

Office

15355

Dec.12, 1982

Dear Professor Mazrui:

Thank you for sending me your address in Nigeria. I hope long before next June when you return to the U.S. I will have had the opportunity to meet you. Having followed your writings for years, especially since the publication of your World Culture and the Black Experience, I highly recommended it to white audiences in the hope that they will learn how to ground their attitudes to the Black Dimension in two directions. One was the method with which you contrast the belief in one God to the so-called animism: "...religions that insist on the oneness of God have, in the short run, been more intolerant than religions that have accepted divine multiplicity."

The other direction is the context in which you place "Language and Black Destiny." In that section I have singled out the counterposition of expressing oneself in the queen's English and the profoundly emotional prophetic Black English the Chief Priest tells why he is sending a son to a missionary school: "I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there...My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow."

My point was that it is true I have always emphasized the quintessential importance of intercommunication between the ages, whether that covered Hegel, Marx and the present age, or what I called the vulgar materialistic way white American history texts "still dwell in detail on the long-dead triangular trade of rum, molasses and glaves--between Africa, the West Indies and the United States--it is the ever-live triangular development of internationalism, masses in action and ideas which is the dominant force today." But what you achieved in "Language and Black Destiny" is not so much intercommunication between the ages as within the age and within the same language. And this far transcends not only the cliché of referring language, "It's all Greek (or Sanskrit) to me, and the seemingly non-cliché rejection of different meanings of the same words by dismissing any other but one's own views as "dogmatism." Thus, at one and the same time, you not only exposed underlying prejudice, but the positiveness of how the "backward" was actually both the more advanced and subtle but also an "art for art's sake" more beautiful language than the queen's or king's English. With the help, of course, of that magnificent African poet, Chinua Achebe.

The impulse to attempt contacting you now "in person" (through my colleague, Lou Turner) came, of course, from the fact that in the Marx centenary I completed my latest work, Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, which, on the surface, appears to be concerned with Russian, Polish, German revolutionaries rather than US, especially Black, but in fact, that is, in the context of the present age's global views, permits me to return to 1831 and Maria Stewart, through the 1940s when I broke from Trotsky whose secretary I had been, to the last two decades when Black Dimension meant not alone my preoccupation with Black America but with Africa not alone in affinity of ideas of freedom, but my trip to West Africa in the 1960s. In any case, despite our different political views, I felt there was an affinity of ideas both on the Black Dimension and on world cultures, which, I assume, does not subordinate philosophy. Would you be interested in what I call "the other America" or Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.? I have deposited all my documents (1941 to today) at the Wayne State University Labor Archives. (I believe Michigan University has bought the microfilm. I enclose the guide to them. Enclosed also is a book,

*People of Kenya Speak to Themselves that I'm esp. proud I had published in 1955 when all other were silent Kenya. Your sincere friend, Eric Durojaye*