

California Runs! By Saheed Aderinto. Posted on Facebook on December 2, 2023

I took 7 graduate students of Florida International University to the African Studies Association (ASA) Conference in San Francisco, California. I helped all of them get funding to attend the conference. Flight ticket, accommodation, registration, membership, and even food--all covered! I took 6 of them for the first time this year. One followed me last year. So, he's attending for the second time.

I attended my first ASA conference as a graduate student in November 2009, four months before I defended my doctoral thesis in March 2010. I couldn't afford flight ticket. So, I drove with fellow graduate students from Austin, Texas to New Orleans, for eight hours (one way). I also couldn't afford hotel accommodation. I slept in the house of Professor Steven Salm in New Orleans and trekked to the hotel venue to save \$20, daily, so the kids don't starve.

It was the height of graduate school SAPA, when every penny carried the burden of biting financial obligations, the possibility of prolonged saporization, and the motivation to finish the PhD ahead of time so that SAPA doesn't kill me. A moderate or a short-lived SAPA is a reality of life for millions of people, at least at some point in their lives. Excessive SAPA is what no one should wish, even their enemies. Regardless, SAPA is a roaring monster—a monstrous killer of people and dreams!

I'm thankful that 14 years after attending my saporized ASA conference, I'm in the position to help my own PhD students attend a fully-sponsored ASA Conference—just a few months into their first year in graduate school at FIU. They won't have to dip into their limited resources to achieve what it took me a lot of pain to do 14 years ago.

I can't promise them a SAPA-free graduate school experience, because graduate school SAPA is one good reason to get a PhD—a good one, in record time! I can only help block some SAPA attacks so the bastard doesn't annihilate them, completely. Unless you share paternity with DJ Cuppy who recently received a Master's degree from Oxford University, a SAPA-free graduate school is a mirage. Praying against graduate school Sapa is like wishing that Abeokuta taxi drivers would one day allow Uber or Bolt in their city. Why fix what is not broken? Why take away people's beloved carcass-like taxis? Why?

However, I have my own selfish reason for sourcing for funds to take them to ASA. Did you see what I'm seeing? A potential Fuji band? My retirement plan is shaping up, real good! Amala Day in Miami is looking realer than imagined.

I presented the most stubborn chapter of my ongoing book on Fuji at the conference. Titled, "More than Lovers, Daughters, Patrons, Mothers: New Lights on the Women of Fuji," the chapter is proving to be the most difficult to write, partly because I'm trying to invent a new language and approach to study the overlapping roles of women in Fuji. I got some good feedback from the audience, and I think I now have some clarity to complete the chapter. Of course, I filmed the presentation because it will be used for the episode on the "Women of Fuji" in The Fuji Documentary.

Yours Sincerely in History,
Isola Ojurabemasa

