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PREFACE

This number of *Contributions* is mostly devoted to studies of Cuban society past and present. The Cuba section of the journal is edited by Joy James, who provides a full introduction to the relevant essays on the following page. In addition to this important focus, *Contributions* 12 also features essays by John H. Bracey, Jr. and August Meier, Reginald Kearney, and Allan D. Austin.

Bracey and Meier survey the current black middle-class fascination with Ancient Egypt, and find strong comparisons with the African American preoccupation with Ethiopia a century ago. While the authors fully acknowledge the legitimacy of contemporary intellectual and scholarly concerns with Egypt, what interests them, above all, is *why* such questions tend to dominate the present era — especially while solutions to the social problems of massive numbers of African Americans continue to go wanting. Reginald Kearney, on the other hand, delves into the much neglected subject of pro-Japanese attitudes on the part of Black Americans from the end of World War I to the beginning of the Great Depression. While exceptions to these sympathetic feelings among blacks can certainly be found, by and large, Kearney concludes, African Americans tended to view Japan as an ally in the struggle against racism. Quickly forgotten following Japan's subsequent military defeat by the U.S., here is a phenomenon which becomes all the more fascinating in light of egregious, anti-black statements expressed by Japanese government officials within the past several years. And, finally, Allan D. Austin rewards us with a revision of a chapter taken from his *African Muslims in Antebellum America* (1984). The story of Mohammed Ali ben Said — slave, Union Army soldier, school-teacher, and a traveler on five continents who was fluent in nine languages — is a fascinating one, and we profit immensely by Austin's continuing research into the role played by Islam among antebellum blacks.

We continue to be interested in scholarly essays, essays which focus — either within the scope and methods of one of the traditional disciplines of the Humanities or Social Sciences, or in an interdisciplinary manner — on the societies, cultures, histories, or politics of the Black World. We also accept short fiction, one-act plays, and short, self-contained passages from novels, along with analytical, critical, and historical scholarship.

We wish to express our appreciation to the following individuals and institutions: to Isabel Valiela for use of the cover photo, "Cuban Mother and Child," her photo highlighting Cuban survival during the "Special Period" on page 103, as well as her translations from the Spanish of essays by Gisela Arandia Covarrubias, María del Carmen Caño Secade, and Dionisio Poey Baró; to Norberto Valdez for use of the photo, "Dancing Havana Style," on page 73; to Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. for permission to reprint Evelyn Hu-DeHart's essay, "Chinese Coolie Labor in the Nineteenth Century," which originally appeared in *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 14; and to the Massachusetts Historical Society for permission to reprint the photo of Mohammed Ali ben Said on page 130 as well as Said's June 1863 interview found on page 131.