



# TALKING DRUM

## AFRICAN SCHOLARS FORUM NEWSLETTER

### Africa Day 2020 Synopsis



April 2020

#### UMass Boston Africa Day 2020 - Challenging Pan Africanism through Migrations

Africa Day 2020 was an event hosted by the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, Africa Scholar Forum (ASF) - a campus-wide academic platform for faculty who are teachers or scholars of the study of Africa- and that is chaired by McCormack's Associate Dean and Professor of international relations, [Rita Kiki Edozie](#). Held on March 6th, with welcoming addresses from Professor Edozie, [Interim Chancellor Newman](#), [Interim Provost McDermott](#), [Vice Chancellor DiSabattino](#), and [Dean David Cash](#), this year the all-day event was delivered through four components - a keynote plenary African-menu luncheon speaker, a keynote plenary panel of Greater Boston scholars of African Studies, a UMass Boston doctoral student panel, an evening keynote speaker, and a gala evening cultural extravaganza that included an African-inspired fashion show and an Afrobeat DJ.



*ASF Chairperson Prof. Rita Edozie giving the opening remarks*

*Chancellor Katherine Newman giving her remarks*

This year's event theme was titled [Challenges to Pan Africanism: Afrophobia and Migration Across Borders](#) to reflect the African continent's attempts to achieve integration and unity across its deeply pluralistic and diverse borders in spite of the challenges that mitigate its success. Afrophobia refers to a form of xenophobia directed by Africans toward other Africans. The keynote luncheon speaker, [Fatima Kyari Mohammed](#), currently the African Union (AU) ambassador to the United Nations (UN) spoke passionately about the continent's successful attempts to transcend the issue. The ambassador remarked that in dealing with the problems, Africans across the continent should celebrate their differences, to collectively transform thinking about Africa into positive action that overcomes fear.



*Participants at the 2020 Africa Day celebration*

UMass Boston ASF faculty, [Dr. Nada Ali](#), a senior lecturer in the department of women, gender, and sexuality studies, and [Professor Quito Swan](#), also William Trotter Institute Director, and other scholars from [Harvard](#), [Wellesley](#), [Mount Holyoke](#), and [SUNY Geneseo](#)

debated the relevance of race and neocolonialism as a factor of Africa's global migration trends and a spearheading of South African challenges in receiving African migrants. Organized as the [Pan African Graduate Student Association\(PAGSA\)](#), several doctoral students from McCormack Graduate School, the College of Liberal Arts, and the School of Global and Social Inclusion, whose dissertations engage critical topics in African affairs, spoke to these policy issues in relation to the problem of African xenophobia. Evening keynote speaker, [Rahman Oladigbolu](#), a Boston-based, Nigerian filmmaker showed scenes from his film on African immigrants' experiences in the United States, *Soul Sisters*.

With luncheon and evening reception food prepared by local Boston Nigerian, Somalian, and Cape Verdes restaurants, and an evening African cultural show; the all-day event marked another successful affair at the UMass Boston campus which hosts a sizeable number of African immigrant, international, and heritage students.

**Watch the 2020 Africa Day Welcoming Remarks here:**

<https://youtu.be/CpR4nrykkv0>



## Keynote Address titled "Afrophobia and Pan-Africanism: Lessons for the Continent"

The keynote speech was delivered by Amb. Fatima Kyari Mohammed is the African Union Permanent Observer to the United Nations (UN). Prior to her current appointment, she was the senior special advisor to the ECOWAS commission. Her career spans more than two decades, with a focus on peace, security, socio-economic development, regional integration, organizational development, and project management both in the public and private sectors.



Prof. Nada Ali while introducing the keynote speaker

Amb. Fatima while delivering her keynote speech

She started her lecture with a brief history of Pan-Africanism and the birth of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which later became the African Union (AU) in 2002 and the role it has played in attaining and strengthening the Pan African vision of an integrative, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its citizen representing a dynamic force in the international arena. Pan Africanism has its origin in the struggle of Africans against slavery and colonization. The idea of Pan Africanism originally came from the diaspora in the 1900s and the main idea was to bring together people of African heritage living outside the continent to protest the stealing of land in the colonies, racial discrimination and other issues of interest to them at that time.

The explosion of the movement of people to other parts of the world (migration) over the past 100 years has created fear in the mind of people. This fear becomes fear of the unknown, fear of lacking and this brings about division, fighting for natural resources, etc.

This further results in the socio-economic and class divisions as fear is used by privileged and advantaged populations to dominate disadvantaged populations. Thus, migration which happens to be a natural phenomenon based on the evolution of man becomes negatively affected by these fears such as Xenophobia. As a result, migration becomes a thing of fear.



Question from the one of the participants

In order to achieve unity in the continent, she proposed actionable solutions some of which includes recognizing that Africans are the same. As a result, Africans need to own their narratives and tell their stories. Apart from this, Africans must focus on building nations worldwide and eliminate discrimination, helping those who are disadvantaged to gain equal and full participation in global development. Finally, Africans must celebrate their differences, culture and identity and collectively transform thinking into positive action which will help in overcoming fear.

Watch the 2020 Africa Day Keynote speech here:

<https://youtu.be/FNJfrydsZg>



## Greater Boston Area Africanist Scholars Debate Afrophobia and Pan Africanism in Contemporary African Affairs

The keynote plenary panel, titled, (watch panel here [Between Afrophobia and Afrophilia](#)) constituted a star-studded cohort of Africanist and African Diaspora scholars from the Greater Boston university community, including South African-Zimbabwean, [Panache Chigumadzi \(Harvard University\)](#), Zimbabwean, [Chipo Dendere \(Wellesley College\)](#), Zimbabwean, [Munya Bryn Munochiveyi \(Holy Cross College\)](#), and Nigerian [Daniel E. Agbiboa \(Harvard University\)](#). [Olaocha Nwabara \(SUNY Geneseo\)](#) moderated the panel. As suggested by the title, the panel's goal was to have panelists examine three important themes that effectively capture a substantive understanding of African integration - Afrophobia (African on African xenophobia), Afrophilia (an ultra-nationalistic celebration of African identity and all that is African), and Pan Africanism (the African continent's efforts at uniting and integrating politically, socially, and economically).

To facilitate what became a vibrant and sometimes heated intellectual discussion, moderator Nwabara posed three sets of questions to the panelists. A first interrogated the challenges to Pan Africanism. One key question on this topic was how the global issue of race important to our understanding of the persistence of the challenges in your research and in your work, in misrepresentations of Africans and *between* Africans, and to our current topic - Afrophobia and its challenges to Pan Africanism.

By way of response to this question Panache Chigumadzi and Daniel Agbiboa presented two different perspectives on the centrality of race in shaping the growing incident of Afrophobia and its challenges to Pan African unity. Agbiboa, 'Race means little to the average Lagosian in Nigera'. For Chigumadzi, race is at the heart of Afrophobia in South Africa as a Black South African working class majority slips further into economic marginalization as a result of African migration into the country; Whites remain wealthy, privileged and play a pretend game of Black affirmative action without really reversing the legacies of apartheid. Both scholars provoked a thought-filled discussion with other panelists and the audience around the intersectionality of race, class, and national cultural and global context to understand the twin but paradoxical movements of pan Africanism and Afrophobia in Africa today.

A second set of questions interrogated panelists on their own "African" identities in relation to the world. Nwabara asked each panelist, Beginning with your experiences in Southern Africa out to the world, what does Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa and Black.

America have to teach Africans and the world over about our progress, both as examples of identity, unity, and self-worth *and* perhaps as a cautionary tale of what must be understood, challenged, and/or eradicated? Responding, Dendere spoke of the plight of the African migrant in the world who is the most marginalized immigrant - in the US and in Europe. She also spoke about the way that African youth through popular culture were transforming Pan Africanism through music, film, and social media. Munochivey rendered a dynamic history of progressive Pan Africanism in the continent that has always undergone challenges and opportunities. Pan Africanism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he remarked, will transcend Afrophobia too.

Nwabara referred to a final set of questions borrowing from the African Union mantra, African (Studies) Solutions to African Challenges. Calling herself a transdisciplinary scholar herself dedicated to using her scholarship to engage and transform community, Nwabara asked the panelists about the responsibility of those here today, after engaging this topic area "Challenges to Pan-Africanism". She asked them, "How do we translate what we've learned here to our everyday actions in critical and sustainable ways? What, if anything, must be gained or sacrificed in order to do so?"

Just a quick preview of their research and scholarship; there is no doubt that each of these scholars is doing her/his bit. Take a look at novelist and story-teller, [Panashe Chigumadzi's TEDTalk lecture, \*Hearing the silence\*](#) where she shares her experiences about writing as a Black and African woman. Daniel Agbiboa's new book, [Transport, Transgression and Politics in African Cities: The Rhythm of Chaos](#) is a collection of field-based case-studies that examine the role and contributions of Africa's informal public transport to the production of city forms and urban economies, as well as the voices, experiences, and survival tactics of its poor and stigmatized workforce.



[Chipo Dendere](#), an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Wellesley College says that her passion for politics grew out of observing the changing and challenging political landscape in her home country of Zimbabwe. She is also inspired by the experiences of her mother who raised me as a single woman at a time when most Africans frowned at the idea of divorce, her work as a trader between Zimbabwe and South Africa, and her stories about migration spanning from the 1950s to today.



Plenary Panel (L-R): Prof. Oloacha Nwabara, Ms. Panashe Chigumadzi, Prof. Daniel Agbiboa, Prof Chipo Dendere & Prof. Munya Bryn

Finally, Holy Cross professor, Munya Bryn Munochiveyi's 2014 [book, \*Prisoners of Rhodesia: Inmates and Detainees in the Struggle for Zimbabwean Liberation, 1960-1980\*](#) gets a five star good reads rating. The book is the first to look closely at the histories and lived experiences of political detainees and prisoners whose contributions to the liberation struggle have been rendered invisible by the dominant historical and political narratives of modern-day Zimbabwe.

All in all, this was an intellectually inspiring panel discussion by accomplished and creative African scholars who are doing excellent work in African Studies.

Watch the 2020 Africa Day Plenary Panel session here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKShqzkdw58&feature=youtu.be>



Written By Dennis Jjuuko and Professor Rita Kiki Edozie



## The Legacy of Colonialism and the Emergence of Afrophobia

The event also premiered its first graduate student roundtable with the title "*The legacy of colonialism and the emergence of Afrophobia.*" The panel included graduate students from various schools at UMass Boston and the Pan African Graduate Students Association. Discussions examined Afrophobia from pre- and post-colonial perspectives, highlighting its emergence in the post-colonial era and sharing case studies, trends, and experiences that lead to and fuel its existence today. Panelists proposed theories and concepts for exploring the phenomenon and its operationalization, such as human security, social identity theory, and migration. They also highlight its devastating impact and the need for an integrated Africa that promotes unity in governance and an enabling environment, sensitive to the needs of the people within all African countries. Actionable solutions proposed by panelists to combat the phenomenon include education and research on Afrophobia, building communities, the need to teach collective instead of nation-specific African history in schools to educate the younger generation on how



Graduate Roundtable (L-R): Prince De-Makele, Balkissa Diallo, N. Hannah Brown, Uche Nwagu, Helen Busolo & Dennis Jjuuko

African countries collectively work together harmoniously, especially in times of need.

Other solutions include the use of sports and athletic events in Africa as a strategy to build connectivity and coexistence across nations as well as develop the economic potential of youths in communities.

Watch the 2020 Africa Day Graduate Roundtable here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCaVsgHf8GM&feature=youtu.be>



Written by Hannah Brown

## Gala Keynote and Fashion Show

Also, the evening hosted the Gala keynote address and film show titled "*Soul Sisters*" by **Rahman Oladigbolu**. The essence of the film was to share insights as to the challenges immigrants face in their quest for survival and identity in the US. Through this movie, Rahman tells the story



*Rahman during his Gala keynote speech*

of a young Nigerian woman who immigrated to the United States in search of freedom and stability. Rahman expressed the importance of narratives and how African filmmaking can be instrumental in portraying the multifaceted struggles of Africans in America. The story of Sade, the young Nigerian woman in the movie, represented these untold narratives.

In a way, he reminded us of the value of friendship that can transcend differences and build good relationship bridges. The sisterhood between Sade and Sonya (an African American woman) reflected this ideal which explains the title of the movie. Sade and Sonya's relationship further highlighted the humanity component in the movie; we do not have to come from the same place or share the same realities to be brothers and sisters. Humanity does not have borders. A reflection of Rahman's speech and movie makes us think about the current pandemic and the value of humanity. The spread of the COVID-19 today, forces us to think more deeply about being human. Not immigrant, not White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, or other cases to tick, but just "*a being*" sharing the same fears, worries and hoping for health security. The evening session also hosted fashion show by Obioma fashion. Africa day was indeed the D-Day to wear that beautiful African attire hanging in our closet, be it our head wraps, ties, dresses or skirts. It is all about colors, but most importantly about style. The managing director of Obioma Fashion (based in New York), Emeka Goz Anyadiegwu ensured style was at the Rendezvous during the Gala Dinner. Apart from this, it was also an opportunity to pass a message that despite the challenges we face as a continent, we have rich and beautiful cultures which should unite us as Africans.



*Written by Balkissa Diallo*



## *Photo Gallery of the Fashion Show*



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