



TALKING DRUM



African Scholars Forum Semester in Review Newsletter

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-  Ubuntu Award Ceremony 2021

UMass Boston
Africa Scholars Forum
Black History in Africa Series
and Business Meeting



Special Guest Speaker
Layla D. Brown-Vincent, PhD
Assistant Professor of African Studies
College of Liberal Arts, UMass Boston



On Writing and Resilience: What My Time in South Africa Taught Me About Resistance and Scholarly Production

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2021


NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF MEXICO \ UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON
BOSTON UNIVERSITY \ UNIVERSITY PROGRAM OF STUDIES ON ASIA AND AFRICA \ UNAM-BOSTON \ UNAM-SOUTH AFRICA

2nd INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM
- OF -
AFRICAN STUDIES
MIGRATION, SECURITY AND INEQUALITIES

MARCH \ 2021

24th 8-13.30h (MEXICO) 9-14.30h (BOSTON) 14-21.30h (SOUTH AFRICA) 25th 8-14h (MEXICO) 9-15h (BOSTON) 14-22h (SOUTH AFRICA)
26th 8-14.30h (MEXICO) 9-15.30h (BOSTON) 14-22.30h (SOUTH AFRICA)

webinar registration <https://tinyurl.com/africaboston2021>



The Africa Scholars Forum, Pan African Graduate Students Association,
and African Students Union at UMass Boston
Present

AFRICA DAY 2021

*"Transitioning Towards Post COVID Africa:
Response from Africa CDC"*

Friday, April 30, 2021 * 5:00 p.m. - 8:15 p.m. on ZOOM

Featuring Special Keynote & Gala Night





Africa Scholars Forum at UMass Boston

THE 2021 UBUNTU AWARDS CEREMONY


*Immigration Related Violence in African Communities:
Policing and Deportations*

Monday, May 24, 2021 * 4:00p.m. EDT * Online via ZOOM



Distinguished Community Leader Award Recipient and
Keynote Speaker:
Abdulkadir Hussein
President of African Community Economic Development of New England (ACEDONE)

*Ubuntu means I am because you are; a person is a person through other people!
Ubuntu is a concept of common humanity and oneness.*



Opening Remarks



What a year!

Last year at this time in June 2020, we prepared for a year of digital educational delivery that we now fondly refer to as Zoom University! In contrast, this year in June 2021, we are preparing to return to in-person, on campus teaching and learning! During a year of remote delivery of our

educational programs at McCormack, UMass Boston; the Africa Scholars Forum has risen to the challenge of its objectives to engage, produce, and disseminate knowledge about the African world.

In the fall of 2020, we began by hosting guest speaker, [E. Edna Wangui, PhD](#), Associate Professor, Ohio University College of Arts & Sciences whose research examines the gendered dimensions of rural development and rural livelihood change, environmental conservation, and climate change adaptation. Later, in the semester, at our African Studies Association (ASA) 2020 Conference shadow event, we invited young and up-and-coming Africanist scholars from the continent, [Aggrey Willis Otieno Odhiambo, a PhD candidate at Ohio University](#) and [Margaret Monyani, a PhD candidate at Witwatersrand University, South Africa](#) to give presentations of their research on migrations in Africa. In December, Professor Quito Swan was featured as our Amilcar Cabral speaker while Vernon Robinson was our Kwanzaa speaker. Robinson ended the year reminding us about our African values, being Unity, Self-Determination, Collective work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity and Faith.

We took these values into the new year in 2021 hosting our first Africa in Black history series in February with [Assistant Professor of Africana Studies, Layla Brown who spoke on, "On Writing and Resilience: What My Time in South Africa Taught Me About Research Writing"](#)! By March 2021, we were even more invigorated! We held an inaugural collaborative African Studies conference with the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and Boston University, called, ["Migrations, Insecurities, and Inequalities in the African World"](#).

In April, we held our annual Africa Day 2021, themed, "[Towards a Post-Covid Africa](#)" that featured, Yale University public health and epidemiological disease professor of medicine, Dr. Elijah Paintsil. In May, we ended the semester and year with our Ubuntu Graduation and Awards Ceremony giving the Ubuntu community award to [ACEDONE Executive Director, Abdul Hussein](#) and the Fatima Kyari Mohammed African Union fellowship awards to graduating doctoral students, Lyndsey McMahan and Uchenna Nwangu.

You would agree with me that with these events, we've had quite a year! Read and review the details of these events in our May/June 2021 edition of our newsletter, *Talking Drum*. In reading, you will see how in this edition titled, "A Year in Review", we see how our Africa program at UMass Boston's McCormack Graduate School has illustrated, engaged, reflected upon, and debated a range of African issues, experiences, and aspirations that we encounter throughout the continent and its diaspora!

Enjoy reading and have a great summer!

Rita Kiki Edozie (PhD)

Chair, Africa Scholars Forum

Professor of International Relations and Global Governance

Associate Dean, John W McCormack School of Policy and Global Studies

ASF Black History in Africa Series

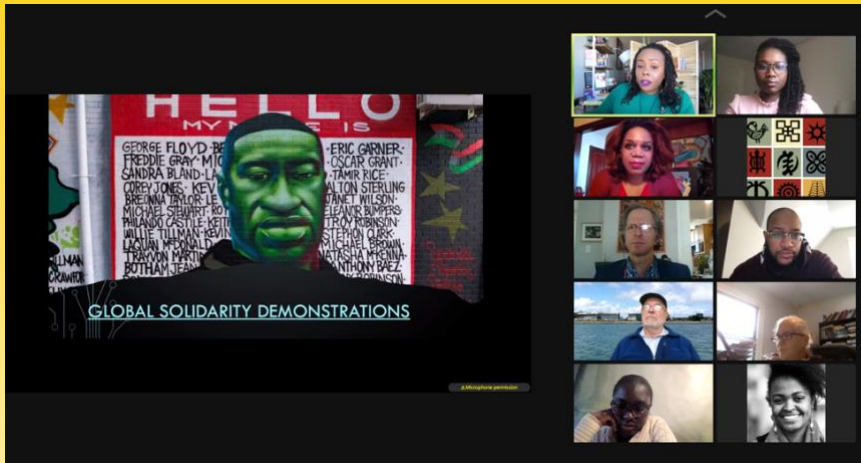


The Black history celebration, organized by the ASF held on February 26th, 2021, was facilitated by Margaret Gatonye, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Global Governance and Human Security, UMass Boston.

In her opening remarks and welcome address, Professor Rita Kiki Edozie, Chair of Africa Scholars Forum and Professor and Associate Dean at the McCormack Graduate School, explained the idea of the Black history celebration as first espoused by Carnegie and later Malcolm X. She emphasized that the history of Black people did not begin in chains and that there was a rich history prior to and after the trans-Atlantic slave trade. She mentioned the need for children to know that Black history is steeped in rich cultures, civilizations, and monuments that still fascinate the world to this day. According to professor Edozie, the earliest abstract art was found in South Africa, and that Ethiopia, Mali, and Kush rivaled European civilizations of their time. Dean David Cash of the McCormack Graduate School discussed how this Black history celebration is the first since the killing of George Floyd and hopes it will help bring about structural change and address issues of racial discrimination and inequities.

Professor Layla Brown, the keynote speaker, focused on writing and resilience and what her time in South Africa taught her about resistance and scholarly production. She started with a quick video on civil rights and the worldwide protests after the killing of George Floyd despite the coronavirus restrictions; how statues of slave traders were torn down around the United States and Europe; and the global demonstrations in solidarity. She stated how a crisis is a catalyst for change, and when it occurs, it develops alternatives to present issues and persists until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable. The crisis of the global pandemic also has the potential to inspire a global shift that could, in turn, provide a better standard of living for millions around the globe.

She underscores how in 2019 when she received the grant to do her research in South Africa, the world had no idea the dangers that lay before it. She stated that the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in the US and Collins Khosa in South Africa show the widespread



nature of state brutality against Black people globally. She posits that the manner of death and subsequent handling of the cases afterward reveal the inhumanity of neo-liberal states and dictate the actions of the USA and states like Brazil, whose police brutality

killings during the pandemic have been on the rise and have particularly targeted Black communities.

Dr. Brown stated how her article, “The Pandemic of Racial Capitalism: Another World is Possible,” explores the dangers of capitalism during the pandemic. Racial capitalism can then be seen in the United States with its poor health care system and lack of willingness to take the pandemic seriously, which has harmed these same communities. Dr. Brown states the response of President Donald Trump and his administration to the pandemic underscored the logic that capital is more important than life. She went on to discuss how this is not necessarily a new development, however. This logic of the disposability of lives continues to be a driving logic in governance in the United States and elsewhere, such as South Africa. For example, she compared the actions of the South African government, which restricted funding during the winter when COVID infections were at an all-time high, while governments in Cuba and Venezuela devoted more funding towards healthcare to preserve lives. Finally, Dr. Brown discussed her time in South Africa and what it meant to have an environment that allows creativity and provides scholars the time, space, and environment to think.

This logic of the disposability of lives continues to be a driving logic in governance in the United States and elsewhere

Following this, the floor was opened for questions, moderated by Ellen Busolo Milimu, a Ph.D. student in Global Governance and Human Security and a member of PAGSA. Ellen thanked the keynote speaker for a fantastic presentation. Dr. Edozie asked the first question, asking about the comparisons Dr. Brown made between the US, South Africa, Brazil, Cuba, and Venezuela. Dr. Brown acknowledged that Venezuela and Cuba are imperfect and not utopias but said they could offer positive examples in particular areas, like healthcare, what we want going forward, and what we never want to see again. Dr. Brown also explained that initiatives pushed

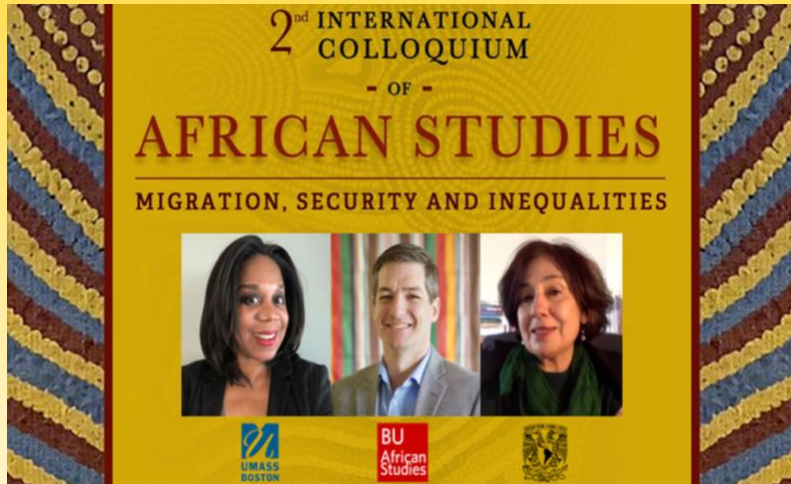


by the Venezuelan government to educate students from underdeveloped nations in engineering and medicine, with the condition that they return home and work in the public sector, encourage solidarity and diplomacy in a way that does not exploit students or their home countries. Another

question asked by the audience concerned how much the pandemic situation applies to racial capitalism, especially in terms of the stages of disease control, and what is necessary to change these inequities. Professor Brown stated that nothing short of a revolution would bring about the change that is needed. The final question, asked by Balkissa, considered if, like America, police brutality and violence are directly connected to race in South Africa. Dr. Brown stated that no matter where, there is certain anti-Blackness instilled within the police force. Professor Edozie thanked Professor Vincent once again and closed the session.



Africa Scholars Forum Partners with the National Autonomous University of Mexico and BU on Second International Colloquium on African Studies



For the last three years, UMass Boston's Africa Scholars Forum (ASF) has been a hub for providing formal educational resources and programming around African studies. The university-wide academic platform, convened by an informal network of Africanists across campus and worldwide, includes

teachings, research, and initiatives centered on African issues. Hosting a multitude of events, like its annual [Africa Day](#), ASF's goal is to deepen engagement around African research and expand

“As African dynamics become increasingly entangled with those of other regions across the globe, events such as the colloquium help to improve knowledge about African phenomena and their connections worldwide,” says Alicia Girón

the interests of graduate students, researchers, and external partners outside the university.

This past March marked the second [International Colloquium on African Studies](#), which featured the work of an intensive collaborative team of National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), UMass Boston, and Boston University (BU). The virtual, global event gathered over 30 experts from the US, Mexico, Europe, and Africa who discussed several themes of African Studies at a global scale. Associate Dean [Rita Kiki Edozie](#), chair and founder of ASF, says the project was not only exciting in covering real-time

African issues, but also in establishing the partnerships with a global institution like UNAM and New England's largest African Studies Center at BU. “As African dynamics become increasingly entangled with those of other regions across the globe, events such as the colloquium help to improve knowledge about African phenomena and their connections worldwide,” says Alicia Girón, Coordinator of the [University Program of Asian and African Studies \(PUEAA\)](#) at [National Autonomous University of Mexico \(UNAM\)](#). “The conference enabled speakers from different corners of the world to interact with each other and address topics from diverse perspectives and backgrounds exchanging their points of views.” UNAM's Northeast Office is located at UMass Boston and serves as a large connection point between the campus' African and Latinx communities. Although there are academic ties, “[our global population is] not in an

era where we are reconstructing these identities about Africa. Africans need to have some voice and so does [Mexico]," says Edozie. She adds that the conference allowed participants to talk through a lot of dialogues about deconstructing these ideologies.

With McCormack's diverse student population where people identify with cultures worldwide, ASF is dedicated to advancing research, study, and programming centered on Africa and the African diaspora through diverse and inclusive platforms and projects. "I was just amazed by [the colloquium's participants'] passion for and knowledge of African issues and the kinds of studies they were doing on Africa." She added that this includes research on Latin American countries such as Brazil and Portugal. "This is based on real intellectual and policy exchanges," emphasized Edozie.

While the biennial conference was set to take place in Boston this year, the virtual format "allowed for even richer and more global participation than would have been feasible before," says Eric Schmidt, Assistant Director of [Boston University's African Studies Center](#). "What we once imagined might be 100 people in a room together grew to over 300 people attending over three days. Scholars and artists across Africa, Europe, and the Americas grappled with important questions touching on the African world, constituting a wonderful opportunity to reach across disciplinary and geographic boundaries that we continue to reckon with in African studies."

With the current academic semester coming to an end, Edozie and her committee members have their minds set on the future of ASF. "We have an immediate goal to establish and launch an African certificate program," says Edozie, in addition to many upcoming ideas for fundraising. ASF also aims to eventually provide scholarship aid to scholars and students researching and advancing African studies.

The colloquium's organizers are eager to explore a third event in the future, perhaps hosted in South Africa on UNAM's Johannesburg campus, which Edozie is excited about for the opportunity to further develop the resources and insights from ASF's new partners. "This was a collaboration of the African world so that we can pull in Africans in Mexico, Africans in Latin America [and] Africans around the world so [participants] learn from me and I learn from them," she says.

Culled from:

https://www.umb.edu/news/detail/africa_scholars_forums_second_international_colloquium_on_africa_studies_and_the_power_of_partnership

ASF Africa Day 2021

Life will never be the same after the pandemic. This is true in Africa, where the crisis has impacted the delivery of healthcare in many ways. To highlight the implications of the pandemic in Africa, this year's Africa Day was themed, *Transitioning Towards Post-COVID Africa: Response from Africa CDC*. In his keynote address, Elijah Paintsil, MD, FAAP, Professor of Pediatrics (Infectious disease), Public Health, and Pharmacology at Yale School of Medicine, gave a presentation titled, "Post-COVID-19 Africa Healthcare Systems: A Need for Disruptive Innovation". Guest speakers included Associate Dean Rita Kiki Edozie, Provost and Vice-Chancellor Joseph B. Berger, Dean David Cash, Vice Chancellor for Students Affairs Gail DiSabatino, Special Assistant to the Chancellor for Black Life Joseph N. Cooper, PAGSA president Hannah Brown, and ASU president Boston Okundaye. This year's celebration was also an opportunity for reflecting and storytelling about coping with the pandemic, with carefully selected African music by Prince De Makele MOUNGUENBOU. The last hours of the event involved two breakout sessions on Jollof Rice and African Dance and Music. The Jollof Rice session included Nigerian Jollof (by Sinmi Araoye and Boston Okundaye) and Jamaican Jollof (by Rashelle Straker). Dorothy Muchere Bulinda and Boston Okundaye presented on African Dance and Music. Africa Day 2021 concluded with a fantastic Fashion show by Obioma Fashions (presented by Kelechi Anyadiegwu and Goz Anyadiegwu).

Keynote by Dr. Elijah Paintsil



Dr. Elijah Paintsil, Professor of Pediatrics, Pharmacology, and Public Health & Management at the Yale School of Medicine gave a keynote address for the Africa Day 2021 event titled "Post COVID-19 Africa Healthcare Systems: A Need for Disruptive Innovation". He argues that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fault lines in public health preparedness and systems on the continent. Dr. Paintsil points out that part of the threat of COVID-19 is in how it strained already fragile health systems in Africa, where less than half of the African Union's member states have access to modern health facilities, and there are too few health workers to support those who do become ill. Despite this, he

Dr. Paintsil points out that part of the threat of COVID-19 is in how it strained already fragile health systems in Africa, where less than half of the African Union's member states have access to modern health facilities and there are too few health workers to support those who

explained that there are various possible reasons why the pandemic has been less severe throughout much of Africa when compared to places like the United States or Brazil.

Testing for COVI-19 has been limited by poor test kit distribution and other logistic issues. Still, the modulating effect of temperature and humidity, continent-wide strategy, and the young population profile (which means fewer deaths) has led to a less severe pandemic for many. Continent-wide initiatives, such as the AU's Africa Task Force for Coronavirus (AFTCOR) and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), have also helped greatly in the fight against COVID-19. However, Africa needs to improve its healthcare systems to save lives from infectious diseases, such as Lassa fever, yellow fever, among other sources. Dr. Paintsil recommends that due to the limited availability of healthcare facilities, budgets, and workers across the continent, nations invest in disruptive solutions like Telemedicine, an "Africa Health Professionals without Borders," and a cross-continental disease surveillance system. By making these investments, African nations can expand their abilities to save lives and help prevent future pandemics.

Africa Day 2021 Breakout Sessions

The Jollof Rice Panel



Also featured in this year's Africa day 2021 celebration was a session on how to prepare African Jollof Rice. It was an opportunity to educate the audience on what jollof rice is and how it is prepared from various parts of the continent. While Nigerians lay claim to it, it is believed the dish was created by the Senegalese, with nearly all West African cultures having their own versions. The dish itself is believed to have been created by Penda Mbaye in Senegal in the 19th century. The rice dish became popular with traders taking the dish home and putting their spin on it. Boston Okundaye and Simi Araoye, from UMass Boston, presented on how to prepare the Nigerian jollof rice, while Rashelle Straker educated the audience on how to prepare the Jamaican jollof rice. Some of the ingredients for preparing jollof rice include grated tomatoes, diced White Onion, diced Bell Pepper, Vegetable oil, Curry Powder, Salt, Chilli Powder, Black Pepper, Thyme, Bay Leaves, Diced Carrots, Maggi, Tomato Paste, and Canned Green Beans.

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African Dance and Music Panel



The second breakout session focused on African Dance and Music presented by Boston Okundaye and Dorothy Muchere Bulinda. Boston's presentation focused on Afrobeat, a genre of music dating back to Ghana in the 1920s with elements from West African musical styles, American musical influences using complex intersecting rhythms and percussions. Boston had everyone learning how to dance to "Charle Man". In the 21st century, Afrobeats encompasses American Rap and HipHop. Dorothy Muchere Bulinda, M.Mus, an ethnomusicologist, music educator, and Swahili linguist, presented from Kenya. Dorothy's presentation focused on the *kiringongo*, a marimba that is found among the Mijikenda of Kenya.

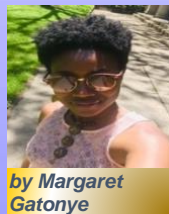
The Fashion Show



The 2021 Africa Day celebrations featured a virtual fashion show from [Obioma Fashion](#), created by Kelechi and Goz Anyadiiegwu. It offered an opportunity to learn more about fashion on the continent and in the diaspora, especially with regards to how fashion has changed and adapted over time. Several well-known designs, such as the West African dunfa, the dashiki, and others, were featured. Various textiles, but particularly wax prints, could be seen throughout the fashion reels presented by Goz. Kelechi touched on the importance of these textiles and how artisans in Africa transform them into beautiful works of design which vary from the 'traditional' to the experimental. They both also discussed how being able to share these African-inspired fashions internationally has been a great experience. By sharing African cultures through clothing designs, Obioma Fashion brings African-inspired fashion to the global marketplace.

"...being able to share these African-inspired fashions internationally has been a great experience."

The ASF Africa Day article is authored by



ASF e-Ubuntu 2021 Award Ceremony

The 2021 Africa Scholars Forum Distinguished Ubuntu Community Leader Award:
Abdulkadir Y. Hussein, M.P.P.



Mr. Abdulkadir Y. Hussein, MPP, is the Founder and CEO of the [African Community Economic Development of New England](#) (ACEDONE) and the recipient of the 2021 ASF Distinguished Ubuntu Community Leader Award. Mr. Hussein was a successful software engineer for many years before turning his attention and devotion to the African refugee community. Mr. Hussein has over 25 years of experience in community development, Public Policy, and nonprofit management. In receiving his award, Mr. Hussein gave a keynote address on Immigration Related Violence in African Communities: Policing and Deportations (A Transformational Leadership Approach). Hailing from Somalia where, as a young teacher, he began mobilizing around an unfair policy by a repressive dictatorship, Mr. Hussein had to leave his hometown in 1975 to the Middle East. Once again driven by a will to impact his community and thrive for positive change, he mobilized workers to advocate for fairer work conditions and lose his as a result of this engagement. As he stated, “losing my job never stopped me from standing up for what I believe in, which is a just world.” A family man and father of three kids, in 1981 Abdulkadir moved to the United States and then to Boston in 1988 where he attended graduate school and began working as a Software engineer.

Mr. Hussein engaged in community service part-time in Waltham, where he was inspired to get involved in helping his community in Boston. In 1992, he set up the Somali Development Center in Jamaica Plain, where he continued to be involved part-time. Seeing a pressing need in his community, Mr. Hussein quit his job to devote his entire time to the betterment of the organization and his community. Within 3 years, the organization went from a 30,000 dollars budget to a half-million dollars. Through his organization, he sought to address the major problems that the Somali community faced in Boston—adapting to the new environment, finding stable housing, and integrating society in a context where racial, gender, and environmental injustices deepen these issues. Having pushed the organization to success, he left the Somali Development Center in 2000. He returned in 2002 and decided to establish ACEDONE. With a renewed drive for justice, he adopted a transformational leadership

“Losing my job never stopped me from standing up for what I believe in, which is a just world.”

approach to lead this new organization where, as he emphasized, “We no longer really want to work with the system. Now, we are really working on how we are going to change the system.”

To address these systemic issues impeding the successes of the African community in Boston, ACEDONE, to date, has established a Youth Leadership Program called “Ubuntu Youth” to empower the youth in educational achievement. Beyond impacting a system change, ACEDONE aims to promote economic equity and wealth creation for future generations in the community. In this regard, the organization is providing technical support to 300 businesses across Massachusetts. Closing his speech, Mr. Hussein highlighted his vision of a community in his terms, “the meaning of community is being involved.” He continued by noting that this involves building bridges across all communities, and he hopes to do so among communities of African descent like the Caribbean and African American communities.



Fatimah Kyari Mohammed Awardees

Meet Dr. Lyndsey McMahan, a Fatima Kyari Mohammed African Unity Scholarship Awardee of the Africa Scholars Forum at UMass-Boston

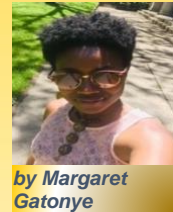


Lyndsey McMahan is a global social worker and graduate of the Boston College School of Social Work, with a Master’s degree in Social Innovation and Leadership and a concentration in global practice. She recently obtained her doctorate in Global Governance and Human Security at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Dr. McMahan’s dissertation, titled “A Top-Down Approach to Bottom-Up Development: NGO Implementation of Early Childhood Development Programs in Rwanda,” focuses on nongovernmental organizations that engage with actors across different scales (global, national, local) and the challenges organizations face due to this. She primarily uses qualitative

“I started to really think about how, in the end, do you impact individuals and communities on a very real human level.”

methods to better understand the lived experiences of individuals, which ultimately inform research, policy, and practice recommendations.

During the Fatima Kyari award ceremony, Dr. McMahan explained her motivations behind joining the Ph.D. program at UMass-Boston: “I started to really think about how, in the end, do you impact individuals and communities on a very real human level. And that's what ultimately sort of spurred my interest in the Ph.D., and more specifically, in the Global Governance and Human Security program. You know, looking at the work that's happening in Rwanda...there is a word regarding early childhood development called twacky, and that means ‘we make ourselves stronger.’ This has become sort of the country's approach to most things post-genocide—we build ourselves up.”



Meet Dr. Uchenna Nwangwu, a Fatima Kyari Mohammed African Unity Scholarship Awardee of the Africa Scholars Forum at UMass-Boston.



Uchenna Nwangwu is an Africanist scholar who obtained her doctorate from the School of Global Inclusion and Social Development at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Her research focuses on poverty, development, and the rights of excluded populations, including people living with disabilities in developing countries. Dr. Nwangwu's dissertation, titled "Enhancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities: A case study of the twin-track approach to disability-inclusive development in Nigeria," focuses on operationalizing disability-inclusive programming. The study identified important considerations for policy, in-country context, and continuous improvement for carrying out disability-inclusive processes and practices. According to Nwangwu, “it presents evidence-based scholarly knowledge and practical efforts by the development community, government, and other stakeholders towards advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society amidst existing challenges.” Uchenna's tip for completing and defending her dissertation during the pandemic is her self-motivation, which she attributes to her faith, passion for her dissertation topic, and a weekly commitment to keep writing. She advises current and prospective doctoral students to figure out what works for

“She advises current and prospective doctoral students to figure out what works for them in getting their work done and using that to self-motivate themselves and to keep pushing ahead in all areas of their Ph.D. program.”

them in getting their work done and using that to self-motivate themselves and to keep pushing ahead in all areas of their Ph.D. program, including their course work, research, and dissertation writing. In her words, “Keep pushing...you have to figure out what works for you...you'll be able to figure out what works for you, however long it takes you. And when you figure it out, just use it.”



by Hannah Brown

2021 Africanist Graduates



Esther N. Kamau, PhD
School of Global Inclusion and
Social Development



Yaa Opoku Agyeman, MA
International Relations



Bichetine Salome Nanga, MA
Conflict Resolution



Lyndsey McMahan, PhD
Global Governance and
Human Security



Uchenna Nwangwu, PhD
School of Global Inclusion and
Social Development



Yacoub M. Dahah, MA
Conflict Resolution

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