



African People's Association

NEWS UPDATE

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Opportunities Abound and Africa Marches On Confidently

by Mwenda M'Mailutha

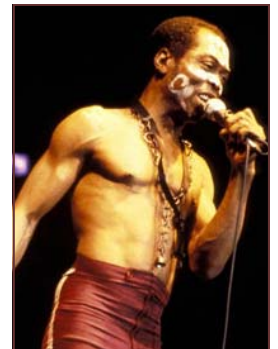
In the recent past even as economies unraveled in the more developed countries of North America, Western Europe, and Japan, many countries in Africa have been on a different kind of roll: a heady-resource based and opportunity-ready bonanza. Granted, a lot of African countries are also feeling the pinch from the domino effect triggered by the mega-greed and hubristic ways of Wall Street. Some, like western United States, Australia, or some parts of India have to deal with prolonged drought and 'Dust Bowl' like conditions. All these notwithstanding, many African countries have registered phenomenal economic growth rates (Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Botswana); revolutionized business performance as well as ease of setting shop (Rwanda); moved steadfastly into a lasting democracy (Liberia). Whichever way you turn in Africa, there is evidence of African countries that have finally taken ownership of development in nuanced and strategic ways.

Shanta Devarajan, a World Bank economist calls them African successes, and has actually developed a moniker for these countries—Africa Can. The ululation from the World Bank is not that impor-

African Popular Music: A Brief History

by Hamainda Bbela

Africa in the early 1960s and 1970s faced a shared dilemma; that of creating nations out of loosely constructed imposed national boundaries. Boundaries that didn't take into account preexisting ethnic and social connections. Most of these nations were young with moderately large populations and not yet deeply in crisis. If African nations are still in their embryonic stages then this time period represents the first trimester. One of the most important things facing these nations was building a national identity, but also affirming their place in the world. This affirmation would be done by retaining their pre-colonial cultural identity while still being fully functional participants in the modern age of the human race.



Fela Kuti - Highlife Artist

Dates to Note:

General Meeting BTSU 207 @ 6PM	10/16
General Meeting BTSU 201A @ 6PM	10/23
General Meeting BTSU 201A @ 6PM	10/30
General Meeting BTSU 201A @ 6PM	11/6
Cultural Conference	11/21
Community Global Awareness	TBA
Football Tailgate/BBQ	TBA

APA Member of the Month: Blen Ayele!

interview by Sely-Ann Headley, edited by C. Cox

Dedicated and ambitious are two words that easily describe Blen Ayele, this year's winner of the Phenomenal Woman of the Year by BIG (Black Intellectuals Group). She was also titled Emerging Female Leader (2009) by Division of Student Affairs as a result of her hard work and great leadership role as WSA's (2008-2009) president. APA members might best know this bright 20 year old Ethiopian student, as the enthusiastic member who graced us with a dance at our last annual dinner. What members might not know about her is that she accomplished this while working 20 hours each week and successfully carrying a full-time college load.



Blen Ayele...(cont'd from front)

This year Blen has turned her attention to more business oriented student organizations namely, ISM (Institute of Supply Management) and SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management). Not only is she a member of SHRM, but she is also a representative in the Dean's Advisory Council. Presently, Blen is in her third year as an Accounting and Supply Chain Management major.

What's her advice to new students? "Make the best out of your stay at BGSU and utilize all resources. Get involved because it builds character, helps develop skills and most importantly opens opportunity to network and to meet people. Study hard because that is what you are here for and of course, don't forget to have FUN :) AND I guarantee you it will pay off. "

APA would like acknowledge the hard work and leadership of Blen Ayele and congratulate her for excellence and leadership.

Opportunities (cont'd from front)

tant anyway, and all they need is to keep doing what's right, while learning as they go in order to build on on-going efforts and successes to address the intractable socio-economic woes that have been the mother continent's bane for so long. Natural resources, from minerals to oil and wood have also become really important.

Africa still remains a veritable magnet for natural resource hogs, now increasingly known as China and India in addition to the U.S. With vast oil reserves in traditional producers like Nigeria, Angola and Sudan, several other countries including Uganda and Tanzania have hit oil in the recent past. Obviously there are other natural resources: minerals, timber, and many other forest resources. The rush to exploit the continent's resources, including agricultural land, has led many observers to frame the issue as the "second scramble for Africa." Hardly a day passes without an African government signing a contract with a country from the rest of the world for natural resource concessions. Many countries—especially from the Middle East, but also South Korea—are now leasing agricultural land in many African countries. Whether this is good or bad, whether it should be happening at all is a topic for another day.

Phenomenal changes

Among the African countries that have been doing rather well economically, Mozambique is in the lead. With an economic growth rate, according to the World Bank, averaging 8% p.a. in the past ten years, the country is truly a show-case. The ICT revolution in Africa is also the fastest growing in the world. In less than a decade, mobile networks have covered over 90% of the urban population in Africa. While there is considerable variation within countries, coverage has grown tremendously, and still has a lot of potential—the highest in the world. The success of GSM technologies has changed many things different African countries. A most notable phenomenon is Kenya's M-Pesa, s money transfer system, that, due to its simplicity and convenience has become widely popular with people who otherwise would have no or limited access to banking services.

There are many other examples of the different ways in which African countries are showing that they can: in Nigeria, the Lagos City's Bus rapid transport system, the first of its kind in Sub-Saharan Africa is instructive.

Ethiopia projects that it will have brought water to all her rural population by 2015, Eritrea and Zambia have dramatically lowered the incidence of malaria, while Rwanda continues to shine as a beacon of what good governance can do even in the aftermath of the worst of circumstances. Guinea and Niger, for long lagging in primary school completion rate, have now doubled completion rates since 2000 according to World Bank data.

Peril and promise

While Africa still faces grave challenges like the effects of Climate Change, grossly inequitable wealth distribution, and other aspects of underdevelopment, now is an opportune time for Africans to look to the future with confidence and enthusiasm. It is a time for Africans to jealously guard and build on gains made so far. What the continent has achieved attests to the fact that at the end of the day, the extent to which African countries develop is a function of the efforts of Africans themselves. Now is a time to re-dedicate ourselves to the eternal quest for a better Africa: more developed, more egalitarian, more prepared for the challenges like Climate Change; a better place for posterity.

Poetry by Robert Lino

I don't know
How to stop loving you
Because being around you
Makes me feel so good
So good that I can't explain the feeling

All I know
Is that it feels like sunrise
Sometimes it feels like sunset
Just a feeling that is memorable
One that you got to have to know

I wish
I can find a word to describe how you make me feel
But all I know
It takes me to a different world
One that is beautiful and peaceful

Sometimes
When I talk to you
I just can't breath
For your voice just make me feel so good
Till I find a word to describe that feeling
I will just be loving you



I wish the sun would never set
So that I will have the day to look at your beautiful face
I wish the moon would never disappear
So that I will enjoy seeing your shiny eyes
I wish the sun would never rise
So that you will always be my guiding star
I wish summer would never come
So that I will enjoy your warmth all winter long
I wish spring would never end
So that I will keep running with you in the fields
I wish fall would never end
So that I will enjoy seeing your colorful face
I wish the year would never end
So that I will always long for you as I long for Christmas
I wish humans were like sunflower
So that you will always be my sunshine
I wish humans were like tides
So that you will always be my moonlight
I wish wishes were flowers
So that you will always be a rose in my garden
I wish the world would never end
So that we will live forever

African Popular Music (cont'd from front)

It was within these formative times that African youth of the time began a musical movement that was equal parts culturally authentic and equal parts western. This cultural movement was pan-African in its scope while still retaining elements of the many distinct national identities it encompassed. This musical movement was born out of growing pains of a young continent and was the brain child of Fela Anikulapo Kuti. He christened the movement afrobeat, and hereby begun a golden age in the creation of potent and powerful African popular music in sub-Saharan Africa. Afrobeat as a term probably doesn't encompass the large range of music that was created in the many regions of sub-Saharan Africa.

Afrobeat is a term with no fixed definition, like rock, soul or punk, but it has the ability to be all those things. The first person to use the word was probably Fela Kuti. Fela Kuti the late Nigerian musical giant through whom understanding the sound of 1970s Africa cannot be honestly appreciated. His music was polyrhythmic, equal parts symphonic funk that he developed alongside drummer Tony Allen.

My story here is a story of rediscovery of uncovering a facet of Africa I never new existed. It's easy to be from Africa and view yourself as a child of this one region, place ethnicity. Coming here doesn't erase these identities but it reinforces the blanket phenotypic identity, and once you open your mouth people assume very quickly once they hear a slight accent. You find yourself viewing yourself as being part of this collective African condition.

For me one of the greatest ways of understanding the human condition is thru the universal language of art as such music was my way to reach out and uncover parts of Africa I have never traveled to. I am Zambian but a huge fan of Ghanaian highlife, Nigerian Afrobeat, Ethio-jazz out of Ethiopia, Mpaquanqa out of Zimbabwe & South Africa and other older forms of Afro-pop or afro-beat. I can't understand 95% of what there saying but I can feel the message hit me on an emotional level that transcends language and meaning. As a fan of everything from Parliament-Funkadelic, James Brown, Otis Redding to the Beatles. Listening to this music you can hear that these forbearers of ours were very conscious of western musical trends. They simply appropriated these trends and created completely new musical and cultural forms.

The most productive period for African funk, soul, rock, and jazz lasts from 1965 to 1982, a time of great upheaval in Africa, and much of this music wasn't recorded. A lot of the bands were in house club bands and would record a song with no intention of making albums. A lot of this music was lost and went into obscurity. It has recently made a big comeback in the community of people who hunt for novel and obscure funk and soul records from around the world.

Afrobeat and its funk variations is a distinct form of African music. It's not as popular as central African soukous music and its variants. This is largely due to heavy lengthy jazzfunk improvisations that can at times complicate the music. This complexity meant the music couldn't

African Popular Music (cont'd pg. 3)

compete with the very danceable percussive and playful rhythms popular in sokous music. The same goes for a lot of today's African popular music which will be discussed at length in a later edition of the column. Every African region had variations of afrobeat from Kenya to South Africa to Ghana.

Highlife music

Is essentially one of the earliest forms of popular music in regions of Anglophone Africa like Ghana and Nigeria. This music was a fusion genre that used hints from different genres and traditions of music and melded them to create a unique form of music. Highlife was born in colonial Ghana and was a mixture of Calypso coming out of the Caribbean, Liberian sailor's songs and local rhythms. This style's first mega star was band leader E.T Mensah out of Ghana. E.T Mensah's tours with his tempos band spread the music all over West Africa. This made Ghanaian highlife into one of the earliest music traditions to become a truly African pop music. A musical form that enjoyed universal appeal regardless of ethnic affiliation or national boundaries. These musical fusions were emerging at the same time as the civil rights movement in the US. The civil rights movement in the US began to deliver music that was more militant and afro centric in spirit. The sounds of soul giants like Otis Redding and James Brown echoed the sense of militancy that many were feeling in Africa. The sounds coming out of America were loud, percussive and spread a very strong message that inspired many African musicians.

The optimism of independence begins to fade as many independent countries descend into spirals of war and dictatorship. The music becomes less joyful and messages become more militant as musicians like James Brown tour Africa more frequently their influence is obvious in the African music of the late 1960s.



The attendees of the Third Annual Welcome Gala! This event was a joint collaboration between African People's Association, World Student Association, Asian Communities United, Caribbean Association, Black Student Union, Black Intellectuals Group, and the Center for International Programs!

October Birthdays:

Adjoa Mensah — October 1st
Chiamaka PJ-Akpan — October 4th
Omazonna Amadi — October 9th



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African People's Association of Bowling Green State University
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