

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES



# AFRICAN HUMANITIES PROGRAM

THE VECTOR OF IDEAS: REFLECTIONS ON THE  
AFRICAN HUMANITIES PROGRAM (AHP)



**“The humanities remain the vector of ideas, and African humanities are no exception. They constitute the battleground of the mind, and the mind also happens to be where the contest for salvation or damnation is waged.”**

*—Wole Soyinka, Keynote Address, AHP Regional Assembly in Abuja, Nigeria (2020)*





## Preface

From 2008-2023, the African Humanities Program (AHP) strengthened research in the humanities in five African nations—Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda—through a competitive fellowship program funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York and administered by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). The program offered direct support for early- to mid-career scholars while building an Africa-centered community of reviewers and mentors that would flourish beyond the life of the program.

The African Humanities Program was a success by many measures. Scholars in the five AHP countries testify that they were able to publish research and scholarship that they otherwise would have had to abandon due to other responsibilities and pressures, both personal and professional. The fellowship increased their authority and standing in institutional and cultural contexts unfriendly to or dismissive of humanistic inquiry. Former fellows rose to high positions in their universities—especially notable in a period when university leadership tends to cluster in the STEM and business faculties. Conceived through extensive consultations with scholars based on the continent, AHP championed Africa-centered intellectual interventions, challenging the imposition of and reliance on Western paradigms. A strong new community of thinkers has emerged whose work is generated within and for African contexts.

The following appendix illuminates these thinkers' views regarding the program's impact on individuals, and on fields of study in the humanities in Africa more broadly, as expressed through "The Dialogues Project" initiated by ACLS Director of International Programs Andrzej Tymowski and Senior Advisor Sandra Barnes during the final two years of the program. "The Dialogues Project" is a series of essays written by Fellows, reviewers, mentors, and advisors in response to prompts concerning the program. Thirty-two scholar-participants contributed pieces on their experience with AHP, five teams of editors from each AHP country collected the essays and wrote analytical summaries, and two general editors compiled all the documents and wrote a general summary. Excerpts from all these writings are presented here.

Each of the four sections of this document is introduced by the words of Sati Fwatshak and James Ocita, who served as the general editors of "The Dialogues Project." The first section, titled "Scholarly Support," presents AHP Fellows' impressions of the individualized support they received through the program, including, but not limited to, funding and research and strategic writing support. The second, titled "The AHP Journey," explores Fellows' experiences as they moved through the program from Fellows to program champions as mentors at their home universities. Section three, titled "A Sustainable Community of Mentors," further highlights the ways in which Fellows took the skills they developed in the program to become a lasting cohort of mentors for future humanities scholars across the five AHP countries. The final section, "The African Humanities Community," describes the ways in which AHP helped reinvigorate humanities scholarship in Africa during the course of the program.

What follows illustrates the lasting impression AHP left on individual scholars and scholarly communities across Africa.



# Scholarly Support

## “Reflections on the Meaning of AHP Legacies”

**General Editors: Sati Fwatshak and James Ocita**

AHP funding and support translated into both quantitative and qualitative increment and improvement in scholarly production, with more peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and scholarly books being published in reputable outlets. Academic institutions to which Fellows are affiliated registered significant improvements in graduate training, mentoring, and scholarly production, with marked increments in doctoral completion rates and the quality of doctoral dissertations. The strong foundation that AHP enabled through doctoral dissertation writing, novel mentoring practices, and insertion into stimulating scholarly networks instilled in humanities scholars more self-confidence, scholarly prolificacy, and spurred noticeable career advancements.<sup>1</sup>

## GHANA

### “Reflections”

**Yaw Sekyi-Baidoo, University of Education-Winneba**

It is difficult to imagine where humanities research would be now in Africa, especially in the countries in the AHP, but for the intervention of the AHP ... there has been a huge number of research projects, which may not have received as strong attention but for the AHP support. AHP has, in addition to improving funding application skills through its workshops, motivated and supported a keen number of original publications. It has also promoted a great deal of networks across institutions and countries. On the whole, the AHP ... has contributed hugely in strengthening humanities research in Africa in terms of research and reporting skills, areas of research, depth of information, and in publication.<sup>2</sup>

## UGANDA

### “My Experience of the AHP”

**Elizabeth Kyazike, Kyambogo University**

The news of those who had been awarded AHP Dissertation Completion Fellowships got me in Kyanganyikeni Tanzania Assemblies of God (TAG) Church when the pastor congratulated other awardees. It's from them that I got to know that the results were actually out. In anticipation of the good news, I kept checking my emails but without any from AHP. After a week, I took courage to send an email to the AHP coordinators, asking about the feedback on my AHP proposal ... Esther notified me that I had been awarded the Dissertation Completion Fellowship. The award was very timely since I was in dire financial need at the time ... The financial stability that came with the fellowship enabled me to concentrate on my research.<sup>3</sup>

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1 GE, 3, “Reflections on the Meaning of AHP Legacies,” General Editors: Sati Fwatshak and James Ocita

2 GH, 1, “Reflections,” Yaw Sekyi-Baidoo, University of Education-Winneba

3 UG, 1, “My Experience of the AHP,” Elizabeth Kyazike, Kyambogo University

## TANZANIA

### “AHP, A Living Memory”

**Edith Barnabas Lyimo, University of Dar es Salaam**

It strengthened me psychologically, academically, and economically ... The fellowship helped me to get supplies for my study. It was through that fellowship that I got the opportunity to reside outside my country for academic purposes. I stayed at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, and engaged fully in my study, with enough time to analyze collected data without in-person engagement in other duties and responsibilities that pertained to me while in home country. Without that opportunity, I would not finish my PhD studies within the allocated time.

Among the activities sought by ACLS is to help the Fellows to build networks. Through this fellowship, I built networks with other scholars inside and outside my country, within and outside Africa. More importantly, the fellowship and its varied activities helped me to build confidence in applying for postdoctoral fellowships. I learned that, if I am unsuccessful in my application, it is not that I did nothing, but it is due to the increasing number of applicants with interesting or bold ideas.<sup>4</sup>

## NIGERIA

### “My Reflections on the Travel Ban and Proposal Writing Workshops”

**Okechukwu Nwafor, Nnamdi Azikiwe University**

Working on my manuscript at the serene Research Apartments of the University of Dar es Salaam under the Residency program was quite productive for me, as I got removed from the distractions that characterized the familiar Nigerian environment. Based on the level of work I completed during my two months stay in Tanzania, I felt that a bit longer residency period (four-six months) was likely to be more beneficial. Although a much longer stay could be more expensive for the AHP to fund, I believe that shedding a little part of a Fellow’s grant to fund a longer period of the residency could not have been a bad idea.<sup>5</sup>

## UGANDA

### “My AHP Fellowship (2016–2022): Benefits, Lessons, and Challenges”

**Fridah Katushemerwe, Makerere University**

I won the AHP Postdoctoral Fellowship in 2016. My fellowship year fell between July 2016 and July 2017. My target was to analyze the extra raw data I collected during my doctoral studies but could not include in my final dissertation, write a peer-reviewed journal article, and produce a book manuscript for publication. The first step was to secure a 12-month leave from the university, shed off my usual schedules, and concentrate on the targeted outputs. Once I had submitted the required documents, the AHP deposited the stipend directly into my bank account. This was a very important step that ensured that there was no time wasted in requisitions and follow-ups as when money is deposited into an institutional account.

The AHP fellowship enabled me to reflect on my PhD work and extract a book chapter for publication. In addition, I was able to turn part of my dissertation into a book manuscript for publication. The 12-month leave that the university granted me as a condition for the AHP fellowship freed me from my regular work schedule, enabling me to focus on my fellowship objectives. Given the challenge of low remunerations in Uganda, the AHP stipend came as a timely intervention, relieving me of the financial stress that comes with having to supplement one’s incomes. The stipend facilitated me to shed off my extracurricular translation work as a translator for the

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<sup>4</sup> TZ, 1, “AHP, A Living Memory,” Edith Barnabas Lyimo, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

<sup>5</sup> NG, 1, “My Reflections on the Travel Ban and Proposal Writing Workshops,” Okechukwu Nwafor, Nnamdi Azikiwe University

Centre for Language and Communication Services, Makerere University, a service unit based in academic unit, thus freeing up valuable time for research.<sup>6</sup>

## TANZANIA

### “AHP: Secure and Nonbureaucratic”

#### George K. Ambindwile, University of Dar es Salaam

Residency experience is another area where I had a fascinating experience. I took my residency at Rhodes University in South Africa from February through April 2014. During the eight weeks' residency, I managed to write my dissertation. The residency quality in terms of services and hospitality was beyond my expectations. I simply thought of a common set of living space with common quality and services: dormitory kind of residency. I have been to various countries and/or many universities in Africa and abroad where I had a good life, living in a single room with “common” services, which forced me to look for other services such as internet and food outside my residency. In most of those areas, security was shaky; hospitality and library services were modest. With the exception of the University of Florida, none of the other areas I visited gave me an office. However, with this experience, I thought even the AHP residency could be the same. I was wrong. At Rhodes University, I received ... A+ residency services to the extent that I managed to finish dissertation writing and two journal articles in two months, a work that would have required up to eight months in other places. All services were superbly fascinating: primary communication before getting into South Africa to leaving South Africa back to Tanzania, timely airport pick up with a luxurious minibus, a warm welcome at the Centre of Humanities, and a spacious and luxurious apartment with 24 hours security worth for a rich family life. The apartment had three self-contained rooms, a kitchen, and all-time internet connection, which allowed me to work from home. I was also provided with a spacious and ventilated well-furnished office with a desktop computer connected to the Internet. Likewise, I was allowed to access both the Rhodes library and electronic sources, where I don't miss any publication I wanted. Prof. Hendricks and his fellow faculty were too good and friendly to me. I enjoyed having dinner almost every weekend hosted by Hendricks and his wife at their selected hotel. Therefore, my life in South Africa was extremely marvelous ... I will always remember this experience, which is comparable to none. Bravo, AHP!<sup>7</sup>

## TANZANIA

### “Safari Moja Huanzisha Nyengine: Journeying with the AHP”

#### Abdullah H. Mohammed, University of Dar es Salaam

It all started with winning the postdoctoral fellowship grant. Following my graduation at Ohio University and a return to my home country, Tanzania, I made two application attempts for the postdoctoral fellowship, in 2012 and 2013. When the first attempt did not materialize, I used the comments from the reviewers of my application to recompose and improve my application for the next round. I spent several hours browsing and making a close-up reading of various abstracts of the awarded applications from the AHP website. I improved my application, and when the application window was opened, I turned in my application. Fortunately, I got the grant and became one among the 2014/2015 AHP Fellows Alumni. No words can explain my feelings seeing the first line of the email from AHP reading, “I am pleased to inform you ...” What followed were journeys unleashed.

The AHP grant started with my one-year leave from my teaching job at the University of Dar es Salaam. I was then the head of a theater section and a departmental examination officer apart from teaching three full undergraduate courses. With such a teaching load, family involvement, administrative duties, and additional assignments as pleases your supervisor, it was difficult to concentrate on either research or writing to publish and qualify for promotion. The grant rescued me from these engagements. The university granted the leave to allow safaris to my research locations and to comfortable places for organizing my ideas and writing. AHP flew me to an eight-week residency at the University of

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6 UG, 1, “My AHP Fellowship (2016–2022): Benefits, Lessons, and Challenges,” Fridah Katshemererwe, Makerere University

7 TZ, 1, “AHP: Secure and Nonbureaucratic,” George K. Ambindwile, University of Dar es Salaam

Western Cape, South Africa. The residency provided all the needed facilities that a Fellow would require to complete his or her mission, including an office, access to resources, accommodation, and consultation. Unfortunately, I had an extremely busy advisor who, throughout the eight weeks, met me only twice. Despite that, the residency life was a well-thought aspect of AHP for the freedom I had as a Fellow compared to working at my home university. During the residency, I developed two manuscripts, one for a book chapter and another one for a journal article. Conversely, the residency proved the assumption of giving the Fellows ample time to work on their writing projects away from their busy teaching schedules.<sup>8</sup>

## SOUTH AFRICA

### “AHP and Research Opportunities for the Humanities”

#### Irikidzayi Manase, University of the Free State

The fellowship award provided a chance for me to work on my research and expand the humanities research on literatures about personal experience on the land and link this with the broader themes about identities—personal and national— as well as belonging in postcolonial Zimbabwe. This was quite novel then, as Zimbabwean literary and real-life perceptions constantly marginalized white Zimbabweans in their considerations of who was Zimbabwean or what was Zimbabwean literature. It was academically risky for a black Zimbabwean to analyze memoirs about land invasions written by white authors, especially when the land issue was and still is important in the constitution of senses of belonging and the shaping of the political and economic futures of the country. The research and writing of the subsequent book manuscript enabled me to tackle the important focus in the humanities; what it means to be human in a space of national turbulence and geopolitical contestations. As part of the AHP’s mentorship commitments, I received critical peer review reports after submitting my book manuscript at the end of the July 2010–June 2011 fellowship period. This was subsequently followed by a book manuscript workshop at Aburi Ghana in 2013, where I received further mentorship on book writing. Finally, I was awarded a book writing grant . . . in 2014 that resulted in the publication of the book *White Narratives: The Depiction of Post-2000 Land Invasions in Zimbabwe* (2016) under the African humanities Series.

The AHP postdoctoral fellowship and further writing workshop and book publication funding have had a significant impact on my academic and research trajectory. The book published in 2016 enabled me to meet one of the promotions criteria at associate and full professor levels, which is that one must have published a monograph. I was promoted to associate professor in 2016 and full professor this year (2022). In addition, as I write my second book on imaginings of South African futures and infrastructures, I am drawing on my research, manuscript writing, and mentoring experiences garnered from the proficient scholars we interacted with at the Aburi workshop. The community of AHP Fellows, such as Robert Muponde, the late Michael Wessels, and Rodwell Makombe, has been the readers and editors of my journal articles and book chapters, published after 2011.<sup>9</sup>

## UGANDA

### “Mentoring and Networking: My Experience of the AHP Fellowship”

#### Laury Lawrence Ocen, Lira University

The structure and nature of the online application portal was like a training manual for me. I got a sense of how arguments in a PhD dissertation are organized—how different elements such as problem statement, objectives, significance of the research, methodology, etc., are expected to coherently link to each other. You get all these in the AHP application structure, and to me it was like a self-teaching manual. In my subsequent writings, I used so many skills that I learnt from AHP application writing process.<sup>10</sup>

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8 TZ, 1, “Safari Moja Huanzisha Nyengine: Journeying with the AHP,” Abdullah H. Mohammed, University of Dar es Salaam

9 SA, 1, “AHP and Research Opportunities for the Humanities,” Irikidzayi Manase, University of the Free State

10 UG, 1, “Mentoring and Networking: My Experience of the AHP Fellowship,” Laury Lawrence Ocen, Lira University



## NIGERIA

### **“My Reflections on the Travel Ban and Proposal Writing Workshops”**

**Okechukwu Nwafor, Nnamdi Azikiwe University**

My personal experience shows that the AHP proposal template is the best any scholar in the humanities can have. After receiving the AHP fellowship award in 2013, I have adopted the format of the AHP proposal template to secure four other fellowships since 2015. It was my guiding template for a well-defined structure and aspects of the proposal writing that initially proved nebulous to me. I have been invited to lecture potential AHP applicants during one of the AHP proposal writing workshops organized at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, and the questions and responses I got suggested that proposal writing is an area AHP may need to channel more funds to improve. Various segments of the proposal's structure need to be taught in considerable detail.<sup>11</sup>

## TANZANIA

### **“AHP: My Picture, My Experiences”**

**Imani Sanga, University of Dar es Salaam**

The AHP program has been a training agent and force throughout the years. From its inception, AHP organized a number of training workshops in which prospective applicants received training on how to write quality application essays. Through workshops, my fellow applicants and I submitted our draft application essays. The essays were read by experienced scholars from various humanistic disciplines. These senior scholars provided their comments and guided us on how we could improve our essays. During the workshops, we also had time to read and comment on the essays by our fellow applicants. Years later, I also attended the AHP manuscript development workshop (MDW) in Ghana. Again, the presentations/lecturers on manuscript development strategies, comments from senior scholars who facilitated the workshops, and the comments and appraisal from our peer AHP Fellows were very useful in improving our manuscripts and our writing skills. To be sure, I have always used the skills I developed during these workshops in my other writing projects with positive results.<sup>12</sup>

## UGANDA

### **“Away from the Margins: My AHP Experience as a Journey to Better Writing and Graduate Training”**

**Angelo Kakande, Makerere University**

I improved my ability to write and complete articles for publication. I reduced the time I spent on a single article from up to two years before 2013 to an article in two-four weeks by the end of 2016. Thus, in the period 2014–2017, I published the following: six single-authored articles in peer-reviewed journals, two co-authored articles in peer-reviewed journals, two co-authored book chapters, and six single-author curatorial essays for exhibitions. I also curated three exhibitions together with Dr Amanda Tumusiime, was keynote speaker at six international academic conferences, presented papers during these conferences, and was appointed senior research associate at Rhodes University in relation to the Research Chair in Geopolitics and the Arts of Africa (2016–2019). To give me this appointment, the Senate at Rhodes University paid attention to my published works. I also served as senior guest researcher on the project titled “African Art History and the Formation of a Modern Aesthetic: African Modernism in Institutional Art Collections Related to German Art Collecting Activities,” Bayreuth, Germany (2014–2016). A combination of the international appointments above helped me to be appointed, as I wrap this up, a Fulbright Professor at Illinois State University, USA, in 2018–2019.

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11 NG, 1, “My Reflections on the Travel Ban and Proposal Writing Workshops,” Okechukwu Nwafor, Nnamdi Azikiwe University

12 TZ, 1, “AHP: My Picture, My Experiences,” Imani Sanga, University of Dar es Salaam



AHP has shaped my journey from the margins to the center of academic writing on contemporary art in Uganda. I have become a better mentor, scholar, instructor, and a confident and prolific writer. In line with the assumption that AHP's practices could "be modified according to the needs of the African partners," I worked with colleagues to develop an MDW-style model through which we linked academic writing to the grad-level teaching and learning of contemporary art in Uganda. We have spread these benefits from Makerere University to other universities in Uganda, South Africa, Germany, and the USA. Consistent with the experiences of other Fellows participating in this dialogue, my experience suggests that the AHP's residencies and MDWs can shape individuals and institutions in powerful and productive ways; they should be inherited by the AHA.<sup>13</sup>

## NIGERIA

### **"Grill of Guidance: Reflections on My AHP Book Project"**

**Babajide O. Ololajulo, University of Ibadan**

Prior to the call for application for the MDW, I did not know about preparing a book proposal or book prospectus, even when I was supposed to be writing a monograph. Preparing annotated content as part of my MDW application greatly opened my mind. My thoughts on manuscript development became more organized. Participation at the 2015 MDW in Kampala, Uganda, was one opportunity that I had to hone my writing skill. At the workshop, I saw even the very positive advocate talk laying bare the core challenges of manuscript development. There, I knew how difficult it was to string together chapters of a book in a way that they would form a single story. Insights from the workshop also helped me to develop a deeper understanding of writing. By listening to facilitators and mentors, I learned to identify writing styles and make connections that weaved ideas together. I also think the impact of the developmental mentor would have been felt more had he/she been introduced in the earlier stage of the manuscript. In essence, it is difficult to have people propose book writing when they have little understanding of the making of a book. Currently, I am working on another monograph and feel that my AHP writing experience has adequately equipped me to write a better book.<sup>14</sup>

## GHANA

### **"Mentoring at Manuscript Development Workshops"**

**Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang, University of Ghana at Legon**

The Manuscript Development Workshop (MDW) was set up to facilitate the process of turning manuscripts into publishable monographs by providing hands-on experience to AHP Fellows. Held in different African cities over the years, the workshop has led to the publication of several books that add to the quality of work in the African humanities. The unique nature of the MDW—with the focus on advocate talks, diagnostic abstracts, and consultations with senior scholars, as well as the relationships built between participants—has an unquestionably positive impact on all stakeholders. Despite its importance, the MDW experience cannot and should not be limited to Fellows who participate; for sustainable and long-term purposes, we require a ripple effect that traverses the narrow confines of the specific workshops.<sup>15</sup>

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13 UG, 1, "Away from the Margins: My AHP Experience as a Journey to Better Writing and Graduate Training," Angelo Kakande, Makerere University

14 NG, 1, "Grill of Guidance: Reflections on My AHP Book Project," Babajide O. Ololajulo, University of Ibadan

15 GH, 1, "Mentoring at Manuscript Development Workshops," Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang, University of Ghana at Legon

## UGANDA

### “The Highs and Lows of my AHP Fellowship Adventure”

**Okaka Opio Dokotum, Lira University**

I must say the series editors were great in their objective reading and assessment of the manuscript. When I got stuck with the manuscript development mentor (who had a different vision for my book) and I was looking to quit the AHP publishing process, I wrote to the series editors, who asked me to submit my manuscript to them directly, and they eventually cleared the manuscript for external review. My manuscript went way beyond the stipulated pages, but when I told them I was struggling with what to cut out, they recommended a rather modest cut because they realized, I believe, that the pages couldn't be drastically cut without destroying the internal unity of the book. I also found the external reviews very useful. I didn't attend a Manuscript Development Workshop; I was not awarded because my manuscript was in advanced stages, I was told. AHP coordinator Barbara did a fantastic job of coordination between me, the editors, and the publishers. Besides, she was a great encouragement to me. Overall, the processes of producing the book were quite rigorous and well thought out except for the Manuscript Mentor bit, which didn't work for me. NISC editor Peter Lague is the most amazing copy editor I have ever met and did a fantastic job. AHP's vision of moving the book series from the Unisa University Press to NISC, an independent academic publisher, was a good move, although the quality of book binding could improve. The pages come off easily. As far as my book is concerned, I believe I achieved my dreams, and AHP should be very proud of helping to produce this book.<sup>16</sup>

## UGANDA

### “My AHP Fellowship (2016–2022): Benefits, Lessons, and Challenges”

**Fridah Katushemererwe, Makerere University**

In May 21–25, 2017, I attended the MDW in Pretoria, South Africa. My assumption was that attending the MDW would enable me to acquire the requisite skills to complete and polish my book manuscript to a publishable quality. The aim of AHP in the MDW, on the other hand, was to equip authors with skills of competent scholarly communication across disciplines. At the end of the five-day workshop, I had been transformed from a “hypothesis-oriented” scholar to a “thesis-turned” scholar. The approach and organization of the entire MDW was unique compared to related workshops I had ever attended. It was my first time to have an advocate of my written work, a mentor to look and guide me on what I had written, and colleagues to listen and provide constructive feedback—all in the same room ... The MDW was novel, instructive, and transformative. It was an exercise that trained me to write to an interdisciplinary audience.<sup>17</sup>

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16 UG, 1, “The Highs and Lows of my AHP Fellowship Adventure,” Okaka Opio Dokotum, Lira University

17 UG, 1, “My AHP Fellowship (2016–2022): Benefits, Lessons, and Challenges,” Fridah Katushemererwe, Makerere University



# The AHP Journey

## “Reflections on the Meaning of AHP Legacies”

**General Editors: Sati Fwatshak and James Ocita**

Right from the application preparation processes, the program tasked applicants to view their projects in terms of the major and minor disciplines that they straddle. The various mentoring programs emphasized to Fellows the importance of pitching their works to audiences outside the confines of their disciplines. This has the effect of mainstreaming the humanities and bringing them to the forefront of public debates, thereby bringing them closer towards realizing their quest for relevance.

Humanities scholars in African institutions have drawn from their AHP opportunities and experiences to become more successful scholars and administrators, well positioned to impact the humanities and push it to even greater heights. AHP Fellows boast greater confidence and capacity for self-reflection that have made them more prolific scholars with greater ability to impact the societies around them and in the process render the humanities more visible.<sup>18</sup>

## NIGERIA

### “From Postdoctoral Fellow to Assessor: My AHP Journey”

**Samaila Suleiman, Bayero University**

The story of my academic career cannot be complete without reference to the AHP program. It marked the beginning of my journey into a world of boundless opportunities and intellectual odysseys that exposed me to new frontiers of humanities scholarship. Indeed, the AHP has been an important source of inspiration for me—the recognition and belief that my work would contribute to the development of African humanities.<sup>19</sup>

## TANZANIA

### “I Am Because I Am AHP: My Academic and Leadership Journey”

**Mona N. Mwakalinga, University of Dar es Salaam**

My first encounter with African Humanities Program (AHP) was in 2011 when Andrzej Tymowski, Turpin, and a group of scholars from Nigeria, Uganda, and Ghana descended at the University of Dar es Salaam to talk about AHP, assess and mentor AHP applicants. Although I had not submitted a proposal, Prof. Mapunda, the then AHP country coordinator and principal of the College of Arts and Social Sciences, invited me anyway. The discussions were stimulating, and I admired all of the room’s conversations. I felt privileged and somehow inadequate. In between sessions, I pulled up the courage to give Andrzej Tymowski my proposal for him to read and provide me with feedback. He took the proposal, and on meeting him the next day, he told me that AHP does not fund policy issues. My proposal was on the political economy of the film industry in Tanzania and how policies influence filmmaking. I knew from that comment I was doomed. Luckily, when I told a female scholar from Nigeria of the predicament of my

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18 GE, 3, Reflections on the Meaning of AHP Legacies, General Editors: Sati Fwatshak and James Ocita

19 NG, 1, “From Postdoctoral Fellow to Assessor: My AHP Journey,” Samaila Suleiman, Bayero University

essay, she said (in Nigerian accent), “Mona, just replace political economy with representation; you will get it ohh.” I was like “What?!” The rest is history.

I looked at my PhD dissertation and noted that my last chapter was on how Tanzanian films have become transnational. I beefed up that chapter and turned it into a proposal. True to my Nigerian sister’s advice, I did get my AHP postdoctoral funding. Following my reception of the grant, I went to the University of Western Cape, South Africa, for a residency, where I wrote an article that was later published in a reputable journal. My visit to South Africa also allowed me to meet other scholars and attend conferences and make presentations. It also gave me an adventure of exploring the city and townships, even getting lost; thank God, there were two of us, myself and Dr. Edith Lyimo.

Once back, Prof. Mapunda not only appointed me as the coordinator of undergraduate studies of the College of Arts and Social Sciences, he also gave me tasks of coordinating AHP mentorship activities. I have to say, and I always tell him, he is to blame for me being where I am today. I believe in myself today because there were and are people who believed in me. The AHP has been very good to me academically and provided me with writing, leadership, management, and coordination skills, which have been the backbone of my career as an academic and administrative leader at the University of Dar es Salaam. From coordinating undergraduate studies, Prof. Mapunda appointed me as his deputy principal at the newly established College of Humanities. Since then, I have been the head of the Department of Creative Arts, director of the Directorate of Public Services, and currently the dean of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Without a doubt, I credit the AHP for these achievements, for to a large extent, promotions and appointments depend also on publications, which AHP had enormous input.

I have traveled to all AHP countries (South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanzania). I have attended Regional Assemblies, been an assessor, participated in the Manuscript Development Workshop, and I was nominated AHP/ASA Presidential Fellow, a nomination that let me present my work at a convention in Chicago, USA. I have met wonderful colleagues who have become family members. I cherish AHP, for it has made me see the world academically and professionally. Still, it has shed light on the humanities in Africa by providing all the ammunition necessary to promoting quality research, writing, and networking. I send AHP off, for I know it has achieved its objectives. I say, “Go with honor, AHP, for your mark in Africa cannot and will not be erased. I am because I am AHP.”<sup>20</sup>

## UGANDA

### “Away from the Margins: My AHP Experience as a Journey to Better Writing and Graduate Training”

**Angelo Kakande, Makerere University**

I learnt about the call for the AHP competition on October 1, 2012, through an email whose contents I discussed with Dr. Tumusiime Amanda. We both had very limited exposure to grant-writing and AHP competitions. It was Dr. Suzan Kiguli (herself an AHP Fellow, 2010) who helped us: she explained to us that the AHP competition was open to all recent PhD graduates interested in humanities-based research; she guided us in writing our first drafts that we further discussed with Professor Ernest Okello Ogwang.

On November 15, 2012, I completed my online application, in which I planned to expand the issues in my doctoral thesis by researching and publishing on the effect of neoliberal reform on Uganda’s formal art institutions. I assumed that if I won the AHP grant, I would be able to improve my writing skills and complete at most one-two articles during the residency of the fellowship.

Luckily, I won the fellowship. As part of my fellowship activities, I took up a residency at the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR), University of the Western Cape, from October–November 2013, during which I interacted with scholars interested in humanities research. I participated in the regular PSHA Reading Group Sessions. These were graduate-level reading seminars during which we tackled very difficult texts and interrogated their meanings. I began to see reading as a process of sharing; finding meanings behind texts became a collective engagement as opposed to an

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20 TZ, 1, “I’m Because I’m AHP: My Academic and Leadership Journey,” Mona N. Mwakalinga, University of Dar es Salaam

exercise in solitude.

In addition, I attended the AHP Manuscript Development Workshop 2016 on 24–29 May 2016 in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). I presented a paper titled “Beyond Apologies and Political Opportunism: On Contemporary Ugandan Art and Obote’s Reign of Terror of 1966–1986” that was subsequently published online in the [Start Journal of Arts and Culture in East Africa](#). Following the MDW discussions on my article and further conversations with Prof Bola (my AHP mentor), I developed another article, in 2017, titled “No Medals for Capriciousness” and also made an artwork titled “I Say: No Medals for Capriciousness” that I presented during the Different but One 21 Staff Exhibition for academic staff at the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art (MTSIFA) at Makerere University from February 15–March 15, 2017. I used the two outputs to question the normalization of dictatorship through rewards to bad rulers who have pillaged Uganda and superintended over untold suffering for many folks in the country.<sup>21</sup>

## NIGERIA

### “Reflections on Interdisciplinarity and Internationalization in My ACLS-AHP Experiences” Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, Babcock University

I spent my three-month residency at Rhodes University in South Africa, and it was defining for me. It was similar to being at a university in Europe: it was a very well-resourced university for academic research and learning, with the perfect environment for focus and productivity. Not only did I successfully advance my research project during that time, but I also participated in a library workshop and audited the qualitative methods class taught by Professor Louise Vincent. Both contributed tremendously to making me a better postgraduate research teacher and supervisor. The networking for international cooperation was immensely beneficial, from the several social activities organized for we six Fellows by our site director, Professor Fred Hendricks, to the friendships with colleagues there that has resulted in publication and grant-writing collaborations, and culminated recently in my being invited to apply for a position in the Department of Political and International Studies.

And it was my special privilege to have been selected for the ACLS-ASA Presidential fellowship, a unique aspect of the AHP. In addition to being sponsored to attend my first ASA conference in Chicago to present my AHP-sponsored research in 2017, I was hosted by three different US universities, where I did almost two dozen lectures, classes, and meetings. The experience was extremely valuable. At each of the three universities, my interdisciplinary research disposition was the reason for my invitation by a diversity of departments and programs: Political Science, Gender Studies, Black Studies, Global Studies, History, Anthropology, International Studies, Human Rights, Peace and Conflict, Development Studies, and so on. Reflecting on that experience now, I am of the view that this kind of humanities research—multipolar and multifaceted—is what the world needs to see about Africa and African studies today. Without the generous and multidimensional sponsorship of the ACLS at a pivotal period of my career, I could not have done any of the above by myself.<sup>22</sup>

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21 UG, 1, “Away from the Margins: My AHP Experience as a Journey to Better Writing and Graduate Training,” Angelo Kakande, Makerere University

22 NG, 1, “Reflections on Interdisciplinarity and Internationalization in My ACLS-AHP Experiences,” Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, Babcock University



# A Sustainable Community of Mentors

## “Reflections on the Meaning of AHP Legacies”

**General Editors: Sati Fwatshak and James Ocita**

The AHP has been a major catalyst for the formation of an engaged academic community across Africa. It has further fostered a framework for horizontal conversations and exchange of ideas among Fellows and mentors, and between institutions, countries, and even continents, strengthening linkages, networks, and partnerships both within Africa and with the Global North. Related to this endeavor has been the creation of a culture of centers for advanced study, with such centers being established at institutions in the five AHP countries and in Senegal.

The networks cultivated have been central to facilitating flows of new ideas and increased participation in academic citizenry activities such as doctoral supervision, peer mentoring, examining doctoral dissertation, reviewing articles and manuscripts for publication, scholarly visits, and presentations, opening individuals and institutions to international best practices and thus contributing further to the vision of reinvigorating the humanities and the realization of the quest for relevance and an awareness of the implications of one’s actions. In fostering these various frameworks of communication, the AHP valorized a bottom-up approach that inherently drew attention to the institutional and intellectual implications of producing humanities knowledge from an African context and reflecting what is going on in the world around us in the hope of enacting possibilities as well as self-validation.

The nonhierarchical mentoring system by mentors and peer review by Fellows within the scholarly network created by the AHP are at the root of sustainability of the program’s legacies. The AHP built a vibrant community of mentors, assessors, and reviewers to drive the mentoring process, producing a network of AHP scholars on the continent as the fulcrum of its activities.

Fellows honed the requisite and replicable skills of conceptualization and academic writing, targeting both specialist and general audiences. Since these skills are transmissible through graduate training, supervision, peer mentoring, and the production of new knowledge, among others, the program leaves behind great opportunities for extending its benefits beyond the experiences of individual Fellows, their institutions, and even countries, boosting further the circulation of new knowledge.

Being in leadership and decision-making positions ... Fellows and mentors are well-positioned to provide the necessary leadership for the humanities and particularly defend and promote the humanities in deliberations on matters of policies and practices. As the younger AHP scholars mature, they are potential leaders in the system and thus stand to carry on the task of articulating the cause of the humanities in decision-making processes.<sup>23</sup>

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23 GE, 3, Reflections on the Meaning of AHP Legacies, General Editors: Sati Fwatshak and James Ocita



## NIGERIA

### “AHP Legacies and the Values of Inclusiveness”

**Gbemisola Aderemi Adeoti, Obafemi Awolowo University**

Ours is a society and culture where communal sharing of meals is cherished. However, sharing a meal is sweet when each has something to bring to the common pot. Sharing is less palatable when someone has nothing to bring to the table. AHP mediates this feeling of lack and exclusion for mid-career scholars of humanities, most of whom are rising and making waves in their respective institutions and disciplines. Inclusiveness informs the opening up of participation in AHP contests to social science-oriented scholars as applicants, assessors, evaluators, and mentors. It is predicated on the notion that there is a robust advantage in interdisciplinary collaboration, which their inclusion and participation guarantee, more so, when the disciplinary interests of arts and social sciences intersect at the point of qualitative research and analysis.<sup>24</sup>

## NIGERIA

### “Networking: My AHP Story”

**Alexandra Esimaje, Ben Idahosa University**

In the years following the completion of my AHP fellowship, not only did I consolidate on the relationships I established during the fellowship, but also many new ones were built through the ingenious design of the AHP. The series of programs which I had the privilege of participating in, such as the AHP application workshops, manuscript development workshops, residency programs, IIEE conference attendance grants, and the Regional Assemblies, were avenues to build and sustain new and old relationships with colleagues across Africa. For me, this is the most significant and enduring legacy of the AHP.

I am happy that the AHP legacy subsists in the newly formed African Humanities Association (AHA). The task of AHA, therefore, is not only to maintain the AHP heritage but to reformulate it and intensify its networks for greater relevance, more targeted and better outcomes. A main assumption, as I see it, is that prioritizing the insiders' perspectives and approaches to solving the African problems in and through humanities research is desiderative for better and sustainable outcomes to occur.

Humanities research is about human beings, their cultures, and values; thus, being in contact with people enables a better understanding of the human and sociocultural networks that form the world and influence it. The first in the chain of actions leading to social change over time through humanistic research is the creative access to specific groups of people. This type of access is the immediate outcome of the targeted programs of AHP, which bring together Fellows from diverse cultural and social milieus to achieve cross-border interactions and ultimately the creation of associations, some of which become long-lasting. I am sure that this experience is not peculiar to me.<sup>25</sup>

## GHANA

### “My Reflections on the AHP”

**Joseph Oduro-Frimpong, Ashesi University**

In thinking through the underlying values that might have driven the AHP initiative and from which beneficiaries can/should manifest in their academic lives, I see two fundamental principles of the generosity of spirit. In what follows, I detail how such tenets might/should display in our academic lives. Within my experience, I view the initiators and the funders of the AHP fellowship as possessing a generosity of spirit. Here, the planners' and funders' recognition to support and thus strengthen humanities scholarship on the continent (which was in dire crisis then) is an apparent act of kindness and compassion. The willingness to fund the humanities without expecting anything

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24 NG, 2, “AHP Legacies and the Values of Inclusiveness,” Gbemisola Aderemi Adeoti, Obafemi Awolowo University

25 NG, 1, “Networking: My AHP Story,” Alexandra Esimaje, Ben Idahosa University



back speaks to a generosity of spirit. I believe this trait should be made explicit to beneficiaries, and they should be encouraged to practice this attribute within their unique academic environments. For example, beneficiaries should be explicitly encouraged to manifest a generosity of intellectual spirit by organizing and sharing, if need be, the practical skills gained through activities such as writing grant proposals and the Manuscript Development Workshops (MDWs). Another example of a generous academic spirit is creating WhatsApp networking groups such as the Humanities Scholars Hub. Here, group members (known as Hubbers) notify members of opportunities on the continent, such as academic vacancies, upcoming conferences, and new publications. Another example is sharing resources that colleagues potentially deem beneficial in cognate disciplines on official sites such as the Facebook pages of the Ghana Studies Association and the Lagos Studies Association. Practicing such academic generosity creates ripple effects that benefit our collective.

Another underlying value related to the generosity of spirit within the AHP initiative to stem the tide of decline in humanities scholarship on the continent is the essence of selflessness. I take selflessness as a concrete expression of concern for others stemming from empathy. Manifesting this trait in our academic lives, for example, first involves developing a critical awareness about “crisis areas” in our areas of expertise and taking concrete actions to remediate the situation. One example is Grace Musila’s substantial effort in remedying the gap related to an updated contemporary understanding of African popular imaginaries. Here, not only did she take the time to search for potential scholars, but she selflessly provided well-thought-out feedback to contributors’ works, culminating in the recently released volume *Routledge Handbook of African Popular Culture*.

Another example is related to the Center for African Popular Culture at Ashesi University. Here, given the disparaging perception that continues within and outside academia about the popular arts, I conceived the idea of establishing an academic unit highlighting the intellectual significance of popular culture in Africa. Getting the center set took a great deal of motivation and unpaid labor.<sup>26</sup>

## SOUTH AFRICA

### “Who Said the Humanities Is Dying? Taking Stock of the AHP’s Inroads into Sustaining the Present and Future of the Humanities”

#### Mucha Musemwa, University of the Witwatersrand

I was committed to providing the same kind of support I had previously received from my mentors as a graduate student and as an emerging scholar. Thus, for 13 years now, I have annually reviewed about a dozen doctoral and postdoctoral grant applications for the AHP and given constructive feedback which could be usable even for an application that did not win an award. The idea, of course—a strong tenet of the AHP program—was not to discourage scholars who had not had winning proposals, but to educate them on the shortcomings of their proposals so that they could enrich them in preparation for the next round. This aspect of caring ran through the AHP program, and if the program is to be continued even in another guise, this is one attribute well worth maintaining. Several applications allocated to me have been on environmental humanities-related topics on sub-Saharan Africa from the five designated African countries of the program, viz, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa. This is a growing subfield within the humanities writ large, helping in the consolidation of a field which at the time of the establishment of the AHP was, perhaps erroneously, perceived as tottering in the face of rising financially well-endowed science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) projects. This concern within the South African academy led to the establishment of the Academy of Science of South Africa’s (ASSAf) Consensus Study on the [“State of the Humanities in South Africa: Status, Prospects, and Strategies,”](#) the first ever report of its kind to critically interrogate the condition, i.e., challenges and opportunities that characterize the humanities in South Africa. The report mentions the birth of the AHP as a welcome project which was already doing some of the actions the report eventually proposed. It also became the basis of the launch of the flourishing state-funded National Institute of the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) of South Africa, though it funds mostly doctoral South African students.

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<sup>26</sup> GH, 1, “My Reflections on the AHP,” Joseph Oduro-Frimpong, Ashesi University

The AHP was thus a timely and early concrete intervention to improve the status of the humanities.<sup>27</sup>

## TANZANIA

### “AHP: My Picture, My Experiences”

**Imani Sanga, University of Dar es Salaam**

The AHP fellowship came to the University of Dar es Salaam at a time when opportunities for research funding in the humanities were very limited, since STEM had become the main emphasis and focus of the few funding opportunities in the country, whether offered by external funders or by the government agents such as the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH). The prioritization of STEM disciplines in the country (and the region at large) planted a feeling of scholarly marginality and inferiority among humanities scholars. In this context, AHP came as a liberator of the value of research in the humanities and hence resurrected our hope for the future of our discipline and our personal academic prospects and progress. Thanks to AHP, we can now stand among other academics and introduce ourselves with pride that we are scholars or researchers in the humanities.

AHP was also the liberator of what I call “pure” humanistic thinking and approaches. It freed humanities from the stipulations of most research calls which saw social relevance, policy recommendations, promotion of social development, and economic benefits as the necessary justifications for any research-worthy funding. Faced with this situation, many humanities scholars were forced to reformulate their research focus so that they incorporate the accepted justifications in order to compete for the very few opportunities in arts and social sciences. Thanks to the AHP intervention and firm commitment to humanistic research, much of the research aiming at interpreting and understanding the expressions of human experiences and emotions through the visual arts, music, theatrical performances, and literature were recognized and valued. [It is] thanks to AHP intervention that one could orient one’s research to the interpretation and understanding of meanings of cultural practices, histories of social-cultural phenomena, and linguistic expressions with greater chances of obtaining research funding.<sup>28</sup>

## SOUTH AFRICA

### “AHP and Network-Building”

**Grace Musila, University of the Witwatersrand**

I had occasion to attend two Regional Assemblies in Nigeria, specifically at the University of Ibadan and in Abuja, and a third one at the University of Dar es Salaam. At each of these events, I got to meet colleagues working in other regions of the continent who share my teaching and research interests. Like Dr. Nanbigne, I seized the opportunity to identify colleagues who could serve as external examiners for my students’ work, and most recently, I got Prof. Sule Egya, whom I met via the RAs, to examine my students’ work. In this way, my network of potential examiners for postgraduate dissertations widened in ways it probably wouldn’t have, because unfortunately, intracontinental connections are difficult to forge due to systemic and resource gaps, which ensure that African studies is channeled via North America and Europe, and less so intracontinentally. A second important dimension to these networks forged at RAs relates to peer reviewing: over the years, I have served as an editor on many humanities scholarly journals. Exposure to the AHP community at Regional Assemblies got me to know about subject experts across the continent whom I could approach to peer review journal articles, and more recently book chapters, on a volume I recently edited. At the same time, I could also directly reach out to colleagues I met through AHP activities and invite contributions to conferences, journals, and the aforementioned edited volume. In this way, through AHP networks, I have been able to reframe and reconfigure my scholarly community, which was previously heavily South and East African. I have also been able to make space for colleagues’ publications whenever the opportunity arose, in journal

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27 SA, 1, “Who Said the Humanities Is Dying? Taking Stock of the AHP’s Inroads into Sustaining the Present and Future of the Humanities,” Mucha Musemwa, University of the Witwatersrand

28 TZ, 1, “AHP: My Picture, My Experiences,” Imani Sanga, University of Dar es Salaam

special issues and edited volumes. My recent edited volume, *Routledge Handbook of African Popular Culture*, includes six chapters authored by members of the AHP community, while a special issue of the *Journal of the African Literature Association* I am currently co-editing includes three essays from AHP community colleagues. I treasure these flows of ideas and opportunities for what they allow us to do in terms of inserting Africa-based scholarship onto the global African studies canvas, which has historically prioritized Africanist scholarship produced outside Africa.

Another valuable network-building opportunity took the shape of mentorship workshops, both those I was invited to by Nigeria-based colleagues on the back of our meetings at RAs and those I convened. In my role as a member of the Mashariki Literary and Cultural Studies network, which convenes a biennial conference in East Africa, I was able to collaborate with Dr. Carli Coetzee, the editor of *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, to convene mentorship and writing for publication workshops at two of our conferences, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and in Lalibela, Ethiopia. The AHP mentorship workshops were a valuable resource to our conference and the communities of scholars we convened. In Dar es Salaam and Lalibela, the mentorship workshops enabled us to invite mentors from East, West, and South Africa, as mentors to graduate students and early-career colleagues at these workshops. This was special to us, because we were able to bring together senior colleagues who would ordinarily not connect at Africa-based conferences. Again, bearing in mind the deeply isolated nature of the African academy by region, with little desire for intracontinental movement except southwards to South Africa, we considered it special to be able to have West and Southern African colleagues travel to Dar es Salaam and Lalibela, and share their thoughts and experiences on humanities research and scholarly publishing, with conference delegates largely from East Africa.”<sup>29</sup>

## NIGERIA

### “AHP Mentoring Platform: Looking Back and Going Forward”

**Abubakar Aliyu Liman, Ahmadu Bello University**

It is widely acknowledged that mentoring is a universal given, that is, a quintessential ingredient for a vibrant academic culture. However, it is usually treated as an extension of supervisor and student relationship in several African universities, which in itself is a form of power relations that defeats its very essence. Mentoring needs to be based on mutual understanding, respect, and clear zeal on the part of the mentee to accept the tutelage and guidance of the mentor in order to make it ... a win-win situation. The idea of mentoring is very crucial for the self-development of young academics. In some academic centers of learning where mentoring is institutionalized, it tends to produce wonderful results. In places where it is neglected, young and upcoming humanities scholars appear to be more like a lost sheep, without focus and direction in their research endeavors.

To this end, based on my experience as AHP Fellow who graduated into an assessor, the mentoring that I received from diverse scholars in the different AHP countries I visited has exposed me to a wide range of possibilities, prospects, and challenges faced by the African humanities. But there is no doubt it has tremendously improved my research abilities and academic visibility in terms of the quality of my research output and the capacity to successfully compete and win several other fellowships. It has as well improved my ability to mentor younger colleagues on how to produce successful research proposals.<sup>30</sup>

## NIGERIA

### “Local Influences in Globalizing Knowledge Production in Africa: My Mentoring Roles in Evaluating Application Essays and in Manuscript Development Workshops (MDWs)”

**Sati Fwatshak, University of Jos**

During each of the MDWs that I participated in, I was, like other senior scholars, assigned two scholars to mentor,

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29 SA, 1, “AHP and Network-Building,” Grace Musila, University of the Witwatersrand

30 NG, 1, “AHP Mentoring Platform: Looking Back and Going Forward,” Abubakar Aliyu Liman, Ahmadu Bello University

some of whom were not in my primary discipline of history. I read my two mentees' proposals, as well as those of other mentees in the batch, as mentees' works were shared in advance. It was easy relating with the historian Fellows, but not so easy with the nonhistorians in my first few experiences. I had thought that I needed to understand their projects as a specialist would do. However, during the Ghana MDW, I learned the basics of mentoring outside one's discipline from the other co-mentors. Such basics included looking out for the argument/new knowledge; logical flow; structural coherence; match between title, subtitles, and the content; the quality of the extant literature; and communication skills, among others. A book on developmental editing shared by Andrzej at one of the MDWs further strengthened my knowledge of a mentor's role in MDWs, which were interdisciplinary, and in evaluation of academic essays in general.<sup>31</sup>

## UGANDA

### **"My AHP Fellowship (2016–2022): Benefits, Lessons, and Challenges"**

**Fridah Katushemerwe, Makerere University**

The AHP has fostered a strong network across the continent that has enabled its designers to nurture early career scholars and in effect enrich the pool of researchers, reviewers, assessors, and mentors across humanities disciplines and in the participating countries and even beyond. The AHP has been able to draw on this strong network to promote awareness about its dissertation completion and postdoctoral fellowship and improve the quality of the competitions through structured application essays, preparatory workshops, structured MDWs, targeted mentorships, and a rigorous review and selection processes. All these have effectively widened the pool of fellowship applicants and Fellows and created stronger ripple effects at institutional, national, regional, and continental levels. The founders of the program were so generous that they never wanted to leave anyone behind. Physical meetings and workshops have been crucial, enabling interactions and clarifications of various issues to the intending applicants. Application preparation workshops were very helpful to me as an intending applicant, for they equipped me with knowledge and skills of writing fellowship applications. These skills have also enriched my teaching, supervision, research, and mentoring experiences, allowing me to extend the benefits of the AHP to my students, mentees, and peers.<sup>32</sup>

## NIGERIA

### **"Networking: My AHP Story"**

**Alexandra Esimaje, Ben Idahosa University**

In 2010, when I applied for the AHP dissertation fellowship, I attended the proposal dissertation workshop at the University of Ibadan, where I met a number of professional colleagues from different universities in Nigeria and Africa, as well as the officers of ACLS. This workshop marked the beginning of the building of enduring professional networks through the AHP of ACLS. I was working on religious discourse, an area of research interest to Professor Yankah, who later became an immediate and a very useful contact for me. There were many others whose relationships with me have survived to the present time and who contributed significantly to my career development ... In the years following the completion of my AHP fellowship, not only did I consolidate the relationships I established during the fellowship, I established many new ones through the ingenious design of the ACLS-AHP. The series of programs in which I had the privilege to participate... were avenues to build and sustain new and old relationships with colleagues across Africa. For me, this is the most significant and enduring legacy of the ACLS-AHP.<sup>33</sup>

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31 NG, 1, "Local Influences in Globalizing Knowledge Production in Africa: My Mentoring Roles in Evaluating Application Essays and in Manuscript Development Workshops (MDWs)," Sati Fwatshak, University of Jos

32 UG, 1, "My AHP Fellowship (2016–2022): Benefits, Lessons, and Challenges," Fridah Katushemerwe, Makerere University

33 NG, 1, "Networking: My AHP Story," Alexandra Esimaje, Ben Idahosa University

## NIGERIA

### “Benefits and Challenges of a Mentee: My Journey through the AHP”

**Rafatu Abdulhamid, University of Abuja**

In 2012, the same year I won the postdoctoral award, I was invited by AHP to attend a workshop in Ibadan on Proposal Writing and Development. I was also encouraged to spread the news among colleagues, which I did. A colleague of mine from Christian Religions Studies department, University of Abuja, Nigeria, developed interest, and we both attended.

One of the benefits of my attendance was the opportunity to meet other awardees of ACLS/AHP fellowships. We began networking together in different areas of academic endeavors, including sharing of experiences, which turned out to be of immense benefit to me, especially when I commenced writing. In fact, the workshop in Ibadan opened my horizons in scholarship. It was also an opportunity for me to meet and interact with resource persons, who were invited for the workshop both within and outside Ibadan. This led to my additional interest in research writing and exposed me to a wide range of research interests, which became useful to me in the course of my research writing. Because of that, I was able to choose an interesting topic and the most suitable research methodology for my research.<sup>34</sup>

## TANZANIA

### “AHP: My Picture, My Experiences”

**Imani Sanga, University of Dar es Salaam**

AHP has been a hub of network amongst AHP Fellows, advisors, and administrators. It has played this role through numerous AHP meetings organized within the country and outside Tanzania. Through these meetings, I have come to know and personally meet many scholars who are researching and writing about Africa. As a result, I began to read and familiarize myself with the work of people I would have not read through my usual scholarly web. This is especially true for scholars in fields afar from musicology, African music, or ethnomusicology: e.g., literature, linguistics, English, anthropology, philosophy, and history. Likewise, AHP has been a networking agent for me through travelling grants I received over the years to attend academic conferences for mentoring, spreading the word about AHP fellowship, and presenting my own research work. Through an AHP travelling grant, I was able to travel to Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa for conferences in ethnomusicology, musicology, and African music studies. Through the years, I have benefited a lot from the many colleagues and friends I have made through these interactions, including sharing news about opportunities, writing recommendation letters for each other, and evaluating academic works for promotion for each other.

I personally commend AHP for respecting and valuing African scholars. AHP has accomplished this by engaging local African senior scholars in the five participating African countries in coordinating various AHP activities. The most prominent of these activities include organizing AHP launch meetings and later MDWs, mentoring young AHP applicants during the launch meetings and application writing workshops, and as assessors of AHP applications. And some would go and serve in the selection committee. African senior scholars have also served as editors of the AHP book series. Had AHP been one of the funders that look down at Africa and African scholars, perhaps these important activities would be delegated to reputable American Africanists located in American world-class universities. Finally, AHP made sure that African scholars (both mentors and AHP Fellows) participate fully in charting out the way forward after AHP and in the establishment of African Humanities Association (AHA).<sup>35</sup>

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34 NG, 1, “Benefits and Challenges of a Mentee: My Journey through the AHP,” Rafatu Abdulhamid, University of Abuja

35 TZ, 1, “AHP: My Picture, My Experiences,” Imani Sanga, University of Dar es Salaam



## TANZANIA

### “AHP Dialogues: Legacy and Meaning”

**Abdullah H. Mohammed, University of Dar es Salaam**

When AHP closes after its 15 years of service in Africa, it leaves behind a legacy built on several elements, including principles, a pool of scholars well equipped with various abilities, mentors, Fellows, and MDW graduates whose experiences are vital in supporting the continuation of the work done. Each of these elements mean a lot, though differently to members of the AHP community and their neighboring others, whether colleagues, institutions, or countries at large touched in one way or another by the program activities.

It means a lot to me, because those who passed through this AHP experience are likely to avoid being miserly gatekeepers to their mentees because they have acquired a new way that is not only possible but also useful. The implication of these experiences remains bold, as graduates of each of the formats had the opportunity to learn new techniques and bear the obligation to communicate the knowledge to a broader academic community. The legacy in this way matters, because it calls for close consideration on the part of the beneficiaries to reach far from their own selves in ensuring access by others to what they have got.

The community has also built trust and confidence on the human resource—or scholars, in this case—residing within the continent. It used to be the case that reviews from outside the continent seemed more trusted, leaving those from within less valued. AHP’s approach of reviews, whether applications or books, is Africa based. Early career scholars have developed confidence in their fellow African scholars, both peers and senior mentors.<sup>36</sup>

## SOUTH AFRICA

### “AHP and Research Opportunities for the Humanities”

**Irikidzayi Manase, University of the Free State**

The AHP activities also enabled me to participate in the extension of the field of African humanities. I have been a reviewer of the AHP Doctoral Completion and Postdoctoral fellowships for over five years. This has exposed me to various areas of studies from different parts of the continent and various textual focuses in my area of literary and cultural studies. The reviewer activities also enabled me to hone evaluative skills, research empathy, and working with other institutional demands in ways that have compelled me to manage time, which are skills all needed in academic and personal management. I have learnt to draw on some of these in my position as the academic head of department here at the University of the Free State and in meeting requests to review the South African National Research Foundation project funding and Research Rating applications.

A final positive from the AHP award and related activities has been the recognition and inclusion in projects to mentor future scholars and expand the study of humanities in Africa. I attended, as a mentor working with other Fellows, such as Grace Musila and Mucha Musemwa, the Africa Humanities Program Journal of African Cultural Studies journal and book publishing workshop for young researchers at the 4<sup>th</sup> Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies Conference, 16–18 August 2019, Woldia University, Ethiopia. This opportunity gave me the chance to contribute to shaping and sustaining the future of African humanities, something that I hold dear<sup>37</sup>

## UGANDA

### “Mentoring and Networking: My Experience of the AHP Fellowship”

**Laury Lawrence Ocen, Lira University**

Today, when I guide students on how to win grants and fellowships, I use a lot of my AHP experiences, such as focus

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<sup>36</sup> TZ, 2, “AHP Dialogues: Legacy and Meaning,” Abdullah H. Mohammed, University of Dar es Salaam

<sup>37</sup> SA, 1, “AHP and Research Opportunities for the Humanities,” Irikidzayi Manase, University of the Free State

and concentration, listening attentively to critical/alternative views, following networks and synergies (given how the AHP scholarly networks in African universities helped me a great deal), democratic mentorship and guidance of students, etc. Those are some of the very useful lessons that I learnt from my engagements with the AHP. I was particularly fascinated with the AHP secretariat, especially Sandra and Barbara, and I realized just how coordination and regular feedback are important in mentorship. The AHP secretariat staff have been very professional in the way they handle their administrative duties, namely timely communication and using friendly/positive language (encouragement, appreciation), etc. I have taken these as my take-home from the AHP.<sup>38</sup>

## UGANDA

### **“Mentoring, Networks, and Other Opportunities: My Academic Journey with the AHP”**

**James Ocita, Makerere University**

The AHP facilitated my scholarly development through its research, book and media grant, and, subsequently, its robust mentoring, network, and scholarly platforms. These opportunities and structures have contributed significantly to boosting and refining my scholarly capacity, making me more confident, productive, and self-reflective. They have enabled me to give back to my university and the wider humanities networks as a supervisor, mentor, reviewer, and scholar. As a Fellow, I published three peer-reviewed journal articles and a book chapter. I could have published even more in the immediate aftermath of the Fellowship. But I had prepared my dissertation with the aim of converting it into a book monograph afterwards. I was thus mindful to retain significant portions of the dissertation as fresh material.

With the knowledge, self-reflection, and the confidence that I acquired through my AHP experiences, I assumed the instruction of the graduate Research Methods course in my home department in the subsequent academic year. The experiences have helped me to become a better graduate instructor and mentor to my students and peers. Besides, in the years following the successful completion of my postdoctoral fellowship and the MDW, I participated in several other ancillary activities organized by the AHP. For instance, from 2017, I became a peer reviewer of fellowship competitions, further enriching my professional development and academic citizenry experiences. I gained valuable experiences, making me a better mentor to my peers, graduate students, and potential applicants, some of whom went on to win the AHP or other fellowships. Between 2017 and 2020, I was also honored to participate in three Regional Assemblies in Accra, Dar es Salaam, and Kampala, through which I gained a better understanding of the humanities landscape across the continent, its various challenges, opportunities, and new possibilities and directions as the AHP transitions to the African Humanities Association (AHA). I feel that my rich experiences of the AHP, insertion into its rich networks, and the mentoring and insight I gained have all enabled me to contribute towards charting new paths as the AHP transitions to the AHA and we seek to consolidate the gains of the former.<sup>39</sup>

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **“Transforming the Humanities: A Heterogeneous Approach”**

**Dina Ligaga, University of the Witwatersrand**

AHP has created new visions. In a context where other sources of funding might exist, the AHP might be seen by “outsiders” as just another award. But its intervention holds the potential for shifting how we value the humanities. Most recipients of the AHP will testify, one way or another, about feeling valued. I want to argue that this visibility refers to both tangible output and also internal confidence that enables a generation of knowledge that feels valuable.

I believe a growth in the humanities in Africa will lead to new theories being generated at a faster pace, with more and more academics on the continent being encouraged to be creative in their approach, influenced by what they know,

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38 UG, 1, “Mentoring and Networking: My Experience of the AHP Fellowship,” Laury Lawrence Ocen, Lira University

39 UG, 1, “Mentoring, Networks, and Other Opportunities: My Academic Journey with the AHP,” James Ocita, Makerere University



and encouraged by the possibility of a more conducive publishing world. Part of the debate in the humanities is about social impact. Yet, for generations, much of knowledge production is also has been about shaping how as humans, we perceive the world. A myriad of African scholars, consisting of early and mid-career academics, are now contributing to this global conversation in a way that matters.

Rather than the competitive neoliberal system that structures the academic world, this gentler nonhierarchy is sustaining and generative. The AHP system of engagement has the potential to affect many, given the ethos that has defined it. Those who mentor have had to learn a gentler approach to guidance, working with rather than being dictatorial towards mentees. The implications of this system are far reaching. In a way, it also makes possible the entry into the world of academia of a different cohort of thinkers, whose work is generated from the contexts within which they are located and who are encouraged to exist in the world of academia as accomplished academics.<sup>40</sup>

## NIGERIA

### **“Applied Research Towards Re-invigorating African Humanities: My AHP Experience” Gbemisola Aderemi Adeoti, Obafemi Awolowo University**

Shortly after the fellowship, I became a professor in 2010. Apart from participating in pre-application and launch meetings in Zaria, Ibadan, and Accra from then on, I was awarded the ASA Presidential Fellowship in 2012. The award facilitated my attendance at that year’s ASA conference in Philadelphia, USA. As part of the fellowship, I presented my research (“Politics and the Urban Experience in Postcolonial West African Literature”) to an international audience at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, under its “Africa at Noon” Seminar Series.

Thereafter, I have been taking on leadership roles in my university. I served as the director of the Institute of Cultural Studies from 2011 to 2015 and dean, Faculty of Arts, from 2015 to 2019. During my tenure as the dean, I convened two international conferences on “Poverty and the Humanities” and “Humanities, Security, and the Social Media.” Papers from the two conferences have been published in two books. As part of the conferences, we organized workshops for prospective AHP postdoctoral fellowship applicants. Around 2015, I became an assessor, a position that brought me into the peer-review and mentorship stratum of AHP.

Looking back over the decade, the fellowship contributed to my development as an academic and boosted my capacity for basic research, networking, and mentoring of younger colleagues, some of whom have not only won the AHP awards, but are also rising in academia.<sup>41</sup>

## NIGERIA

### **“Networking: My AHP Story” Alexandra Esimaje, Ben Idahosa University**

The relationships that I have established through the AHP—collaborations with Fellows and others through the activities of the AHP—enhanced my career visibility and personal research in many intangible ways, but also achieved the following tangible outcomes which I am proud to mention: the management of the Centre for Language Research and English Proficiency, (CLAREP) which I direct, and its journal (*CLAREP Journal of English and Linguistics (C-JEL)*), which utilizes the invaluable resource of AHP Fellows as editorial board members and reviewers; the organization of academic writing and grantsmanship workshops in which AHP assessors were sponsored to mentor the young academics on the art of writing; through the series of activities and subsequent exposures to research and writing skills, I have pioneered the production of three edited volumes and authored one book; I have also created and managed a mentoring forum for young academics in Africa. I belong to a number of fora for the same purpose.

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40 SA, 2, “Transforming the Humanities: A Heterogeneous Approach,” Dina Ligaga, University of the Witwatersrand

41 NG, 1, “Applied Research Towards Re-invigorating African Humanities: My AHP Experience,” Gbemisola Aderemi Adeoti, Obafemi Awolowo University

Finally, the AHP-led networks have snowballed into many others and continue to grow. I am eternally grateful to ACLS-AHP for laying, for me, the foundation for successful academic and research careers.<sup>42</sup>

## SOUTH AFRICA

### “Leadership and Capacity Building among African Academics”

**Dina Ligaga, University of the Witwatersrand**

I attended the 2014 Manuscript Development Workshop in 2014, in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. In the workshop, I learnt a number of skills. The first involved how to peer review colleagues’ work, who, at that moment, I had never met before, but to whom I had the opportunity to respond to face to face. This was a generative session that allowed me to look into my own abilities to fully and deeply engage with other people’s work in meaningful ways. I would later hone these skills in my work as editor of two different journals. Importantly, it was not about giving mindless feedback, but really paying attention to what an author was saying and how they were saying it. In the feedback sessions, participants gently aired their views. We then had one-on-one feedback sessions with advisors, who guided us into thinking of our projects as book projects.

My leadership skills in academia have been expanded through my involvement as a mentor to younger scholars. In 2020, Dr. Chidi Ugwu of Ibadan University invited me to be a mentor at the AHP Proposal Development Seminar. I considered this an excellent opportunity to showcase my skills as a leader in a field of knowledge. In 2021, I was an assessor of AHP applications, an incredible opportunity for me, eight years after I received my award. This rotational exercise and experience allowed me to review what peer assessment meant from the AHP point of view. It also allowed me to get a better sense of what kinds of applications came through to the AHP.

I received numerous opportunities from my involvement with AHP for academic leadership. This is both a strength of the AHP and an avenue that can be expanded and grown for the future. Many of those who successfully become AHP Fellows do not have prior experience of the global academy. This is also their first experience in speaking to a readership outside of their own academic communities. The potential to build skills and expand knowledge is made possible through a myriad of opportunities.<sup>43</sup>

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42 NG, 1, “Networking: My AHP Story,” Alexandra Esimaje, Ben Idahosa University

43 SA, 1, “Leadership and Capacity Building among African Academics,” Dina Ligaga, University of the Witwatersrand



# The African Humanities Community

## “Reflections on the Meaning of AHP Legacies”

**General Editors: Sati Fwatshak and James Ocita**

The humanities matter! One of the fundamental principles of the AHP is that “the humanities matter.” The humanities fields and the researchers in it are both important. Prior to the AHP intervention, the humanities were a marginalized cluster in the African academy, while the STEM fields were privileged by policy makers, governments, funding agencies, and higher institutions of learning. Similarly, the social sciences had interventions such as CODESRIA and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), while the humanities had none.

The AHP Intervention assuaged the feeling of marginalization, of lack, and of exclusion by early and mid-career academics in the humanities. The AHP has given the AHP community of mentors and mentees—and the humanities in general—a sense of worth, being taken seriously and given continental and global visibility. Consequently, the morale of individual Fellows and mentors have been lifted, and they themselves now place a higher premium on the value of their disciplines in particular and the humanities in general, having been validated.

AHP has demonstrated that a participatory, well-conceptualized intervention can create impacts and generate ripple effects that are sustainable for long periods, equipping Fellows, mentors, and mentees with the capacity for self-replication in the aftermath of funding ... The merit-oriented Fellows as individuals and as a cohort have come to constitute an intellectual resource base for the entrenchment of the culture of meritocracy and excellence, which is vital to sustaining the relevance of the humanities.

In administration, many have become heads of departments and of directorates; some have become deans of faculties or colleges, and others vice chancellors. Most of these positions are earned through a stiffly competitive process requiring credentials and leadership capacity that AHP played a big role in shaping up. Nearly all the AHP Fellows and mentors who have attained these leadership positions have credited the AHP for their successes.<sup>44</sup>

## TANZANIA

### “AHP Dialogues: Legacy and Meaning”

**Abdullah H. Mohammed, University of Dar es Salaam**

AHP has awakened the sleeping giant and set it on the move. The legacy here becomes the process itself that specifically enabled the start through dissertation and postdoctoral grants; lubricated the move with MDWs, conference grants, and residencies; guided the way via general assemblies, reviews, evaluations, and resident mentors; and affirmed the success with the AHP book series. The established movement and the networks are the beginning, not the end. It is intended to ignite the engine and the spirit of the scholars to take a lead role to push their institutions and other humanist-loving funders to continue holding the tempo towards sustainable research grants, publications, mentorship, and peer interdisciplinary advising or reviewing. These can grow from within one institution, country, AHP countries, and beyond. It can grow as wide as it can ... It has raised the bar to early and middle-career scholars and shown them that the field they have selected was not wrong. It is an area that is respected

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<sup>44</sup> GE, 3, Reflections on the Meaning of AHP Legacies, General Editors: Sati Fwatshak and James Ocita

and can be transformed into a more known and effective one if they invest more time and resources into it.<sup>45</sup>

## TANZANIA

### “AHP Experiences and Engendered Potentials”

**Michael Andindilile, University of Dar es Salaam**

AHP happened to be the right medicine at the right time for the University of Dar es Salaam. Its beginning coincided with the institutional transformation that splintered the then-largest College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS) (formerly Faculty of Arts and Social Science, or FASS) at the University of Dar es Salaam into two separate colleges, i.e., the College of Humanities (CoHU) and the College of Social Sciences (CoSS). This split did not go down well, particularly for those in the humanities, primarily because the former was considerably resource-poor and the latter was resource-rich. Or to put it differently, the latter attracted more funding than the former. To contextualize this dynamic, one must look at how reluctant many of the senior faculty members were to assume leadership at the helm of the then-nascent CoHU. Things have ever since changed for the better, with the college attracting much more funding than one could have initially envisaged. The departments of Archaeology and History—with several faculty being AHP alumni—are exemplary in this regard.

To understand how much AHP has helped to shape and make a difference, one only ought to look at how respectable the humanities have increasingly become at the University of Dar es Salaam and how many of the AHP Fellows and alumni are contributing meaningfully to the humanities at home and abroad. AHP Fellows have engaged in groundbreaking research and scholarship and have been active in publishing in peer-reviewed, internationally recognized publications, much in line with the university’s mission and vision to become a leading institution not only at the local level (where it is the oldest) but also internationally. Moreover, thanks to the tutelage of the AHP, many of the faculty in the humanities at the University of Dar es Salaam can now write competitive proposals capable of attracting external funding. In this regard, the Department of Archaeology has been leading the way.

For illustrative purposes, I would like to use my personal experience as an AHP Fellow to account for the difference the AHP has made and how the enormous potential in the humanities can be unlocked. When I became an AHP Fellow, I did not imagine the doors that the fellowship would open for me. I was then a junior faculty, a freshly minted PhD holder. Though my project was, ultimately, to develop a monograph based on further development of my initial PhD work, I did not realize how engaging and meaningful it would be in terms of producing new knowledge and building my capacity as a scholar in the humanities.<sup>46</sup>

## SOUTH AFRICA

### “Reflections of AHP Fellowship with Regards to AHP Directorate Assumptions”

**Sarah-Jane Walton, University of the Free State**

The AHP has catalyzed the reimagining of humanities in Africa in the following ways. The first is through the production of new knowledge. I believe the AHP has been successful in generating new knowledge by African scholars without constraints which require proof of overt contemporary relevance. My own research, which considers the effects of the First World War on Cape Town, is suggestive of the material and ideological effects that the global phenomenon, as linked to European empires, had on colonial and dominion African cities and the lives of their residents. Such research would likely not have been funded by a program that was designed to “problem solve” contemporary “issues.” As such, the AHP recognizes the importance of historical knowledge outside of this paradigm. Such an approach is likely to encourage a diverse range of scholarly research.<sup>47</sup>

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45 TZ, 2, “AHP Dialogues: Legacy and Meaning,” Abdullah H. Mohammed, University of Dar es Salaam

46 TZ, 1, “AHP Experiences and Engendered Potentials,” Michael Andindilile, University of Dar es Salaam

47 SA, 1, “Reflections of AHP Fellowship with Regards to AHP Directorate Assumptions,” Sarah-Jane Walton, University of the Free State

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **“Transforming the Humanities: a Heterogeneous Approach”**

**Dina Ligaga, University of the Witwatersrand**

I have become a much more confident and purposeful researcher, qualities that have no doubt come with years of experience as well as the association with AHP. I say this because I was a visiting fellow for the first time because of the opportunity I had to be nominated as the 2017 African Studies Association Presidential Fellow. Once again, this role required that I get out of my comfort zone and make presentations at seminars, interact with colleagues as peers, and network with other AHP participants who were at the ASA conference. That visit to Rutgers made it possible for me to meet scholars such as Professor Stephane Robolin and Professor Ousseina Alidou. As a result, I have since been invited to contribute a chapter to a book that Robolin is co-editing with Prof. Gaurav Desai of the University of Michigan, on African literary and cultural institutions. These kinds of international recognitions are, to a large extent, the result of exposure through my AHP guided work.<sup>48</sup>

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **“A Collation of South Africa-Based Academic Voices: A Review of AHP Experiences”**

**Dina Ligaga and Mucha Musemwa (Country Editors)**

One of the key takeaways from the AHP experience for some participants is the space and scope for self-development and eventually the invitation to take up academic leadership roles. The AHP has been cited as an important avenue through which critical skills were developed to achieve a high level of academic excellence. With this, the idea of academic leadership evolved from the confidence in the quality of work, and the opportunities to expand one's academic networks, and communities of interdisciplinary exchanges. A different category of academic leadership that was highlighted was the tireless work done by senior academics who patiently guided younger scholars to navigate their own work, but also the academic world, more courageously.<sup>49</sup>

## NIGERIA

### **“From Postdoctoral Fellow to Assessor: My AHP Journey”**

**Samaila Suleiman, Bayero University**

Another critical milestone in my career was my nomination as ACLS/ASA Presidential Fellow in 2018, through which I attended my first African Studies Association (ASA) meeting in Atlanta. Apart from the opportunity of presenting my AHP-supported project to an international audience, the fellowship expanded my networks beyond Africa and boosted my confidence. I met some US-based Africanist scholars who became interested in my project and shared opportunities of interest. I also had a short but fruitful residency at Rutgers University, where I delivered a guest lecturer and interacted with students and Africanist colleagues. This was a turning of seasons in my career!<sup>50</sup>

## SOUTH AFRICA

### **“The AHP: Valorising the Humanities in Africa through an Independently Administered, Africa-Centred Programme”**

**Susana Molins Lliteras, University of Cape Town**

The greatest success of the AHP was its role in valorizing the humanities in Africa by providing prestigious opportunities for researchers in the humanities to access fellowships, residency and writing grants, international travel,

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48 SA, 2, “Transforming the Humanities: a Heterogeneous Approach,” Dina Ligaga, University of the Witwatersrand

49 SA, 1, “A Collation of South Africa-Based Academic Voices: A Review of AHP Experiences,” Dina Ligaga and Mucha Musemwa (country editors)

50 NG, 1, “From Postdoctoral Fellow to Assessor: My AHP Journey,” Samaila Suleiman, Bayero University

and diverse academic networks. In a context where humanities research is often relegated in importance, regularly considered an unnecessary luxury, and sometimes outrightly attacked, the existence of a vibrant and celebrated programme exclusively for humanities researchers serves to raise the profile of the humanities in Africa. Moreover, the independent nature of the selection process and the administration of the grants (not through the universities themselves) provides a degree of freedom to the humanities that is not linked to the vagaries of the different universities' financial constraints or specific staffing or teaching requirements at different points in time. Finally, the AHP's Africa-centredness, with its emphasis on African academics from different countries evaluating the grants process, the mentoring opportunities, and the networking with African colleagues during the residency programme and writing workshops, is particularly important in a context of academic domination and agenda-setting by Global North researchers and universities.<sup>51</sup>

## NIGERIA

### “Reinvigorating the Humanities in Africa’: My AHP Story”

**Gloria M.T. Emezue, Alex Ekwueme Federal University**

The AHP fellowship is a life-enhancing experience. Although it all started with conducting basic academic research, the interactions that I had in the different AHP activities have all proven to be enriching experiences, which have positively affected my life ... Africa (Nigeria) is very rich in human resources and has a minutely tapped knowledge base. At the time of its commencement, and throughout the period of its brief life-span, the AHP project made a very important statement to (particularly) the generally often ignorant university administrators, Nigeria's political leaders, and the general population, who usually privilege only studies in the sciences, engineering, and social sciences at the expense of the humanities. The bane of humanities in Nigeria is the institutionalized ignorance (among the populace) which posits that only STEM is needed for social development and in order to encourage studies in STEM, humanities must fall. Thus, through policies and practices, the fight against the humanities has been sustained over the decades. As a Nigerian child and later a parent, I faced systemic denouncing and discouragement from studying courses in humanities. These are experiences which I believe that many Nigerians can relate with. As the dean of my faculty, I witnessed the great restriction on the number of students that could be admitted into courses in the humanities, while a larger number of students are admitted to study science/engineering/medical courses. As much as I challenged this, I was informed that it was a policy of the government of Nigeria and there was nothing anybody can do about it at the university level. Even the area of local grant opportunities is equally skewed towards the sciences. Thus, the commencement of the AHP awards served the purpose of not just rescuing and validating the study of humanities, but further restoring the confidence of the academics and students in the various fields of study in the humanities.<sup>52</sup>

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51 SA, 1, “The AHP: Valorising the Humanities in Africa through an Independently Administered, Africa-Centred Programme,” Susana Molins Llitas, University of Cape Town

52 NG, 1, “Reinvigorating the Humanities in Africa’: My AHP Story,” Gloria M.T. Emezue, Alex Ekwueme Federal University





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Sati Fwatshak, from the University of Jos (Nigeria), has been a champion of the AHP since 2011 and served the program in many roles, including the evaluation of fellowship applications and book proposals and as a leader in Manuscript Development Workshops and application preparation workshops.

James Ocita began his engagement with AHP as a 2014 Postdoctoral Fellow from Makerere University (Uganda) and became an ASA Presidential Fellow in 2018.

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