your donation to *RAL* at the address above. Your generosity will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Bernth Lindfors, Editor
Research in African Literatures

Dear Dr. Bay:

The Library of Congress intends to present to Congress a request for funds to establish and operate a regional acquisitions office in West Africa for the purpose of acquiring West African materials of research value and providing bibliographic controls for them. If funding is approved, the office would open in late 1990, with responsibility initially for Nigeria and four or five neighboring nations. It is anticipated that the office's responsibilities would be expanded over the next five years to include additional West African countries. We feel that this office is needed to develop the same comprehensive coverage that the Library's Nairobi field office has provided for Eastern Africa over the past two decades.

Because of the difficulty of acquiring more than a single copy of most publications in West Africa, we plan to build into the office a strong preservation program so that copies of these publications can be made available through the Library's Photoduplication Service. In this way, all the benefits of the office's acquisitions efforts can be shared with centers of African Studies throughout this country. The office would also produce an accessions list for West Africa which would be available worldwide as an acquisitions and reference tool.

In preparing our request to Congress, it would help us to receive written support for the office from the academic community. It would also be useful to have some indication of your institution's interest in purchasing microfilm or microfiche copies of those West African publications which we will be able to offer in microform.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Robert C. Sullivan
Director for Acquisitions and Overseas Operations
Julian Witherell
Chief, African and Middle Eastern Division
The Library of Congress
Washington, DC 20540