



# TALKING DRUM

AFRICAN SCHOLARS FORUM NEWSLETTER



June, 2020

## AFRICANS RESPOND TO THE TRAGIC KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD

Welcome to our June 2020 edition of the African Scholars Forum at UMB's Talking Drum! As you know,



African talking drums mimic the sounds of human speech in terms of tone, accent, and emotion to deliver messages in code that communicate over long distances. To this end, the Drum serves as the voice of the community by aggregating its desires and enhancing its mobilization for social and public goods.

"Today", our drum's "boom, boom, boom¼boom" sound couldn't be louder, more-pointed, or more purposeful in its warnings from and to Africans and peoples around the world.

Today is [Juneteenth](#)! The Drum relays that we are shocked, outraged, and saddened by the systemically racist, senseless, tragic killings of Ahmuad Arbrey, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and now Rayshard Brookes at the hands of law enforcement in this country.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democratic members of the [U.S Congress who donned Ghanaian Kente cloth stoles](#) while kneeling in silence for eight minutes and 46 seconds on the marble floor of Emancipation Hall in the U.S. Capitol heard the Drum's message. These politicians connected the horrific murder of George Floyd at the hands of police brutality too often targeted at African heritage communities in the US to the long Black freedom struggle of African peoples from enslavement taken from West and southern Africa to segregation, civil rights, and now to a supposedly post civil rights era that Michelle Alexander correctly describes in her book as the [The New Jim Crow\(Alexander, 2010\)](#).

At [UMass Boston's Africa Scholars Forum](#), we agree that the symbolism of Kente cloth-wearing by American politicians, kneeling for just over 8 minutes, and acknowledging the historical connectedness of Africans in the continent and African Americans in the Diaspora is appropriate and required to fully understand, condemn and transcend through policy change the present tragedies that we face in what have been aptly described by some as post-modern day racial lynching's.



But "Today's" tragic killings also connect Africans around the world presently and in the same space - in the US. Over twenty years ago in 1999, Guinean immigrant, Amadou Diallo was fatally shot 41 times by four plainclothes NYPD officers during the now notoriously stop-and-frisk campaign in a Black neighborhood of New York City. The officers claimed that they had

thought that Diallo was a rape suspect, and thought that he had been firing a gun at them. Diallo, a 23 year old, was unarmed with no record, and merely held up the wallet in his hands alarmed at four men (plainclothes cops) aiming guns at him; it was not a gun; and the policemen had the wrong "Black male" suspect. All four police officers were ultimately acquitted of all charges of murder and reckless endangerment.

From Amadou to George, today on Juneteenth, we at the Africa Scholars Forum at UMass Boston invoke the Drum for solidarity messaging and Ubuntu to re-affirm our love for each other as we mourn the loss of those who have befallen these acts of police brutality.

We at the Africa Scholars Forum also enjoin with various African entities in the continent that similarly have expressed statements and releases to condemn the inhumane murder of Floyd and others and advocate for comprehensive, structural change to transcend racism in America!

The Drum has sent us their messages to us and we share some of them. At the vanguard is Africa's African Union (AU) whose [Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat](#) strongly condemns the killing while re-invoking the historic Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) Resolution on Racial Discrimination in the United States of America made by African Heads of State and Government, at the OAU's First Assembly Meeting held in Cairo, Egypt in 1964, an event that was addressed by Malcolm X. Today, the African Union firmly reaffirms and reiterates its rejection of the continuing discriminatory practices against Black citizens in the US.

Equally, in the words of the [President of Ghana, Nana Addo](#), "We stand with our kith and kin in America in these difficult and trying times, and we hope that the unfortunate, tragic death of George Floyd will inspire a lasting change in how America confronts head on the problems of hate and racism". [A Nigerian chapter of Black Lives Matter Movement](#) has besieged the US' embassy in Abuja, Nigeria's administrative capital, to express its displeasure against the gruesome murder of George Floyd. "We believe that all men are created equal and have inalienable rights among which are rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness." In South

Africa, the nation's ANC ruling party responded through a 'Black Friday' campaign that called out 'institutionalized racism in the United States, South Africa, China and wherever racism rear its ugly head.



Finally, translating talk into action, all 54 African countries have called on the United Nations Human Rights Council to urgently debate to advance policy change against racially inspired human rights violations and police brutality against people of African descent.

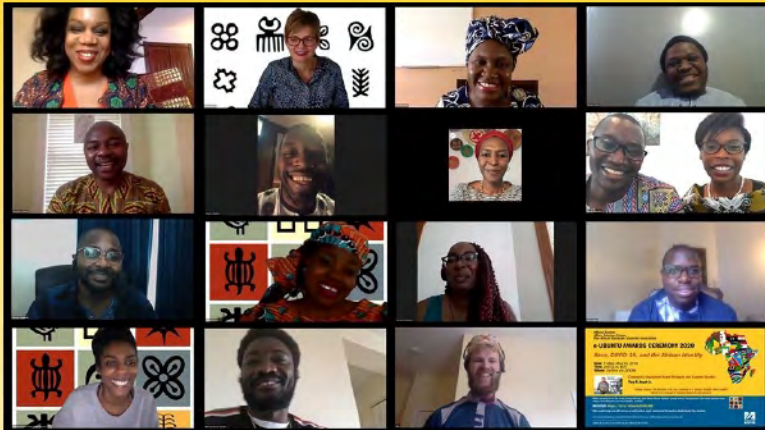
Family! While celebrating our May 2020 Africanist graduates at UMass Boston at our e-Ubuntu recognition ceremony a few weeks ago- [watch it here](#): this month's edition of Talking Drum is dedicated to the loving memories of some giant catalysts for change in wrongful death - Amadou, George, Breonna, Ahmaud, and Rayshard!

Other stories follow herein attached!

Sala Kahle! (Stay Well- Zulu!)  
[Rita Kiki Edozie](#)  
Professor and Associate Dean  
Chair, Africa Scholars Forum (ASF)  
McCormack School of Policy and Global Studies  
UMass Boston



## eUbuntu 2020: A Virtual Celebration of Africanist Scholarship and Accomplishments



*Participants at the virtual Ubuntu event*

[The Africa Scholars Forum](#) premiered her first [virtual Ubuntu ceremony](#) on May 15, 2020. The ceremony was an interactive event to remember as Africanist scholars and supporters connected across the world brandishing their African attires and Adinkra backgrounds to celebrate Africanist scholarship and achievements and reflect on the effects of racism and inequality on the COVID 19 response to Blacks, especially in the United States.

The event began with welcome addresses by the Chair of the Africa Scholars Forum, Associate Dean and [Professor Rita Kiki Edozie](#), the Pan African Graduate Student Association President, Nyingilanyeofori Hannah Brown, Dean of McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, [Professor David Cash](#), and Distinguished Ambassador [Fatimah Kyari Mohammed](#) also attended the event.

In her address Associate Dean Edozie acknowledged the trying times of COVID 19 and stressed how important it was for us to work in the spirit of Ubuntu during this period. She explained that Ubuntu is the essence of humanity and the notion of connectedness, reminding us that our global connectivity during this crisis is essential as it strengthens us to work together, knowing we will all overcome, especially during this time of crisis. She also explained that the Adinkra symbols used in the ceremony are symbols of achievement and congratulations, and the colors of the kente stole expressed various values- energy, love, royalty, assertiveness, victory, humility, and wisdom- in the African culture.

Nyingilanyeofori Hannah Brown echoed Professor Edozie's words on staying connected and emphasized that it was also important to encourage ourselves by celebrating our achievements and accomplishments, especially during these challenging times. She went on to highlight PAGSA's accomplishments and activities in the 2019/2020 academic year, thanking the UMass Boston community for awarding PAGSA the Beacons Graduate Student Organization award for the year.

Dean David Cash empathized on the impact of COVID 19 on families, especially the loss of loved ones and economic opportunities, and acknowledged that everyone was indeed making the best of these circumstances and determined to keep moving forward.



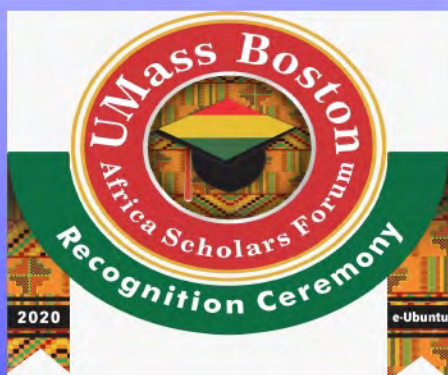
He also reflected on a favored quote of former Governor Deval Patrick, "we have a stake in each other" which he considered as well suited to the spirit of Ubuntu because it requires us to think of our communities, future generations, and about people we may or may not know, making us realize that we all affect each other and have a stake in each other's lives. He explained that this way of thinking is what we practice at UMass Boston and what motivates and drives people to come here.



*Adinkra symbol*

The event also featured a keynote address by renowned community leader and entrepreneur [Tony Kwame Ansah Jr.](#) Mr. Ansah spoke on Race, COVID 19, and the African Identity. His address acknowledged the widespread impact of COVID 19 on the health, economic and social welfare of individuals, especially those of African descent in the Greater Boston Community. Explaining that presently the black community in Boston has the highest percentage of known cases and known deaths. This echoed data released by Boston city in April, showing that over 40percent of the individuals infected, from about 62 percent of Boston's cases (2,513 cases at that time), were of African descent. Tony explained that some already existing factors of inequality in black communities, such as inadequate housing, pre-existing health conditions, and poor access to health care, influence their susceptibility to the COVID 19 virus. He also advised on existing resources and community support initiatives working to change this reality, such as the Massachusetts African community response to COVID 19 campaign and the COVID 19 health and equity task force in the city of Boston.

Tony also took participants on his journey to becoming a Pan Africanist and explained how he practiced this by supporting local African organizations, writing articles on African philanthropy, culture, and business. He encouraged participants to keep practicing Pan Africanism. He ended the session on the note that Race, COVID 19, and the African Identity are interconnected because we are one race - the human race,-, which reflects Ubuntu- "I am because we are"- Explaining that as a race, we are affected by the pandemic, even as we identify as Africanist scholars. Questions explored in the Q&A session includes: What do you see as the response to COVID 19 in cities in Ghana and cities in Massachusetts? How do you reconcile your American-African Identities? With your experience in the human service sector, especially in Massachusetts, what do you suggest the government should focus on in other to address the specific racial disparity that seems to persist regardless of the current social issue?



The keynote session of the event segued into the award ceremony, poem rendition, and an interactive social networking session for participants. The awards session featured awards on community engagement, Fatima Kyari Mohammed Scholarship awards, and Ubuntu recognition awards to a community leader and graduating Africanist students. Each student recipient received a certificate and a virtual badge, and the Fatima Kyari Mohammed scholarship awardees also received cash prizes of \$500 each.

The community engagement awardee was Tony Kwame Ansah Jr. Rose Nyaondo, and Timothy Adivilah received the Fatima Kyari Mohammed Scholarship awards. And the Africanist graduating students included both scholarship awardees and J. Michael Denney, Maryanne W Kamunya, Abigail Kalandula, and Yaa A. Opoku-Agyeman.

The award ceremony led to a rendition by the Poet James Whitacre. The poem "Ubuntu" explored the Poet's discovery and meaning of the word "Ubuntu." The event ended on a festive note as participants socially networked and listened to beautiful African tunes from Brenda Fassie.

Below is an interview with the Community Engagement Awardee, Tony Kwame Ansah Jr., Graduating Africanist Scholars, and Awardees of the first Ambassador Fatimah Kyari Mohammed Scholarship Award.

### **An interview with the Keynote Speaker and the Community Engagement Awardee, Tony Kwame Ansah Jr. by Ojemire Benjamin Daniel**



***Tony Ansah Jr.***

[Tony K Ansah, Jr.](#), M.P.A. is a self-published author and a social entrepreneur based in Rhode Island, U.S.A. He has written and published several books and content via poems, quotes, fiction, non-fiction, blogs, and articles. To add to his collection of publications is his new book titled "*Diary of a Ghanaian Diaspora Entrepreneur: Progress Revolving Around African Business Innovations*". Apart from his publications, Tony has also received national & international recognition from Face2Face Africa, Modern Ghana, The African, Ghana News Online, SDG Philanthropy Platform, and Alliance Magazine (just to name a few) for his articles about African

business, culture, and philanthropy. An interview with Tony was an opportunity to get answers to questions about the motivation behind his work on African issues despite being an American, his understanding of Ubuntu in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, his experience as an African-American, his understanding and experience of race here in the US, his immigration experience, his motivation for positively impacting African immigrants here in the US, and his advice for African immigrants here in the Boston area.

#### ***How do you understand the concept of Ubuntu in relation to the coronavirus pandemic?***

My understanding is, "I am because we are." Without you, there is no me. Without you and I, there is no us or we. It is about humanity and what we have done for her lately. The world is bigger than you and I. We do better for society as a collective than as an individual. It is also about empowering others and giving impact for the betterment of humanity, especially during our COVID-19 pandemic.

***Can you tell us about your immigrant experience and your leadership background in the community of greater Boston as the Executive director of Africans in Boston?***

My immigrant experience and leadership background are somewhat parallel. Let me explain. My back-story is very connected to African immigrants as a youth and as an adult, especially those from Ghana. I was born, raised, lived, and worked with Ghanaian parents (small convenience store owners) in Rhode Island as an only child. I also worked and still work in Massachusetts with a diverse group of Africans as an adult in human services. A good portion of my lifetime has involved the African community in different capacities to include leadership roles, such as Africans in Boston (AiB). Before joining AiB as a general volunteer and later transitioning to the executive director position in 2019, my initial entry into leadership was with an organization called African Coalition (AC), which is based in Mattapan and Brockton. As of 2016, I am the current secretary/clerk of AC. In 2018, I joined African Bridge Network (ABN) of Boston as a volunteer and eventually became a team leader of their current human services industry initiative and project. Overall, from 2016 till now, I have been leading others and taking initiative behind the scenes in and around Boston.

***What are your motivation and experiences in working on African issues despite being an American?***

My motivation and experiences are related to me being an only childhood of Ghanaian parents. As a child, I had the opportunity and pleasure to visit the land of my ancestry many times. I went to Ghana for the first time when I was only a few months old. After this early childhood moment, my parents traveled to Ghana almost every two years and brought me along with them. When I was studying history in undergrad school, I got introduced to politics and economics. I read and saw the negative effects that British colonialism in Ghana had on my family tree. Whereby, my parents, relatives and others sought greener pastures in North America because Ghana was in a regressive state, especially in the 1970s and throughout most of the 20th century.

After roughly two years of chewing and consuming African literature, I decided to go study about Africa in Ghana. I was lucky enough to find and join a study abroad program to continue my education and expand my knowledge about African history and politics. I must say that I learned a lot and enjoyed my studies overall. During that span of time, I got a clear understanding about the past and present history of Ghana and other parts of Africa too. It was obvious to me that my place of birth was vastly different than the land of my ancestry. Things that I took for granted were all a luxurious privilege in America, but not quite the case in most parts of Ghana and other African countries. I later returned to the United States with a Pan-African state of mind. My aim was and still is to encourage and strengthen bonds of solidarity between all people of African descent. I found myself communicating and interacting more with and around individuals like friends and coworkers who identified as "African, Black, and/or Caribbean." My thoughts and expressions continue to evolve and revolve around subject matters related to people of African descendants.

### ***How do you see the issue of race in the US, and what are your experiences?***

In general, I see the issue of race in the US as positive and negative. To me, race is a social construct created by man. It is not scientific fact. Race places people into categories and serves to divide humanity against each other. Some people are willing to integrate or prefer to segregate. To each its own. My personal experience is good and bad. For elementary school, junior high school, and secondary school, I went to public and private institutions, and my peers were of a different complexion or the same. Overall, they were mostly of a Caucasian pigmentation. I did not necessarily have major issues with my classmates per se. However, I did face some issues with teachers and authority figures as a youth and as an adult. These issues have either been covert or verbal, but nothing physical or extreme. There will always be room for improvement amongst race and humanity. We are all imperfect beings. Our focus should be on an individual's character and personality. In an ideal world, race is irrelevant and does not exist.

### ***You have impacted many Africans in the Boston area. What is the motivation behind it?***

The motivation behind it is simply to make social and financial impact. I like to be a catalyst or a vehicle to empower people and inspire others to be the best version of themselves. I want to see people find their passion, tap into their purpose, and ultimately progress in life.

### ***What inspired you in coming up with your publication titled "Diary of a Ghanaian Diaspora Entrepreneur: Progress Revolving around African Business Innovations"?***

I was inspired by some business market research of the African Diaspora I conducted back in the tail end of 2018. Whereby, I came across some African owned online publication outlets in the USA and elsewhere who were open to external and/or independent writers, bloggers, and authors to submit content for their respective readers/followers/subscribers. I was fortunate enough for a few of them to publish my content on their website. As a result, I received national and international recognition from Face2Face Africa, Modern Ghana, The African, Ghana News Online, Center Africa Broadcasting Network Corporation-TV, SDG Philanthropy Platform and Alliance Magazine (just to name a few) for my articles about African business, culture, and philanthropy. For 2019, I focused most of my leisure time and energy on writing articles/blogs about African entrepreneurs and businesses who were selling products or providing services that solved problems for Africans home and abroad as well as others. In the beginning of 2020, I realized that I had a lot of content and material that I could turn into a book that had to do with progress revolving around African business innovations. I then packaged it through the format of a dairy, which wound up being the third installment and continuation of my Diary of a Ghanaian Diaspora Entrepreneur series.

### ***What advice do you have for the African immigrants in the Boston area?***

My advice to African immigrants is to get into the habit of educating one another, empowering one another, sharing resources with each other, being of service to each other, and collaborating with each other



because culture and tradition needs to continue onto the next generation and beyond. If not, the unborn or soon to be born will lose connection to their African roots. Let us keep the various African cultures and traditions alive as much as humanely possible. For those already doing this, I salute you!



*Written by Ojemire B. Daniel*

### **An interview with Dr. Timothy Adivilah Balag'kutu, a first co-recipient of the Ambassador Fatima Kyari Muhammed Scholarship Award by Balkissa Diallo**



*Dr. Timothy Adivilah*

[Dr. Timothy Adivilah Balag'kutu](#) just graduated from the Ph.D. program in Global Governance and Human Security (GGHS) and is a recipient of Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed Award. As he moves forward in his career, Dr. Balag'kutu reflected upon his experience in the GGHS program and on being an awardee. He also offered advice for incoming Africanists students and discussed his future as a new doctorate graduate.

#### ***Congratulations on your graduation Dr. Timothy! How does it feel to be where you are now?***

It feels good, really. After several years of hard work and sacrifice, and to finish with an award adds a lot more to the feeling. And I am full of gratitude to so many people for making this possible. The next steps for me are job applications. Thankfully, I still have my position in Babson College in Fall, and if I get any appointment anywhere else, I can go or combine both, if possible. The immediate concern for me is to find that job...whatever job that suits my skills set, whether in teaching, research or policy, or in an NGO. I feel capable of doing any of these as I said before, the GGHS program has made me very versatile, and I can fit in any environment. In the long term, I want to contribute my training toward addressing human security and other development challenges, especially at the grassroots level globally, but more so in Africa. One thing I would really like now is to hug my mother...I miss her so much. I hope I can do that soon enough.

#### ***Reflecting upon your Ph.D. Journey, what experiences have impacted you the most?***

Fundamentally, it is the relationship between faculty and students. Each professor brings such expertise and uniqueness that all fit into a perfect puzzle, and they readily attend to students. The relationship between faculty and students is cordial and supportive, and it is admirable. inspired me a lot. It has helped us remain very focused and productive. At no time did I hesitate to approach any professor for any kind of assistance. Indeed, most of the times they send information your way even without you asking because they have taken the time to know you, your interests and what is helpful for you. That has really been impactful in the process



for me, and the simple words of encouragement they offer at every stage are inspiring. The staff is also phenomenal.

***What is your dissertation about and why did you choose the topic?***

My study examines human security (environmental and human health ) concerns in the use of mercury in artisanal gold mining in Ghana, based on the Minamata Convention on Mercury, UNEP's newest chemicals governance instrument. Artisanal mining is extensive in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and largely informal and illegal. People in many communities depend on it for their livelihood and survival: unemployment is high and agriculture is declining in many communities. Artisanal gold mining is the leading source of anthropogenic mercury releases into the environment. Miners use mercury extensively and for various reasons. The process is labor-intensive, and after the difficult task of digging and pounding rocks, miners often prefer mercury amalgamation to other safer and environmentally friendlier methods for extracting gold particles: it is easier, quicker, more cost-effective, and mercury is readily available to miners.

This method is popular among miners globally; however, it exposes communities to serious health risks. Handling and disposal of the chemical is often reckless, and it contaminate soils, water sources, and foods like vegetables, fruits and fish. Because of the alarming nature of the problem in artisanal mining, which is concentrated in rural communities that often lack efficient health delivery systems, and whose workforce include the most vulnerable in society, the Minamata Convention focuses significant attention on the sector. My study results from my interests in two things: natural resource governance in Africa and environmental governance. In my second year, I designed some independent study on my research interests.

In resource governance, I focused on how resource extraction impacts and/or benefits local communities of resource-endowed states; and in environmental governance, I was interested in the relationship between international conventions and domestic governance processes. Then I discovered the Minamata Convention. I was captivated by and keen about its attention to artisanal mining, which I had been very familiar with at home and studied in school. I found the perfect connection to the two research areas, and my broad interest in global-local interactions in development policy processes. So, I designed a cross-scale study that examines the potential impact of a global intergovernmental convention in a domestic informal sector.

***How do you feel being awarded Amb. Fatima Mohammed Kyari Award?***

It is humbling, very gratifying, and inspiring for many reasons. First, because of its association with the idea of African unity. When you think about the history and vision of the idea and the sacrifices people have made over the years to advance it, to be given such an award gives me shivers: it is so humbling and gives me an added sense of responsibility. It is a delightful feeling too. I have a lot of gratitude also for the ideas and effort that gave birth to the award. The Ambassador's gesture is profoundly visionary. It is not every day that you see people donate their honorarium. She came to share knowledge and experience with us, and on top of that, she donated her reward for the effort to establish this very important incentive...it is deep. I am thankful to her for the gesture, which would inspire us further to work harder and think deeper about our commitment to our motherland.



### ***What advice do you have for incoming Africanists students?***

For Africanists (in general), what I have realized is that individuals mostly tend to focus on personal satisfaction in scholarly output. Not to say that scholarship is not important, but I think that there should be more focus (especially among African scholars) on its practical impact on development of Africa. It is a continent that has gone through and given a lot to the world, and still does. I see studies that do not bear practical benefits as exploitative in some ways. I would want to see Africanists becoming more pragmatic in helping to address the issues they research than only developing scholarly profiles. And especially for those of us from the continent, I have always said that our training here or anywhere in the world is much more meaningful at home than it is anywhere else. Like in the Kasem saying, "when the cow is grazing (in the bush), its head/mind is at home". Even the cow knows where it belongs. We must keep our minds on the development of our motherland, however faraway we are from home.



*Written by Balkissa Diallo*

### **A Conversation with Dr. Rose Nyaondo Adhiambo: Co-recipient of the Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed Scholarship Award by Dennis Jjuuko**

#### ***Who is Dr. Rose Nyaondo?***

I am a recent graduate from the University of Massachusetts Boston's Public Policy Program & one of the two inaugural awardees of the Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed Scholarship. I am a Kenyan woman, an African scholar, a champion for gender equity, and an advocate for policy issues affecting women, particularly in East Africa. I am a proud feminist. So, as you see I wear several hearts, but above all, I am a Pan-African scholar who strongly believes in exploring Africans' lived experiences and knowledge systems. I strongly believe in making room for us -African women- to tell our own story.



**Dr. Rose Nyaondo**

***You make interesting points about African agency and the need for Africans to tell their story pointing to the reality of the current misrepresentation of experiences and realities about Africa when stories are being***

***told by others from different parts of the world other than Africa. I am thirsty to learn what your doctoral research focused on specifically?***

During my doctoral studies, my research interests were on women's economic security and public leadership in the US and Africa. I looked at issues of universal childcare and pre-care, paid family and maternity

leave, the wage gap, and elder care. I looked at how these policies impact on women's economic security in the short term and also in the long term particularly because these are care jobs and women form the majority of the labor-force. I took special interest of the impact of these policies on women of color, and also how they access decision making roles in the state of Massachusetts. I also looked at women's political leadership in Kenya with a focus on three different counties. This is because I am always compelled to study my people and find out traditions and what is propelling us forward in tandem with what is holding us back.

***Wow...this is very interesting, and I look forward to reading part of this work to widen my knowledge on women in leadership and their meaningful participation in governance in Africa. I can imagine this was a huge and complex doctoral project to accomplish, but what was your experience through your doctoral studies at UMass Boston?***

I would say UMass Boston has been the ground on which I have flourished. I met professors who had vested interest in my research as I was. I credit the professors from my department for giving me room to explore the policy ideas in class using my background in Kenya in the policy making process. Our classroom discussions on the public policy making process and institutions involved from the perspective of the United States was enriching as it enabled me to widen my scope and understanding by adding this experience to my knowledge of the Kenyan perspective of the public policy making process.

I was allowed the freedom to always contribute the Kenyan perspective too, and it enriched the knowledge scope of my peers as well. My professors equally pushed me to think deeper about the systemic issues that happen in public institutions and their setup in ways that I had not thought about. The books we read too were very current and we could take classes in any of the institutions in Boston and get credits. The public policy department made it possible for me to travel back and forth by providing me research grants in form of financial resources. The Office of Global Programs equally funded part of my research and made it possible for me to travel on two occasions to collect field data. My dissertation chair, Prof. Ann Bookman, and my committee were equally very supportive as they always provided comments on my work that challenged me hence bringing out the best in me.

***What does it feel like to be a first recipient of the Ambassador Fatima Kyari Muhammed Scholarship Award from the African Studies Forum?***

I feel humbled and thankful. I feel seen. You know, someone said, I think it was Chimamanda Adichie, that it is good to be recognized for great work, but it is especially sweet to be recognized by one's own people. That is how I feel. This award makes me feel seen and inspired to do more and push further. It is a motivation to keep going. It is also a recognition that UMass Boston has done something incredible such as investing in my scholarship as a person by supporting my education. UMass Boston's contribution to my scholarship has touched the lives of people in my village and county back in Kenya that they will probably never meet. I am also thankful to my peers, at the African Scholars Forum, for inspiring me to keep writing and questioning. For engaging with me along the corridors in between classes, at conferences, over a cup of coffee. Thank you, my brothers and sisters. We did it. I am also very thankful to the women 88 who shared their lives with me and made this research





come to life. H.E. Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed has motivated African scholars at UMass Boston through this scholarship. Her vision for this opportunity is timely and is a ray of light for us African scholars. We are eternally thankful.

***I am inspired and interested at the same time to know how UMass Boston's hand practically reached your people in Kenya?***

My people have been helped through my studies especially in the three counties. After concluding this study, I wrote briefs and reports that will be documents in the public libraries of the three counties. Other young women looking to run for office in electoral politics can now read the experiences of women who ran before them and get aware of the most effective strategies to use in particular circumstances. As a recent recipient of the Fatima Kyari Muhammed Scholarship Award, I feel charged with the responsibility of paving a path forward because the success of Timothy and I will be a door opener for many other future recipients of the award, for an opportunity for internships and mentorship at the Office of the African Union Representative to the United Nations.

***As a recent awardee of this scholarship, with your outstanding work on Africa, what is your vision for the continent?***

Remaining committed to the continent is a dream worth exploring since the transformation of Africa has to come from its people. With a conviction that as Africans, we should use our experiences and the expertise we have gathered through the exposure we have been given, the duty to build the continent is for none other than us. The consciousness of being Africans and the values that come with it give us the opportunity of seeing the world differently and we have to strive to use creative thinking to serve the continent. I thus see myself among a community of Africanist scholars engaging in independent and original thinking and contributing unique ideas that will transform the continent. This will be seen through reformed policies to positively impact the lives of people. The other contribution I aim to make is to challenge pre-conceived and half-baked notions about Africa by championing an alternative view of the continent from the perspective of home-grown values that make sense to the rest of the world, which will bridge the gap of misconception, misrepresentation and miscommunication of African ideas.

***What is your advice for upcoming Africanist scholars that would like to fit in the same feet as yours?***

There is currently no limit to what Africanist scholars can do for the continent. Africanist scholars abroad still have a huge opportunity of transforming different ideas for the continent, translate the knowledge and expertise they accumulate over time for the benefit of the entire continent. Current and future Africanist scholars have a duty of devising sustainable solutions to the current and future challenges of the continent and it is their creative thinking and persistent problem-solving that forms the future of Africa. Upcoming Africanist scholars have the advantage of the diversity of the continent that they should always seek to tap into, learn from and encourage others after them to do the same. The future of young African scholars not only lies in the excellence of those that have somewhat reached the pinnacle of knowledge in its different forms, but also in the persistence for the pursuit of excellence by the current Africanist scholars. What I can say to my fellow upcoming Africanist scholars is we do not have the privilege of folding our hands and look on. The rest of

the world is transforming rapidly, and we must use our agency to match this speed.

*Thank you so much Dr. Nyaondo for availing this time to share with us these words of wisdom that inspire us to dedicate much of our time to doing more for the continent. It is indeed a pleasure to talk to you as the pioneer co-recipient of UMass Boston's Ambassador Fatima Kyari Muhammed Scholarship Award. We value your commitment to the transformation of the continent and the African Scholars Forum (ASF) looks forward to more engagements with you as one of its pillars henceforth. The Pan-African Graduate Students Association (PAGSA) at UMass Boston equally looks up on you for mentorship.*

Thank you. I equally exceedingly value the commitment of ASF and PAGSA to the journey of Africa's transformation and I am proud to be part of this community of scholars.



*Written by Dennis Jjuuko*

## Meet our "NEWLY MINTED" Docs!!! By N. Hannah Brown & Ojemire B. Daniel

**Meet Dr. J. Michael Denney, a recent Graduate, and an awardee of the DOSS Outstanding Doctoral Student Award**

[Dr. J. Michael Denney](#) recently completed and obtained his Ph.D. in Global Governance and Human Security from the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at UMass Boston. He is



*Dr. Michael Denney*

an Africanist scholar with a desire to strengthen sustainable development and governance practices, especially in international development and environment, food security and systems, and enhancing the science-policy interface, especially in Africa.

Dr. Denney's dissertation "**Balancing the Environment and Development: Environmental Reform and Mainstreaming at the World Bank Ethiopia Country Office,**" examined how to measure environmental mainstreaming at an organizational level to ensure an effective way of tracking of how environmental knowledge and concerns change the way the Bank understands and im-

plements economic development. It also acquired a micro-level blueprint of what environmental mainstreaming means in terms of employee tasks & behavior, organizational incentives, and management practices. According to Denney, "At its heart, this research is about making it easier for international development organizations to 'green' their activities." Dr. Michael recently received the Outstanding Doctoral Student Award from the Dean's Office Students Success program in the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies. He is the co-founder of The Sustainability Advisory Group in Ethiopia, which is a consultancy designed to address crucial missing links in public-private partnership development in Ethiopia. Dr. Denney is currently a Visiting Professor in the Political science department of UMass Boston. His academic work and accomplishments serve as a motivation for upcoming Africanist scholars.

Michael's advice to doctoral students and prospective doctors is to "...find a topic that will sustain your interest for at least four years. From there, identify a grand puzzle about the topic, a question that is important but will probably never fully be answered. Then, find a small, manageable question that informs an answer to the puzzle, but does not entirely solve it, that's your dissertation...it has to contribute to how we understand something topical and complicated".

**Meet Dr. Abigail Kabandula, a recent Graduate, and an awardee of the best Global Governance and Human Security Doctoral Dissertation**

[Dr. Abigail Kabandula](#) is an Africanist scholar and obtained her doctorate from the Department of



*Dr. Abigail Kabandula*

Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance at the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts. Her research focuses on regional and international security challenges, peace operations, and the relationship between gender and security, and she has a passion for African and its development. Her dissertation titled *"The Governance of Transnational Security Threats in Fragile States: The Case Study of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) 2007-2017"* got the best dissertation award from the GGHS program. The dissertation focuses on the governance of

transnational security threats in fragile states, particularly in the Horn of Africa region.

Several governance institutions at the national, regional, and global levels are in place to address these insecurities in Africa. Specifically, her dissertation examined the efficacy of one such institution, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), in tackling transnational security threats involving non-state actors in "fragile states" using Somalia as a case study. Dr. Abigail has authored and co-authored several publications, some of which include: *"Rising Powers and the horn of Africa: Conflicting Regionalism"*; *"Donor influence, the minister of finance and welfare policy reform in Zambia, 2003-11"*, among others.

Also, she is the co-editor of the [African Security Journal](#) that addresses emerging issues and security threats resulting from the impact of COVID-19 in Africa. Dr. Kabandula was the inaugural research assistant of the Africa Scholars Forum (ASF), and she started the forum's foundational research work. She is presently a Research Scientist for the Pardee Center for International Futures, and the Inaugural Director for the Center for African Studies, Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver in Colorado. Her academic work and accomplishments serve as a motivation for upcoming Africanist scholars.

*Written by N. Hannah Brown  
&  
Ojemire B. Daniel*



*N. Hannah Brown*



*Ojemire B. Daniel*



## "Ubuntu" Poem by James Whitacre

One Professor,  
With roots to one place,  
Where 500 languages live,  
In the hearts of 200 million people,  
Whose feet walk, where soil speaks,  
Loose sand Norths,  
Granite in Kano,  
Red Savannas,  
Forest Souths,  
Many people, sharing an orientation,  
To the coming and going, of  
droughts and floods.

Nigeria...  
Now a land of who lives and who dies,  
Because of a disease named after a crown,  
One Professor,  
With roots to one place,  
Taught me one word,  
Which our whole world needs now more than ever,  
While we wait out this common drought:

Ubuntu. Ubuntu. Ubuntu.

"I am because you are."



*James Whitacre*

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*For more information, contact the African Scholars Forum at [AfricaScholarsForum@umb.edu](mailto:AfricaScholarsForum@umb.edu) or at 617.287.5550*