

# OFOSUWA M. ABIOLA

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Howard University | Department of Theatre Arts | Lulu Vere Childers Hall

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

### EDUCATION

- 2016 Ph.D., History, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 2010 Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA

### 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 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.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- 2019 *History Dances: Chronicling the History of Traditional Mandinka Dance*. London: Routledge (Monograph).
- 2019 *Historical Perspectives on Dance in Africa*. Temple Hills: Intelligentsia Press, 2019 (Textbook).
- 2018 *Evoke: A Historical, Theoretical, and Cultural Analysis of Africana Dance and Theatre*. Founder/Editor-in-Chief. Digital Howard: Howard University (Peer-reviewed digital journal)
- 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.

## **WORKS IN PROGRESS**

*Fire Under My Feet: History, Culture, & Identity in African Diaspora Dance*. Editor, monograph.

*Unwitting Witnesses: Unearthing Narratives of African Dance in Pre-Colonial Logs*. Monograph.

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

## PRODUCTIONS: ARTISTIC AND DIGITAL WORKS

- 2020  *RITES*, Choreography. Invited to present choreography in Recife, Brazil, with 5 of my students. U.S. State Department, Smithsonian Museum joint project. March 23-29, 2020. (Postponed due to Coronavirus)
- 2020, 2019  *Nankama African Dance Conference*, Founder/Director. Scholarly Conference on African and African Diaspora dance. Produced at Howard University, Washington, DC, February 8-9, 2020; February 9-10, 2019.
- 2016  *The History of Africana Dance*. Pedagogy website. Published website to enhance student engagement in courses; Dance History I, Dance History II, and Performance and Identity. [www.ofosuwaabiola.org](http://www.ofosuwaabiola.org).
- 2016  *Grave Revelations: Cultural and Historical Narratives from the Colored Union Benevolent Association Burial Ground*, digital publication (short form documentary). Producer: Aryzen Pictures.
- 2016  *History Dances: African Dance Systems as Methodologies*, digital publication. Visual supplement for the published monograph  *History Dances*, short form documentary. Producer: Aryzen Pictures.
- 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.
- 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 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Kwanzaa Concert, producer, choreography, director. The Attucks Theatre, Norfolk, VA.
- 2009 “Kujichagulia” Suwabi African Ballet’s 13<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Kwanzaa Concert, producer, choreographer, director. The Attucks Theatre, Norfolk, VA.

- 2007 “Nia” Suwabi African Ballet’s 11<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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**

- 2020 AWARD, HU-Teach Award, \$4,600.00, Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 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.

### **FEATURED SCHOLAR**

- 2019 Interviewed on ABC's *Good Morning Washington* (February 7, 2019).
- 2019 Listed on Howard University's *Hot 15 List of Publications*, for the monograph, *History Dances: Chronicling the History of Traditional Mandinka Dance*. February 6, 2019, Washington, DC.
- 2018 *Afro-American Newspaper*, "Howard Fine Arts Professor Shows How African Dance Chronicled History." (December 15, 2018).
- 2018 *Perspectives on History*, Spotlight Scholar. American Historical Association (AHA). (December 6, 2018).
- 2018 *Dance Spirit*, "Step By Step," article. Interviewed and provided historical content for article on African American Step Dancing (April 2018 issue): p. 44-45.

### **INVITED HOST, DISCUSSIONS & ADJUDICATIONS**

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

- 2019 ADJUDICATOR AND GRANT REVIEWER, *FY20 Arts and Humanities Fellowship in Dance*, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Washington, DC.
- 2019 HOST, talkback for the D.C. screening of the web series, *Black Enough*, Landmark's E Street Cinema, Washington, DC, November 13.

## 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 Research I & II  
 Theatre History I \*(WAC): World Theatre to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century  
 Introduction to Theatre

\*WAC, Writing Across the Curriculum course.

## EXTERNAL PHD DISSERTATION COMMITTEES

- 2020 Dominic King, "Phenomenology of Stepping and its potential as a Liberatory Praxis." Department of Community, Liberation, Indigenous, and Ecopsychology. Pacifica Graduate Institute, Santa Barbara, CA.

## UNDERGRADUATE HONORS THESIS 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." Department of Theatre Arts, 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." Department of Theatre Arts, 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." Department of Theatre Arts, Howard University. Selected to present at Howard University Research Week, April 2018.

## **UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE COURSES CREATED**

- 2020 Arts, Libraries, and Archives
- 2020 Applied Research in Dance, Theatre, and Performance (Study abroad course)
- 2018 Research Methods in Dance, Theatre, and Performance
- 2017 Performance and Identity

## **CONFERENCES AND INVITED TALKS**

- 2020 Invited to speak in, “African Dance in the Diaspora,” panel. Recife, Brazil, U.S. State Department, Washington, DC, March 23-29, 2020. (Postponed due to Coronavirus).
- 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 “2<sup>nd</sup> 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: 19<sup>th</sup>-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 150<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 400<sup>th</sup> 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.

**SERVICE: HOWARD UNIVERSITY**

- 2020-Present INTERIM CHAIR, Transition Team, College of Fine Arts (CoFA)
- 2020 JUDGE for poster and paper presentations, Howard University Annual Research Week.
- 2020 REVIEWER for submissions to Howard University Annual Research Week.
- 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.
- 2019-2020 SUPERVISOR, Experiential Learning and On-Campus Placement, Howard University Student Employment Program (HUSEP), Office of Career Services.
- 2018-2019 MEMBER, CoFA Working Group, 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.

### **SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION**

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

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.
- 2017-2019 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 EVALUATER, Panel Discussion, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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**

- 2020 CERTIFICATION, Blackboard Certified, Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (CETLA), Howard University, Washington, DC.
- 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)  
National Dance Education Organization (NDEO)  
Dance Metro

## **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 DANCE CONCERTS**

1997-2011      Directed, produced, and provided all choreography for 14 annual 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