

# 2015 MANDELBAUM FELLOWSHIP CITATION FOR ABENA KWATEMAA OFFEH-GYIMAH

The logo for OCUFA, consisting of the letters 'OCUFA' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

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## **CITATION FOR ABENA KWATEMAA OFFEH-GYIMAH**

### **Read by Judy Bates, OCUFA Vice-President**

Abena Kwatema Offeh-Gyimah is this year's Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship Doctoral Award winner. She is the fourth doctoral candidate to receive the Fellowship and joins a truly exceptional group of young scholars and community activists. She is currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of Social Science at McMaster University.

As she stated in her application, her research explores African immigrants' experience of poverty by examining how social and support services shape the settlement of these immigrants in low-income communities in Toronto. Her theoretical underpinnings include critical race theory and anti-oppressive practice. She intends to illustrate how the provision of social services in Toronto perpetuates systemic racism and how, using anti-oppressive practice, the socioeconomic needs of African immigrants could be addressed. Her methodology includes the very apt approach of participatory action research, thus involving research participants as co-researchers.

Her record of community involvement and leadership particularly impressed the selection committee. Time does not permit a full accounting of her exceptional achievements in this area, but here are some illustrative examples:

- As an undergraduate, she joined a community food justice program at Black Creek Community Farm; at the end of the program, she co-founded a nonprofit organization called Youth Empowerment Program for Community Food Justice. Through a successful grant from the Toronto Community Foundation, the program has offered food justice workshops to secondary school students. It is currently short-listed for an Ontario Trillium Foundation Fund grant.
- In both Toronto and Alberta, she has worked with the Ghanaian community, contributing to better understanding and action on the social exclusion of African immigrants, racial inequality, and youth access to resources and education.
- She continues, while pursuing her doctoral degree, to volunteer in both Toronto and Hamilton.

As one of her referees noted "Her background in social and political thought and women's studies, her close relationship with the community, and her employment and volunteer experiences...will definitely facilitate her /academic work. Ms. Offeh-Gyimah has demonstrated the qualities desired for an excellent doctoral student and promising scholar: intellectual acuity, very effective academic skills, a strong sense of social justice, excellent communication and social skills, active involvement in the community, and strong self-motivation."



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Another referee commented that her “...work will add to a growing chorus of voices challenging discriminatory and exclusionary practices in the current delivery of social services. For her, the pursuit of social justice is not confined to an abstract academic discussion but is a daily commitment and practice.”

OCUFA is pleased to add the Henry Mandelbaum Graduate Fellowship-Doctoral to Abena’s list of awards and recognitions. Please join me in congratulating Abena Kwatema Offeh-Gyimah.