

# OSA Newsletter

## Oromo Studies Association

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## 1. A Message from OSA President

Dear OSA Family,

Less than three months are left before we meet once again for OSA Annual Conference in the Twin-Cities that have hosted us kindly many times. The relatively high Oromo population outside of Oromia in these cities makes it extra special to get together and participate in OSA conference. **The 21<sup>st</sup> OSA Annual Conference will be held on July 28-29, 2007** and has invited many distinguished Oromo and non-Oromo speakers who will be making presentations. We also have homegrown and energetic International Oromo Youth Association (IOYA) that has organized three panels and will make its presence more visible this year.

**“Discourse on Oromo music by Oromo musicians”, “The Role of Religion in Oromo Society by religious leader”, “Empowering the Oromo Women” and “Gada: An Indigenous Oromo Democracy”** are just a few of the many panels awaiting you during the 21<sup>st</sup> OSA Annual Conference in July. Many first time OSA presenters will be making their impression during the conference. More information will be made available in the coming weeks and months about the conference. Conference venue and lodging are updated and available at <http://www.romostudies.org/conference-venue.htm>. Since this conference will be extra special, as an OSA President I do cordially invite you to join us at the **OSA Annual Conference during July 28-29, 2007 in Minneapolis at the University of Minnesota.**

OSA has conducted a very successful Mid-year Conference at Howard University, in Washington, DC, on April

14, 2007. A very short report is given below. Two very important issues are also included in this letter: Nomination for OSA award and a personal plea for donation to cover expenses related to OSA activities. **I hope you will pay special attention to these timely requests and respond positively to make OSA a better association.**

## 2. OSA Mid-year Conference Report

OSA Mid-year Conference took place at Howard University on April 14, 2007 starting at 9:00 am until almost 7:00 pm with a short break for lunch. The program of the conference is posted at OSA website (<http://www.romostudies.org/OSA2007.Midyear.Conference.program.pdf>) and all the speakers were present except Obbo Leencoo Latta who could not make it due to of unforeseen delay in securing the necessary travel document from the country of his residence on timely fashion.

The theme of the conference was “Strengthening the Core Components of Oromo National Movement.” The conference was open to all and free. About 100 people from civic and political party organizations and unaffiliated individuals were present. One of the goals of this conference was to create a forum where Oromos can come together, listen to experts and experienced individuals and then brainstorm freely what needs to be done to strength the Oromo society in general. I believe the conference was a great success in my opinion by accomplishing its intended goals.

I will be doing deserves if I try to condense the more than forty minutes speech into a paragraph of synopsis or sound bites. The futile attempts are full of my own biases and by no means

meant to present or capture what were presented at the conference. I know I have gone way beyond the irreducible minimum. A condensed version of the conference video will be available in the near future and one panel that will include our speakers will be organized during OSA Annual Conference and please be my guest.

Dr. Asafa spoke on “The Concepts of Oromummaa and Identity Formation in Contemporary Oromo Society” eloquently using PowerPoint slides to emphasize his main points. He meticulously, as good and smart teachers do, explained Oromummaa as an Oromo ideology that is a source of identity formation. He said that liberated mind has no fear and is focused and productive. He emphasized that contemporary Oromo society has to embrace Oromummaa that accommodates Islam, Christianity, Waaqeffata and other beliefs as well. He stressed that unity of purpose and action is possible when Oromos are guided by Oromummaa, an ideology and a life-style of a liberated Oromo- person.

Dr. Addissu, as a veteran of Oromo struggle and who was a confidant of Obbo Baro Tumsaa, described vividly organizational and communication methods employed during the early days of Macaa and Tulama. Speaking on “Organizational Models for Oromo Movement”, he emphasized the role of Oromo ethnics (*safu'u*) and oath/swearing (*kakaa/kakuu*) in uniting and creating comradeship among Oromos across religion and regions. He said that *Safuu* and *kakuu* have eternally made Oromos to believe and depend on each other. Many Oromos kept their words even if it was imminent death. He emphasized the value of believing in each other and not second-guessing the motive of others since that was considered un-Oromo.

Obbo Lube is also a veteran of Oromo struggle for many years and has witnessed many Oromo nationalists who have made tactical alliance with different Ethiopian rulers to make even the smallest for the Oromo people and paid the ultimate sacrifices. During his presentation on “Unity and Tolerance for Oromo National Movement”, he emphasized that the utmost importance of unity among the Oromo people and Oromo organizations first and foremost. He dismissed artificial differences due to religion and region among Oromos. Obbo Lube stressed that Oromummaa supersedes both Islam and Christianity. Therefore, he asserted that Christian, Muslim and Waaqeffata Oromos should tolerate each other and unite for the common cause of Oromo liberation. He passionately disapproved any rapprochement between Oromo political organizations and *nafxaagna* organization because of the non-existence of commonalities. He underlined that such an alliance in the past has resulted in incalculable loss for Oromos.

Obbo Dimma’s presentation was on “Leadership in National Struggle: the Oromo Experience”. He analytically examined the Oromo national leadership with his own experience with emphasis on lessons learned and why it is where it is now. It was deep and serious presentation with laser focus on the state of and history of the Oromo national movement leadership. He emphasized that leadership does not exist in vacuum and it is always the product of the society it leads. He visited many critical points in the Oromo national leadership such as joining the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) with TPLF, withdrawing from TGE and the impact of enemy machination on the creation and growth of Oromo national leaders. He cited tangible facts and emphasized what needs to be done to create a dynamic and energetic leadership in principle. He also noted the pseudo artificial differences that were exploited by Oromo

enemies to weaken the bonds of Oromo leadership. He said that he is optimistic the cumulative lessons learned in the long journey will strength the Oromo leadership.

Abba Kallacha's presentation was on "Oromo Mobilization for the Common Causes". He dissected the notions that Oromos are different and at the same time that they are the same. He pointed out that as any society that inhabits the earth, Oromos have different religions, live in different regions with different local customs. Oromos have intermarried with other ethnic groups and have different experiences of subjugation. He said that those geographical and religious differences could be a source of strength but not weakness. He said that no matter who or where one examines, all Oromos yearn freedom, peace, democracy and equality. His colorful and rich presentation was captivating. He said that coming together as a people is a power our enemies do not want us to have and encouraged Oromos to focus on ideas than personalities and raise up for the common good setting aside petty differences.

There was a lively Questions and Answers session that brought up the questions of our time and the challenges Oromos face now. The audience was polite, informed and asked pointed questions that were timely and very important. No boulder was set for what question could be asked and no one was denied a chance to speak no matter what the political affiliation or persuasion he/she holds. Overall, it was a civil exchange of ideas, a lively forum that was limited because of shortage of time.

The finale was a group discussion where the audience was divided into four groups and each group elected its chair and reporter. All were given the same tasks of identifying the three most crucial issues or challenges Oromos face today and to

propose the best possible solutions for the challenges. In my opinion, this was the most vivacious free exchange of ideas I have seen from ordinary Oromos in a long time. All participants understood the weight of their ideas and belonging and that made all to share no matter how long they have to wait to speak. In many instants, both the priority issues and possible solutions were decided by votes within a group, but when the all the reporters came on the stage and presented their priority issues and possible solutions, there was a significant overlap. It was a humbling, exciting and motivating experience to listen to deep and original thoughts. The atmosphere was so engaging and it could have continued for long time.

After the presentations of the crucial issues and the possible solutions, OSA requested an honest and genuine feedback about the conference from the audience. It was all positive, but inclusion of a woman and youth among the speakers was suggested that OSA would correct graciously in the future. Many repeatedly requested that such a forum was overdue and thanked OSA for undertaking a timely task to engage the Oromo people. Many expressed their ambitious project for OSA from helping to solve differences among Oromo organizations to conducting such a meeting more often at major cities. All Oromos fundamentally have the same goals and there are no issues that they cannot solve through open discussion because such a character is imprinted in their DNA.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our local organizers, especially Dr. Arega Negero, who secured the meeting hall and the Oromo Community Organization, DC, Radio (<http://www.oneoromo.org/>) who helped to advertise the event and others who distributed pamphlets. I would like also to thank all those who participated in the conference as speaker,

chairperson, reporter and/or just as an attendee. OSA Executive Committee Members, Dr. Beyan Asoba, Dr. Ezekiel Gebisa, Dr. Melaku Mekonnen and Adde Xahaay Silga, made this conference possible through detailed planning and hard work. The meeting was conducted in Afaan Oromo from the beginning to the end, and probably this is the first OSA Mid-year Conference to do so.

### 3. OSA Award Nomination

OSA has been giving award for many years and this year will not be different. There are many deserving individuals, professional groups or institutions that OSA wishes to recognize. I am urging OSA members to submit your nomination following OSA Award Guidelines as appended next or you may access the full document at <http://www.oromostudies.org/OSA.Aaward.guideline.pdf>.

Please send a maximum of three nominations per person to my e-mail ([hulukgo@auburn.edu](mailto:hulukgo@auburn.edu)) BEFORE or ON June 30, 2007. Your nomination will remain confidential and do not forget to include a brief justification statement for your nominee(s). The final selection will be made following OSA Guidelines.

#### OSA Guidelines and Criteria for Recognition and Award Giving

##### A. Categories and Criteria

1. **Institution(s)** which has made a major financial and material contribution
  - a) to the development of Oromo scholarship.
  - b) to hold Oromo conference(s) and workshops.
  - c) to publish the *Journal of Oromo Studies*, OSA conference proceedings and other texts.
  - d) to host other Oromo Studies events.

##### 2. Individual(s)

###### a) Scholarship:

Someone who has made a distinguished contribution to Oromo scholarship by publishing book(s) and important article(s) in reputed scholarly journals or by editing journals and books on the Oromo.

###### b) Service:

- Someone who has made a distinguished
- i) contribution to the development of OSA by providing leadership and scholarly inspiration.
  - ii) effort in organizing OSA conferences, seminars and workshops.

##### B. Nomination

1. Institution(s) and individual(s) can be nominated by the Board, Executive Committee or OSA members.
3. A member who nominates someone for recognition and award should submit a brief statement regarding the prospective awardee's contributions based on the criteria in Section A above. All nominations should be made by June 30.
3. Nominee(s) or prospective awardee(s) could include any institution(s) or individual(s) who meet(s) the criteria under Section A above, but active Board Chairperson and the President could not be

considered for an award or recognition before their term of office expires.

4. Nominations will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and recommended to the Board of Directors for final decision.
5. The Board makes the final decision.

#### **4. Donation, Donation, Donation...**

After a very exiting and productive Mid-year Conference, OSA is gearing up for a very special annual conference just in less than three months. Our local organizing committee headed by Obbo Redwan is working hard to host us with open arms and great accommodations. Many Oromo and non-Oromo individuals will be making their first time OSA presentations. We anticipate outstanding presentations, interactions and harvest of knowledge. We have invited a few well-known and respected Oromo from Oromia to share with us their field experiences. This is a great opportunity for OSA members and supporters and I do sincerely invite you to be there.

OSA members and supporters know that OSA's budget comes from membership and entrance fees. Both of these fees are very nominal compared to other similar associations. In a long time, OSA just published (not printed) JOS volume 14, number 1, and number 2 will be available during the conference. This quality work with mailing expenses has cost OSA almost \$9,000.00. In addition, we have to rent conference halls and multimedia equipment. We also have invited a few individuals from Oromia who need help to participate in the conference. Many of them have spent their meager income to secure passport and need our

help to join us. That is why I am pleading with each of you to help as much as you possibly can to make OSA accessible to all. OSA is a pan-Oromo organization that brings Oromos together from all over the world. Please help this to happen by donating whatever you can, \$10, \$50, \$100, \$200, etc., today.

OSA will be handicapped without your help and I do count on each of you to make your donation because it is an investment in Oromo empowerment; it is an investment in Oromo knowledge capital and it is about making a difference. Please and please, send your tax-deductible donations now to:

Tsehay Silga  
OSA treasurer  
P.O. Box 32391  
Fridley, MN 55432  
(USA)

**Two very important items I would like to remind you again are:**

- 1. If you have sent your titles, full abstract is due BEFORE or ON May 31, 2007.**
- 2. If you did not send your 2006 presentation manuscript for OSA proceedings, please do so as soon as possible for inclusion in the upcoming publication.**

I do look forward welcoming each of you in Minneapolis with Oromo optimism and great confidence in the state of OSA.

Together we can do more.

Nagaan,

**Gobana Huluka**

OSA President

<http://www.romostudies.org>