Open Season on African Students

The recent killings of students activists in Kenya, Nigeria, the Sudan, the expulsion of thirty-five students from Makerere University (Uganda) last October, the continuing attack on immigrant student rights in the United States are refocussing attention on the connection between the politics of education and the violation of human rights and academic freedom in Africa and in our country.

In this issue we discuss the repression of student activism in Africa, and look at a bill now in Congress that would restrict the right of students not born in the U.S. to have access to Federal funds for university education.

We also publish an interview with Babacar Diop, ex-secretary of the Syndicat Autonome de l'Enseignement Supérieur, one of the main Senegalese academic unions, on the impact of the World Bank's policy for higher education in Senegal. Last is an article by George Caffentzis on the function that the structural adjustment of higher education in Africa plays in the appropriation of traditional knowledge by the transnational corporations and the intellectual property claims by which it is justified.
The World Bank and Newt Gingrich, in the Footsteps of Leopold of Belgium

At the ASA annual gathering held in San Francisco last November, we learned from Professor Jacques Hyman of San Francisco State University an enlightening piece of information, for which we thank him.

Newt Gingrich, preparing perhaps to position himself at the helm of education in the U.S., wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on the views of the Belgians, concerning the schooling fit for their African subjects in colonial Congo. As it turns out, their outlook on the matter bears an uncanny similarity with that of the World Bank. Like the World Bank, King Leopold of Belgium did not believe that Africans needed much higher learning. In his view, a little reading and writing was all that was required to make them understand what was expected of them—propped, of course, by the practice of cutting hands should resistance occur.

Prof. Hyman’s reminder terminated here. But we must ask—in these times in which so many African students are being brutally persecuted—if in this too the World Bank is not following in the footsteps of its Belgian predecessors. In other words, whether the harsh measures that African governments are implementing to every corner of the continent, are not a recommended complement to the meager educational services the World Bank is willing to concede to Africans today, the equivalent of the hands the Belgians used to cut, and like them intended to crush any resistance.

STUDENTS EXPelled AT MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

A CALL FOR SUPPORT

On October 24, 1996 thirty-five students were expelled from Makerere University, among them several student leaders who were in their last year of studies. The reason that the University has given to justify this decision centers around a students’ attempt to reoccupy a hostel the administration had closed. However, the circumstances surrounding the expulsions bring back memories of the days following December 1, 1990 when two students were killed by the Makerere campus police in the course of a demonstration against cuts in student allowances. It appears, in fact, that at the roots of the harsh measures taken by the university against so many students, this time too, there may have been a fear of student protest. It cannot be coincidental that the expulsions occurred in the context of a mounting students mobilization against the introduction of new tuition fees, the closure of campus canteens and an announced plan for the privatization of the university.

The following is a report that the Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa (CAFA) has prepared on these events. It was compiled on the basis of official documentation, newspapers articles, as well as accounts from different campus sources. We believe it shows that justice was not well served by the decision taken by the Makerere Council to terminate the 35 students’ careers; and we hope that it will contribute to build support for the students expelled. There are initiatives that you can take to help in this process.

*Spread the information, by circulating the report; keeping in mind that it is already being distributed through the e-mail network of the 50 Years Is Enough Campaign and the Radical Philosophy Association.

*Write to President Yoweri Museveni, asking him to intervene, in his capacity as the Chancellor of the university, to ensure that the expelled students are reinstated (a letter that CAFA has sent to him is reprinted as a sample at the end of this section).

*Help the expelled students to gain scholarships and admission to other universities, outside of Uganda and East Africa. This is most important, as Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have reciprocal agreements, binding each country not to accept any students expelled from the others. For further information on this matter, please contact the coordinators for CAFA.

1. At the origins of the expulsion of 35 students at Makerere is an episode that occurred on May 4, 1996. On that day, six or seven students in disguise put foreign matter into food being prepared for a campus reunion. They did this in front of the cooks, who decided that the food was spoiled and discarded it. A university investigation followed. According to one account, what was put into the food was never examined; but it was alleged that the substance was pepper and glass. It was also alleged that the students who perpetrated the act were from Northcote Hall, a student hostel that has a tradition of militanism and pride in its campus.

Campaign and the Radical Philosophy Association.
visibility. The investigation established very little about the identity of those who committed this act.

After a set of ultimatums given by the University authorities to student leaders to force them to produce the culprits, the University Council decided in August that Northcote Hall was going to be closed down and all resident students would have to make different housing arrangements for the coming semester. Northcote Hall would also lose its name, to be called temporarily Hall X.

Simultaneously, the administration announced another set of unpopular measures: a 100% increase in university fees, the introduction of a 50,000 Ugandan shilling fee for first year students (approximately $50 in a country where the per capita GDP is approximately $180 per year), and the banning from the campus of food canteens, that provide cheap food for non-resident students.

As it may have been expected, both the decision to close Northcote Hall and to introduce new tuition fees caused dismay among the students, each amplifying the other and adding to what appeared as a pattern of insensitivity, on the side of the university authorities, to the students’ welfare.

The tension surrounding these measures peaked in the first days of October when the university reopened after the vacations. Students were particularly outraged by the administration’s decision to inflict upon all Northcoters a collective punishment, causing most of the 700 residents in the Hall to become homeless, through no fault of their own. The university administration was urged, and not by students alone, to consider the hardships that off-campus students must suffer, as they face high accommodation costs and the additional cost of expensive and irregular transport. This, however, was to no avail.

On the evening of October 23, in the course of a student general assembly, a decision was taken to reopen Northcote Hall. The same assembly decided to begin on the next day, a strike against “cost-sharing.” According to an agreement previously made with other tertiary schools, it was to ignite a general student protest against the introduction of new fees in any institution of higher learning. But due to the dispute about Northcote Hall this was not to happen.

On the evening of October 23, by 9 PM, Northcote Hall was occupied. The initiative, however, was short lived. By midnight, the police arrived and with tear gas and batons drove the students out, chasing them into other residence halls and engaging in a battle that lasted until noon of the next day. In the aftermath, 50 students were arrested, and many more lay with broken bones all over the campus.

It was on October 24 that the University Council made it known that the police action had its approval, and that 35 among the arrested students would be expelled from the university. Upon hearing this news, the students decided to cease the strike and beg the university for mercy, especially on behalf of their Student Guild representatives who were among the expelled. They argued that the Guild leaders were innocent of any wrongdoing, and all their actions had always been guided by concern for their constituency. Many students called upon the University Chancellor, President Museveni, to intervene to ensure that the students would be readmitted. Their pleas, however, remained unanswered; even though the students were joined by off-campus organizations, such as the National Democratic Forum, which called for the dismissal of the students “unconstitutional.”

The dismissed students received a better treatment at the hands of the law. On December 10, a local court debating their cases, dismissed all charges pending against those arrested for lack of evidence. Nevertheless, upon leaving the courtroom, the same students were served, by university officers, with letters of dismissal from Makerere. Hopes for a change of mind by the administration were not completely dashed, however, until December 13, when most of the expulsions were again confirmed.

2. Why has the Makerere Council been so adamant in its determination to punish the students, especially in front of a court ruling testifying to their innocence? Why did it resort to such an unjustifiable course of action as collective punishment? Why did it decide to make 700 students homeless—not a small tragedy, particularly in a city like Kampala where public transportation is virtually non-existent from many parts of town and housing is in extremely short supply? Again, why was the university so insensitive to the situation of the Student Guild representatives, and punished them for an initiative (conceiving in the opening of Northcote Hall) that was taken by the student assembly? In sum, why have the authorities chosen the path of open confrontation, and inflicted upon so many students a punishment so disproportionate to the events that presumably provoked it?

We can only raise these questions. But we can be sure that, in the months to come, as the effects of cost-sharing are felt, and the plans for the privatization of Makerere unfold, few students will have the inclination to protest, even though for many of them such measures will spell the end of their studies.

This is what is at stake in the fate of the expelled students, in addition to the injustice and suffering to which they and their families have been exposed. Once again, as in December 1980, we are witnessing an attempt by Makerere University to stifle student resistance to unpopular educational measures which (we can anticipate) will destroy any hope for a democratization of the university system, as well the hopes of many students and their relatives who look at a university degree as the passport to a better life.

This is why we are calling upon the Makerere University Council and President Museveni to reconsider their decision. We also urge our readers to join us in giving support to the students expelled, and helping them to be readmitted, or to find alternative solutions enabling them to complete their studies.

LIST OF DISMISSED STUDENTS

This is a partial list of the students that were dismissed from Makerere University on October 24 (the Roman numerals indicate the number of years the student had been attending the university):

Bwire, Benard B.A. (Arts) III
Egou, David BPharm IV
Kyaka, Fred B.A. (A) II
Balikuddende, Joseph I
Kagimu, Abdullahi I
Akwangwa, Denis I
Rukundo, Patrick I
Tuskerbwa, Sydney I
Mbire, Jude I
Sempewu, John, B Stat III
Otim, Emmanuel Otaala MB ChB V
Gallogrito, Stephen Remy Med V
Mondwa, Emmanuel BA (SS) II
Mpenzo, Mike BVM III
Sebiku, Peter BSc II
Muganga, Robert
Semakula, John
Mbewe, Leonard

LETTER TO PRESIDENT YOWERI MUSEVENI

This is the letter that CAFA has sent to President Yoweri Museveni. We reprint it as a sample for similar initiatives. Please, send copies of your letters also to the Ugandan Embassy in Washington.

President Yoweri Museveni
Parliament Bldgs.
POB 7108
Kampala
Uganda
Students Murdered in Kenya
What Can Be Done?

The atrocious death of Solomon Murali, the student leader killed "under mysterious circumstances" on February 23, on the Kikuyu campus of Nairobi University, again demonstrates the intensity of the attack to which students are being subjected in Africa today; and highlights the need for an international mobilization to bring to justice all those responsible for this murder and the policies which instigated it.

How Murali was killed is not certain. It appeared at first that he had been the victim of an explosion in his room; later accounts suggested that he may have been already dead when the fire that charred his body was ignited.

What is certain is that in the days preceding his murder he was afraid for his life. One week earlier he had received a letter threatening him with death and he was moving from room to room fearing that he would be killed; this, after he had identified a senior police officer as one of those who, on November 27, 1996, had kidnapped him and tortured him for five days, and later dumped him unconscious in the corner of a church compound in the Kiambu district.

It is also clear that the university authorities took no steps to protect him, and that after his death they have demonstrated a high degree of insensitivity to the pain of his family and his student fellow mates, who were again brutalized on the campus premises during a demonstration protesting Murali’s killing.

This insensitivity is not surprising. Kenya has one of the worst records in Africa concerning abuses of human rights and academic rights. "Those who have attended the Kenyan public universities know that it is only by luck that one completes studies alive"—writes Bob Awuor, a former Kenyan student now in the United States (The Economic Review, March 3-9, 1997).

These days, moreover, in campuses all over Africa, the most brutal attacks on students and teachers are being sanctioned by university authorities and governments to silence their criticism, put an end to political dissent and break their resistance against the abysmal deterioration of the conditions of academic work.

It is important here to remember that the killing of Murali was not an isolated event. So unpopular are the measures that the Kenyan and other African governments are implementing to "rationalize" and "adjust" social economic and academic life, that deadly confrontations have become a daily factor on the campuses.

Shortly after Murali was kidnapped, on November 27, three other students were killed at Kenyatta University. Festo Etaba Okon’go—was shot dead by the police at Egerton on December 17, 1996. He was killed in the course of a demonstration organized by the students to demand the disbursement of Ksh 450.00 ($1.00=Ksh 55)—part of their loans that the university had kept. Then, a day later, on December 18, two more students, Kenneth Maleka and Eric Kamunzi were shot dead at Kenyatta University while protesting Okon’go’s death.

To the deaths of Kenyan students killed in recent months we also must add the incalculable pain of the thousands, who, day after day, are being being denied the most basic resources to continue their education, or must carry on their studies in conditions of abject poverty and a climate of constant intimidation. For instance, in November 1995, because of student...
protests over high costs for room and board. Kenyatta University was closed for nearly two months. When the university reopened in January 1996, students were required to pay a Ksh 500 fine. By April, students were boycotting classes again, demanding that food prices be reduced from Ksh 30 to Ksh 20 per meal.

Earlier in February 1996, confrontations broke out between students and police at Egerton University, when students began protesting the deduction of Ksh 4000 from their student loans and the stationing of police on campus. This led to the suspension of seventeen students by the university disciplinary committee, that was in turn answered, on February 20, by a weeks-long boycott of classes.

In May 1996, the Minister of Education, Joseph Kamotho, almost as a provocation, reaffirmed the government’s intent to “liberalize” education despite student protest. He proposed a reduction of the education share of the national budget from 40% to 30%, and urged the privatization of education at all levels.

This policy was again rejected by the students of Kenyatta, Egerton and Nairobi Universities, who mobilized through the Fall of 1996 leading to the confrontation in which Okon’go was killed.

When we consider this record we see that on trial for Munuli’s killing we must place not only those materially responsible for his murder and those who commissioned it, but also the economic and educational policies that prevail in Africa today, which are at the roots of the terror governments have unleashed on the campuses. On trial must be the budget cuts, the unpaid allowances and teachers’ salaries, the escalating tuition costs, the unlivable housing conditions, the new limitations imposed on admission, the outlawing of student and teachers’ organizations, in one word, the “rationalization” and “adjustment” of education, and social-political life as conceived by African Vice Chancellors, the African governments and their partners at the World Bank and the IMF.

Under these circumstances, while we urge our colleagues to send letters of protest to the Kenyan government concerning the killings of Solomon Munuli, Festo Etaba Okon’go, Kenneth Makokha and Eric Kamundu, we remain convinced that a different range of initiatives are needed to end the regime of violent repression now prevailing on the African campuses, and African societies, of which the campuses are a microcosm.

If African students are not to die any longer fighting for the right to voice their opinions and organize, or to have small loans or allowances, books, a better diet, water in their forms, transport money, and all the other basic necessities for which today they have to risk their lives, an international mobilization has to develop similar to that which grew in opposition to South Africa. For while apartheid may have come to end, formally at least, in one country, it has continued to spread on the African continent.


ON THE CONTRADICTIONS OF GLOBAL EDUCATION IN THE U.S.

The attack on the freedom to study is taking place in the U.S. as well as in Africa. Here too the form the attack takes in the U.S. is the financial restriction of access to university education. What follows is a reprint of an action alert we received from the Associate Students of the University of California.

HR-4 is a bill pending in the U.S. Congress that would restrict student aid to anyone who is not "born" in the U.S., regardless of their resident status.

If HR-4 passes, students who are permanent residents will no longer be eligible for financial aid — Stafford loans, Perkins loans, Pell grants, etc., even though these LEGAL immigrants have been paying taxes all along. Note: This is no longer an attack on illegal "aliens", but on people who have entered the country LEGITIMATELY and who are trying to continue their contribution to this society through the attainment of higher education.

The bill has not received much attention because it is still going through Congress but it has far reaching implications not just for the quality of our student pool, but more so as a reflection of a growing xenophobia in this country.

Please increase awareness of this issue and contact your representatives in the Senate and House.

WARNING: THE U.S GOVERNMENT WANTS TO TAKE FINANCIAL AID FROM STUDENTS

In addition to a bill recently passed in the Senate to cut Federal loans programs by $10 billion, the Senate and the House have both passed bills that will effectively curtail student aid benefits to LEGAL immigrants, including Pell grants, subsidized Stafford loans, and other federal financial aid programs. These proposed cuts, hidden deep within a welfare reform bill (HR-4), are to be achieved through a process known as "Alien Sponsor Deeming", in which the income and assets of an immigrant’s sponsor are added to the immigrant’s own resources in determining eligibility for government financial aid programs. Since most immigrants must have a sponsor in order to immigrate here legally, deeming would disqualify many legal immigrants from receiving aid by falsely inflating their income and wealth.

WHO WILL BE AFFECTED?

A new draft report issued this month by the General Accounting Office in Washington, D.C. states that 390,000 legal immigrants received Pell grants nationwide in 1992-93. The Pell grant program is designed to help the neediest students and has a maximum award of $2,340 per year.

In California, legal immigrants make up 32.6% of Pell grant recipients. An analysis performed by the University of California (UC) President's Office found that more than 25% of UC students who receive need-based aid are legal immigrants. In New York, legal immigrants make up 26.5% of Pell grant recipients. In Florida, the total is nearly 16%.

The Senate version of this bill (S. 269) would also restrict aid for naturalized citizens. The bills now in consideration would essentially affect anyone who was not born in the United States. A total of $21 million in Pell grants and $31 million in subsidized loans could be lost among the nine UC campuses alone.
These restrictions will affect private colleges as well.

As Permanent Residents of the United States, legal immigrants have been eligible for federal financial aid for many years. Permanent Residents pay federal income taxes and are subject to the draft. The bills now being considered by a Joint Committee of the House and Senate would restrict benefits to many legal immigrants by changing eligibility requirements. Two classes of citizens would be created, and legal immigrants would effectively be denied opportunities for higher education.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
A list of those members of Congress who are on the Joint Committee considering these bills will soon be made available. We will try to organize letter-writing, faxing, calling, and emailing campaigns. We will also try to get in touch with local and national media. Ethnic newspapers definitely need to be targeted. More specific information on what you can do will be coming in the next few days. If you are interested in working on this issue or getting more information, contact the Associated Students of the University of California Executive Vice President’s Office at:
Fax: (510) 643-6396
Email: urd@uclink2.berkeley.edu
ascexec@ofc.berkeley.edu

On the World Bank and Education in Senegal
An Interview with Babacar Diop

Babacar Diop was Secretary General of the (Senegalese) Union of University Professors, (Syndicat Autonome de l’Enseignement Supérieur—SAES), from 1983 to 1990. He is the President of the (Senegalese) Union of Teachers and Researchers. He is also President of the Senegalese Association for Literacy and Adult Education, and the chief editor of SOFAA, a bilingual newspaper in Wolof and Pulaar, two of Senegal’s main national languages. He has studied and taught at the University of Dakar, now Cheikh Anta Diop University, and is presently teaching at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva (New York).

The interview was conducted by Ousseina Aidoo of Ohio State University in February 1997.

O.A.: What has been the impact of the World Bank on the Senegalese Educational System?
B. D.: In the mid 1980s, we were given by the World Bank a set of documents that advocated a reallocation of educational spending in favor of primary education. At the time, we had just formed the Higher Education Union (Le Syndicat Autonome de l’Enseignement Supérieur—SAES). Thus, we reproduced these documents in our newsletter, to draw the attention of our colleagues to the implications of their content.

We were aware that there were many distortions in the higher educational system. First, social costs were much higher than the expenses allocated for research and pedagogy. This was primarily the responsibility of the government and the university board, that never responded to the proposals advanced by SAES concerning how the university agenda could be restructured to create the conditions for savings. Further, the universities in Senegal had become the safe haven for corrupt members of the Socialist Party, that is currently in power. Embezzlement of university resources and linkages between members of the faculty and the party were a trend.

Between 1988 and 1990, teachers and students came together to fight against the establishment and to protect their interests. 1988 was a terrible year, due to the fraudulent presidential election which led to a student uprising and the government’s decision to close the universities. In 1989, university teachers went on a 70 day strike, which led to a substantial salary increase, and rose the public’s awareness concerning the crisis of higher education. The university leadership was forced to call a general assembly meeting, that addressed the main points of concern in the concluding clauses of the state of the art Document on Education of 1991.

Then, in 1992, the World Bank released a document entitled “Revitalization of Higher Education in Senegal,” followed by a media campaign. The document restated the old diagnosis but added new elements. It claimed that in order to introduce any positive reform, it was urgently necessary to crush the universities’ unions. This led to a call for a national referendum that brought together teachers, researchers, students, informed citizens and members of government. The debate was very heated due to conflicting agendas, provoked by incompatible interest groups. Only one third of the clauses of the referendum were sanctioned by unanimous consensus.
It was the attempt by the government to force the implementation of the rejected clauses that provoked a teachers’ and students’ strike, which led to another unfortunate closure of the universities of Dakar and Saint Louis in 1994. The student unions were subsequently dismantled and restructured.

There are now special cabinets within the Ministry of Education that handle World Bank projects at all educational levels—from primary to university. Whether at the Ministry level, or in any of its sub-branches, the World Bank’s interference operates both at the formal and informal level (NGOs, communities, etc.). The World Bank is currently most interested in funding projects focusing on girls’ and women’s education. Aside from some insignificant contribution to the expansion of some building, the Bank has shown no interest in revitalizing higher education. In fact, some buildings were renovated without any consultation with university executives or representatives of SAES. At the time of my departure from Senegal there were some suggestions that the SAES offices be relocated within the confines of the Ministry of Higher Education.

The World Bank revitalization project in Senegal was first felt at the level of primary and secondary schools. Many teachers who openly rejected its proposal, pointing out its contradictions, were instantly fired.

At the university level, due to the cuts in spending and the quick privatization of the dining services and shelters, the students have had to face enormous hardships. These problems were intensified by the late reopening of the campuses, after the October exams had begun. It penalized many students who relied on government stipends for their survival. Again this led to a teachers’ protest.

While there are budgetary problems and the government is cutting research funding, there are at least three ministers in charge of education, and the administration has acquired “luxury” cars, without consultation with SAES. Moreover, the new regulations disqualify the junior faculty from applying for research funding. The situation is even worse in Ivory Coast, where the reduction of the junior faculty’s salaries is most deplorable.

O.A.: What impact has the World Bank’s interference in the structuring of higher education had on academic freedom?

B. D.: From the moment when the agreement between the government and the unions concerning the World Bank’s proposal for the revitalization of higher education in Senegal was violated, the government invited the police and the military to besiege the university campuses. This has become the general pattern in many African countries.

In Senegal, the Ministry of Secondary Education went even further in its attempt to crush teachers’ and students’ protest by replacing tenured teachers with part-time lecturers or volunteers trained on the spot. The unions are protesting this reactionary initiative, and are mobilizing their various branches within the Ministry of Secondary Education, as well as the Ministry of Higher Education. Their objective is to promote an agenda for academic reform, that will revalidate the fundamental function of the universities in Africa. SAES has also taken the recruitment of unqualified volunteers and part-time lecturers before the International Labor Office (ILO), where the matter is still pending.

The government is very embarrassed, because it acknowledges that it is guilty of a fundamental violation of some of the UNESCO and the ILO’s 1996 recommendations.

As for the World Bank, it gives the impression of being keen to listen to SAES; but in reality its main concern is to ensure, by all means, that African countries pay back their debts, regardless of the socioeconomic constraints they are faced with.

O.A.: Was the hiring of volunteers and part-time lecturers an innovation in Senegal?

B. D.: Previously, the universities had called upon part-time lecturers whenever there was a shortage, when, for instance, a faculty member went on a research leave, or in similar situations.

But in those cases, the universities scrutinized the applicants before hiring them, to make sure that they had the right qualifications. Now, with the government intervention and under World Bank’s pressure, the universities are not consulted concerning who should be hired as a lecturer. The position of SAES is that we should respect these government imposed lecturers, because they too are victims of the same policies, whether they understand it or not. What SAES is protesting, however, is the invasion of the universities by unqualified teachers.

O.A.: Is it true that the government gives priority to graduates from polytechnics over graduates from universities?

B. D.: People have been discussing for some time the fact that formal school training is not adequate for employment. We recognize that a good educational system must try its best to adapt to the demands of the job market. But these should not be the only priorities for academic institutions. In the case of Senegal, as in most African countries, there is no real educational policy outlining social priorities. This is the cause of the high unemployment among university graduates, from doctors to engineers. According to the government, university students are overqualified, from the viewpoint of the development areas for which experts are needed and the salaries they can expect.

As for the polytechnics, what the government did, following the advice of the World Bank, was to merge the Polytechnic of Thies, located at about 70 kms from Dakar, with the University Institute of Technology in Dakar. The new institute— the Ecole Normale Superieure Universitaire Technologique (ENSUT)—now includes departments of communication and library sciences as well as mining. This operation has caused the destabilization of the Department of Economics at the Universities, as all its research capacities have been reduced.

O. A.: Has there been an increase in the number of vocational schools in Senegal?

B. D.: Yes, there has been a great proliferation of private vocational schools, with uncheck credentials. In general, they focus on vocational training in marketing and business education for college level students. They are also beginning to establish international affiliations.
The International Intellectual Property Regime and the Enclosure of African Knowledge

C. George Caffentzis

We must be firm in naming names and telling our trading partners that we will act if they harbor pirates, counterfeiters, or permit infringements to go unpunished. Ira S. Shapiro, General Counsel, Office of the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, 1993

The question must again be asked: to which workers ought the (soonerly) developed productive forces belong? What does' workers' wages should be determined by them? Those of the area where these forces are located? Those of the branch of production or the enterprise that possesses them? (A. Emmanuel 1969).

The motivations behind the structural adjustment of African universities are by now the object of a large debate (CAFA 1991, CAFA 1995, CAFA 1996, Seidman and Aung 1992). Inevitably, one of the questions that scholars and activists have asked is why has the World Bank been unwilling to reconsider this policy, despite the fact that it undermines one of the main achievements of postcolonial Africa—the creation, in one generation, of a university system virtually ex nihilo—and despite the fact that its pernicious consequences have for some time been evident. Why has the World Bank forced many universities to practically grind to a halt (as in the case of Nigeria and Zaire), or to survive by relying on foreign "donors" and, in the process, loose any semblance of independence (as in the case of Tanzania and Uganda)? Why has it not been the most massive brain-drain witnessed in Africa, since the slave trade, and why has it ignored the endless violations of students and teachers' rights that the adjustment policies have cost?

This situation seems even more puzzling given that the World Bank has persistently stressed the importance of knowledge for "developing" countries, and presents education as a sine qua non condition for the "wealth of nations". Why, then, this contradiction?

Among the explanations offered, the most convincing makes reference to (a) the "recolonization" of the TW, that has been carried on by the transnational corporations (TNCs), with the assistance of the WB and IMF (and now WTO), and (b) the new international division of labor that has followed from it. According to this view, the dismantling of African education is part of a process aimed to restore the "metropolises" to the role of "heads" of the world economic system—those who take the managerial lead, make decisions for the world economy and political system, produce the acceptable cultural models; while most regions of the Third World, beginning with Africa, are being returned to the colonial role of providers of raw materials and "cheap" labor for the international market. In other words, according to this perspective, we witness an attempt to re-divide and centralize world economic functions, with the First World aiming again to play the "mind", and forcing the Third World back into its colonial role as the "body" or "hand" of the empire. The World Bank's hoxansas in praise of knowledge are, in this context, just a further example of that double-talk for which the World Bank has become world famous.

As convincing as it is, I propose that this analysis does not cover an important aspect of the World Bank's strategy for education in Africa. This is the fact that the funding of Africa's higher education systems, and their consequent loss of independence, are functional to the policy of claiming and enforcing intellectual property rights that, since the early 1980s, has been promoted by the TNCs and the US government, with assistance of the World Bank. In this article, I argue that the "adjustment" of African universities is not only intended to limit the Africans' access to knowledge. It is also intended to (a) expropriate from Africans the knowledge they have accumulated over the centuries, and (b) to restore an unequal exchange that is even more pernicious than the one that prevailed in the colonial and postcolonial periods, since it forces African countries to pay an exorbitant price even for the acquisition of the very knowledge from which they have been expropriated. It is to this process that I give the name of the "Enclosure of African Knowledge".

1. Intellectual Property Rights and A New Unequal Exchange

The institution of "an intellectual property regime" is in essence a policy by which pharmaceutical, agricultural, biogenetic, and computer software transnational companies (TNCs) are allowed to privatize, enclose, monopolize the cultural wealth of the planet—so that no shred of information and knowledge can "ideally" be acquired without passing through a monetary exchange, and without a toll being paid by the purchasers to these companies (Watts 1992, Shiva 1994, Shand 1994, Fowler 1995, Jussawalla 1992).

This may not seem a new process, given that the commercialization of knowledge has historically been an integral component of capitalist development, and is a structural imperative in a capitalist society where everything must be subordinated to the cash-lexicon (Long 1991). However, trade in "intellectual property"—patents, copyrights, trade marks—has intensified in the recent past. With the simultaneous introduction of computer software, biogenetic manipulatively seeds and pharmaceuticals, video and sound recordings, and the new importance acquired by international "name brand" recognition, intellectual commodities have become one of the life-lines of world trade. For instance, the export of computer software (that, in real terms, involves permission to use the software programs and not the discs they are inscribed on) reached $35 billion in

1995, with the U.S. firms being the dominant suppliers, shipping 75% in 1993. Intellectual property is now the main surplus sector in the U.S. balance of trade, and, not surprisingly, it is defended with the same viciousness with which the British protected the opium trade in China.

World trade tribunals and a world trade police have been instituted, managed by the World Trade Organization, through the trade-related intellectual property (TRIPS) clauses of the Uruguay Round of GATT, which stipulate its right to intervene at the slightest sign of a violation of the companies' "intellectual property rights" (Dawkins 1994). Worse yet, the U.S. Congress has also given the companies a hand, through trade legislation titled "Special 301," that forces the rest of the world to pass through a monopoly exchange, and culture throughout the planet, with the meting out of lengthy jail sentences to individuals, and the imposition of collective punishment on wayward nations.

What needs to be pointed out, however, is that this process is assisted and legitimized by the "adjusting" and "enclosing" the institutions of higher learning in the Third World, particularly in Africa. As I will argue, this occurs in several ways. But in order to appreciate their significance we have first to realize that the very Third World countries that, from the viewpoint of the world market, seem to have "no inventions for sale" and no intellectual property exports, are increasingly the sources of the products the U.S. and European seed and biogenic companies are selling as their inventions. It goes without saying that these same countries have nothing to gain under the current WTO "intellectual property regime" (Richardson and Guiseford 1996).

The bulk of the seed and pharmaceutical patents that the TNCs have introduced in recent
years have, in fact, been appropriate by plundering the knowledge and terrain of people living in the most biologically diverse parts of the planet: the tropical forests of the world (1995). Countries like Brazil, India, China, Tanzania, Ivory Coast and the Philippines (Wilson 1992: 262-263) are the main areas of operation of the TNCs, in their effort to establish their property rights over biological species. They are the biodiversity “hot spots” of the planet, i.e., the areas with the highest concentration of unique species and the greatest danger of species extinction.

The traditional knowledge possessed by indigenous peoples in these “hot spots” has become a prized asset, as witnessed by Ismail Serageldin’s speech to the World Bank-sponsored two-day conference on Traditional Knowledge and Sustainable Development held in September 1993. (The Proceedings of the conference were published in (Davis and Ebbe, 1995).

On this occasion, after decades of financing projects that physically and culturally destroyed indigenous peoples (e.g., the Chixoy Massacre in Guatemala (Majot 1996/1997)), Serageldin treated the reluctance of “indigenous experts” to a new rhetoric of “empowerment,” replete with quotes from Aime Cesaire ...

...we have to recognize that, by and large, everywhere in the world indigenous peoples have been victimized in the name of “progress.” They have been persuaded by that which should have empowered. We must recognize that the post-colonial independence of many states has not translated into respect for the individual rights or indigenous peoples or indigenous communities... As Aime Cesaire said, “The universal is enriched by all its various particularisms.” Empowerment and recognition of the rights of people to be themselves do not lead to disintegration into many cultural groups... To the exponents of that broader society who speak with a certain degree of arrogance, by arrogance of the modernist and advancement that they contribute, I think we should remind them of the precariousness of these human condition in most of these societies, the vulnerability of unskilled labor, the soul-destroying impact of poverty and homelessness, and the case with which the rich and powerful subvert law enforcement to their own ends (Serageldin 1995: 31).

But we can be sure that once these peoples’ expertise in classifying the biodiversity of the tropical forests is acquired, and all their “secrets” are revealed and appropriated, they will meet the fate typical of indigenous people in World Bank’s projects—possibly through a “resettlement” plan.

It is within this framework that we have now to reconsider the World Bank’s policy towards higher education in Africa. At the most minimal level, it is clear that the collapse of Africa’s higher education systems allows the TNCs and the international financial agencies, like the World Bank, to present themselves, in the eyes of the world, as the centers best equipped and thus best entitled, to protect, preserve, control the cultural wealth of the continent, whatever form it may take (from agricultural seeds, to “cultural property” like archeological sites, to pharmaceutical substances to be discovered through exploration of Africa’s forests) (World Bank 1992).

The ability of the TNCs to obtain licenses, and legitimacy for “bio-prospectting,” relies, to a large extent, on the general impoverishment of the African countries, that in the wake of liberalization, must literally sell their birth-rights (Tripp 1993). The disabling of the universities gives a powerful contribution to this process, as it weakens the ability of African countries to enforce measures that would protect Africa’s knowledge, “traditional” or otherwise. Thus, ironically, just at the time when the dynamism of African knowledge is being recognized, and “local,” “situatuated” knowledge is being given a new epistemological stature (Guyer 1996, Braudotti et al. 1994, Harding 1986), the World Bank is undermining any institutional basis for its protection.

In addition to legitimizing intellectual property rights, the structural adjustment of African universities helps to reduce the TNCs’ costs of research and production, by making available to them a large pool of cheap intellectual labor and research facilities in the African higher learning institutions. (There is parallel here with what is taking place with the Russian computer scientists, who are similarly being hired for a pittance, in this case by U.S. software companies, after the destruction of the Russian universities.)

The recruitment occurs through the funding of select university departments, or programs that are allowed to survive, with the injection of short-term, task-oriented funds, to pay for the personnel that is to help with bio-prospecting work, or that is to provide a liaison with local communities, and give the project a veneer of local, indigenous input.

Much gene-hunting and gene-plundering is now conducted in this fashion, with only those segments of the African universities being revitalized that can be used as intellectual plantations, where workers are expected to survive on short-term, contract work projects, issued from First World “donor” agencies, governments, or the TNCs themselves, who reap immense profits in the process. In other words, much of current research by pharmaceutical or agricultural companies consists of the “booting” of the medical and agricultural knowledge of “Third World peoples.”

The African universities have two other major consequences. First, it undermines their ability to develop, on the basis of local/national research, cheaper products than those marketed by the TNCs. Second, it subverts their capacity to protect African “farmers rights” from external exploitation.

The WTO property rights regime allows the patenting of final products (the DNA-specific seed or the chemically-defined pharmaceutical substance) rather than the patenting of production processes. Consequently, anyone wishing to utilize the new processes leading to those products must pay fees to the patents’ holder. This means that a Third World research institution would not be allowed to produce, by means of a different, low-tech, low-cost process, an ingredient present in a product patented by a U.S. company without paying fees to that company; nor could a Third World government allow a local company to patent it (Prashad 1994). That is why U.S. based firms have fought a hard war against process-based patenting laws, and favored, instead, product-based laws. Product-patenting most often gives monopoly rights to the most technologically costly production process. Thus, any breakthrough replacing a high-tech process with a more labor-intensive one would be nullified as the producer will have to pay a licence fee to the high-tech patent owner (Watkins 1992: 37-38).

Along the same lines, the rights of farmers living in the villages, fields and forests of Africa are more easily trampled upon, without the protection coming from the presence of a domestic academicianship or branch of government capable of standing up to the TNCs (Brush 1992). This is what happened in the Uruguay Round of GATT (which led to the creation of the WTO), in the context of the debates over patent rights. The “plant breeders”—see the TNCs were unambiguously privileged over the farmers, who were thus deprived of their “compa...

The defeat of the African farmers’ rights is directly related to the weakness of the African universities, that should be in charge of the conservation and exploration of their countries’ biodiversity, and the protection of local knowledge. Calestus Juma suggested this much in the late 1980s:

By granting farmers’ rights, African countries would also be asserting property rights over material that is in their territories and would therefore strengthen their capacity to bargain with powerful users for other forms of compensation. They, for example, may require that the information and technical knowledge arising from the use of genetic material collected from the continent for breeding be exchanged freely with African scientists as a way of building local capacity in related fields (Juma 1989: 234).

Attempting, then, some general conclusion, we can say that the weakening of the African universities is more than a means to devalue the work-force and to curtail African political autonomy. It is also a means to intensify the exploitation of the continent in a total and
enduring way, i.e., by expropriating it of the capacity to reproduce itself materially and culturally. Undermining university research, or allowing it to continue in a fragmented and dependent manner, under the direction of donors' programs and at the service of foreign TNCs, increases the expropriation of the continent's wealth, since it prevents Africans from devising local products, cheaper and more fit for local needs. It also forces them to pay exorbitant costs for commodities that have to be imported from abroad, and which in many cases are—ironically or better perhaps, tragically—made out of information robbed from local farmers or healers. By virtue of the working of the world market, in the transfer from the hands of Africans to those of the TNCs, the same products acquire a much higher value than they previously had, even though their value—use-value had remained unchanged. This is because the TNC's high-wage and high-tech work environment is more capital-intensive than the low-wage work of indigenousknowers in diverse African bioregions; and the value of intellectual property is not determined by its "use value." More generally, the intellectual property regime has contributed to a situation in which the African people are forced to pay in order to use their own knowledge, as the products now patented by TNCs are often nothing more than "high tech" versions of a plant part, chemical or drug that can only naturally be found in the same "low tech, low wage" country that now has to pay for it. Also firms producing in the country of origin of a patented plant part, chemical or drug, must often pay a license fee to a foreign TNC patent holder, even though the product's use was discovered by the indigenous people that very same country. Thus, the unequal exchange, first defined for non-intellectual products by Arghiri Emmanuel in the 1960s (Emmanuel 1972), could not be more complete and more pernicious than it is in this new form. This situation has sparked off a movement in the Third World to demand that either the patenting of life forms be abrogated or that intellectual property protection be extended to indigenous "farmers," to the peoples whose knowledge was used in the creation of a new life-form, or to the Third World countries whose territories are home to the species in question (Brush 1992). These claims, however, have had no impact on WTO, whose primary allegiance is to assert the hegemony of the commodity form.

As this article suggests, one front for this struggle is education. This means that university struggles have an important bearing on the resistance to the WTO/U.S. intellectual property regime. Indeed, intellectual workers in the physical and social sciences, as well as artists and historians, could play a major role in the defense of local knowledge. This, perhaps, is one further reason why they have so severely under attack from international agencies like the World Bank. Independent faculties and universities, in fact, could go a long way to ensure that the patents are not used as launching pads for biopiracy.

Bibliography


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WHO IS CAFA AND WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

The Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa (CAFA) consists of people teaching and studying in North America and Europe who are concerned with the increasing violations of academic freedom that are taking place in African universities and who believe that it is crucial we support the struggle our African colleagues are conducting to assert and preserve their rights.

CAFA was organized in the Spring of 1991 and since then we have been involved in numerous campaigns on behalf of African teachers and students. We have also created and continue to update a “Chronology of the African Student Movement from 1985.” The CAFA Newsletter contains scholarly articles on the impact of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies on African education as well as action alerts and other information about student and faculty struggles on African campuses.

CAFA’s objectives include:

*informing our colleagues about the current situation African campuses;
*setting up an urgent action network to respond promptly to emergency situations;
*mobilizing our unions and other academic organizations so that we can put pressure on African academic authorities as well as international agencies like the World Bank and the IMF;
*organizing delegations that will make direct contact with teachers and students and their organizations in Africa.

The annual fee for membership in CAFA is $25. CAFA’s coordinators and the editors of the CAFA Newsletter are:

George Caffentzis
Department of Philosophy
University of Southern Maine
P.O. Box 9300
Portland Maine 04104-9300
Tel.: (207) 780-4332
email: caffentz@usm.maine.edu

Silvia Federici
New College
130 Hofstra University
Hempstead, NY 11550-1090
Tel.: (516) 463-5838
email: nucszf@hofstra.edu