

## INTERNATIONAL VISITORS PROGRAM OF THE ASA ANNUAL MEETING

In recent years, scholars resident overseas have participated in ASA Annual Meetings with the help of funding from the Ford Foundation, USIA, and other organizations. The Board of Directors is grateful for this generous support of an essential component of the Annual Meeting, and works to assure that visitors from abroad are selected so that funding is distributed equitably to qualified applicants.

Pending receipt of funding, the Association invites prospective panel organizers and individuals resident overseas to submit applications for full or partial support to allow scholars based outside the United States to participate in the meeting. Panel organizers may request support for one panelist only. Requests should be addressed to the 1988 Program Committee, African Studies Association, Credit Union Building, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322, and should include the following information:

1. Name of scholar, his or her full address, phone or cable contact number, institutional affiliation, area of specialization, and proposed paper topic;
2. Scholar's record of attendance during the past five years at ASA Annual Meetings and at other professional meetings in the US;
3. Scholar's plans for participation in other professional activities in the US before and after the Annual Meeting;
4. Indication if scholar needs full or partial (local conference costs or air travel costs only) support;
5. In the case of scholars nominated by panel organizers, the name of the panel organizer and the panel subject.

Persons who nominate others for full support should be prepared to arrange itineraries of six to eight days for their nominees during which the visitors might visit universities or research institutions in the US as guest lecturers. Requests for support must be received no later than April 15, 1988. Scholars nominated may be of any nationality though the preponderance of grants will be awarded to Africans. In addition to a fair representation of disciplines and geographical areas, the selection committee will be concerned to include an appropriate representation of women scholars. Priority will be given to scholars who have not recently attended ASA meetings and to those with definite plans to undertake other professional activities during their visit.

### Letters...

To the Editor:

We applaud the efforts of the Executive Committee to end the inappropriate use of "tribe" to describe the Hutu and Tutsi of Rwanda and Burundi. But we are most distressed that in attempting to correct one misconception, they have perpetuated another: that these groups are "castes." Indeed, their letter (*ASA News*, October/December 1988) to the

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-