

OFOSUWA M. ABIOLA

Howard University | Department of Theatre Arts | Lulu Vere Childers Hall
2455 Sixth Street NW, Washington DC, 20059

E-mail: ofosuwa.abiola@howard.edu

Website: www.oabiola.org

CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

- 2016 Ph.D., History
Howard University, Washington, DC
Major field: African History
Research focus: African cultural History; African dance history
- 2010 Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (B.I.S.)
Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA
Specialization: Cultural Studies
Minors: Dance; History
Graduated Summa Cum Laude (4.0 GPA)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENT

- 2016-Present Assistant Professor of History, Department of Theatre Arts, Howard
University, Washington, DC.

EMPLOYMENT AND PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

- 2018-Present Coordinator, Dance Program, Department of Theatre Arts, Howard
University, Washington, DC.
- 2018-Present Director, The Africana Theatre and Dance Collection, National
Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant project, Founders Library,
Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2017-Present Coordinator, Honors Program, Department of Theatre Arts, Howard
University, Washington, DC.
- 2017-2018 Coordinator, Theatre Arts Minor Program, Department of Theatre Arts,
Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2013-2016 Lecturer, Department of Theatre Arts, Howard University, Washington,
DC.
- 2014-2016 Historian, Researcher, National Park Service (NPS), Washington, DC.

- 2014-2015 Project Curator and Research Associate for the exhibit, "Polyrhythm: The Evolution of African American Dance and its African Roots," The National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, Wilberforce, Ohio.
- 2013-2014 Co-Investigator, Ethnographic and Historical Project, National Park Service (NPS), Washington, DC.
- 2012-2013 Teaching Associate, Department of History, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2012 Archivist, Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, United States Department of the Interior, Vienna, VA.
- 1996-2011 Artistic Director/Founder, Suwabi African Ballet, Norfolk, VA.
- 2005-2011 Director, CampRize! Dance Camp, Norfolk, VA.
- 2007-2009 Director, Stage Norfolk Theatre Company, Norfolk, VA.
- 2000-2009 Artist in Residence, Governor's School for the Arts, Norfolk, VA.
- 2000-2003 Artist in Residence, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.
- 2000-2002 Lecturer, Christopher Newport University, Newport News, VA.

PUBLICATIONS

- 2019 *History Dances: Chronicling the History of Traditional Mandinka Dance.* London: Routledge.
- 2019 *Evoke: A Historical, Theoretical, and Cultural Analysis of Africana Dance and Theatre.* Peer-reviewed digital journal. Founder/Editor-in-Chief.
- 2019 *Historical Perspectives on Dance in Africa.* Temple Hills: Intelligencia Press, 2019. Textbook.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

For Every Thought There's A Dance: Historical Musings on Dance, Hegemony, and Resistance in Africa. Monograph.

Fire Under My Feet: Historical Perspectives on Dance in the African Diaspora. Monograph.

Les Ballets Africains and the Restoration of Black Identity in Africa and the Diaspora. Paper accepted at the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) biannual meeting, November 5-9, 2019.

PUBLICATIONS/PRODUCTIONS: ARTISTIC, DIGITAL, AND PRINT

- 2019 *Rites*. Choreography, African Ballet. Ira Aldridge Theatre, Howard University, Washington, DC, April 5-6, 2019.
- 2019 *Nankama African Dance Conference*, Artistic Director. African Dance and Scholarly Conference. Produced at Howard University, Washington, DC, February 9-10, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kg7X2IOsWNo>.
- 2016 www.ofosuwaabiola.org, pedagogical website. Published website to enhance student engagement in courses; Dance History I, Dance History II, Performance and Identity, and Theatre History I.
- 2016 *Grave Revelations: Cultural and Historical Narratives from the Colored Union Benevolent Association Burial Ground*, digital publication (short form documentary). Producer, Aryzen Pictures. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=WOU3AT6eKQY>
- 2016 *History Dances: African Dance Systems as Methodologies*, digital publication. Visual supplement for the published monograph *History Dances*, short form documentary. Producer, Aryzen Pictures. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHJNSnaCM0M&feature=youtu.be>
- 2016 “Lamban,” African dance choreography, ceremonial reception director. African American Women and the Law (AAWL) Conference. Theme: “Black Women Still Rising: Ending Structural Racism, Patriarchy and Violence.” National Education Association (NEA), Washington, DC.
- 2014 "It Fits Like a Glove: Women and Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1901-1989," *Africalogical Perspectives: Historical and Contemporary Analysis of Race and Africana Studies*, Spring Issue, 2014, pp. 77-92.
- 2008 *Wasalunke and the Three Virtues*, African dance ballet. Wrote the script, choreographer, producer. The Attucks Theatre, Norfolk, VA.
- 2010 “Umoja” Suwabi African Ballet’s 14th Annual Kwanzaa Concert, producer, choreography, director. The Attucks Theatre, Norfolk, VA.
- 2009 “Kujichagulia” Suwabi African Ballet’s 13th Annual Kwanzaa Concert, producer, choreographer, director. The Attucks Theatre, Norfolk, VA.
- 2009 “Once on This Island,” choreographer. Hampton Roads Academy Newport News, VA.
- 2009 “Faju,” *A Choreographer’s Showcase*, choreographer. Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.

- 2008 “Imani,” Suwabi African Ballet’s 12th Annual Kwanzaa Concert, producer, choreographer, director. The Attucks Theatre, Norfolk, VA.
- 2007 “Nia” Suwabi African Ballet’s 11th Annual Kwanzaa Concert, producer, choreographer, director. The Attucks Theatre, Norfolk, VA.
- 2006 “Bena,” choreographer. The Governor’s School for the Arts, Norfolk, VA.
- 2006 “Kuumba” Suwabi African Ballet’s 10th Annual Kwanzaa Concert, producer, choreography, director, The Attucks Theatre, Norfolk, VA.
- 2006 *Imhotep*, African dance ballet. Wrote the script, producer, choreographer, director. Live ballet and DVD, The Attucks Theatre, DVD published by Ascension 1 Productions, Norfolk, VA.

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2019 GRANT, U.S. Department of Education/Center for African Studies, Howard University, \$3,000.00, Washington, DC.
- 2018 GRANT, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Humanities Initiatives, \$99,948.00, Washington, DC.
- 2018 AWARD, Outstanding Assistant Professor in the College of Arts and Sciences at Howard University, 2017-2018. Washington, DC.
- 2018 AWARD, Outstanding Student Advisement, Office on Research Development, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2018 AWARD, Junior Faculty Writing and Creative Works Summer Academy, \$500.00, Office of Faculty Development, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2017 GRANT, Summer Faculty Research Grant, \$10,000.00, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2011-2016 FELLOWSHIP, Frederick Douglas Doctoral Fellowship, \$96,000.00, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2012 AWARD, *Special Commendation*, Office of the Mayor, Washington, DC.
- 2011 FULBRIGHT, The J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship, Morocco, North Africa.
- 2010-2011 GRANT, Crispus Attucks Cultural Center, Norfolk, VA, rehearsal space grant, \$20,800.00.

- 2009-2010 GRANT, Crispus Attucks Cultural Center, Norfolk, VA, rehearsal space grant, \$20,800.00.
- 2010 FELLOWSHIP, George H. Benet Fellowship, Petersburg, VA, \$1,000.00.
- 2008-2009 GRANT, Crispus Attucks Cultural Center, Norfolk, VA, rehearsal space grant, \$18,000.00.
- 2006-2008 GRANT, Crispus Attucks Cultural Center, Norfolk, VA, rehearsal space grant, \$41,600.00.
- 2007 GRANT, Newport News Arts Council Grant, Newport News, VA, \$4000.00
- 2006 AWARD, *Excellence in the Arts Award*, Southeast Virginia Arts Association, Norfolk, VA.
- 2005 AWARD, *Master Folk Artist Award*, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.
- 2005 AWARD, *Outstanding Contribution to Music in the Commonwealth*, The Virginia Music Educators' Association, Norfolk, VA.
- 2005 GRANT, Partners in the Arts Grant, Richmond, VA, \$6,000.00.
- 2004 GRANT, Hampton Council for the Arts Grant, Hampton, VA, \$5,000.00.
- 2002-2003 GRANT, Peninsula Fine Arts Center, Newport News, VA, \$10,000.00
- 2003 GRANT, Newport News Council for the Arts Grant, Newport News, VA, \$2,500.00.
- 2002 AWARD, *Unity Award*, Office of Human Affairs, Hampton, VA.

FEATURED SCHOLAR

- 2018 “Howard Fine Arts Professor Shows How African Dance Chronicled History.” Interviewed by *Afro-American Newspaper* (December 15, 2018). <https://www.afro.com/howard-fine-arts-professor-shows-how-african-dance-chronicled-history/>
- 2018 Featured as a Spotlight Scholar by the American Historical Association (AHA) in their Blog, *Perspectives on History* (December 6, 2018). <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2018/aha-member-spotlight-ofosuwa-m-abiola>

- 2018 “Fine Arts Professor Making Strides In Increasing Awareness On Importance Of African Dance Through New Book.” Howard University Newsroom, Office of University Communications (December 6, 2018). <https://newsroom.howard.edu/newsroom/article/9176/fine-arts-professor-making-strides-increasing-awareness-importance-african>
- 2018 “Step By Step.” Interviewed and provided historical content for *Dance Spirit* article on African American Step Dancing (April 2018 issue): p. 44-45; <https://www.dancespirit.com/the-art-of-stepping-and-how-its-brought-people-together-for-more-than-a-century-2551841621.html>

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Dance History I: Africa, Antiquity to 1800
 Dance History II: Engaging the African Diaspora, 1800 to Present
 African Dance Performance Workshop
 African Dance II
 Performance and Identity
 Honors Thesis I & II
 Honors Directed Studies I & II
 Theatre History I *(WAC): World Theatre to the 18th Century
 Introduction to Theatre

*WAC, Writing Across the Curriculum. Received WAC certification to teach these courses.

UNDERGRADUATE HONORS ADVISEMENT

- 2018-2019 Directed the Honors Thesis of Jaylen Wilson, “Theatre is a Weapon: The Efficacy of Theatrical Presentation as a Device for Combating Systemic Racism.” Theatre Arts Major, Acting Concentration, Howard University. Selected to present at Howard University Research Week, April 2019.
- 2017-2018 Directed the Honors Thesis of Adanna Paul, “Bound to Post-Black: Examining and Redefining Tenets of the Post-Black Art Movement.” Theatre Arts Major, Acting Concentration, Howard University. *Won award for best presentation in Arts and Design, Howard University Research Week, April 2018.
- 2017-2018 Directed the Honors Thesis of Mary Morris, “Breaking the Cycle: An Investigation of Drama Therapy as an Intervention on the School to Prison Pipeline and At-Risk Youth.” Theatre Arts Major, Acting Concentration, Howard University. Selected to present at Howard University Research Week, April 2018.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT MENTORING

- 2018-2019 Directed the independent study of Ayana Fowler for Honor's Thesis research on the performance of gender in the African Diaspora, Howard University.
- 2017-2018 Directed the independent study of Jaylen Wilson for Honor's Thesis research on the use of theatre to alleviate racial discrimination, Howard University.

UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE COURSES CREATED

- 2020 Applied Research in Dance, Theatre, and Performance (Study abroad course in Botswana, Southern Africa, forthcoming)
- 2020 Arts, Libraries, and Archives (Library and archives internship course, forthcoming)
- 2018 Research Methods in Dance, Theatre, and Performance
- 2017 Performance and Identity

CONFERENCES AND INVITED TALKS

- 2019 "Les Ballets Africains and the Restoration of Black Identity in Africa and the Diaspora," presentation. Paper accepted in Association for the Study of the World Wide African Diaspora (ASWAD) conference. November 5-9, 2019, Williamsburg, VA.
- 2018 "Performance, African Rock Art, and the History of the Earth," paper accepted in the panel "Making People of African Origins Visible in the STEM Curriculum." Association for Science Teacher Education (ASTE) International Conference. January 4-6, 2018, Baltimore, MD.
- 2018 "Dancing Off Blackface: Vaudeville and the Construction of Black Identity in the World War I Era," presentation. Paper accepted in Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALAH) annual meeting and conference. October 3-7, 2018, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- 2018 "The Africana Theatre and Dance Collection" invited talk. Howard University Annual Research Week Conference 2018, Washington, DC.
- 2017 "History Restored: Reconnecting Dance to the Black Arts Movement Narrative," presentation. Jr. Faculty Writing and Creative Works Academy, Howard University, Washington, DC.

- 2017 “Jondon/Wolosodon,” featured artist, Master Class. Lecture and workshop, Wazee African Dance and Culture, The Hampton Performing and Creative Arts Center, Hampton, VA.
- 2016 “Nangadef: August Wilson and Ritual,” discussion. The August Wilson Society, Armour J. Blackburn Center, Washington, DC.
- 2016 “2nd Annual Youth and Young Adult Hand Dance Symposium,” panel discussion, National Hand Dance Association, (NHDA) R.I.S.E. Demonstration Center, Washington, DC.
- 2015 “Authenticity in Research: Approaches and Methodologies for the Performing Arts Historian,” invited lecturer. The Annual Summer Intensives for Theatre Arts, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2014 “Africa, the Ring Shout, and Hand Dancing: Exposing the Ancient Foundations of DC Hand Dancing,” invited speaker in the panel, “Hand Dance Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” the Annual Conference of the National Hand Dance Association, Arena Stage, Washington, DC.
- 2014 “When They Stood Up: 19th-Century African American Cemetery Ritual,” paper. Organization of American Historians (OAH), Annual Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia.
- 2013 “Revelations of Africanisms: The History of Washington DC's Emancipation,” paper. District of Columbia City Council Emancipation Conference, Washington, DC.
- 2013 “Research and the Arts,” invited lecturer for the course, Dance History I, Department of Theatre Arts, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2012 “Fortitude and the Embodiment of a Movement,” invited speaker. DC National Archives’ Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of Emancipation in Washington, DC.
- 2011 “African Dance and the Utility of Tradition,” invited speaker (and performance and choreography). The International Arts Festival, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA.
- 2011 “Historic Vistas of African Dance,” invited speaker (and workshop). Norfolk State University Annual Dance Conference, Norfolk, VA.
- 2011 “History, Traditional African Dance, and the 21st Century,” invited speaker (and performance and choreography). Thomas Nelson Community College Annual Black History Month Conference, Hampton, VA.

- 2010 “Moving Forward: African American Dance,” invited speaker (and choreography). Norfolk State University Annual Dance Conference, Norfolk, VA.
- 2010 “Manjani: Conceptualizing the Rite of Passage in Mandinka Dance,” invited speaker. The Office of International and Intercultural Programs, Wesleyan College, Norfolk, VA.
- 2010 “A Separate Space: Historical Highlights of Gnawa Arts and Culture in Contemporary Morocco,” paper. Cross Cultural Solutions, Morocco, North Africa.
- 2009 “The State of Black Dance in America,” invited speaker and workshop. Office of Student Affairs Black History Program, Hampton University, Hampton, VA.
- 2008 “Diversifying Dance Venues,” invited speaker (and performance). National Folk Festival, National Council for the Traditional Arts, Richmond, VA.
- 2007 “Africa, America, the Arts and Inclusion,” invited speaker (and performance and choreography). America’s 400th Anniversary, Jamestown Settlement, Jamestown, VA.
- 2006 “Incorporating The Arts in the Homeschool Curriculum,” invited lecturer. Department of Education, Hampton University, Hampton, VA.
- 2005 “Kasa: Celebration through Traditional Jola Drumming,” invited speaker (and workshop). The Virginia Music Educator’s Association Annual Meeting, Norfolk, VA.
- 2004 “Faju, Healing,” invited speaker (and choreography). Choreographer’s Showcase, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.
- 2003 “Deciphering Traditional African Dance Technique,” invited speaker (and choreography), The Regional Choreographer’s Annual Conference, Norfolk, VA.

SERVICE: HOWARD UNIVERSITY

- 2019-Present MEMBER, Executive Committee, College of Fine Arts (CoFA)
- 2019-Present MEMBER, Transition Team, College of Fine Arts
- 2019-Present MEMBER, Bylaws Committee, College of Fine Arts

2019-Present SUPERVISOR, Experiential Learning and On-Campus Placement, Howard University Student Employment Program (HUSEP), Office of Career Services.

2018-2019 MEMBER, Committee for reinstating the College of Fine Arts.

2018-2019 MEMBER, Department of Theatre Arts Sabbatical Committee

2017-2021 MEMBER, Academic Policy, Standards, and General Education (APSAGE) Committee, College of Arts and Sciences.

2017-2020 CHAIR, Curriculum Committee, Department of Theatre Arts.

2017-2019 MEMBER, Honors Council, College of Arts and Sciences

2016-Present MEMBER, Executive Committee, Department of Theater Arts.

2015-Present CHAIR, Library Committee, Department of Theater Arts.

2019 JUDGE for poster and paper presentations, Howard University Annual Research Week.

2019 REVIEWER for submissions to Howard University Annual Research Week.

2018 MEMBER, Search Committee, Department of Theatre Arts Lighting Designer.

2018 JUDGE for poster and paper presentations, Howard University Annual Research Week.

2018 REVIEWER for submissions to Howard University Annual Research Week.

2017-2018 MEMBER, Honors Council, Division of Fine Arts.

2017-2018 CHAIR, Department Chair Search Committee, Department of Theatre Arts.

2014-2017 MEMBER, Curriculum Committee, Department of Theater Arts.

2014-2015 CASTING DIRECTOR, "Image," (documentary). M.F.A. thesis committee, School of Communications.

2014 ADJUDICATOR, Theater Arts Department, Dance Concentration end of semester Jury, Howard University, Washington, DC.

2014 ADJUDICATOR, Dance History Oral Presentation and Choreographic Interpretation Finals, Howard University, Washington, DC.

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

2019-Present REVIEWER, *Arts*. Peer reviewed international journal, Basel, Switzerland.

2019 HOST, talkback for the D.C. screening of the web series, *Black Enough*, Landmark's E Street Cinema, Washington, DC, November 13.

2019 ADJUDICATOR, *Kennedy Center Dance Lab*, John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, Washington, DC.

2019 GRANT REVIEWER AND DANCE ADJUDICATOR, *FY20 Arts and Humanities Fellowship in Dance*, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Washington, DC.

2019-Present REVIEWER, *The Griot: The Journal of African American Studies*. Peer-reviewed academic journal.

2019-Present CONSULTANT, *BREathe Dance Project*, Fort Washington, Maryland.

2018 DANCE DRAMATURGE, "Trials to Freedom," *Seals Dance Project*, Washington, DC.

2018 JUDGE, *Frederick Douglass Oratorical Contest*, National Park Service (NPS), Washington, DC.

2017 JUDGE, *Frederick Douglass Oratorical Contest*, National Park Service (NPS), Washington, DC.

2017-2019 CONSULTANT, *Wazee African Dance and Culture*, Hampton, VA.

2016-2017 HUMANITIES SPECIALIST, *National Hand Dance Association* (NHDA) Washington, DC.

2016 PANEL EVALUATOR, Panel Discussion, 2nd Annual Youth and Young Adult Symposium, R.I.S.E. Demonstration Center, National Hand Dance Association (NHDA), Washington, DC.

2016 MEMBER, Planning Committee, African American Women and the Law Conference, African American Policy Forum: Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies, National Education Association (NEA) Washington, DC.

- 2014 ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, American Historical Association (AHA), Annual meeting, Washington, DC.
- 2009-2011 JUDGE, Dance Auditions, CampRize, Attucks Theater, Norfolk, VA.
- 2006-2008 JUDGE, Dance Presentations, Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological, and Scientific Olympics (ACT-SO), NAACP, Newport News, VA.
- 2007 Chaperone for ACT-SO (Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological, and Scientific Olympics) Gold metal finalists' travel to final competition in Detroit, MI.

CERTIFICATION, CONTINUED EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 2017 CERTIFICATION, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (CETLA), Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2017 CERTIFICATE, Faculty Writing & Creative Works Summer Academy, Office of Faculty Development, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2015 CERTIFICATION, Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) Howard University, Washington, DC

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD)
 American Historical Association (AHA)
 Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)
 Dance Metro DC
 National Dance Education Organization (NDEO)
 Black Theatre Network (BTN)

FIELD WORK AND ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Senegal, West Africa
 The Gambia, West Africa
 Morocco, Northwest Africa
 Nassau, Bahamas
 Freeport, Bahamas
 United States

LANGUAGES

French (Reading) | Wolof (Basic) | Spanish (Basic) | Arabic (Basic)

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

ORIGINAL FULL-LENGTH AFRICAN BALLETS

(Wrote the script, produced, directed, drumming arrangements, and choreography)

2008	<i>Wasalunke and the Three Virtues</i>
2006	<i>Imhotep.</i>
2004	<i>Waters of Despair, Waters of Hope</i>
2002	<i>The Voices of Shu</i>
2000	<i>The Dismal Swamp</i>
1998	<i>Africa: A Song of Me</i>

KWANZAA CONCERTS

1997-2011 Directed, produced, and provided all choreography for 14 Kwanzaa concerts which opened on the second day of Kwanzaa, Kugichagulia (Self-determination), from 1997 to 2005, and on the first day of Kwanzaa, Umoja (Unity), from 2006 to 2011.

OVERSEAS PERFORMANCES & PRESENTATIONS

The Gambia, West Africa | Morocco, Northwest Africa | Bermuda | Bahamas | Puerto Rico | St. Thomas