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Faculty

Makau Mutua

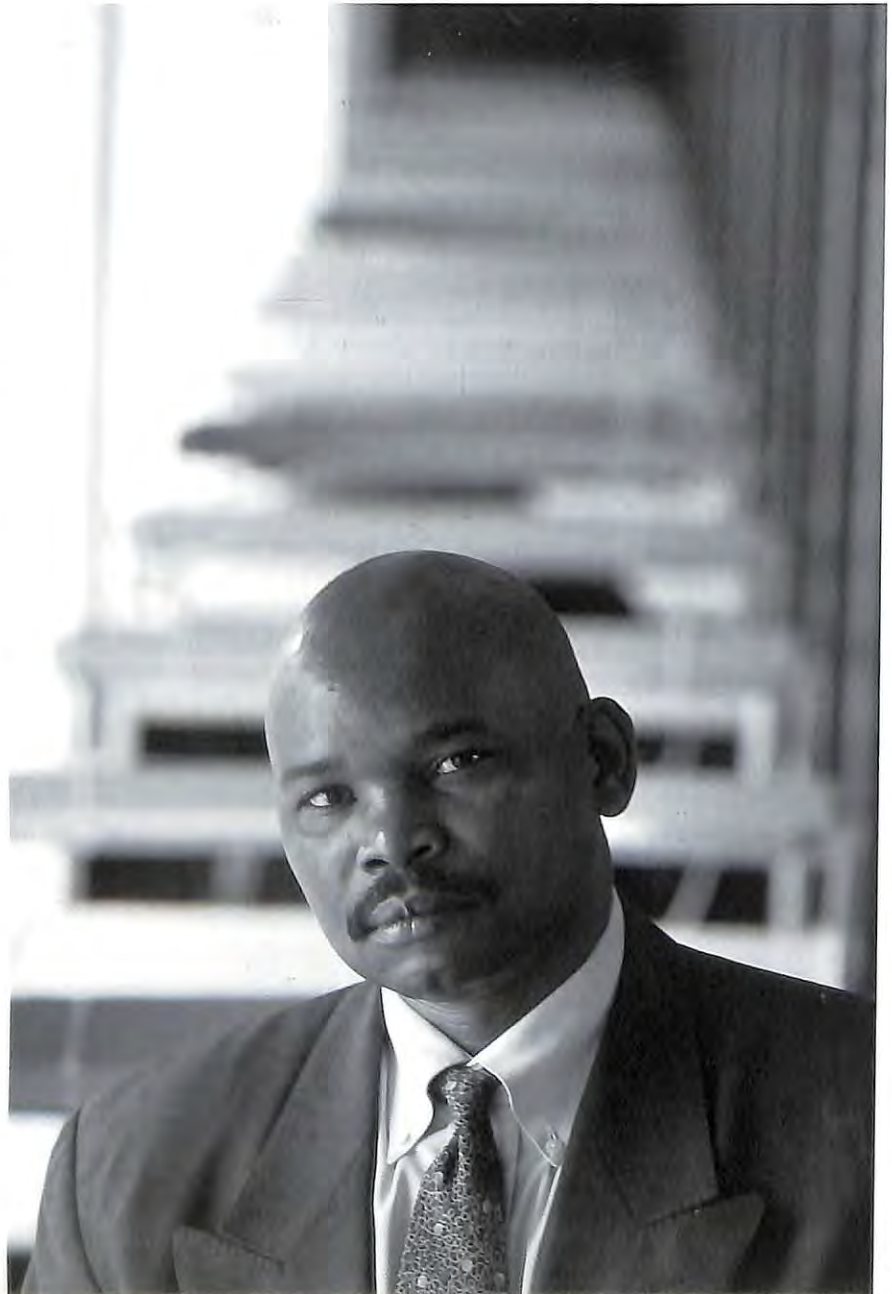
Critiques the state of human rights

Professor Makau W. Mutua has written a new examination of multiculturalism and human rights which is being well received. *Human Rights: A Political and Cultural Critique*, published by Penn Press of the University of Pennsylvania, has been put on the press' "Best Sellers and Classic Titles" list in only its third month of publication in hardcover. The 264-page volume is in the Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights series.

Mutua's book looks at the movement in the wake of the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which purported to set down the definitive understanding of what universal human rights ought to comprise. Not so, says the catalog listing for the book: "This universal reliance on the rights idiom has not succeeded in creating common ground and deep agreement on the scope, content and philosophical bases for human rights."

By contrast, Mutua argues that the human rights movement, though it means well, has built itself on Eurocentric principles and essentially imposes those principles on non-Western societies and peoples. He argues that for the human rights movement to succeed, it must be made truly multicultural in approach. Only by embracing the indigenous traditions of Asia, Africa, the Pacific and the Americas, he says, can proponents come up with a workable and just conception of what universal human rights should look like.

Mutua, whose bachelor's and master of laws degrees are from the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and whose J.D. is from Harvard Law School, teaches international human rights, international business transactions and international law at UB Law School. He also directs UB's Human Rights Center and co-directs the Program on International and Comparative Legal Studies at the Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy. He also chairs the Kenya Human Rights Commission.



MARK MULVILLE