

MURDERING OUR PROMISING BABIES: THE PAN-AFRICAN HISTORICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL (PANAFEST) FACTOR

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Abstract

International cultural festivals have attracted researchers and tourists globally for their role in impacting understanding and appreciation of societies and cultures worldwide. Regardless of this recent emphasis, in Ghana, there is paucity of literature on one of the most historically celebrated international historical and cultural festivals of unique significance to the global Pan-African family, the Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST). Yankah (2012) critiques the Ghanaian PANAFEST by examining the chequered history behind its evolution from a small-scale, culturally local vision to a grandiose event more appealing to tourists than to local citizens. So, deploying the interpretive paradigm and narrative design and with a SWOT analysis, we explored PANAFEST in perspective, seeking to critically examine its genesis, state of affairs for its prime periods, from 1990s to 2010,

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to expose challenges shackling its sustainability by the local citizens. The findings revealed that a lack of funding, mismanagement, negative perceptions and misgivings, poor planning and organisation, and partisan politics defeat the purpose for which PANAFEST was established. We opine that PANAFEST represents geopolitical, public memory, cultural space and theatrical event, and that it has come to stay and all governments, private individuals, tourists, African diasporans, Pan-Africanists, slave descendants and other corporate institutions should put their shoulders to the wheel in making it a monumental festival for generations yet unborn.

Key words: Culture, Cultural Festival, Historical Theatre, Panafest, Pan-Africanism

Introduction

International cultural festivals have attracted researchers and tourists globally for their role in impacting understanding and appreciation of societies and cultures worldwide. Regardless of this recent emphasis, in Ghana, there is paucity of literature on one of the most historically celebrated international historical and cultural festivals of unique significance to the global Pan-African family, the Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) (Osei-Tutu, 2009).

The Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival, as it was known at its inception, and now Pan-African Festival (PANAFEST), was established to promote African civilisation and culture as the running theme, the Re-emergence of African civilisation. The change that has taken place in the nomenclature of the name could be alluded to issues of time, context and focus of each festival edition. It is about three decades since the first edition of the festival was held in 1992 and it is possible that the demands of time and circumstances driving the focus and interest of PANAFEST have equally evolved, hence the evolution of the terminology to meet the desires and taste of the ever-changing dynamics within which the existence and sustainability of PANAFEST is set. There exist a number of publications on the various aspects of the festival (see Amemumey, 1998; Gibbs, 2012; Kerr, 2013; McMahon, 2014; Yankah, 2012). This paper has sought to examine the festival from its inception up to 2010. Yankah (2012) critiques the Ghanaian PANAFEST by examining the chequered history behind its evolution from a small-scale, culturally local vision to a grandiose event more appealing to tourists than to local citizens (Frömming, 2013; Gibbs, 2012; Kerr, 2013; McMahon, 2014).

Therefore, in this paper, we deployed the interpretive paradigm and descriptive design, with a SWOT analysis, to explore PANAFEST in perspective, seeking to critically examine its genesis, state of affairs for its prime periods, from 1990s to 2010, in order to identify factors mitigating against local sustainability of this international historical theatre festival rooted in African history (Gibbs, 2012). The two-decade period of scope is, perhaps, reflective of the evolutionary and transitional dynamics associated with PANAFEST, from 1992, the 20th century, to 2010, the 21st century, and more particularly, the new millennium.

Historical Context

The Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) is principally geared at championing the course of the PANAFEST movement – part of an attempt to link with and relocate brothers, sisters and people of African descent, who, for obvious reasons, have left or lost contact with the continent of Africa. The trailblazers of this movement date back to the pre-independence era (1940s), with renowned figures like Ghana’s first president Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Dubois and the likes.

Indeed, Ghana, the first black African country south of the Sahara to gain independence, became a beacon of hope for other African countries and Pan-Africans in the Diaspora. Such Pan-Africanists and or Diasporans wanted to look at the gains of Africa and feel attracted to their ancestral home. In turn, Africans saw an opportunity in such experiences to attract Diasporans and Pan-Africanists back to the African continent amidst the heritage politics (Schramm, 2004). This could be observed “in the pilgrimage tourism of African Americans to Ghana” (Reed, 2013, p. 524). Diasporan Africans sought the opportunity to tour Cape Coast and Elmina castles to catch a glimpse of one of Ghana’s slavery heritage sites and museums in the forms of castles and forts. This goes a long way to promote heritage tourism in Ghana (Pierre, 2009). Evidently, PANAFEST is part of a major cultural festival fashioned to demonstrate such relationships to draw African American tourists to Ghana (Schramm, 2004). This was the time when the relationship between Ghana and African Americans grew and gained prominence. Very notable figures visited the country, and this raised the agitation to fight for equality of the black man. The then president of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, was very instrumental in the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the

African Union (AU). On the declaration of Ghana's independence, on March 06, 1957, he said categorically that "The Independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent³".

The Concept of Pan-Africanism

The need to look at Pan-Africanism as far as Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFFEST) is concerned is very significant for the purposes of this paper. Pan-Africanism is a philosophy based on the belief that Africans share common bonds and objectives, and therefore their unity as a people with a common destiny will go a long way to achieve those objectives. This concept initially developed outside Africa in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries with people like Harriet Tubman, Marcus M. Garvey, Martin Luther King Junior, W. E. B. Dubois, Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Jomo Kenyatta and Haile Sellassie, emperor of Ethiopia. Its development was a reaction to the impact of European colonialism on Africa and its antecedent trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

In the mid-twentieth century, activists in Africa adopted Pan-Africanism as a rallying cry for independence from colonial rule. Some African Pan-Africanists sought to unite the continent as one independent nation. This culminated into two basic forms of Pan-Africanism – continental Pan-Africanism which advocated the unity of states and peoples within Africa, either through political union or through international cooperation, and Diaspora Pan-Africanism, relating to solidarity among all black Africans and peoples of black African descent outside the African continent.

Within this development and interpretation by authors, activists and scholars around the world, Pan-Africanism continually stands as a significant force in global politics and thought. Modern resistance to colonialism, however, began with the development of a formal Pan-African movement at the dawn of the 20th century.

Pan-Africanism had a cultural idea and a political movement. Otto von Bismarck, then Chancellor of Germany, in 1884, summoned other European nations to a conference in Berlin, without any African representation. While sitting at a table, Africa was carved up among the fourteen European nations (including the United States of America), as if it were a 'Christmas

³ The independence speech by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana at the old Polo grounds in Accra.

turkey.’ Apart from France, Germany and Portugal who had their shares, England got the biggest pieces. King Leopold II of Belgium was given the Congo and its people to rule and exploit. The ‘scramble for Africa’, which we call the ‘criminalisation of the states of Africa’, began just after the meeting. African lands, minerals and other rich natural resources were taken and the people were forced to work for the ‘colonial masters’.

It was generally accepted by many historians that the official beginning of the Pan-African movement started in 1883, because it was the year that saw a congress on Africa in Chicago. Blacks from all corners of the Diaspora, including notable figures like Bishops Henry McNeil and Alexander Crummel, discussed European Imperialism at that congress. The Diasporan Blacks expressed their anger over the continued partitioning of the African continent, and this gave food to a growing anti-colonial movement. In 1897, the African Association was formed with Henry Sylvester Williams as the key figure and leading spirit of the association.

Henry Sylvester Williams, a lawyer from the Caribbean Island of Trinidad, organised a Pan-African conference in London, in 1900, with the sole aim of giving black people the opportunity to discuss issues facing blacks around the world. The original political objective of the meeting, which attracted a small but significant representation of Africans, people of African descent from the Caribbean and the U.S.A as well as whites from Britain, was to protest the unequal treatment of blacks in British colonies as well as in Britain. The need to uphold the dignity of African people all the world over and to provide them with education became the topic for discussion at the meeting.

In addition, “speakers at the conference celebrated aspects of traditional African culture and pointed out great historical achievements of African people in the tradition of influential Pioneer Edward Wilmot Blyden, a Caribbean-born Liberian educator, who wrote extensively in the late 19th century about the positive accomplishments of Africans and may have coined the term ‘Pan-Africanism⁴’”.

⁴ http://Encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_1741500827/pan-africanism.html

PANAFEST in Perspective

In the light of the foregoing, Theodora Efua Sutherland, at the University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies, a Ghanaian dramatist, lecturer and Pan-Africanist, wrote a "Proposal for a Historical Drama Festival in Cape Coast"⁵. In October 1991, the Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) was officially launched, with its concept being a cultural event dedicated to the enhancement of the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the development of the African continent as a whole. The summary report of the first Pan African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST '92) indicated the following:

The first Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST '92) was held in Cape Coast and Accra, Ghana, from December 12 to 19, 1992 under the theme, 'THE RE-EMERGENCE OF AFRICAN CIVILIZATION', with the under listed organisations and institutions:

1. The National Commission on Culture
2. The Tourism Development Scheme for the Central Region (TODSCER)
Ghana
3. The International Theatre Institute (ITI) Ghana Centre
4. The University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana
5. OAU
6. UNESCO
7. COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION⁶

PANAFEST aims at establishing the truth about the history of Africa and the experience of its people using the vehicle of art and culture, among other things. It also provides a forum to promote unity between Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora, and above all, affirming the common heritage of African people the world over, and defining Africa's contribution to civilisation.

Among its objectives are "to develop a framework for the identification and analysis of issues and needs central to Africa's development to the improvement of the quality of life of

⁵ Proposal for a Historical Drama Festival in Cape Coast Castle by Efua T. Sutherland, 1980

⁶ Summary report of the first Pan African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST '92)

her people. It also looks at the encouragement of regular views of Africa's developmental objectives, strategies, and policies, and to mobilize consensus on ends for the formulation of possible alternative options for development⁷."

PANAFEST '92 saw the participation of different national groups, independent theatre companies and musical groups from all walks of life, artistes, scholars of international repute, a host of cultural activities and tourists from different parts of the Pan African world and beyond. The government in power then, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), was the organiser, manager and financier of PANAFEST. This was placed solely under the aegis of the National Commission on Culture and under the chairmanship of Dr. Mohammed Ben-Abdallah.

It must be put on record that there had been other African theatre festivals before PANAFEST '92. 1966 saw the first World Black and African Festival of Arts and culture, dubbed "World Festival of Negro Arts,"⁸ in Dakar, Senegal. Nigeria was billed to hold the second edition in 1970, but internal wrangling including the Biafran war led to its demise. Though it was rescheduled for the end of 1975, it did not see the light of day, due to 'obvious difficulties in providing all necessary facilities'.⁹

Fortunately, the Federal Government of Nigeria, in 1977, was able to hold the second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77), which earned scads of praises. This festival was more or less victory earned for the Pan-Africanist in a moral and spiritual sense. Maayang (1994) reiterates that "the festival brought renewed sense of hope to myriads of black folks worldwide".¹⁰ FESTAC '77, however, yielded to fifteen years of inaction. It was another attempt to revive the waning flame of the Black Arts theatre festivals that saw the advent of the first Pan African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) as a common denominator in highlighting the historical and spiritual ties which bind all blacks and Africans together in global multicultural understanding.

At a colloquium held at the University of Cape Coast auditorium, very eminent intellectuals from the black world brought their views, opinions and suggestions to bear on the festival. An intellectual stood among the audience and remarked that Ghana is noted for making

⁷ 'PANAFEST '94 Brochure'

⁸ Uhuru magazine; vol, 6 No.11. 1994 p. 1

⁹ *ibid*, p. 12

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 12

beautiful babies, but somehow, they turn their backs and in time, murder them. We do hope and pray that this historical theatre festival will withstand the test of time.

Our attention was not drawn very early to this remark which was ‘loosely made’. Ten years after PANAFEST, we decided to take a critical look at the statement. In 1994, the second Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival was held, around the same time, with the same theme, but now, with a sub-theme, ‘Uniting the African Family’. It had a wider outlook, having been held in sixteen major cities and towns countrywide, with over four thousand attendants coming from about thirty-two countries.

Challenges

Though participation was quite encouraging, PANAFEST ’94 had teething problems. This was where the exigencies of theatre organisation, management and finance showed up. Programmes and performances were ongoing at these venues at the same time and participants were expected at these performances.

Secondly, funds for the programmes were released very late, and as a result, organisation was a big flop. Monies seemingly found their ways into other pockets other than what they were meant for. A seeming high level of corruption became the order of the day. As if that was not all, attention was focused on ‘big personalities’ attending the programmes, thus leaving the organisation in the hands of a few people.

According to Lena Slachmuis, in an interview with Akunu Darkeh, former executive secretary of PANAFEST, “...PANAFEST ’94 was dogged with logistical hang ups, bad press coverage and left a sour taste in the mouths of many Ghanaian performers and audiences”¹¹. ‘Big name performers’ were featured at the country’s top venues, for a gate fee the average Ghanaian could not afford, resulting in many poorly attended events. Logistical problems frustrated Ghanaians and foreigners who arrived at venues, only to find performances cancelled or moved to a different location. On several occasions, even performers were unable to get to their performance venues when the official PANAFEST transport never showed up. “Exorbitant gate fees re-enforced the view that this is actually not a festival for Ghanaians; certainly, their pockets were not full enough to attend many of the most sought after

¹¹ African agenda, no. 12/13

performances. Financially, PANAFEST ended up with about One Million Dollars in debt, which had to be picked up by, perhaps, a very angry government”.¹²

In October 1996, the government of the day, National Democratic Congress (NDC), one of the five principal organisers of the festival and the major force behind PANAFEST, pulled out stating that “for certain reasons the government cannot support PANAFEST’96.”¹³

This was a big blow to the event organisers and people of African descent who probably had in mind that the festival had come to stay and would not end up in an abyss as did FESTAC. Ironically, the president in a sessional address to parliament in January 1995 stated, “that the objective of the government is to enhance creativity and pride of the Ghanaian through the exposure of history, arts and crafts. PANAFEST ’94 was praised as being instructive and providing lessons”¹⁴. It then became a non-governmental organisation, dubbed PANAFEST FOUNDATION.

Re-awakening the festival in 1997, with the sub-theme “Uniting the African family for development” coincided with the Fetu Afahye festival of the chiefs and people of Cape Coast (Oguaa), from August 29 to September 7, 1997. Twenty-three out of thirty-eight expected countries participated in the event with the involvement of the community.

PANAFEST’99 came off in August of that year. This was to have coincided with Emancipation Day activities in Ghana, with the sub-theme, “Uniting the African family—Youth, the agenda for the new millennium”. This theme was chosen “because of the challenges posed to the youth of Africa and African descent in the coming Millennium”¹⁵.

PANAFEST 2001 was held from July 27th to August 3rd with the sub-theme, “Uniting the African Family—Bridging the Gap through Information Technology”. The appropriateness of the theme was that it came at a time when the demand for Information Communication Technology (ICT) was on the ascendancy in Ghana and the world over. It was a very successful event both for politicians, businessmen and professionals in their various spheres of endeavour.

Then came inactivity for some time. In 2007, PANAFEST was ‘resurrected’ with the sub-theme, “Pan-Africanism in the context of Africa’s political, socio-economic development”.

¹² Daily Graphic Oct, 1995

¹³ *ibid.* October 28, 1995

¹⁴ PANAFEST ’99 Souvenir brochure

¹⁵ Emancipation day, PANAFEST, and Joseph Project launch souvenir brochure

That was the very year which saw the inception of the “Joseph Project” which aimed at “a series of activities, actions and interactions spearheaded by Ghana to re-establish the African nation as a nation of all Africans, capable of delivering on the promise of God to Africa and the African people”¹⁶.

This took place from July 19 to August 4, 2007. This particular festival, though successful, suffered a major setback in terms of sponsorship. Most of these sponsors were sponsoring Ghana at 50 and the inception of the Joseph Project had a negative influence on the programme.

SWOT Analysis of PANAFEST

Strengths

PANAFEST has a lot of following in the Diaspora and people of Africa of African descent. This has made it a household name. The fact that the festival in itself unites black people is a plus to the event. The formation of local (Ghanaian) and external (foreign) representation on boards attests to the strong resolve to unite the African people. Due to this, other countries have been trying to duplicate the event.

For an international festival of this kind to have been organised eight times is a hard-won reputation to the organisers and the foundation in its entirety. Furthermore, a lot of foreign cash found its way into the country by participating individuals, which went a long way to increase foreign exchange in the country’s revenue base.

The acquisition of job and employment opportunities deserves a passing notice. The PANAFEST secretariat, hoteliers, artisans and restaurants provided jobs in one way or another to the community at large.

Weaknesses

Funding

There had not been enough funding for the event after government stepped aside from the organisation and its management. Part of the funding was from the sale of PANAFEST souvenirs, gate proceeds from programmes, registration fees of participants and contributions of

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private businesses and corporations. Most of the time, the secretariat was left in big debt without even paying some performers and people employed by the foundation. PANAFEST Foundation also took an autonomous position, not allowing government to be part of the event even when government wanted to. This culminated in poor marketing, advertisement and event management of PANAFEST in its entirety.

Sponsorship

Many corporate organisations expressed their interest in PANAFEST when government was in control. The story became different as soon as government withdrew itself from management and organisation: thus, these corporate bodies shifted/directed sponsorship to the ventures they deemed fit.

The lack of sponsorship might also be due to the growing conception of events in the Arts, all striving for sponsorship at the same time. Events like beauty pageants (Miss Ghana, Miss Malaika), Ghana Music Awards and the like possibly ‘milked’ sponsorship for PANAFEST.

Politics

One major effect of PANAFEST going down the drain is politics. This has affected the smooth running of the event. Subsequent Ministers of State posted to the Ministry of Tourism (which oversees the administration of PANAFEST) came with a different idea or sense of direction, thus, “muddying the waters” continuously. Critical studies of PANAFEST throughout the years shows how people “make beautiful babies,” and then turn around to “murder” them.

The ‘Operation Feed Yourself Programme’ which came into being with the government of General Kutu Acheampong never saw its continuity after his overthrow in 1978. Ghana was then self-sufficient in food production and started exporting rice, yam, maize and other agricultural products to neighbouring countries. Now, it is the very opposite.

The Farmers’ Services Company (FASCOM), another agriculture-based initiative by the erstwhile Acheampong regime, was also short-lived as a result of his overthrow. The Aveyime rice project at Afife in the Volta Region of Ghana, instituted by the Rawlings’ regime in 2000, had to be abandoned because of politics.

Of significant importance is the theatrical/cultural drive by the PNDC/NDC regime in refurbishing all regional centres for national culture and thereafter rotating the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC). Just after the December 2000 elections, a lukewarm attitude towards the celebration was exhibited by the ruling government. Patronage of NAFAC from that time dwindled.

Opportunities

Established originally as a Pan-African historical cultural and theatre festival, PANAFEST has the potential to all intents and purposes, to be a success. This takes into consideration attendance and participation of distinguished personalities such as academicians, Pan-Africanists and artists, artistes, particularly, African Americans from the Diaspora. PANAFEST was introduced to commemorate and celebrate the slave trade heritage, preserve and promote African culture to offer Africans and African Americans in the Diaspora an opportunity in appreciating their African roots and heritage locally and globally. As ingrained in its aims and objectives, PANAFEST hopes to become a major occasion for appropriating the arts and culture of Africans to foster unity between Africans on the continent and those in the Diaspora to demonstrate their common heritage.

Also, state officials, including Ministers of State from participating countries on the African continent, mostly the West Africa sub-region, do attend and participate in the planned events and activities to make PANAFEST an impressive celebration. This opens opportunities for pledges to be made by some African American personalities and other influential partners who attend to support the festival in diverse ways to boost the Ghanaian economy locally and the African cultural space, in general. This promises socio-cultural, economic and political support and benefits to help the country.

PANAFEST is guided by African-oriented and diaspora-related principles of organisation. Its programme activities seek to harness the cultural, creative, artistic and cultural resources that abound in the African continent, Ghana and Central Region, in particular, towards the revitalisation of the cultural life of the African continent and Ghana as country. Ghana, thus, engages surrounding countries in managing and maximising the creative potentials of this international cultural festival. Issues about local and international tourism culture are

brought to bear to harness the socio-cultural, economic and political opportunities offered during PANAFEST celebrations.

Ghana, the home country for its origination, claims itself as one of the foremost, unique and rich performing arts communities in Africa and world-wide. Hence, PANAFEST celebrations and related activities engage participants from various countries to augment the human resource needs of Ghana's cultural space during the celebration. This is mostly seen in the creative and cultural industry sector of Ghana's economy. Creative theatre and film productions, seminars, symposia, local and international conferences, workshops and creative outputs of PANAFEST have sustained research in this space about cultural festivals, heritage politics and tourism heritage to boost cross-fertilisation of knowledge from the academic community to impact the African and global cultural space and society. As part of the practical cultural processes of the festival, PANAFEST has assumed a usual tradition of activities to include cultural celebrations as well as creative, theatre and film activities, where participants stage and screen several interesting performances and film shows that have strong socio-cultural and political intents.

Clearly, PANAFEST activities create many opportunities to boost the socio-cultural, economic, developmental and political image and potentials of the country. Key beneficiaries include all stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation activities, especially the hospitality and tourism sectors of Ghana's economy. Cape Coast, Elmina and Assin-Manso, the host venues for most of the celebration activities, all in the Central Region of Ghana, do benefit in various ways. Foreign visitors do attend due to various motivations. Participation from various personalities from key market segments such as the African, North American, Caribbean and European (Amenumey, 1998) spaces have great potential to boost inflow of foreign capital into the country's economy. Local artisans, craftsmen and vendors from all walks of life do get the opportunity to cash in and boost the economic potentials of their works. As affirmed by the findings of Amenumey (1998) about a study in tourism special events, focusing particularly on PANAFEST '97 to assess perceptions of foreign visitors, PANAFEST has great potential to serve as a tool for the promotion of cultural tourism in Ghana and within the West-African sub-region. Per its original vision, PANAFEST promises to be a tool for accelerating tourism potential and development in Ghana. This is because it exposes

participants to the various tourist attraction sites in the country (Amenumey, 1998), Cape Coast, Elmina and Assin-Manso, Central Region, in particular. However, the realities of the emerging challenges bedevilling the sustainability of PANAFEST have raised issues concerning potential threats to the survival and sustenance of this cultural festival of international repute.

Threats

Poor economic standing and conditions of the country have led many to develop negative perceptions towards the vision for its conception and the present realities threatening the sustainability of the PANAFEST festival. Presently, it is not uncommon for some people to hold the perception that the festival cannot be sustained due to poor sponsorship from various stakeholders, the government, local and international partners. This raises the question: Do we make beautiful babies and then turn around to murder them?

Unnecessary bureaucratic processes and partisan politics seem to be posing another great danger to the survival and sustainability of this great cultural festival of global recognition. This has great premonition to negatively impact the smooth running of the event. As noted earlier, successive Ministers of State (for the Arts, Culture and Tourism sector) privileged to take the lead in the supervision and administration of planning and administration of events of PANAFEST appear not to have done as desired to improve the fortunes of this great festival.

As identified in the study of Amenumey (1998), poor planning and organisation of the festival appear to be posing a threat to the sustenance of PANAFEST. Also, overly concentrating on local cultural festivals like National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC) has the possibility to negatively impact adequate sponsorship, survival and sustainability of PANAFEST celebrations. Sustainability of both local and international cultural festivals needs to be accorded the needed attention by all stakeholders. However, this needs to be done in a balanced way to prevent unhealthy competition to sustain the gains and potentials of all these cultural festivals for the benefit of all.

Besides, poor perceptions and misgivings raised by both local and international participants (Amenumey, 1998) have the likelihood to generate apathetic attitudes towards the planning, implementation and organisation of the festival. Hence, local and international

organisers, particularly, and key stakeholders need to be on top of their work in order to address emerging issues that are generating negative or poor perceptions toward PANAFEST. Again, systemic corruption, poor commitment and bad attitude exhibited by local organisers and participants, poor staffing and miserable funding and sponsorship, among others, equally threaten the survival and sustainability of PANAFEST as an international cultural festival.

The Way Forward

Though PANAFEST has been registered as a non-governmental organisation, it is recommended that any government in power should look beyond the idea of putting PANAFEST in private hands. It is a theatrical event that possibly earns the country a lot of foreign exchange, and booms the hotels, restaurants and tourist industries. Government should either take full control or enter into a joint partnership with the foundation. Ideally, a standing document to protect PANAFEST should be laid in event of change of government.

The PANAFEST secretariat is deplete of permanent staff. National service personnel are normally recruited and at the end of their service year, they leave, thus, incapacitating the secretariat from having permanent experienced staff to run the day-to-day activities of the foundation.

Seeking assistance from the African Union and other international corporate organisations to hold this biennial event is long overdue. This is because PANAFEST has an international outlook and has the growth and development of blacks at heart. Perhaps, consideration for introduction of a one-percent tax on tourism and culture as a law can go a long way to support and promote PANAFEST to a very large extent.

Partisan politics defeats the purpose for which PANAFEST was established. Using PANAFEST as a means or medium for championing the course of blacks and people of African descent should be the focus of every government in power.

Since PANAFEST is about inviting people from all walks of life, fees charged at the gates should be looked at carefully so that the average Ghanaian would also share his or her glory in being part and parcel of an international event, and not for a few who have the ability to pay.

Probity and accountability is very essential in any organisation, be it private or public. It is highly recommended that asset declaration and the financial position of the foundation before and after the festival be properly audited and made public.

To reduce monotony of the festival in its presentation of the same programmes, it is recommended that other events like showing movies on black resistance, other festivals and black personalities who made tremendous impact on the black race, be shown to participants.

Conclusion

In this paper, we explored PANAFEST in perspective, seeking to critically examine its genesis and state of affairs for its prime periods, from 1990s to 2010, to expose challenges shackling its sustainability by the local citizens. The findings revealed that different factors cutting across socio-cultural, political and economic reasons such as lack of funding, mismanagement and partisan politics challenge the sustainability of this international historical theatre festival by the local citizens. And this, by implication, defeats the purpose for which PANAFEST was established.

We opine that PANAFEST represents geopolitical, public memory, cultural space and theatrical event (Woodard, 2020) and that PANAFEST is about blacks and people of African descent all over the world. It has come to stay and all governments, private individuals, tourists, African diaspora, Pan-Africanists, slave descendants and other corporate institutions should put their shoulders on the wheel in making it a monumental festival for generations yet unborn.

On this note, we reaffirm the following words from Nelson Mandela: "...one thing is for sure, as long as black people around the world continue to face oppression and exploitation, the idea of Pan-Africanism will continue to exist- and the struggle will continue".

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