



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

# FACULTY IMPACT NEWSLETTER

Fall 2019

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### About Us:

The provost is committed to the development and success of faculty, academic staff and students in Wayne State's 13 schools and colleges, and views student and faculty/staff success as inextricably linked. With this vision in mind, *Faculty Impact* is aimed at celebrating faculty successes and encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations that inspire junior colleagues and students to persist and be successful in their endeavors.

### Faculty Impact

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Welcome to the first issue of *Faculty Impact* for the 2019-20 academic year! I launched *Faculty Impact* last year as a way to celebrate and recognize Wayne State's outstanding faculty, research, scholars and creators. The first four issues covered the themes of big data, social justice and health, innovation and entrepreneurship, and countering stereotypes. The theme for the first issue of this year is international collaboration and research. In this issue, you'll meet three faculty

members who have devoted their scholarly, research and creative activity to issues of international importance. They have collaborated with their colleagues here and abroad and offered unparalleled opportunities for their students to co-create with them. Enjoy this issue of *Faculty Impact*.

*Keith E. Whitfield, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs* 

# FREEDOM PLAYERS

By: Billicia Charnelle Hines, M.F.A.



My research and creative work in the area of performance and theatre of the African diaspora and social justice continually influences what I do in the classroom and in communities. Currently, I am focusing my research toward the promotion of liberation through embodiment.

I work with the Freedom Players, an ensemble that is part of the Black Theatre and Dance Collective at Wayne State. The objective of the ensemble is for the members to produce a stage production centered around current socio-political themes and to bridge communities. Through performances and conversations, we engage and challenge audiences about their conceptions of race, gender, sexuality, masculinity and privilege. While the Black Theatre and Dance Collective is an affirmation to provide opportunities for African American students, it is an invitation to expand what we do demographically. I continually create space for all marginalized, different bodies, and different lives. The work that I do unfolds many dimensions of Black theatre so that many people feel included. Students who may have been silenced, overlooked or misunderstood can come to Freedom

Players, have a voice and feel true belonging. Freedom Players creates a culture where we can start to have equity within the hallowed halls of higher education. This is my life's mission: to build stronger and empowered individuals through these opportunities.

I am honored to work with wonderful colleagues, RAS Mikey Courtney, Ph.D., and professor Karen Prall. Together, we created the I AM Project, a scholar social justice performance project used to promote liberation through embodiment. This innovative project represents an engaged and collaborative approach of how the body is manifested through the journey from oppression to liberation. We have engaged students in exploring, creating and developing a 75-minute original play that puts youth on a journey toward liberation. The play was shaped by techniques drawn from our work and that of international scholars. For example, we used Ethio-Modern



dance techniques that brought the students into a collective, global project of cultural development. Many Africanists and Black Aesthetic dance forms and techniques promoted their sense of shared collaboration. In these and other ways, we built on a collective African American experience to guide students to use their bodies to reinterpret their oppression. The

production was very successful locally and internationally. We toured throughout the Detroit metro area and to the Edinburgh Fringe Fest in Edinburgh, U.K., in 2019.

The project brought attention to collective action. Students not only helped create the play and used their bodies to perform, but also invited audiences to share in collective liberation. After each performance, the post-production discussions with the performers advanced a mutual understanding of the connection between social injustice and personal experience. Along with directing and producing plays for diverse communities, I have observed how audience members were open toward the road of liberation as they were able to see their lives reflected on stage. This work has inspired us to write articles centered around this subject matter. Also, we aim to continue the I AM Project in other countries of the African diaspora. We hope to create theatrical pieces with students in other countries that can explore how liberation is embodied.

*Billicia Charnelle Hines is artistic director of the Black Theatre and Dance Collective and an assistant professor of theatre in the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts. In her collaborative work, she educates and informs international audiences about the African diaspora and social justice issues and offers Wayne State students opportunities to engage in this work. ♡*



# INTERNATIONAL TEACHING AND RESEARCH ALLIANCES

By: Atilla Yaprak, Ph.D.

I view teaching and learning as the noblest pursuits in life. Guided by this purpose, I have dedicated my life to educating younger minds through my research and teaching. A key ingredient in this effort was my engagement in international teaching and research alliances in different geographies in the world. I have found these partnerships inspiring learning experiences throughout my academic career.

I began teaching abroad in the late-1980s after receiving an invitation from the United Nations to teach managers of small and medium-sized enterprises in the developing world. I served as a consultant for the International Trade Center (ITC), a component organization of the World Trade Organization (then GATT) under the United Nations umbrella. Through three summer fellowships, I taught managers and international trade agency employees in the Philippines, Thailand and Nepal. I followed this with a teaching assignment, again through the ITC, in China in the 1990s. I enjoyed the opportunity to immerse myself in a variety of cultures and learn about their history, geography and traditions. Simultaneously, I began teaching colleagues from around the world in international business workshops funded by the U.S. Department of Education at the universities of South Carolina, Memphis and Georgia State. Through grants I received from the Department of Education, I was able to enrich Wayne State's international business curricula and conduct collaborative research with colleagues in the transition economies of Eastern Europe. These grants took me to Ukraine and Poland for case

writing research and led to transition economy-focused courses offered at Wayne State.

Through 2001 and 2009 sabbaticals in my native Turkey, I began working with younger faculty at Sabanci University. That collaboration led to several academic and consulting projects and multiple publications, and spawned numerous executive teaching opportunities at Turkish multinationals.



I was able to bring the learning I took away from these experiences into my M.B.A. classes at Wayne State, spicing up my content delivery with real-world examples. That learning also inspired new questions in my research stream on emerging market internationalizing enterprises and led to greater international collaboration opportunities.

In the mid-2000s, I began exploring collaborative research opportunities in Western Europe. That effort led to fellowships at the Universidad Autonoma de Barcelona (Spain), the Martti Ahtisari Institute, University of Oulu (Finland), Ecole Management de Lyon (France), Technical University of Dortmund (Germany), and the University of Vienna (Austria). I enjoy collaborating on research projects with doctoral students and younger faculty at these universities.

One of these projects is a five-country (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Slovakia and the U.K.) and 10-colleague project focusing on the psychology of consumer ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism and commenting on the roles of personal values, moral foundations and gender role identities on consumers' orientations toward global brands.

I have always cherished the learning I have been able to absorb from these collaborative experiences with colleagues in other geographies of the world and bringing that learning back to Wayne State students. I am grateful to Wayne State for giving me the freedom to pursue these experiences, which have enriched not only my career, but also the careers of my students. Through these

experiences, I hope students come to embrace teaching and learning as the noblest pursuits in life, as I have.

*Atilla Yaprak, professor of marketing and international business in the Mike Ilitch School of Business, is known for sharing his vast knowledge of international business research and practice with his colleagues and students. ♥*

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

By: Jennifer Hart, Ph.D.



The last week in October, I am traveling to Lilongwe, Malawi, to participate in the second of a series of workshops that bring together an international, interdisciplinary group of researchers to think about the challenges and opportunities presented by DIY urbanism in cities across the African continent. These workshops are organized by my research group, which includes researchers from a number of disciplines in the U.S. (Wayne State and University of Michigan), Sweden (Malmö University, the Nordic Africa Institute) and Malawi (Malawi University of Science and Technology). Our broader network includes researchers and practitioners from Ghana, South Africa, Egypt and Nigeria. Our research seeks to approach the challenges posed by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (and particularly SDG 11) in new ways, centering Africans as experts in creating meaningful, sustainable and equitable urban communities and infrastructures.

Through these workshops, we are defining what DIY urbanism looks like in African cities, but we are also working on meaningful ways to engage the diverse systems and practices through which African

residents have made urban space meaningful. Too often, policymakers and technologists have dismissed practices like market trading, paratransit or "slum settlement" as illegal, messy and disorganized. Anthropological and historical research, however, highlights that these systems are often part of highly dynamic and innovative forms of social and economic organization. They provide meaningful and effective alternatives for local residents in the context of state disinvestment and infrastructural failure. They also highlight histories of spatial and economic violence, which were rooted in the structures of colonialism and reinscribed through local, national and international systems. While DIY urbanism can be appropriated by the state to justify further disinvestment, taking the grassroots practices of urban residents seriously can also suggest new, more just alternatives to persistent urban problems.

One of the outcomes of our project, which is funded by Swedish research grants, is to create an alternative planning school, which exposes emerging urban practitioners to new grassroots strategies and approaches to urban development. We're also developing a handbook, which will make resources produced through the workshops and planning schools freely and publicly available online. We are working carefully with people across the continent to center African voices, experiences, inventions and solutions. We argue that this research also has implications for cities like Detroit, which are struggling with histories of spatial violence, infrastructural decay, public disinvestment and unemployment.

I pursue these questions in conventional academic research (books, journal articles) and in applied and public humanities work. I direct Accra Wala, a digital humanities project that uses the map of Accra's

public transit (trotro) system as the base for a publicly generated interactive map and curated archive of city life in Accra. By incorporating video, sound and photographic documentation of city life, we try to bring the map to life and think in new ways about the way that residents use space. I also participate in a collaborative Instagram-embedded art project, @thistrotrolife, with Ghanaian photographers Nana Osei Kwadwo and Nii Odzenma. I write about policy issues on my own blog ([ghanaonthego.com](http://ghanaonthego.com)) and on "Africa is a Country." I write in collaboration with urban planning colleagues at Wayne State and around the world. I also teach courses on the history of Africa, urban planning and technology, as well as digital humanities and history communication, and I lead study abroad programs to Ghana, where students get to conduct research with community organizations.

*Jennifer Hart is an associate professor of history who engages in authentic dialogue and international collaborations to advance knowledge about African cities and cities worldwide, create linkages between different groups of people who can create meaningful change, and apply digital humanities to bring ideas to life.*

*Learn more about professor Hart's work in her first book, Ghana on the Go: African Mobility in the Age of Motor Transportation, in interviews here: [blog.castac.org/2017/04/driving-postcolony/](http://blog.castac.org/2017/04/driving-postcolony/) and here: [newbooksnetwork.com/jennifer-hart-ghana-on-the-go-african-mobility-in-the-age-of-motor-transportation-indiana-up-2016/](http://newbooksnetwork.com/jennifer-hart-ghana-on-the-go-african-mobility-in-the-age-of-motor-transportation-indiana-up-2016/).*

*Check out her blog here: [ghanaonthego.com](http://ghanaonthego.com)*

*Follow professor Hart on Twitter and Instagram @detroittoaccra 🐦*