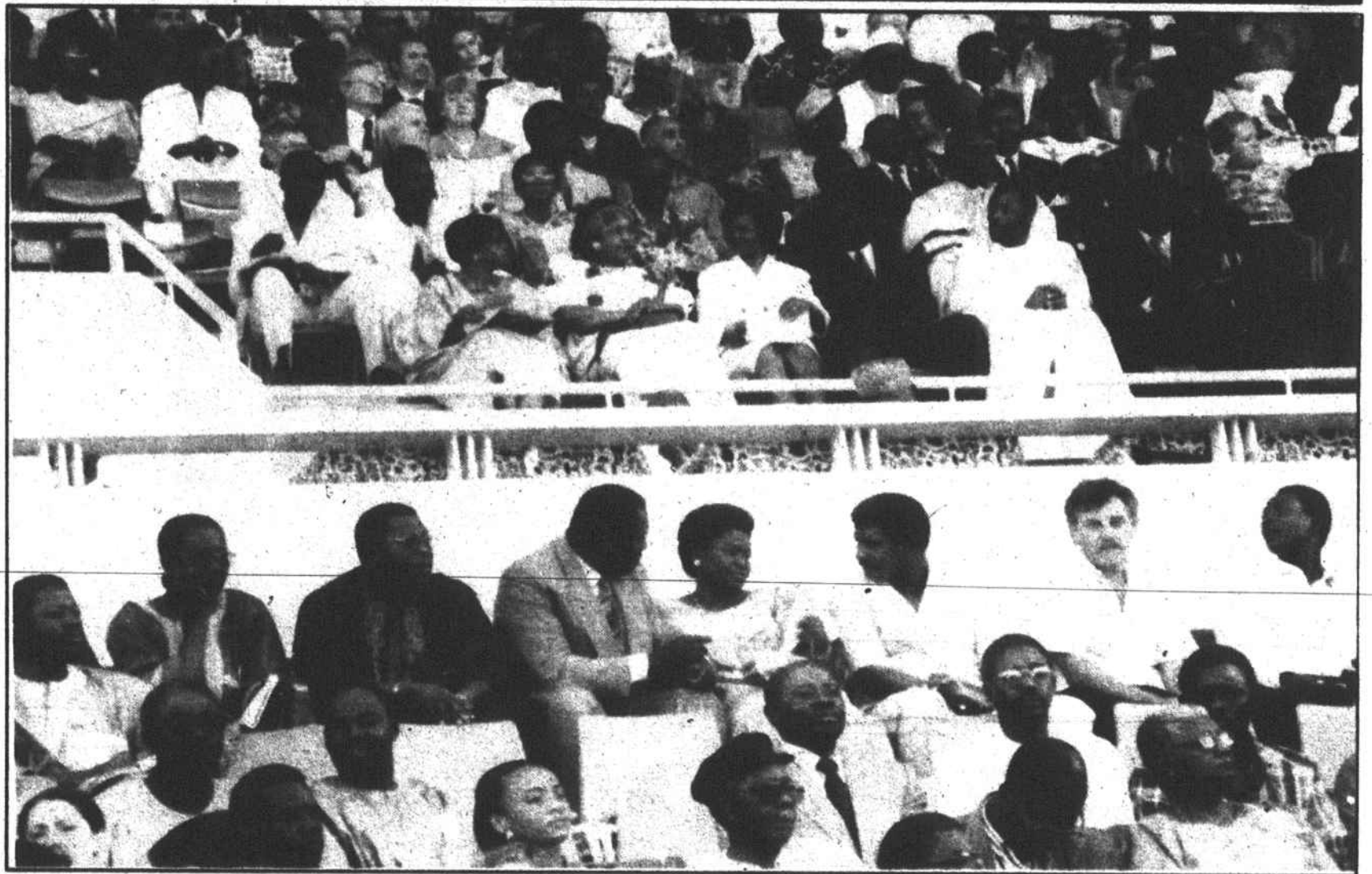


Practically all of Africa and its Black diaspora participated, 150 films were screened with 30,000 spectators.

through famous characters such as Charlie Chaplin. His Excellency Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso gave the opening clap and released the balloons just after the opening speech delivered by Prime Minister Rock Marc Christian Kabore. Kabore saluted African filmmakers for their efforts to forge new and positive images of Africa that those on the continent live and feel. After the opening ceremony many festival attendees proceeded to Cine Neerwaya, Ouagadougou's most impressive theatre, to view the inaugural films "Jemima and Johnny" by Lionel Ngakane of South African and Henri Duparc of Cote d'Ivoire's "Rue Princesse."

The next morning cineasts met at the "Place des Cineastes Africains" Monument to pour libation to African filmmakers who have joined the ancestors.

Films ranging from dramas about AIDS, the quest for democracy, the preservation of African history and culture, women's issues (especially excision), terrorism, political corruption, urban life, polygamy, traditional beliefs and practices to cultural and historical documentaries. Special tribute was paid to South African cinema. Participating officially for the first time in this great cinema rendez-vous, about 75 filmmakers as well as men and women of culture from South Africa came as standard bearers of their country. The delegation was led by special guest Mrs. Winnie Mandela, South African Vice Minister for Arts and Culture. Mrs. Mandela declared that South Africa will strengthen its cooperation with FESPACO.



In the foreground of the photo are South African filmmaker Lionel Ngakane, and Elizabeth Diop, Directress of Presence Africaine Publishing House. In the background Winnie Mandela and South African officials attended the opening ceremonies at 4th of August stadium.

Among the renowned cineasts in attendance were South Africa's celebrated Lionel Ngakane ("Jemima and Johnny"), Henri DuParc ("Rue Princesse") and Bassori Timite ("La Femme au Couteau") of Cote d'Ivoire, Djibril Mambety Diop ("Hyenes") of Senegal, Mel Hondo ("Sarraounia") of Mauritania, Gaston Kabore ("Rabi") and Idrissa Ouedraogo ("Samba Traore") of Burkina Faso and Cheick Oumar Sissoko ("Finzaan") of Mali. Sembene Ousmane, Africa's oldest and most prolific filmmaker, served as president of the 1995 Jury. Sembene's "La Noire de" ("Black Girl"), which made its debut in 1966, was the first feature film to be written, directed, and produced by an African.

Oddly, this time around none of Black American's famous film personalities were in attendance. However, several up and coming African-American cineasts were on the scene and some had films in competition: Kathe Sandler ("A Question of Color"); Patricia Khayyam ("Henry Box Brown"); Charles Dumas ("The Garden"); Freeman Koina ("Little Black Panther"); Windell Williams ("Murder Magic"); Michelle Parkerson ("A Litany for Survival: the Life and Work of Audre Lorde"); Amie Williams ("Uncommon Ground"); Lawrence Williams ("Perfect B"); Louis Massiah ("W.E.B. DuBois: A Biography in Four Voices"); Benimo McCrea ("Retribution"); and Lisanne Skyler ("No Loans Today"). In "A Question of Color" Kathe Sadler confronts the issue of color consciousness in the black community by exploring the devastating effects of a caste system based on how closely skin color, hair texture and facial features conform to a European ideal. Patricia Khayyam captures the true story about an African American slave hero "Henry Box Brown" who, in 1849, escaped to freedom by ingeniously encasing himself in a wooden box and having himself mailed to freedom in the North. Also screened was the controversial "Warrior Marks", by Pratigha Parmar of Great Britain. This visual text that confronts female circumcision, was written and co-produced by Pulitzer prize-winner Alice Walker.

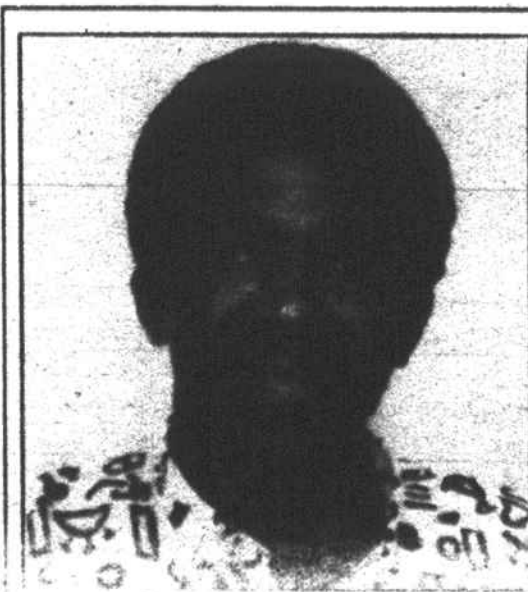
The 1986 Nobel Prize Winner Professor Wole Soyinka was also in Ouagadougou for the opening of "The Interpreters, The First of Brother Leo,

Death and Kings Horsemen and countless other famous works was finally able to realize his long-time dream of attending the festival. Soyinka is actively leading a campaign denouncing the obstruction of the democratization process in Nigeria. Soyinka criticized African banks and entrepreneurs for failing to invest in and support African films and filmmakers.

In commemoration of 100 years of Cinema, FESPACO initiated a series of exhibits entitled "Images of Africa." This research was designed that Africans might review the pictorial elements that have forged depreciatory and pejorative images of Africans in posters and film for the purpose of domination and exploitation by European colonizers. FESPACO was also enriched by the "Niger Valleys" exhibition, a testimony to the rich African civilizations that existed along the River Niger Valley.

Another exciting FESPACO trend is the parade of fashions. This year's festival focused on "cinema and costume". It was organized by Mrs. Naye Diallo under the high patronage of First Lady of Burkina Faso, Mrs. Chantal Compaore. Naye Diallo, an African-American who is married to a Burkinabe, is special assistant to Mrs. Compaore. Breath-taking fashions by five of West Africa's most noted dress-makers, Alphady, the Prince of Niger; Ly Dumas of France; Ali Ouedraogo and OK Burkina Faso; and Belle Dame from Senegal attracted large crowds.

The President Compaore received African filmmakers who came to the festival in the 4th FESPACO at his residence.



Henry Lopes, Congolese writer.



Cheick Oumar Sissoko