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The First-Year Writing Seminar and the *Serenbetz Institute for Women's Leadership, Social Responsibility, and Global Awareness* are proud to present

Women Who Wow

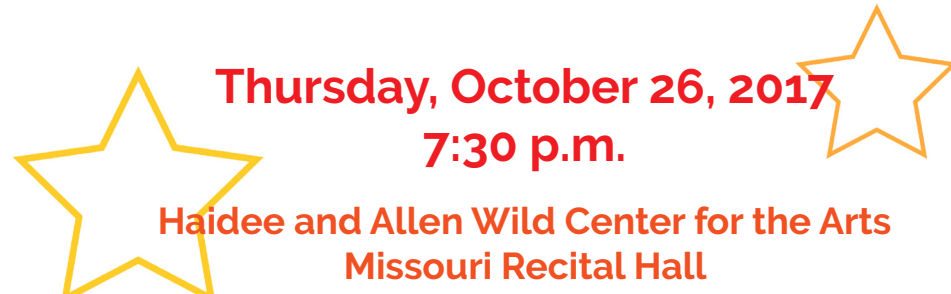


The Women Who Wow panel discussion is supported through the **Marjorie W. Smith Leadership Seminar Fund.**

COTTEY
COLLEGE

Thursday, October 26, 2017
7:30 p.m.

Haidee and Allen Wild Center for the Arts
Missouri Recital Hall



Our Panelists



Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka

Organizing for Racial Equity
and Women's Rights

Scholar, artist, activist and mother, Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka was faculty with joint appointments in the departments of Theatre and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies (WGSS)

at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, for twenty-five years before retiring as Professor Emerita in 2015. As an interdisciplinary scholar, she has published widely in both areas (theatre and gender studies) of her disciplines.

Her creative works (choreography and poetry) advocate for women's rights and criticize injustice and oppression against all peoples; she strives to make those in authority accountable for their actions – a risky thing to do under an authoritarian government. Such was the political climate in Nigeria, her country of origin, when she left in the mid-1980s.

While in Nigeria, teaching at the Obafemi Awolowo University (formerly University of Ife), Omofolabo launched a branch of Women in Nigeria (WIN), and with two other female colleagues at the same university, she founded Hopeline that sought justice for female students sexually harassed by professors. Since relocating to the U.S., Omofolabo has continued her leadership activism through the University of Kansas, her church, Plymouth Congregation, and the Lawrence community by working with United Way, food security, Justice Matters, racial equity and women's rights. In 1995, she organized a vigil symposium to highlight the judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni-Nine by the Abacha regime in Nigeria. She continues to write short opinions on the socio-political climate in both Nigeria and the U.S.

Since retiring, Professor Ajayi-Soyinka spent the last year (2016) in Nigeria working with women-activists and the leadership roles in advocating for the girl-child, and abused women and youths. It is a project that cuts across social class and education levels because Ajayi-Soyinka believes that leadership is making meaningful contributions to, differences in, and positively influencing the lives of people anywhere, anyhow; leadership does not always claim star power nor does it trend in the social or print media.

Ceci Salem

Gaining Ground for LGBTQIA
& Refugee Rights



Ceci Salem is an undergraduate student of Kent State's Honors College, dual majoring in history and political science with an international relations and comparative politics concentration, and an LGBTQIA studies minor. She served this past spring 2017 as a Refugee Status Determination Section and Law Policy intern at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee Geneva, Switzerland, Headquarters, gaining a global perspective on the refugee crisis by specializing in research and writing guidelines pertaining to the situation of LGBTQIA asylum seekers around the world.

Ceci also continues to work as an Immigration Law Department intern at the International Institute of Akron, a prominent nongovernmental organization concerned with refugee resettlement and immigration law services since August 2016, where she has the privileged opportunity to work with refugees, immigrants, and asylees from diverse countries around the globe. Ceci hopes to continue her passion for LGBTQIA refugee advocacy by attending law school following her undergraduate studies' completion and becoming an immigration human rights attorney.



Kelly Ast

Innovating Rural Health Care

Kelly Ast is the community coordinator at Healthy Nevada, driving innovation in rural health care. Kelly oversees project development for population health for the coalition and executes strategies for youth and adult wellness.

Innovations have helped drive new policy adoption, rural transportation initiatives, increased food security, and mental health projects.

Most recently, Kelly has advocated for local health policy for anti-tobacco use and the first prescription drug monitoring program in Southwest Missouri. Kelly resides in Nevada, Vernon County. She enjoys raising her family on their farm.



Ruby Rios

Advancing Opportunities for Girls in STEM

Ruby Rios is a senior student at Bishop Miege High School in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, and a cybersecurity intern at Cerner Corporation.

She's a leader in her school's FIRST Robotics and forensics teams, and she's been especially active in the Kansas City community, working to improve STEM-related opportunities for young people (STEM = science, technology, engineering, and math).

Ruby believes more interesting educational activities can help Kansas City take the lead in bringing more girls and more diversity into STEM fields. As a young woman interested in STEM herself, Ruby has led initiatives to bring the Girls Who Code program to more girls in the Kansas City region. Ruby's work has been featured in The Kansas City Star and most recently on stage at TEDxYouth KC.

Besides her technology interests, Ruby also loves tap dancing.

Priscilla Barrios

Promoting Peace & Social Justice

Priscilla Barrios' interest in promoting peace and social justice developed from her experiences growing up in the cities of Los Angeles, California, and Phoenix, Arizona. Her passion for social justice and peace continued to develop through her Cottey experiences, specifically her LEO Presidential Leadership Service Project. As a second-year Cottey student, Priscilla used her talent and skills for dance to bring people together for a "Peace Begins with Me" flash mob to raise awareness for personal peace. Through this project, she worked with a team of Cottey students and faculty to choreograph a dance, teach the dance to students and high school girls, and perform the dance at the Kansas City Farmer's Market on the International Day of Peace which reached audiences through the Joplin and Kansas City news outlets.



Priscilla's project did more than raise awareness for peace. She says, "My project was about taking ourselves out of our comfort zones, making our presence and purpose known, making it possible for others to be comfortable enough to follow the message and intent behind the dance moves." Priscilla aims to support and encourage women to be more confident in their own skin and accepting of ourselves and others. It is through this personal discovery where peace begins.



Martha Sander

Giving Voice to Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence

Martha Sander is currently the Executive Director for Council on Families in Crisis, a local 501©3 not-for-profit corporation providing residential shelter and supportive services to victims of domestic and sexual violence. Ms. Sander has

served almost 27 years in the feminist movement. Moss House, our local shelter, was open five months when she joined the agency. Over the years, she has expanded services by securing grant funds not only for the shelter, but for nonresidential services, volunteer programming, court advocacy programming, formal case management, therapy, children's services, a task force on domestic violence in two counties, a thrift store, and batterer intervention programming.

During her career, she has served at the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence as an individual member, a program member, and six years as a board member, serving as Public Policy Chair and Treasurer. She has also served on the MCADSV Membership Committee, SW Regional Liaison, and co-chaired a statewide workgroup to develop standards for batterer intervention programs and a statewide workgroup on the co-occurrence of domestic violence, substance use, and mental health.

Currently, Ms. Sander serves on the MO Balance of State Continuum of Care Board of Directors, serving as secretary, chair of the Victim Services Subcommittee, and representing 12 counties in Region 9. In this capacity, she represents one of the voices of the domestic and sexual violence community in homelessness issues and safe, affordable housing. She is the lead for Coordinated Entry in Region 9, a national HUD initiative to ending homelessness. She is also a board member for West Central Missouri Community Action Agency, serving as treasurer, and is a Cottey College alumna.

Our Moderator



Dr. Chioma Ugochukwu

Vice President for Academic
Affairs at Cottey College

Dr. Chioma Ugochukwu has a passion for empowering young women to realize their leadership potential and become global citizens. She received her Ph.D. in Journalism and a doctoral portfolio in Women's Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Prior to assuming her position at Cottey, she served as the dean of the School of Social Sciences, Business and Education at Mount Mary University, and the assistant dean in the J. William and Mary Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University. She also served as a tenured associate professor of Journalism at the University of South Carolina Upstate, where she assumed the role of adviser to the student newspaper and coordinator of the Journalism unit. Her research interests focus on race, ethnicity and gender, new media, and international communication.

Prior to her academic work, Dr. Ugochukwu was a professional journalist and worked as a political reporter, columnist, and features editor. She is deeply committed to social justice, and initiated an annual diversity conference/speaker series at USC Upstate. The series attracted senators, policy makers, human rights activists, authors, and industry experts, who addressed critical issues in human rights, women's issues, and international affairs.

In her free time, Dr. Ugochukwu volunteers for charitable organizations, including Mobile Meals. She is a member of the board of directors of the Arts Council of Johnson County, and sits on the board of Courage to Dare, a non-profit organization dedicated to creating breast cancer awareness among women in Africa and the Diaspora. She is a member of Professional Dimensions, the largest women's membership organization in Wisconsin dedicated to the leadership and professional advancement of women. She is also a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, a professional honorary Society of women educators.

Notes