

2020 Mandelbaum Fellowship Award

Citation for Fitsum Areguy

The logo for OCUFA, consisting of the letters 'OCUFA' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The 'O' and 'C' are connected, and the 'U' and 'F' are connected. The 'A' is a simple, blocky letter.

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This year's Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship Award winner for the Masters level of study is Fitsun Areguy, currently enrolled at the University of Guelph in the Family Relations and Community Development program.

Fitsun's dedication to his community and academic pursuits are inspiring. His research and extracurricular activities are uniquely situated to advance the lives of multiple equity-seeking groups in the greater Guelph and Waterloo region. His thesis explores the nature of informal caregiving, with a particular focus on the experiences of young carers and ways to support and improve the experiences of this often invisible population.

His volunteer commitments intersect with his research and illustrate his deep commitment to equity. Fitsun volunteers as a Project Facilitator and Chair of the Young Carers Project, a research-based initiative focused on raising awareness about the existence of young carers, and he leads community consultations with the local African, Caribbean and Black community to identify key targets for anti-Black racism work in the region. Fitsun is also the founder of Textile, a community-engaged art organization in Waterloo Region which offers literary mentorship, art programming, and publication opportunities through an annual literary journal.

Fitsun's academic standing is equally impressive. He has already published a sole-authored article and presented at multiple conferences. His academic promise is demonstrated through the receipt of multiple prestigious awards, including one from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Fitsun's references spoke highly of his accomplishments:

Fitsun is a deeply intelligent young man who is passionate about making a difference, active in his community, and exemplary in his academic pursuits.

With respect to his dedication to scholarship and community-based research, another referee explained:

I was immediately impressed by this young man's knowledge of the sociopolitical landscape in which we were enmeshed. It is for this reason, that in 2019 I agreed to serve on his advising committee for his Masters Thesis on young, Black caregivers – a novel addition to the body of literature and



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scholarship on young caregivers. Fitsum has a sound understanding of the scholarship in his area, as well as an understanding of the importance of his contribution to the scholarship. Not only does Fitsum have a firm theoretical grounding, he also has a keen interest in centering the voices of young, Black caregivers through the use of the focus group methodology.

Another referee explained Fitsum “is and will continue to be a leader for our next generation” and is a “deeply intelligent young man who is passionate about making a difference, active in his community, and exemplary in his academic pursuits.”

The committee found the passion with which Fitsum employs community-engaged work and scholarship inspiring. His commitment to ameliorating the experiences of young carers is deeply important research. For these reasons, and many more, OCUFA is pleased to award Fitsum Areguy the Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship –Masters.