



Foreign Policy and Prospect magazines named Ali Mazrui, Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities and director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies, to their new list of the top 100 public intellectuals. Harpur College alumna Camille Paglia '68, a professor, author and social critic, was also chosen.

"What is a public intellectual?" the magazines asked. "Someone who has shown distinction in their own field along with the ability to communicate ideas and influence debate out-side of it."

"I definitely plead guilty to that," Mazrui said, even as he expressed reservations about the notion of such a list.

He noted that this list betrays the usual bias of such exercises, in that it skews heavily toward men and toward the Western, English-speaking world. Indeed, nearly a third of those on the list are American citizens and more than half live in the United States. Mazrui, who has written more than 20 books, lists African politics, international political culture and Islam among his research interests. He holds a doctorate from Oxford University as well as many honorary degrees. He also created a controversial television series in the mid-1980s called *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*.

Mazrui, 72, said the TV project was probably a key factor in his appearance on the magazine's list. "I would guess that got me more attention than anything else I have done," he said. Paglia's fifth book, *Break, Blow, Burn: Camille Paglia Reads Forty-Three of the World's Best Poems* (Pantheon, 2005), is also her fourth best-seller in 15 years. She's the University Professor of Humanities and Media Studies at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

As Mazrui scanned the list, he found the names of several thinkers with whom he has crossed swords, including Nigerian playwright and activist Wole Soyinka as well as author Salman Rushdie. He also noted the absence of a fellow Kenyan, Wangari Muta Maathai, who won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize.

The term "public intellectual" isn't a new one for Mazrui. Africa World Press will soon publish a book about his work titled *The Public Intellectual in Thought and Action*.

And this isn't the first time Mazrui has found himself in exalted company on such a list. Last year, Mazrui was named to New African magazine's list of the 100 greatest

Africans of all time. He shared the spot at No. 50 with F.W. de Klerk.

"That was even more absurd," Mazrui said with a smile.