

LETTER FROM THE ASA PRESIDENT

Friends and Members of the ASA:

I am writing to brief you on recent developments within our beloved association. Our 50th Annual Meeting held in Chicago last November was, by all accounts, a great success. Besides the excellent facilities and layout of the hotel that facilitated conversation and conviviality, Chicago was abuzz with the excitement of the election of Senator Barack Obama, who lives on Chicago's South Side, as the next President of the United States. For members of our Association there was special cause for celebration given President-elect Obama's strong personal African connections.

Altogether, approximately 1700 registrants attended 208 panels and roundtables and a poster session during the conference, including board sponsored roundtables and the Current Issues plenary. The Program Committee received 862 proposals and approved 95%, a much higher acceptance rate than last year. Among the highlights of the Annual Meeting was the keynote address by the President of the Chicago-based John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Dr. Jonathan Fanton, who expressed the Foundation's commitment to Africa and African studies. The invitation to Dr. Fanton is part of the Association's efforts to build relations with the philanthropic community and other constituencies working on Africa.

I am also happy to report that during the Annual Meeting a memorandum of understanding was signed between the ASA and the Association of African Universities. This will enable the two associations to work on joint programs of mutual interest and strengthen our engagements with our

counterparts on the continent. We expect to sign similar agreements with other scholarly organizations based on the continent.

As most of you know, over the past few years the Association has been trying to improve its financial position through careful budgeting and fundraising. This has borne some fruit. The ASA's budget has been balanced for the past two years and is balanced for the coming year. Also, through prudent investment and management, the Association has incurred much lower losses than other academic associations in the current financial crisis. The fundraising drive is making some progress, but membership donations could be higher. The more money we can raise internally, the easier it will be to convince external donors to contribute and build the Association's endowment. So I appeal to all of you to continue making donations.

I am delighted to report that the ASA will be launching a new and more efficient platform for its website in the New Year, which will provide faster and easier communication between members and the secretariat and the board, as well as facilitate networking among members, and enable the Association to provide new services that will allow us to become a more robust community of scholars and advocates for Africa.

I thank you for your continued active membership and support and look forward to a successful year for the ASA.

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza
President