



# Newsletter

of the Department of Sociology & Anthropology

## Research in the Global South

### *Masters Students' Fieldwork and Scholarship Focused on Disability Research: Activism and Practice*

**Solomon Amoatey**, a graduate student in Sociology, explores the experiences of people with disabilities in the Global South. Last summer he carried out fieldwork in his homeland of Ghana. Solomon is deeply committed to improving the rights, freedoms and opportunities experienced by people with disabilities and by people in the Global South more broadly.



Solomon (right) working with a sign language instructor during his field research in Ghana this past Summer



During his research trip, Solomon (right) had the opportunity to meet and work with several local disability leaders.

"Going into this research seemed more of a project to me than just gathering data for my master's thesis. I have learned life lessons that are going to stay with me for the rest of my life. Having heard the life experiences and challenges of persons living with disability in Ghana, I believe it is urgent to initiate practical measures to give disabled Ghanaians a better and quality life. I think we must all accept that disability is not inability." As Solomon completes his thesis this year, he hopes to enter into a Ph.D. program next fall to carry on his research.

Masters student **Edelweiss Murillo Lafuente** presented her paper "Transnational Feminism and Disability in the Global South: Experiences of Bolivian Disabled Women" at the Michigan Sociological Conference this past October at the Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Her presentation aim was to identify ways in which disabled women's experiences in Bolivia may be different from the existing literature on disability, to explore their activism and political agenda as examples of a new Global South Disability Studies approach to disability, and propose a new theoretical understanding of disability by focusing on the distinctive social, cultural and political environment of Bolivia.



Edelweiss presenting her research at the 2019 Michigan Sociological Conference

# Engaging Global Conversations:



74<sup>th</sup> Session  
United Nations  
General Assembly



## UT's Simon Njoroge Participates in Meetings held at the UN General Assembly



Simon Njoroge (seated on the left) participates in meetings held in conjunction with the UN General Assembly focused on orphaned children (image source: <https://www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org>)

This past September, Sociology graduate student **Simon Njoroge** attended the 2019 United Nations General Assembly in New York City. There, in his capacity as the Executive Director at Jabali Foundation (a Kenyan non-profit children's foundation). He participated in meetings associated with "The Global Church's Response to Children Without Parental Care" aimed to engage the global church into the wider

movement of family reintegration. Simon presented on the realities of and importance for the establishment and maintenance of partnerships between church and government.

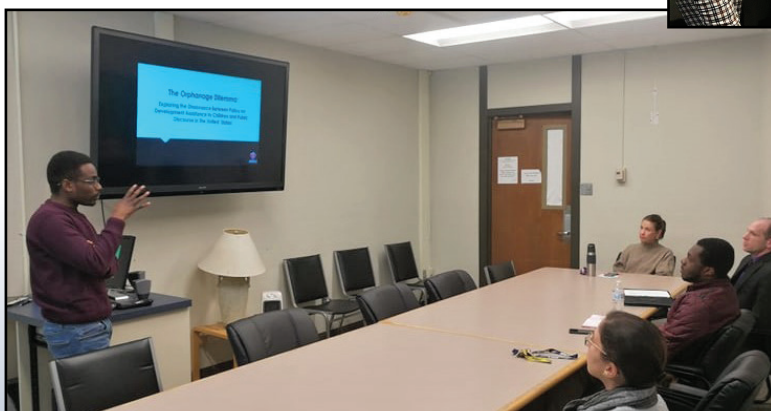


### -Fall Brown Bag Series-



## Across Campus and Around the World: Interdisciplinary Dialogue On International Issues

Undergraduate students **Sarah Bayes** and **Katie Raczkowski** (pictured right) presented their talk titled "Stateless in the DR: Haitian Elementary Students" focused on their recent field experience in the Dominican Republic, a fieldschool program led by Drs. Peralta and Arps.



Left, **Simon Njoroge** presents during our November Brown Bag meeting on his ongoing research and engagement with orphanages in a talk titled "The Orphanage Dilemma: Exploring the Dissonance Between Policy on Development Assistance to Children and Public Discourse in the United States."

# Scholarship In Focus:

## PRESS RELEASE...

Sociology graduate student Butheina Hamdah's previous publication in the online news source *Muftah* titled "American Culture and the Liberalization of Hijab," has recently been cited in articles published by the *New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *American Conservative*.



Her contributions included focusing attention and discussion on the role of the hijab as more than an article of clothing, in that it is tied to wider concepts of Muslim women's identity and individualism.



This past summer, Sociology graduate student *Simon Njoroge* contributed an article to the *Elephant*, a pan-African online news source. Simon's work highlights contemporary practices

and issues concerning orphanage systems, focusing on Kenya, and the impact of later 20th century Structural Adjustment Programs, or SAPs. The intersection of such programs and the orphanage system as it currently operates in Africa remain a key focal point in Simon's ongoing Master's research.

## The First in the Next Generation: UT's First in the Family Center Celebrates Students New to the College Experience

The recently founded First in the Family Center was present at UToledo's first-generation day on November 6th (celebrated nationally November 8th). The day marks the national celebration for first-generation students. Sociology Professors *Dr. Patricia Case* and *Dr. Monita Mungo* spearhead the Center that provides resources for students who are the first in their households to attend and navigate through the college experience.



Pictured left are alumna *Aleiah Jones* (left), current student *Chartyse Fagan* (center), and *Professor Mungo* (seated right) who represented the Center at the first-generation resource fair held in conjunction with the day's events.



# In Memorium

by Seamus Metress

**Dr. Dorothy Siegel**, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics, in the University of Toledo's Department of English Language and Literature, died September 22, 2019. She was one of two anthropological linguists who, for many years, served our anthropology program by teaching our students. One of them, Jason Baldrige, who wrote his undergraduate Honor's Thesis under the tutelage of Drs. Dorothy Siegel and Seamus Metress, went on to receive his Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2003. Jason was honored with the Best Dissertation Prize by the European Association for Logic, Language and Information. He now teaches

linguistics at the University of Texas, Austin. Dr. Siegel, who received her Ph.D. in linguistics from MIT in 1974, was eulogized by the Linguistic Society of America for her "groundbreaking" research which is "often referenced in today's linguistic textbooks." The group noted that she was "cherished by her students for her warmth and stimulating conversation." It should be noted that Dorothy was trained under Dr. Noam Chomsky who is often referred to as the "father of modern linguistics." The Department of Anthropology would like to honor the memory of Dr. Siegel by paying tribute to her long standing service to its students.

## *Message from the Chair*

From Syracuse to Hong Kong, images of student protesters are juxtaposed with headlines of corrupt politicians and oppressive regimes around the world. It reminds us the role college students play in speaking truth to power. Serving as a voice of conscience and a catalyst for change is something students have been doing for generations. But protesting is only one of myriad ways in which students are actively engaged in the ongoing endeavor to right wrongs and make a better future.

Our majors here at UT are wholly engaged in this enterprise. This year perhaps more than any other in recent memory, they have made their voices heard on issues related human and cultural rights, and social and environmental justice. Their impact is real; it's positive. For example, in March several of our majors joined Drs. Arps and Peralta on the second field school visit to assist with child health monitoring in a Haitian community in the Dominican Republic. The

following month, alumna Markie Miller spoke at the UN on Earth Day, not long after she spearheaded the passage of the Lake Erie Charter, which recognizes basic legal rights for nature. Then this fall, grad student Simon Njoroge also spoke at the UN on the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, addressing the wellbeing of orphans and adopted children around the world. Meanwhile, throughout the year, grad student Butheina Hamdah's work on cultural appropriation and hijab was being cited in publications like the *New York Times* and *Christian Science Monitor*. And more recently, the Anthropology Club has hosted Halloween and Thanksgiving events on campus as opportunities to raise awareness about cultural appropriation and inclusivity.

*Dwight Haase, Ph.D.  
Chair, Department of Sociology and  
Anthropology*

# Where are they Now? A Check-in With Some Recent Graduates



Recently highlighted in the Society for Applied Anthropology News, former University of Toledo undergrad and recent Ph.D. awardee **Nora Bridges** received 2nd place in the

2018 the Peter K. New Student Award, an annual student research competition in the applied social and behavioral sciences. After earning a Masters at the University of Memphis in 2009, Dr. Bridges earned her Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Pittsburgh in 2017. Her Ph.D. research integrated medical and

environmental anthropology to explore the practice and framework of wellbeing within its relative cultural setting. Specifically, her work centered on how people interact with plants as food and medicine to shape wellbeing. Nora's research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, Fulbright IIE, and the American Philosophical Society.

Among her ongoing research goals, Nora's focus includes addressing food insecurity in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as she establishes partnerships with local universities, private foundations, and nonprofits to collect and analyze data and share results in an effort to highlight the needs of promoting food justice, sustainability, and wellbeing in all communities.

---

**Richard Hamant**, a December 2018 Anthropology graduate, is now at Johns Hopkins University. There he is enrolled in a masters program in Molecular Microbiology and Immunology within the School of Public Health.

While at the University of Toledo, his interest in medical anthropology and the effects of mountaintop removal

mining (MTRM) on the health of central Appalachians, resulted in an honor's thesis. In it, he researched the rise of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis within the U.S. and its possible impact on the pulmonary health of those living in MTRM regions. He hopes to further build upon that research topic while in graduate school.



---

**Dr. Nicole Lambert**, who received her BA and MA in Sociology from The University of Toledo (2008 and 2010, respectively) serves as a recently appointed Assistant Professor of Sociology at MassBay Community College. She earned her PhD in Sociology at the University of Colorado



Boulder in 2018. Her research takes an intersectional approach to understanding the experiences of undocumented 1.5-generation Latinx immigrants in the United States. She is particularly interested in the impact of trauma on identity formation and how activists use self-narratives to advocate for social change. Nicole has recently been asked to be a board member for the Institute of Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience in Higher Education (located at MassBay CC).