



History, Memory and Violence

A Focus on Africa Symposium

Friday, April 24, 2009

**Department of
Africana Studies
Brown University**

**Joukowsky Forum
Watson Institute for
International Studies
111 Thayer Street, Providence**



12 p.m. Film Screening

The Two Faces of War: National Liberation in Guinea-Bissau

with **Flora Gomes**, distinguished film-maker from Guinea-Bissau.

A documentary on the war of liberation in Guinea-Bissau (and by extension, in Angola and Mozambique). In this film, Gomes' lens is on both the Portuguese colonial soldiers and the African freedom fighters.

2 p.m. Lecture

History, Memory and Freedom Park

Wally Serote, CEO Freedom Park, South Africa

Freedom Park, 52-hectares on the outskirts of Pretoria, is dedicated to celebrating South Africa's heritage and its vision for the future that's embedded in the African Renaissance. It also highlights South Africa's role in the genesis of life forms and hominids, including geological formations dating back 3.6 billion years.

4 p.m. Play excerpt and panel discussion

A Time of Fire

by **Charles Mulekwa**

An unnamed African country. A civil war. A student, a soldier, a thief, one story of Africa.

Panel participants include: filmmaker Flora Gomes (Geri Augusto, interpreter), playwright Charles Mulekwa, scholar Peter Mendy and CEO, Freedom Park Wally Serote; moderated by Tony Bogues, Harmon Family Professor of Africana Studies.

Florentino (Flora) Gomes

Flora Gomes has international stature as a distinguished filmmaker whose work is aesthetically innovative and is historically significant texts of global culture. It is difficult for major African filmmakers to produce a sustained output of high quality and artistically sound films. Gomes has managed to address the historical legacies of funding and infrastructural deficiencies on the continent. Gomes resides in his country, Guinea-Bissau, one of the poorest nations in the world. He has completed a number of shorts, beginning in 1977, and five feature films, the first *Mortu Nega* in 1988. His features have won awards at prestigious international film festivals and are discussed in textbooks on African cinema and postcolonial film. His films often deal with history and memory as well as modernization and questions of identity. In spring 2006, Gomes was a visiting artist/professor at the Department of Africana Studies, Brown University.

Mongane Wally Serote

A South African poet and writer, Serote was born in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. He first became involved in Black Consciousness as he finished high school in Soweto. His presence in that town linked him to a group known as the “township” or “Soweto” poets. His poems often expressed themes of political activism, the development of black identity, and images of revolt and resistance. He was arrested by the apartheid government under the Terrorism Act in June 1969 and spent nine months in solitary confinement, before being released without charge. He later obtained a Master’s of Fine Arts degree at Columbia University in 1977, before going to work in Gaborone, Botswana and later London for the Arts and Culture Department, African National Congress. After publishing in various journals, he published his first anthology in 1972, *Yakhal’inkomo*. In 1973 he won the Ingrid Jonker Poetry Prize.

In addition to currently serving as the CEO, Freedom Park, he is also chairperson of African Renaissance Organization of Southern Africa; Indigenous Knowledge Systems of South African and acting chairperson of South African Chapter of African Renaissance. He has served as chair of the parliamentary select committee for arts and culture.

Charles Mulekwa

Mulekwa, from Uganda, has practiced theatre since 1983. Currently the Ford Foundation International Fellow and a Brown University, Theatre and Performance Studies graduate student. From 1990–1992 Mulekwa taught Literature and Drama, King’s College, Buddo, Uganda. Then from 1992–2003 served at the Uganda National Theatre in managerial, directorial and dramaturgical capacities. In 1994, at the Royal Court Theatre, London he gave talks about Ugandan theatre. He also lectured at Cambridge, Nuremburg and Hamburg universities and on BBC radio. In 1998, Mulekwa performed in the Uganda version of Brecht’s, *Mother Courage and Her Children*. The production went to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC and to the Grahamstown Festival, South Africa in 2000. In 1998–99 he graduated with a Master’s degree in playwrighting from the University of Birmingham, England. He was a writer in residence at London’s Royal National Theatre Studio and served as Chief Judge for the BBS African Performance radio drama series. Commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre he wrote, *Black Diamond*. In 2002 Mulekwa became an Iowa International Writing Fellow and in 2004 was appointed advisory member of the program. He wrote the Ugandan film *Full of Energy* for Great Lakes Productions in 2003. In collaboration with People With Disabilities he wrote *The Other Me* for BBC World Service in 2005. Also in 2005, he was Cultural Consultant for the film, *The Last King of Scotland*. Mulekwa is an Affiliate Artist, Providence Black Repertory Company.

