

KEN SARO-WIWA -- 1987-1991

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November 30, 1992

Abiola Irele
2825 Neil Avenue # 904
Columbus, OH 43202

Dear 'Biola,

Thank you for agreeing to consider preparing an entry on Ken Saro-Wiwa for the third volume of the Dictionary of Literary Biography's Twentieth-Century Caribbean and Black African Writers. Please note that the entry should run between 6000 and 6500 words instead of between 4000 and 5000 words as previously stated. The publisher has given us more space for each of the entries in this volume so you will be able to deal with your author in greater detail.

I am enclosing:

1. a memorandum of agreement which you should sign, address and date;
2. a contributor's questionnaire which you should fill out with your addresses, phone numbers, and fax number;
3. a contributor's style sheet;
4. a sample essay from the first volume in the series.

Please return items 1 and 2 to me at your earliest convenience. If any questions arise while you are preparing your entry for the volume, do not hesitate to contact me at the address above or by phone at 512-472-4712 (home) or 512-471-5522 (office) or by fax at 512-471-4909. Please keep in mind that our deadline is 1 June 1993.

Thanks again for offering to join us in this project.

Sincerely yours,

Bernth Lindfors

P.S. If you decide you can't do the entry, please let me know before the beginning of the new calendar year, using my home address (1501 Gaston Ave., Austin, TX 78703). I'll send you a copy of the print-out of works and criticism that Ken gave me last spring and will ask him to provide you with an update covering the last six months or so. Who knows? Perhaps he has published three or four new books since I last saw him.

It was good to see you in Seattle. Hope to run into you at a palm-wine bar somewhere in Guadeloupe in April

June 14, 1993

Ezenwa-Ohaeto
English and Literature Department
Alvan Ikoku College of Education
Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

Dear Ezenwa-Ohaeto,

This is to remind you that I am looking forward to receiving your DLB entry on Ken Saro-Wiwa, which was due June 1st. If you have run into a snag and now anticipate that you will not be able to deliver the essay by the middle of next month at the latest, please let me know immediately so I can start searching for a replacement for you. Otherwise it may prove impossible to include an essay on Saro-Wiwa in the book.

Sincerely,

Bernth Lindfors

P.S. I know you are at work on this essay. I am only seeking some assurance that you'll be able to finish it reasonably soon. Also, if you can obtain some photos or caricatures of Saro-Wiwa, those would be greatly appreciated.

August 30, 1993

Editor
Saros International Publishers
Saros Plaza
33 Aba Road
P.O. Box 193
Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Dear Editor,

When catching up on Nigerian news by reading some old issues of Nigerian newspapers at Indiana University recently, I was alarmed to read that Ken Saro-Wiwa had been arrested and charged with treason several months ago. I had heard nothing about this and I have heard nothing further since, so I do not know if he has been released or tried or is still sitting in detention. Any up-to-date information you can send me about this would be greatly appreciated. I have already sent a photocopy of the original news story to the African Literature Association headquarters here in the U.S., urging them to protest his arrest and incarceration. I certainly hope he is not still in prison.

At about the time that he was arrested, I had written to inform him that Reinhard Sander and I were editing a new volume of the Dictionary of Literary Biography on "Twentieth-Century Caribbean and Black African Writers," and that there would be a 6000-word essay in it on him and his writings. We were looking for appropriate illustrations for the volume, and I wrote to ask if he could send us a few photographs (old as well as new), book jackets, and photocopies of one or two manuscript pages that could be considered for inclusion. Any unique, rare or original materials sent would be returned as soon as the publisher had a chance to make copies, and photographers would be paid a fee for any photos selected for publication. If you have access to such materials, I would be very grateful if you could direct them to me at the address above. Thanks in advance for any help you are able to provide.

And do please let me know how Ken is faring.

Sincerely yours,

Bernth Lindfors

January 14, 1994

Ken Saro-Wiwa
Saros International Publishers
Saros Plaza
33 Aba Road
P.O. Box 193
Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Dear Ken,

I'm writing in the hope that you are back in circulation again. News of your imprisonment and much-delayed release made the papers here. The ALA sent off a protest in your behalf, but I don't know if it did any good. It appears that you were sprung from jail by other forces coming into play on the Nigerian scene. It is hard to keep up with the pace of Nigerian politics these days, especially on this side of the Atlantic. In any case, I hope you are well and getting back into your usual spate of activities.

I am writing to ask for a photograph (or two or three) of you. As you may be aware, an essay on you and your work will be appearing in a volume on African and Caribbean writers that Reinhard Sander and I are editing for the Dictionary of Literary Biography. DLB volumes are handsomely illustrated with photos, drawings, reproductions of book jackets, copies of ms. pages, and the like. We have good drawings of you and we have plenty of book jackets to choose from, but we are lacking high-quality photos, and we don't have any reproductions of manuscript pages. Could you send materials falling into the latter two categories to me? All originals will be returned once the publisher has made a selection for reproduction. Photographers will be acknowledged in the volume and will be paid a permissions fee (it would be helpful if you could indicate how much each photographer expects the publisher to pay for the right to reprint each photograph; the publisher will then make a selection based on quality and price and pay the individual concerned upon publication of the book). If some of the photos are from your own family archive, you will be credited (and paid, if need be) as the source of the illustration.

By separate post I am sending you a copy of Issue, the journal in which the proceedings of the first ALA conference appeared. It was on this occasion that Achebe made some remarks about you and your poetry in the context of talking about the Biafran war. This may be ancient history now, but I thought you might like ~~the~~ copy of the publication so it can be included in your computerized list of Saro-Wiwaiana, which must have grown enormously since I last saw it nearly two years ago. Saro-Weewee has become Saro-Bigbig.

Will you be going to the ALA conference in Accra? Unfortunately, I cannot afford to attend, the distance between Ghana and Texas being so formidably expensive to traverse without the assistance of institutional support. The university here is still suffering the consequences of the current oil glut, so it has had to cut back on travel funds. I'm sorry to have to miss this conference, for the last one on African Soil (in Dakar in '89) was a lot of fun. However, I should have a good chance of getting to the one at Ohio State University next year.

I wish you a very happy new year!

All the best,