

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Spring has arrived, and along with it, the promise of growth. As a precursor, January 1 marked the first day of the third five-year Rutgers University contract to host the ASA Secretariat in New Brunswick, NJ. Rutgers University President Richard McCormick described the ASA as “a jewel in Rutgers’ crown.” The sparkling achievements of Rutgers’ Africanist faculty infused the ASA’s 50th Anniversary celebrations: Carolyn Brown’s leadership as a Local Arrangements Committee Co-Chair and the Committee’s energy led to wonderful events that included the first ever “New York Celebrates Africa Week,” which kicked-off at the Schomburg Center. Abena Busia organized a Durbar of Ghanaian chiefs during the Welcome Reception to honor the ASA’s 50th and the 50th Anniversary of Ghana’s independence. Ousseina Alidou’s book, *Engaging Modernity*, was a runner-up for the Women’s Caucus Aidoo-Snyder Book Prize. Barbara Cooper won the Herskovits Award for *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel*. On behalf of the ASA Board of Directors, I am delighted to thank the many representatives of the Rutgers University community who were so instrumental in bringing the Association to Rutgers, and who worked with me to renew the contract through December 31, 2012.

The importance of the Rutgers University contribution to the ASA cannot be overemphasized. Assured the stability of an operational base, the Board and the Secretariat have focused attention on finances, governance and strategic planning. We worked hard to adhere to 2007’s balanced budget. Watch the website for the outcome of those efforts in a new Annual Report. We are closely monitoring the balanced budget that was passed for 2008. The Strategic Planning Committee and members of the Board’s Executive Committee continued outlining initiatives to strengthen the Association during

February 1-2 meetings in New Brunswick. These initiatives were further discussed during President Aliko Songolo and Vice President Paul Zeleza’s February 20 visit to the Secretariat, and they form the basis for the Spring Board Meeting agenda that will include plans for follow-up referenda to update the ASA’s Bylaws. We are also working to enhance the ASA relationship with its Coordinate Organizations. I am pleased to welcome to the Secretariat Suzanne Moyer, who joined the staff as Senior Program Manager on February 11, and whose expertise will be an invaluable support for these efforts.

The Call for Proposals process for the 50th Anniversary of the first Annual Meeting highlighted the need for technological upgrades that will be detailed at a future date. The online system functioned smoothly for some, while others encountered random and unexpected obstacles, and the deadline consequently was extended. Be assured that all verified attempts to submit a proposal on or before March 23 will be honored. The Program Committee will soon begin its work to organize the November 13-16 program in Chicago, “Knowledge of Africa: The Next Fifty Years,” and the Preliminary Program will be posted to the website in July. In the meantime, please view the Program Committee Proposal Review Guidelines that the Board adopted on January 24, 2008 as per the Presidents’ Statement on the ASA Policy for Proposal Acceptances for the 2007 Annual Meeting.

As indicated above, individual effort advances the collectivity. The ASA, now in a strengthened financial position, is poised to capitalize increasingly on the vitality of its members in ways familiar and new. We thrive on your input. Please help us to complete the “Fifty Fabulous Firsts” document at [www.africanstudies.org](http://www.africanstudies.org), and please continue to contribute to the 50 Year Anniversaries Fundraising Campaign. If we honor the past and endow the future, the next 50 years of “promoting African studies” promise to be productive and rewarding!