



**AGAINST ALL ODDS:
AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
INTO THE 21ST CENTURY**

Written and Directed by Charles Cantalupo
Produced by the Audio Visual Institute of Eritrea (AVIE)

Screening at 10th Annual ALTA Conference:
Friday, March 24, 7pm
Conference Room A of the University Inn
New Brunswick, New Jersey
Pizzas will be delivered

The litany of contemporary African horrors is familiar: brutal colonialism, the dawn of independence become the dark night of neocolonial terror, pandemics, mass starvation, racial and ethnic war, genocide, murderous national debt and suicidal borrowing, theft and colossal corruption and so much more...as if the men, women and children of an entire continent were forced to survive at gunpoint.

Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the 21st Century tells a different story, as no documentary about Africa ever has: a story of Africa's languages. With thousands of African languages dating back – orally and in written form – over the course of millennia, *Against All Odds* focuses on Africa's greatest resource: its languages.

African languages are the simplest, fairest, most democratic, economic and achievable way to improve African lives and livelihood through the application of knowledge, education, science and technology. African languages are the most important African source of traditional and future social change, economic development and individual self-realization.

- ❖ *Shawa Kan Matsalodi: Harsunan Afrika da Adabin Afrika har Karni na Ashirin da Daya* (Hausa Fulani)
- ❖ *Dhhidi ya Vikwazo Vyote: Lugha na Fashih za Kiafrika katika Karne ya Ishirini na Moja* (Kiswahili)
- ❖ *Noma Kunzina: Izilimi nokulotshiew kwase Afrika ekhulwini elisha leminyaka* (Zulu)
- ❖ *Antsar Kulu Mesenakhlat: Afriqawi Qwanqwatatn Sine:tsuhufatn Nab Mebel 21 Zemen* (Tigrinya)
- ❖ *Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the 21st Century*

In January 2000, Africa started a new century and a new millennium in a new way. Named *Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the 21st Century*, a literary festival brought 250 writers and scholars from 20 African countries and around the world to Asmara, Eritrea. They joined universities, foundations, corporations, publishers, cultural activists, civic groups, students, artists, children and everyday citizens, forming a unique cultural coalition to create an historic intervention like the first Pan African Congress in 1900. *Against All Odds* also aimed to resemble the “African Writers Conference” held at Makerere University in 1962, which gathered writers, critics and publishers from throughout English-speaking Africa, but with one crucial distinction.

Changing the medium from English and Europhone languages to African languages, *Against All Odds* has changed the message. Concluding with the writing and ratification of “The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures” (<http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/AllOdds/declaration.html>) – Africa's declaration of language independence – *Against All Odds* offers an alternative vision of development in Africa. There are no such things as underdeveloped languages as there are underdeveloped countries, despite many languages marginalization and being apart from the centers of political power. Furthermore, the recognition of African languages is still only a part of a much larger movement to create a pioneering, global and free conversation among all languages, literatures and cultures towards discovering and mapping a kind of universal, verbal genome in which humanity itself is writing its own life's story.

Let no part of that story be lost, and let it be heard in African languages.
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