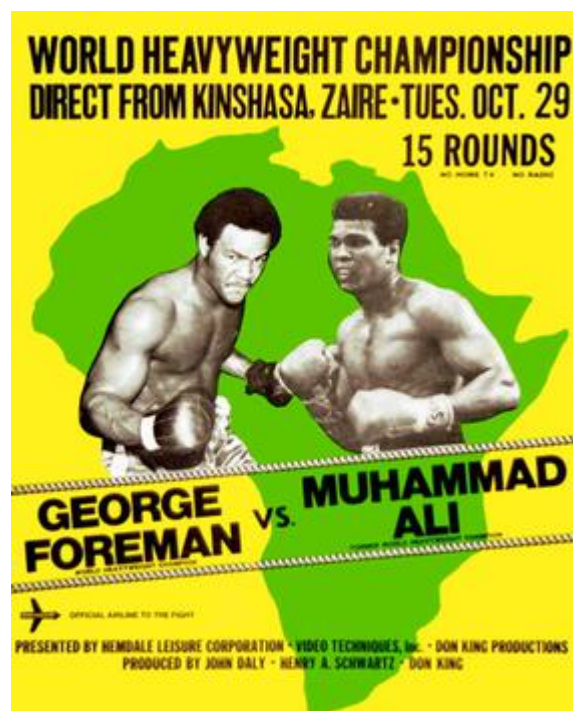


Ouch! Rumble in the Semi-Literate Jungle

By Reg Green



As the volcanic debate continues to spew its detritus I remember a long ago article by George Plimpton, the Paris Review co-founder, that described how some of the world's top sports journalists, assigned to cover the Muhammad Ali/George Foreman fight in Zaire in 1974, and with time heavy on their hands, invented a primitive language to speak mysteriously to each other so that, for example, one might ask about another colleague and be answered, "He m'Bele. He very m'Bele."

I've been wondering how today's Zairean elites, having benefited from the fifty intervening years of contact with the civilizing West, would describe how they felt about our two contenders.

My guess: "They m'Bele. They unbelievably m'Bele."