



COMMONWEALTH
SCHOLARSHIPS

COMMONWEALTH KNOWLEDGE

ISSUE #3 DECEMBER 2016

PROTECTING THE FUTURE

Urban heritage conservation in India

CONTENTS

4 The first word

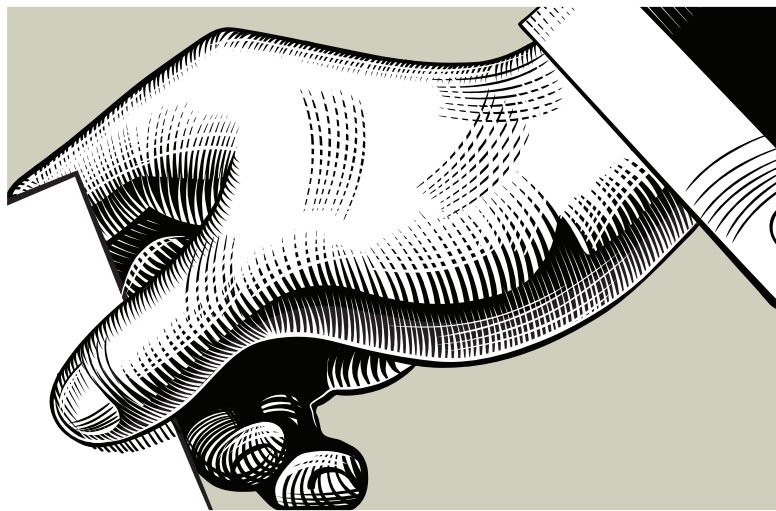
5 The battle against Ebola in Sierra Leone

How Prince Tommy Williams joined the fightback



6 Already forgotten?

Boghuma Titanji on the lessons that must be learnt from the recent Ebola crisis

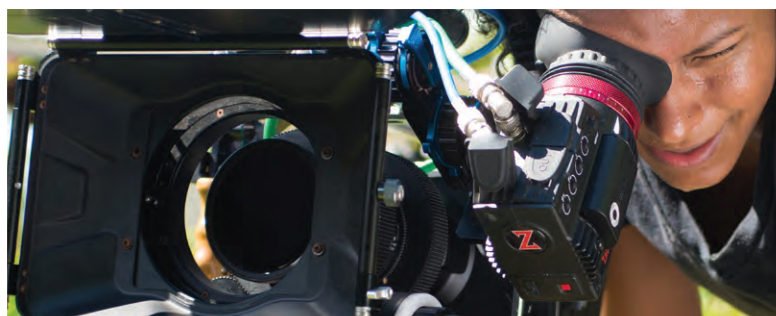


8 The reluctant politician

An interview with Winston DaCosta Jordan, Guyana's Minister of Finance

10 Looking beyond

Aishwarya Tipnis explains the impact of her work in urban conservation



12 Dreaming big

Gabrielle Blackwood reflects on her path to filmmaking



15 New research, new knowledge

Pioneering research recognised by the 2016 Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize

18 Events

22 Alumni news



25 Thoughts into action

Lou Marinoff: academic, philosopher, and table hockey champion



28 Turning challenges into opportunities

Herine Otieno and Dieudonné Che on the proceedings and outcomes of a recent Scholar conference

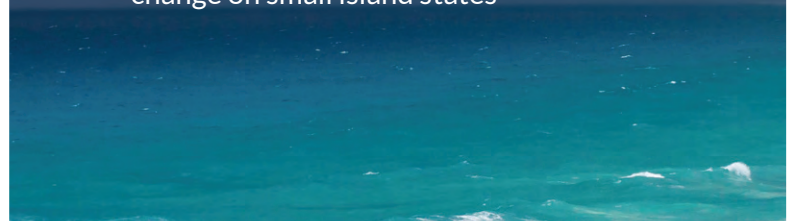
31 School of Rock

Daniella Tilbury, the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Gibraltar



32 Global problem, local impact

Ahnivar Peralta considers the impact of climate change on small island states



34 The CSC in numbers

35 Get involved!

THE FIRST WORD

Welcome to the third issue of *Common Knowledge*! This edition contains articles from current Commonwealth Scholars and alumni from 13 different countries - representing every Commonwealth region - about their work to improve their local communities. Examples range from using leadership skills gained during a Commonwealth Professional Fellowship to raise awareness of Ebola prevention in Sierra Leone, to researching and investigating the effects of climate change on small island states, to returning home to improve higher education opportunities in Gibraltar.



2016 has seen national or regional elections in over 16 Commonwealth countries. We will look back on this year as one characterised by considerable change, the effects of which we all continue to navigate and will no doubt do so for some time ahead. It is in this climate of change that I believe current and former Commonwealth Scholars need to be heard more than ever. Your contributions towards the common good - whether in education, health, science, politics, or any other field - are essential. The CSC will continue to showcase your achievements, but we cannot do this without you, so please do keep us informed of your news and successes, as well as your current contact details.

Change is also a key element in the CSC's work. Most of our 2016 cohort of Scholars and Fellows have arrived in the UK, and I hope that they are

starting to settle in to their new environment. I also hope that all of our recently returned alumni, who left the UK a few months ago, are adjusting well to life back home and finding that the skills and knowledge they acquired are being put to good use.

As we move into 2017, on behalf of everyone at the CSC, I wish all our readers and supporters a happy festive season and best wishes for the new year ahead.

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THE BATTLE AGAINST EBOLA IN SIERRA LEONE

Prince Tommy Williams' journey from child soldier to fighting Ebola.

Prince Tommy Williams had a normal family life before civil war broke out in Sierra Leone in 1991. In 1997, at the age of 15, he was kidnapped by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels and taken to the jungle, where he was trained in how to use a gun and initiated into the rebel army.

'I thought it was the end of my life,' Prince recalls. 'It was like living in a different world, not like living on earth. They used a blade to cut the letters "RUF" into my chest so, if I was thinking about escaping, I knew that I could be killed if I got caught by militia who supported the government. The rebels also threatened to cut off my legs or arms if I tried to flee, and I saw this happen to other people. Sometimes they would even take out the heart from someone's chest and cook it up with onions and ask people to eat it. It seems like a nightmare now.'

After 18 months, Prince managed to escape. Unable to find his relatives, he turned to pickpocketing in the capital city, Freetown. 'I was caught trying to pickpocket one day, and a huge crowd surrounded me to beat me to death, but a man convinced the crowd to allow me to go with him to his boys' home instead.'

That man was the late Richard M Cole, founder of the Lifeline Nehemiah Project – a Sierra Leone-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) supporting holistic development in the country following the brutal conflict. The NGO focuses on rebuilding the lives of ex-child soldiers and young people affected by war and, through his boys' home, Richard helped countless boys such as Prince succeed despite their troubled past.

The Lifeline Nehemiah Project is a member of Lifeline Network International, a UK charity that brings together grassroots community organisations in 16 countries across the world. Through funding from the CSC, Lifeline Network International has been able to offer Commonwealth Professional Fellowships



Planning for the opening of the Ebola Community Care Clinic in Freetown

to former child soldiers to deliver training in management, communications, finance, networking, and IT skills.

In 2012, Prince undertook a five-week Professional Fellowship in the UK, during which, among other activities, he visited schools in Essex to talk about his experiences and life back in Sierra Leone. Upon his return to Sierra Leone, Prince provided training to fellow staff on the skills he had learnt, something he describes as having 'created a collective mind shift for us to step up and do more'. He is now Deputy Director of Lifeline Nehemiah Projects.

Prince's fellowship broadened his level of understanding and increased his capacity to build up local teams able to communicate effectively with local communities – a critical skill during the recent Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone. Prince was invited to join the national Ebola Emergency Response Team, which was responsible for developing strategies and policies for fighting the epidemic. His skills proved invaluable in forging partnerships with international aid organisations, including Oxfam and Medair, to try to stop the outbreak and establish the Ebola Community Care Clinic in Kuntorloh, Freetown.

'We started with education, as people found it difficult to accept that Ebola was real,' Prince said. 'It was scary and some people said it was witchcraft, but we persuaded them that there

were principles to observe to protect themselves as we attempted to break the chain of transmission. In total, we helped educate over 80,000 people. Additionally, we supported people by giving them food and other items. This became a massive operation – visiting 11,000 quarantined people to provide fresh food.'

Jamie Singleton, International Director of Lifeline Network International in the UK, is proud of the contribution Prince and his

team have been able to make. 'Commonwealth Professional Fellowships have given Prince and other emerging leaders the opportunity to develop and increase their leadership skills while serving their communities,' he said. 'Never have these valuable skills been more visible or needed than during the Ebola crisis, when Prince and his colleagues at Lifeline Nehemiah Projects collectively stepped up to help educate many thousands of people about the virus, as well as leading community sensitisation programmes and providing food and psychosocial support to thousands of quarantined families.'

In the year since Sierra Leone was declared Ebola free, Prince's work at Lifeline Nehemiah Projects has continued. He has recently been working with government ministries and external agencies such as UNICEF on policy development in the areas of child protection and special needs for disabled people and civil war amputees. The NGO provides vocational training for thousands of Sierra Leoneans, as well as running schools and orphanages, which now support many recent Ebola orphans.

Prince is also currently managing a project focused on training young people from rural areas in sustainable agriculture. The project is funded by the UK Big Lottery Fund, which Prince met with during his Professional Fellowship.

Prince Tommy Williams is a 2011 Commonwealth Professional Fellow – he was hosted by Lifeline Network International.

ALREADY FORGOTTEN

Boghuma Titanji on the lessons that must be learnt from the largest Ebola outbreak in history.

December 2016 will mark exactly three years since the start of the largest epidemic of Ebola virus disease reported to date. The epidemic resulted in an estimated 28,000 cases and over 11,000 deaths in the west African states of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea.

It took a considerable international response effort for the epidemic to be controlled and, although the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the end of the storm in April this year, many questions remain unanswered. Is another Ebola epidemic likely to occur? How do we ensure that those most at risk from an outbreak are prepared to respond whenever and wherever it occurs? What challenges lie ahead in securing sustained investment to develop vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics for a disease with tremendous epidemic potential and devastating outcomes, but also highly unpredictable occurrence?

The first Ebola outbreak was reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1976; the virus is named after a small river located near where it was first discovered. Since then, multiple human outbreaks of Ebola have been recorded in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa and, to a lesser extent, in western countries.

Ebola is thought to be a classic zoonosis: an infectious disease of animals which can be transmitted to humans. The virus persists in reservoir hosts generally found in endemic areas. Humans, apes, and perhaps other mammals that are susceptible to infection and disease are considered terminal hosts and not reservoirs of the virus. With every outbreak,

considerable effort has gone into identifying the natural reservoir host of the virus and, although some bat species and rodents have been suggested as potential reservoirs, a firm link is yet to be established.

Because of the uncertainties that surround the reservoir for the Ebola virus, how transmission first occurs to a human at the start of an outbreak remains unclear. It is, however, widely accepted by scientists that the initial human infection in an outbreak occurs through some form of contact with an infected animal, such as a fruit bat or primate. Person-to-person transmission then ensues and can lead to infections of large numbers of people. Once infection has occurred, the course of disease is severe and often fatal in humans, with an average case fatality rate of 50%. There are currently no licensed vaccines or antiviral treatments effective against Ebola, though several vaccine candidates are currently under investigation.

The most recent Ebola outbreak in west Africa has been described as the 'perfect storm', alluding to the many existing challenges faced by the region that coalesced to create the worst Ebola outbreak in history. In the three countries most affected, the combination of years of civil war, dysfunctional and weak healthcare systems, distrust of the government and western medicine, and easy movement of people across porous borders contributed to the severity, duration, and devastating effects of the outbreak. Furthermore, while countries in equatorial Africa had experienced Ebola outbreaks for several decades, west African countries were essentially faced with an old virus in a completely new context,

BOY ATTEN?



▲ **Dr Boghuma K Titanji** is a 2009 Commonwealth Scholar from Cameroon – she studied MSc Tropical Medicine and International Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She is also a 2011 Scholar – she studied for a PhD in Infectious Diseases at University College London.

where people were unfamiliar with the disease and healthcare workers wholly unprepared to respond.

The slow response of west African governments and the international community has also been heavily criticised. It took four months after the death of the first patient in December 2013 for the Ebola virus to be confirmed as the cause of the outbreak – despite several calls by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which was already actively working on the ground alongside local communities to curtail the outbreak. The WHO and the governments of the countries most affected only declared the outbreak a public health emergency in August 2014. The result was a two-year battle and a frantic race against time to stop the contagion and to save lives.

With the outbreak officially declared over, the victory laps have been run and the world has moved on. Attention has now shifted to the ongoing Zika virus outbreak, among other competing priorities, while Ebola has rapidly faded into the background like a long forgotten nightmare. There will undoubtedly be more Ebola outbreaks in the future as long as there are interactions between humans and viral reservoirs in endemic regions. Even with this knowledge, the response preparedness of the regions most at risk remains an area of grim uncertainty.

The west African outbreak exposed the many vulnerabilities and inadequacies of developing countries to fight large-scale infectious disease outbreaks. Proven interventions – such as disease surveillance,

early case detection and diagnosis, clinical care, and case-control, as well as community engagement and communication – all involve considerable financial and human resources and are simply unaffordable for many low income countries, such as those most heavily affected by the recent Ebola outbreak. These populations need help! The biggest challenge is getting policymakers, including local government, to move outbreak preparedness to the top of their priority list, considering the sporadic nature and unpredictability of infectious disease outbreaks. It is important to recognise the local challenges of corruption and mismanagement of resources that significantly impede progress.

There is a compelling case for the threat posed by outbreaks to international security and the global economy. We now know from previous Ebola outbreaks that it is demonstrably much more cost-effective for the global community to invest in preparedness, than to spend in response. The recent Ebola outbreak in west Africa has taught us many invaluable lessons, and we must act on them. Many of the deaths that occurred during the epidemic could have been prevented had the countries most affected been better prepared. There is no excuse for the complacency of the global community in committing to help vulnerable healthcare systems build effective surveillance and response strategies. If we rest on our laurels and do nothing, we will again be caught unprepared in the eye of the next Ebola storm – implicit accomplices to the resulting loss of thousands of human lives.

Winston DaCosta Jordan was elected as a Member of Parliament and appointed Minister of Finance in Guyana last year. He spoke to Common Knowledge about his career trajectory and ambitions for the nation.



▲ **The Honourable Winston DaCosta Jordan MP** is a 1983 Commonwealth Scholar from Guyana – he studied MA Economics at the University of Warwick.

Did you always plan to go into politics? What compelled you to do so?

No, I never contemplated going into politics, though I did participate in activities of the youth arm of the ruling party, the People's National Congress (PNC), in 1974/75. But I soon gave that up to pursue academic studies and build a professional career. It was not until January 2015, after a New Year's visit to my home by the then Opposition Leader (now President of Guyana), that I consented to join the emerging multi-party coalition to fight the incumbent government of 23 years, which had plunged Guyana to the depths of corruption, nepotism, and racism. Even then, I was a bit reticent about becoming a full-blown politician, and had asked the President to be considered for a technocratic position in the Cabinet. So, here I am today, the reluctant politician who has become the Minister of Finance of Guyana.

What are your priorities for the Guyanese economy over the next few years? What do you see as your biggest obstacles?

On 26 May 2016, Guyana celebrated 50 years of independence from Britain. During that time, Guyana's economy has remained largely unchanged: heavily dependent on a few primary commodities – sugar, rice, bauxite, and,

more recently, gold – for growth, income, and employment. At the same time, the economy has a high import content. So, I see my main task as one of building a vibrant, resilient economy capable of withstanding both external (low prices for exports and high prices for imports) and domestic (climate change factors such as El Niño and La Niña weather phenomena) challenges. This will entail diversifying and modernising the economy away from its current dependence to one that adds more value and services. For this to take place, we will need to put in place the right political and business climate to attract especially foreign investment. This includes the right combination of fiscal, monetary, and debt policies, as well as infrastructural and social development.

The biggest obstacle to achieving this vision is the divisive politics that have consumed the country since pre-independence. We require a social cohesion framework that unites the people of Guyana, who have been racked by years of divisive politics and internecine strife.

Your previous roles include teaching at the University of Guyana. What was that like and what are your favourite memories?

When I returned from my Commonwealth Scholarship in the UK in 1984, I immediately began teaching and researching part time at the University of Guyana. I was engaged as a Senior Research Associate in the Institute of Development Studies, teaching development planning until 1989. I had subsequent engagements with the university through the years, teaching public finance and public administration. It was both frustrating and rewarding. Frustrating in the sense that the university had lost a significant number of skills while being unable to find suitable replacements, was severely handicapped in terms of financing, and faced the real danger of closure.

It is within that environment that I found myself trying to make a contribution to the restoration of the university's values and dignity. It was rewarding in the sense that I was able to use my subsequent position as Director of Budget in the Ministry of Finance to increase the resources available to the university, whether through approaches to multilateral funding agencies or directly appropriated expenditure.

Many of my fondest memories revolve around teaching and mentoring students, especially those who were in difficult circumstances, as well as providing an innovative learning environment. I remember introducing new methods of teaching, given the paucity of materials. Here, I was able to share books, papers, and other materials garnered from my sojourn at the University of Warwick. It gave me great joy to watch those who graduated subsequently.

What enduring lessons and skills did you take away from your time as a Commonwealth Scholar?

I still remember the day in October 1983 when I arrived in Coventry to undertake graduate studies in economics at the University of Warwick. Cold and blustery, it was a far cry from the warmth of the Caribbean. However, the warmth of the reception, the assistance in locating living accommodation and lecture halls, and the help of professors, tutors, students and other people whom I met helped to make my stay memorable.

The lessons learned and skills acquired were not necessarily through the courses taught, but by experiences in completing assignments, and engaging in social and other activities. I learnt to live within a budget and make smart financial decisions – money is always at a premium, especially in developing countries like Guyana, so knowing how to live within budget and avoid unsustainable

That I could be entrusted with a leadership position in the government of Guyana is a tribute to the enduring influence of Commonwealth Scholarships.

deficits that impact negatively on the population is an invaluable lesson. I learnt resourcefulness – knowing how to find the best options within your budget to maximise your welfare. I learnt independence – making quick decisions that impacted on my daily life, especially since I was many miles from home; as Minister of Finance, this is necessary to avoid the financial and other costs associated with procrastination. I learnt how to multitask – balancing academic, social, and household activities. I learnt analytic writing, and the use of mathematical and computing tools in policy development and implementation. I learnt how to prioritise – scheduling activities based on their degree of importance. And I learnt how to work in a group – marrying the skillset of each member to produce the most desired outcome.

How do you think Commonwealth Scholarships have benefited Guyana?

My Commonwealth Scholarship was the most important development in my academic life. Coming from a poor background, the scholarship offered me the opportunity for both scholastic and personal development, and a means for satisfying my quest for knowledge. Most importantly, however, it allowed me to develop

tools, acquire knowledge, and gain valuable life experiences and skills that are still being used, 33 years afterwards, in moulding impressionable minds, changing attitudes and perspectives, transforming lives, and, generally, building a better Guyana.

That I could be entrusted with a leadership position in the government of Guyana – to wit, with the nation's finances – is a tribute to the enduring influence and worth of Commonwealth Scholarships. I believe that other alumni can make the same attestation. Indeed, the training provided to the nearly 350 individuals from Guyana who have benefited from Commonwealth Scholarships over the years has assisted in creating a pool of talented and qualified persons, who have been contributing meaningfully to the socioeconomic development of the country. In addition, this pool has helped to narrow the skills gap, occasioned by the massive brain drain that continues to afflict the country.

**THE RELUCTANT
POLITICIAN**



LOOKING BEYOND

Aishwarya Tipnis explains why urban conservation is about more than protecting buildings.

In a country with such diverse history and culture, heritage has many meanings. In one of the world's fastest growing economies, while infrastructure development has been a priority, architectural heritage conservation has mainly been concentrated on iconic monuments, forts, and palaces. Largely the responsibility of the public sector, the drawback of inheriting a monument-centric approach is that interventions in the environment are often top-down projects focusing on beautification and tourism development. The concept of urban conservation, looking beyond the monument to encompass the city and its urban landscape, has been introduced in India only in the last two decades.

Conservation is not just about museums and art galleries.



(l and background) Hooghly Imbarara in the city of Chinsurah
(r) Jora Ghat, on the banks of the Hooghly River in Chandernagore
(opposite) A typical streetscape in Chandernagore

My love affair with urban heritage conservation began when I was studying architecture at the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi, India. While most of my classmates were designing new buildings, I chose to defend my undergraduate thesis on adaptive reuse and conservation of a derelict cotton mill in Mumbai. I believe that the purpose of conservation is not to fossilise the city or arrest time, but to mediate sensitively with the forces of change to create a better and sustainable environment. At the time, when new development was the national agenda, heritage conservation as a discipline was viewed with scepticism, and conservation architects were considered more as activists rather than professionals.

My interest finally culminated in a Master's degree in European Urban Conservation at the University of Dundee, UK, as part of the Scottish International Saltire Scholarship. Studying at Dundee gave me a holistic understanding of a derelict industrial city regenerating itself by creative reuse of its historic buildings and spaces.

Armed with this new knowledge, I returned to India and set up my practice a decade ago on the premise that for conservation to be successful, it had to become part of mainstream architecture. This was one of the most important lessons that I learned from my Commonwealth Professional Fellowship in 2011. It is by no means an easy task, given that historic buildings are considered as regressive and, with insufficient legislative protection for their preservation, are rapidly being replaced by contemporary international-style architecture for want of 'modernity' and development. The challenge is that having an understanding of the laws of the land requires one to wear the hat of not just a conservation professional, but also an activist and a social worker, in order to convince people to retain their heritage and educate them on the benefits of conservation and sustainability in a language they understand.

My Professional Fellowship enabled me to critically analyse the British approach to urban conservation. I was able to meet with local councils and conservation officers and spend time at leading architectural conservation practices in England and Scotland to gain a holistic insight into conservation philosophies and practice. Site visits to ongoing projects as well as interviews with designers and project managers inspired me to develop a bespoke methodology for conducting and professionally carrying out a conservation project in India.

My learning has been directly applied in the delivery of some of the most pioneering and prestigious private conservation projects in the country. A prime example is the Doon School in Dehradun, in the state of Uttarakhand, wherein design, quality, and professional execution in the conservation of an unlisted historic building has set a precedent for the rest of the country to follow. The project has recently been recognised by an Honourable Mention in the 2016 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for exhibiting notable technical accomplishment in preserving the old and introducing new technology in an unobtrusive manner.

My Professional Fellowship also enabled me to undertake specialised hands-on training as part of the Autumn Repair Course of the SPAB (Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings) in London. The course provided an industry interface and site visits to ongoing projects of conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation. This demonstrated that a pragmatic, rather than an academic, approach is the need of the hour, and became the basis for initiating the first private restoration project for a *haveli* (medieval mansion) in the walled city of Delhi. The *haveli* project has been groundbreaking in setting a precedent that conservation is not just about museums and art galleries, and that creative reuse as a dwelling is

a viable solution for other derelict historic *havelis* in the walled city. The important lesson here is that innovation is key. For example, due to a lack of readily available restoration materials, we had to devise methods to make our own homemade mortar and to locally replicate historic Victorian tiles.

A direct derivative of the British approach has been the understanding of interventions in historic buildings. The underlying theme of all my projects is essentially the marriage of the old and the new – of sensitively adding 21st-century needs to a historic building without compromising its values. I was able to experiment with many 'out of the box' solutions, such as adding a contemporary and plush apartment in a 150-year-old colonial bungalow in Jabalpur, designing a technologically advanced 21st-century classroom within an Edwardian building at the Doon School, and introducing a completely contemporary kitchen in compatible materials and finishes within a 19th-century listed *haveli* in the middle of the walled city of Delhi.

Another area of interest during my Professional Fellowship was colonial shared cultural heritage, particularly industrial heritage. The fellowship facilitated interaction with the Railway Heritage Trust, as well as professional bodies such as English Heritage, Urban Splash, and Alan Baxter Integrated Designs. This enriching experience helped build a solid foundation for when my practice gained the opportunity to develop the urban design strategy and conservation plan for the Grade I-listed *Bandra Station* in Mumbai. Here, we were able to demonstrate the principles of urban design, sustainability, and people-centric design. I continue to constantly use and adapt this experience to my ongoing project as part of the UNESCO expert team on the conservation of the *Darjeeling Himalayan Railway World Heritage Site*.

The one key experience that I think helped position my practice apart from my contemporaries is the principles of learning and sharing that I acquired from my time spent at the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of my Professional Fellowship. By design, we include a component of outreach in all of our projects – conducting workshops for students, providing opportunities for training, writing articles and blogs, and designing brochures and heritage walks for dissemination. We developed one of India's first heritage conservation projects to adopt a digital humanities approach for the former Dutch colonial settlement of *Chinsurah*, and subsequently for *Chandernagore* (a former French settlement), both near Kolkata. The projects led to the development of an online archive and an interactive website where people could contribute their memories and stories via crowdsourcing, making this shared cultural heritage accessible to a wider audience in India and other countries in Europe, and helping to bring renewed focus on these forgotten towns. An important aspect of each of these projects was community engagement through innovative competitions and workshops, as well as developing a model for sustainability of the heritage movement by grassroots-level advocacy.

I would like to believe that my practice is built on contextualising and adapting the British approach to the Indian context. It has no doubt been challenging and at times daunting to swim against the tide, but through our work we are striving to make heritage conservation appeal to the general public and a part of mainstream architecture, rather than an elitist exercise. I hope to continue working towards developing new approaches to evolving a deeper understanding of urban heritage conservation.



DREAM

Gabrielle Blackwood on her path from the small stage to the screen



BIG

MINING

en.



Gabrielle Blackwood is a 2009 New Zealand Commonwealth Scholar from Jamaica – she studied MA Screen Production at the University of Auckland.



I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD AND CUTTING UP MY MOTHER'S CURTAINS – SOON-TO-BE COSTUMES – FOR MY NEXT IMPROMPTU NEIGHBOURHOOD PRODUCTION.

The stage was set (my living room), the cast (my usual crew of local friends who I'd inveigle into each performance), routinely overdone barbecued frankfurters, the opening curtains (bed sheets, hopefully old enough to go unnoticed by my mother), and the audience (anyone in sight crazy enough to be entertained by a bunch of children). I invited my whole street. I was obsessed with anything visual that had a story. I had friends and family who were kind enough to indulge me, and filmmaking – much less studying in New Zealand – was the last thing on my mind.

It was while searching through a college magazine that I came across 'cinematography' as a career and

immediately knew that I wanted to concentrate all my efforts on becoming a filmmaker. The problem, however, was that Jamaica had no dedicated film school and a small, almost non-existent film industry, save for commercials and one or two feature films produced by a few Jamaicans or, in most instances, foreigners who regurgitated the learned, overused, and misplaced stereotypes of Jamaica: sun, sea, sand and reggae music. I wanted to change that.

Exploring and considering the use of Jamaica as a virtual location for foreign landscapes and international stories was something inspired by the small but burgeoning New Zealand film industry, which I had

admired for some time. It was then a dream come true to find out about Commonwealth Scholarships and, after going through a rigorous selection process, receive a scholarship to pursue a Master's in Screen Production at the University of Auckland. It was also my Master's thesis film, *Grave Digger*, that carved a path for me into the realm of film. The film, which was shot in Jamaica, won the top screen production award for my year group at the university, and went on to be screened at film festivals in Trinidad and Tobago, Havana (Cuba), Mauritius, China, and Edinburgh (UK).

Having worked with film crews in New Zealand, where camaraderie and acceptance were based on

work ethic and skill instead of connections or status quo, it was a huge adjustment upon returning to Jamaica to break through a somewhat cliquish, already very small, inundated film and commercial sector. I also realised that, while no one batted an eye at technical female crew in New Zealand, it was difficult for prospective clients to comprehend the concept of a woman operating a camera, lugging heavy equipment, or lighting a scene in Jamaica. As a result, work opportunities were often passed on to those less qualified, wages were negotiated at a lower rate and, due to the small size of the industry, work was extremely seasonal. For a few years I struggled and ended up working in capacities I had no

DREAMING BIG

interest in, but I was grateful for the opportunities and worked doubly hard to prove myself. Over the years I have worked on short films, commercials, documentaries and media campaigns, including one for the Jamaican National Council on Drug Abuse. I have also lectured part-time and now serve as President of the Jamaica Film and Television Association (JAFTA).

It was during one of the seasonal periods of downtime that I came across the story of a family friend's struggle. Her husband, Denis, was diagnosed at the age of 43 with Amyotrophic Lateral

Sclerosis (ALS), also known as motor neurone disease or Lou Gehrig's disease: a debilitating condition that results in paralysis, loss of speech, extreme patient dependency, and high medical bills. For my part, I had planned on making a short five-minute crowdfunding video for Denis and his family. However, upon meeting him in his advanced state of illness, I became interested in finding ways to communicate the inner thoughts and emotions of a man in the prime of his life, stripped of pride and given a death sentence. I was not a huge fan of documentaries but decided that, perhaps if approached metaphorically, the subject matter could be portrayed in a less monotonous way for the viewer.

Suddenly, a five-minute video became a feature documentary. *Denis* was screened locally as a fundraiser, had a small screening in Brooklyn, New York (USA), and was nominated for Best Documentary Feature

and the People's Choice Award at the 2015 Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival, where it was seen by the Director of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The



following year, I directed and shot a promotional video for an ECLAC campaign seeking improvements to healthcare resources, initiatives, policies, and human rights for ageing populations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

While completing the edit of *Denis*, I was contacted by UNICEF Jamaica to direct and shoot a short film about violence in schools, which



would eventually be used as a social development teaching tool across Jamaica. UNICEF had not seen *Denis*, but had heard of my previous

work and wanted a female director on the project. In truth, I was not aware of the rampant existence and far-reaching consequences of bullying in Jamaica, so making *Bully* was extremely insightful.

Set primarily against the metaphorical backdrop of an unnerving football penalty shootout, *Bully* is narrated by the real victim of a tumultuous verbally and physically abusive past, with some of her attacks played out on screen by an actress, in order to protect her identity. The protagonist had been suicidal for years – even up to the point of production of *Bully* – so it was poignant to make a film

position who may see it. As such, the end of the film is symbolic of the protagonist taking the necessary and painful steps towards healing when she eventually kicks the ball under duress. The audience doesn't see whether she scores and this is symbolic of her unknown, yet what we hope is a bright, future.

When the film was released, the reception on social media was particularly gratifying for me, mainly because the protagonist – who I had come to know, whose pain I witnessed in our preproduction conversations, and most of whose unmentionable

experiences were not even captured in the film – had finally got the vindication, sympathy, support, and acceptance she had craved for so long.

Each non-commercial project I have worked on has shed new light on human experiences, emotions and understanding, which has given me a greater appreciation for the art form of filmmaking and its relevance

to society and being a voice for the voiceless. Working in a seasonal and uncertain industry, especially in a small country with a film sector still in the process of growth, as a director and cinematographer – the latter being a role not normally associated with women – has had its challenges, but every time I refer to that childhood enthusiasm and passion, I wouldn't change a thing. Thanks

to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, I was able to realise my dream of becoming a filmmaker.

new research, new knowledge

The winner of the 2016 Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize and four fellow finalists summarise their pioneering research.



Dr Olivia Faulk

2012 Scholar from New Zealand, DPhil Clinical Neuroscience, University of Oxford – winner for her article 'Conditioned respiratory threat in the subdivisions of the human periaqueductal gray', published in *eLife* in February 2016

Perceiving and reacting to threat is key to survival.

A group of brain cells in the brainstem called the periaqueductal gray (PAG) has been regularly hypothesised to be involved in threat perception, although the small size (less than 5mm³), location, and presence of different subdivisions within this structure have made it very difficult to study in humans.

I, together with colleagues from the Oxford Centre for Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the Brain (based in the Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences), devised an experiment where we looked at brain activity both when we are about to become breathless and during breathlessness itself, by scanning subjects' brains using an ultra-high-field 7 Tesla MRI scanner while making it difficult for them to breathe.

The volunteers for the experiment wore a breathing system similar to a snorkel, which could be altered to produce resistance when they breathed in (like breathing through a very narrow straw). During the scan, they looked at a screen that showed three different symbols at various times. Eventually they learnt the meaning of the symbols – for instance, the triangle meant that nothing would happen and they could breathe normally, and the star meant that their air would definitely be restricted and they would become breathless. They therefore learned when they may be about to find it difficult to breathe. We were then able to look at what was happening in the PAG both when people thought they might become breathless, as well as during the difficult breathing itself. We wanted to know what was happening when people anticipate breathlessness, to better understand the stress and anxiety that exacerbate it.

The study found that, averaged over all participants, a particular subdivision of the PAG (called the ventrolateral column) became active when people anticipated that they might become breathless, and another subdivision (called the lateral column) became active while they were actually breathless. This means that different subdivisions of cells within the PAG are doing different things throughout the course of breathlessness.

A normal functioning PAG is clearly a good thing. We need to know when we are in danger, whether from something we could run away from or something we can't escape but could endure – such as becoming breathless. However, it could be that in people who are hyper-sensitive to threats, the function of the PAG or its communications to the rest of the brain are altered. For example, some people with asthma may get very stressed if they can't find their inhaler, and this may even bring on an attack – perhaps the PAG is telling them that they are in danger of becoming breathless (even if, physiologically, at that moment they are breathing normally).

This experiment has enabled researchers to know where and how to look at the PAG, and we plan to carry out further studies to find out more about asthma and other conditions where the physiology doesn't match the perception – such as chronic diseases or panic disorders. Such work could hopefully lead to the development of new treatments, to target this tiny, hitherto inaccessible, yet vitally important part of the brain.

The Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize is offered for the most outstanding article published in a recognised peer-review journal of high standing by a current or recent doctoral Commonwealth Scholar. The 2016 competition saw our highest-ever number of entrants, with 79 Scholars and alumni submitting articles. Entries for the 2017 prize will open in January 2017. For more information, visit bit.ly/cscuk-best-journal-article-prize

Dr Herman Kamper

2013 Scholar from South Africa, PhD Informatics, University of Edinburgh – finalist for his article 'Unsupervised Word Segmentation and Lexicon Discovery Using Acoustic Word Embeddings', published in IEEE/ACM Transactions on Audio, Speech and Language Processing in April 2016

Automatic speech recognition (ASR) is becoming part of our lives through applications like Google Now and Apple's Siri. Future applications could improve the lives of many, for example, through assistive technologies for the disabled. However, current technology requires thousands of hours of 'transcribed' speech data for developing robust systems. This is why companies are focusing on only the hundred or so most common languages – yet there are about 7,000 languages spoken in the world today. If we



only rely on current methods, speech technology will never be developed for many under-resourced languages.

Of the 11 official languages of South Africa, ten are considered under-resourced (English being the exception).

Since it is often much easier to obtain speech recordings than transcriptions, our article took a different stance on the ASR problem: we developed a novel method for building an

ASR system purely from speech audio, without any transcriptions. This involved solving two challenges. First, although it might not seem that way, there are no pauses between words in fluent speech (say 'stuffy nose' versus 'stuff he knows'), so the system must discover where words start and end. Second, the same word may sound very different when spoken by different people, due to differences in pitch, timing, and accent; these cause little difficulty for humans, but confuse computer algorithms. Without transcriptions, these problems are very hard to solve, but our new approach allowed us to reduce errors by more than a third compared to previous work, giving an 80% accuracy on a small-vocabulary English dataset.

Our work has practical implications for tasks such as automatic summarisation from speech and could allow these technologies to become available in languages where it was previously impossible, such as the under-resourced languages of South Africa. In my current work, I am applying the same model to Xitsonga speech. Xitsonga is an official language of South Africa, but is considered severely under-resourced because of the limited availability of transcribed data. Our work could therefore lead directly to speech technologies in South African communities that could greatly benefit from it.

Dr Sachith Mettananda

2012 Scholar from Sri Lanka, PhD Clinical Laboratory Sciences, University of Oxford – finalist for his article 'β-Globin as a molecular target in the treatment of β-thalassaemia', published in *Blood* in April 2015



β-Thalassaemia is one of the most common genetic diseases in the world. It is a lifelong disorder, which begins very early in life and is characterised by a profound decrease in the production of haemoglobin in red blood cells. The prevalence of β-thalassaemia is particularly high in my home country, Sri Lanka. There is no cure for β-thalassaemia except for bone marrow transplantation, which is only available to the minority of patients who have suitable donors – approximately 1 in 10. All other patients are managed with supportive treatment, including blood transfusions and iron chelation therapy, and premature death is inevitable. The cost of treating patients with β-thalassaemia is extremely high; in Sri Lanka, it consumes an estimated 5% of the total health budget.

Through careful evaluation of clinical and genetic data, we have proposed that β-thalassaemia can be effectively treated by reducing the expression of the β-globin gene. This approach would eliminate the need for matched donors and several serious and life threatening complications associated with bone marrow transplantation. I am now back in Sri Lanka and looking forward to working with my supervisor on the next stage of this research. If this future work is successful, many poor β-thalassaemia patients in Sri Lanka and all over the world will benefit from a promising new therapy.

Dr Akusa Mawa

2012 Scholar from Uganda, PhD Immunology, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine – finalist for his article 'The impact of maternal infection with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* on the infant response to bacille Calmette-Guérin immunization', published in *Philosophical Transactions B* in May 2015

Tuberculosis (TB) is estimated to cause ten million new infections and two million deaths each year. BCG (bacille Calmette-Guérin) is still the only licensed vaccine against the disease. However, its efficacy is poor in tropical latitudes, and the reasons for this are not fully understood.

We hypothesised that maternal latent *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* infection during pregnancy contributes to the poor efficacy of BCG in children, and investigated this in a pilot study. We observed that mycobacteria-specific antibodies in the infants decayed rapidly within six weeks of birth, and that maternal latent TB infection was associated with lower infant anti-mycobacterial T cell responses immediately following BCG immunisation.

The findings from this study have implications for the use of BCG and newly-developed vaccines in TB endemic areas, such as Uganda, as well as for the treatment of mothers for TB as part of antenatal care. Our goal is to contribute to the development of an effective vaccine against TB for use in areas where the disease is widespread and such treatment is most needed. If maternal TB infection is shown to have an important effect on the infant response to BCG immunisation, this will have major public health implications, raising the possibility that treatment of latent TB in young women might contribute to stemming the TB epidemic, through benefits both for themselves and for the vaccine response amongst their children.



Rebecca Sutton

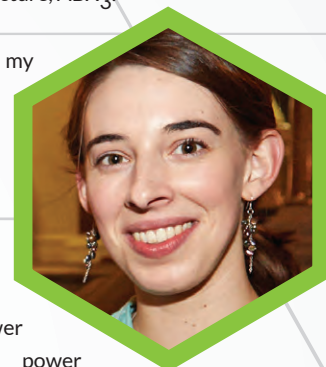
2014 Scholar from New Zealand, PhD Condensed Matter Physics, University of Oxford – finalist for her article 'Bandgap-Tunable Cesium Lead Halide Perovskites with High Thermal Stability for Efficient Solar Cells', published in *Advanced Energy Materials* in February 2016

With rising global temperatures and decreasing stocks of naturally occurring solid fuels, there is an urgent need to make better use of renewable energy sources. Of these renewable resources, the Sun provides the earth with about 1,000 times more energy than we need. The impending catastrophe and the abundance of solar energy form a strong motivation for my research into improving solar panel technology.

Solar cells are typically a sunlight-absorbing material sandwiched between electrical contacts which extract current. For my research, I am investigating new materials to absorb the sunlight and convert it into electricity. We call these new materials 'perovskites' because they crystallise in the perovskite crystal structure, ABX_3 .

Most research in my group uses lead halide perovskites, where 'A' is an organic molecule. I have been using the element caesium for 'A', which gives improved stability to heat but, so far, lower solar-to-electrical power conversion efficiencies. My article is the first report of using the perovskite $CsPbI_2Br$ as the sunlight absorber in a solar cell, with the highest efficiency reported for caesium perovskites to date. From the experiences gained developing this material composition, I'm now researching other, even better perovskites.

These perovskites are fantastic because they are made from cheap starting salts which can be dissolved into inks and printed over large areas to form thin films of less than one micron in thickness (human hair is 40 microns). These thin films can be applied to silicon solar panels to easily enhance the overall performance, or even to flexible surfaces. The best perovskite solar cells have lab efficiencies above 22%, so they really are the next generation of solar materials!



EVENTS



FAREWELL EVENT

Mark Carney (1991 Scholar from Canada, DPhil Economics, University of Oxford), Governor of the Bank of England, was the guest of honour at the CSC Farewell Event held in July 2016



CSC WORKSHOP SERIES

Workshops on entrepreneurship, hosted by the University of Glasgow, and science communication, delivered by SciDev.Net, were held in June 2016



CSC LECTURE SERIES

Scholars attended CSC Lectures hosted by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in May 2016 and Aston University in June 2016



SHARING RESEARCH

The Midlands and Oxford Regional Network organised a Commonwealth Scholars Research Presentation Conference, held at the University of Nottingham in July 2016 - read more on page 28

EVENTS



GHANA

Alumni at a reception held in Accra in July 2016



MAURITIUS

Alumni networking at a reception in Réduit in April 2016

SOUTH AFRICA

Alumni met at events in Cape Town and Johannesburg in October 2016



NAMIBIA

Newly-returned alumni met with the Deputy Minister of Higher Education, The Hon Dr Becky Ndjoze-Ojo MP (second from right)



ZAMBIA

Chanda Shikaputo (2009 Scholar, PhD Corporate Governance, University of Dundee) at an alumni symposium on 'Revisiting development plans', held in Kitwe in July 2016

RWANDA

The first-ever CSC alumni event, hosted by the University of Rwanda in August 2016

ALUMNI NEWS

The updates below (listed by year of award) summarise just some of the achievements of our global alumni. To let us know about your successes, email alumni@cscuk.org.uk

1983

Stephen TOOPE has been nominated as the next Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, UK. Pending approval by the university's governing body, Stephen will take up his appointment in October 2017. He is currently Director of the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs. (Scholar from Canada, PhD Law, University of Cambridge)

1992

Wendy LARNER was appointed Provost of Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, in December 2015. Wendy is an internationally respected social scientist whose research sits in the interdisciplinary fields of globalisation, governance, and gender. She is a Fellow of the New Zealand Geographical Society, the Royal Society of New Zealand, and the UK Academy of Social Sciences. (Canadian Scholar from New Zealand, PhD Sociology, Carleton University)

1997

John TUTA has been appointed a Member of the African Union (AU) Advisory Board on Corruption by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. He was re-elected in 2016 for a second term as the Rapporteur for the board, which is mandated to oversee the implementation of the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption. In 2016, John was also promoted to Director, Legal Affairs of the State Law Office and Department of Justice, Kenya. (Shared Scholar from Kenya, LLM Law, University of Cambridge)



▲ John Tuta

1998

Faqir Muhammad ANJUM was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Gambia in October 2016. (Academic Fellow from Pakistan, Cereal Science, University of Reading)

2000

Mark ADOM-ASAMOAH has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. He was previously Dean of Graduate Studies at the university. (Scholar from Ghana, PhD Earthquake Structures, University of Bristol)

2001

Divino SABINO was elected President of the Bar Association of Seychelles in July 2016. (Scholar from the Seychelles, BA Law and Business Studies, University of Warwick)

2005

Shanmugam PALANIYANDI has received the 2016 Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Award for his service in the Department of Higher Education in Tamil Nadu, India. Shanmugam is the second recipient of the award, which recognises contributions made to scientific development, humanities, and student welfare, and is named after the 11th president of India. (Scholar from India, PhD Biomethanation for Power Generation, University of Leeds)

2007

Jacob AGBENORHEVI has been awarded a Titular Fellowship by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), which will see him return to the Department of Food Science and Technology at the University of Huddersfield, UK. Jacob is a Lecturer in the Department of Food Science and Technology at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana. (Shared Scholar from Ghana, MSc Nutrition and Food Sciences, University of Huddersfield)

2009

Véronique FORBES has been awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship. During her two-year fellowship at the Université de Bordeaux, France, Véronique's research project will aim to test and develop a new approach to the study of prehistoric conflict: 'forensic archaeoentomology'. (Scholar from Canada, PhD Archaeology, University of Aberdeen)

Vijender KUMAR has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of Maharashtra National Law University, India. (Academic Fellow from India, Family Law, King's College London)

Vimal MAISURIA was one of six winners of the 2015-2016 William and Rhea Seath Awards. The awards recognise outstanding students and professors at McGill University, Canada – where Vimal is a Postdoctoral Fellow – who have innovative technological ideas or research results with potential for commercialisation. (Split-Site Scholar from India, PhD Microbiology, University of Hertfordshire and Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda)

2010

Abhishek SHUKLA has received a Vayoshreshtha Samman (National Award for Senior Citizens) 2016 for his outstanding service in the field of ageing. The award, in the category of best institution providing services to senior citizens and awareness generation, was presented to Abhishek for his work as Founder and Director of the Aastha Centre for Geriatric Medicine and Hospice, India. (Distance Learning Scholar from India, PG Diploma Palliative Medicine/ Care, Cardiff University)

2011

Nutifafa GEH was named Correspondent of the Month for July 2016 by the Commonwealth Correspondents global network, part of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Youth Programme. (Shared Scholar from Ghana, MSc Environmental Management, Liverpool Hope University)

Aishwarya TIPNIS was the recipient of two prizes at the 2016 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards. Her project 'Restoration of fortification of walls and bastions of Mahidpur Fort' in Madhya Pradesh, India, received an Award of Merit, while her restoration of the main building of the Doon School in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India, received an Honourable Mention. Find out more about Aishwarya's work on page 10. (Professional Fellow from India, Tayside Building Preservation Trust)

Mimi ZOU has been named one of Asia 21's 2016 Class of Young Leaders. The 2016 class is comprised of 32 rising professionals from 24 countries, representing private, public, and non-profit sectors, focused on shaping the future of the Asia-Pacific region. (Scholar from Australia, DPhil Law, University of Oxford)

2012

Francis ATSU has received the 2016 Outstanding Reviewer Award from the Emerald Literati Network for his peer review of articles featured in the *African Journal of Economics and Management*. (Scholar from Ghana, PhD Economics and Finance, Brunel University)

Samuel GORO has been presented with the Award of Excellence as Peace Ambassador by the National Association of Peace Studies, Nigeria. (Professional Fellow from Nigeria, Conciliation Resources)

Etheldreder KOPPA was named New Starter of the Year (Under 30) at the 2016 Women in Construction Awards. The award recognises her work as Assistant Project Manager at the National Housing Corporation, Tanzania, and identifies her as 'one to watch' within her sector. (Scholar from Tanzania, MSc Construction Project Management, Heriot-Watt University)

Megan WEBBER has been jointly awarded the 2016 Pollard Prize for the best paper presented at an Institute of Historical Research (UK) seminar by a postgraduate student or a researcher within one year of completing their PhD. Her paper, titled 'Troubling Agency: Agency and Charity in Early Nineteenth-Century London', will be published in *Historical Research*. (Scholar from Canada, PhD History, University of Hertfordshire)

ALUMNI NEWS

2013

Eric LARTEY has been appointed Executive Director of the Ghana Wildlife Society. (Distance Learning Scholar from Ghana, MSc Tropical Forestry, Bangor University)



▲ Eric Lartey

2014

Rawlance NDEJJO has been awarded the Environmental Health Faculty Prize by the University of the West of England for demonstrating a high level of academic achievement and positive contribution to the university's Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences. (Shared Scholar from Uganda, MSc Environmental Health, University of the West of England)

Nelly-Shellia TCHAPTCHUT YONGA has been awarded a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders – the flagship programme of US President Barack Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative – to further support her work as Coordinator of the Rural Women Development Centre, Cameroon. (Professional Fellow from Cameroon, National Youth Agency)



▲ Nelly-Shellia Tchaptcheut Yonga

2015

Eucharía NWAICHI was made an Affiliate of the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) during the 10th AAS General Assembly in June 2016. The AAS Affiliates Programme mentors and develops eminent young professionals into research leaders. Eucharía was also inducted into the Science Hall of Fame at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, in August 2016. (Academic Fellow from Nigeria, Environmental Science, University of Nottingham)



▲ Eucharía Nwaichi

OBITUARIES

1964

Robert Merlin CARTER was a renowned geologist, research academic, and public speaker. His research on the geology of New Zealand and the marine geology of the southwest Pacific was recognised globally. He received many honours and awards throughout his career, including the New Zealand Geological Society's Outstanding Research Career Award, an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Society of New Zealand, and the Lifetime Achievement in Climate Science Award of the Heartland Institute, USA. He was better known in recent years for his science-based views on climate change; he delivered three public lectures at the United Nations COP21 Conference in Paris, France, in December 2015. Robert passed away on 19 January 2016 at the age of 73. (Scholar from New Zealand, PhD Geology, University of Cambridge)

1975

Alexander Keith JEFFERY was a world authority on the structure and function of articular cartilage. He was a Specialist Orthopaedic Surgeon at Dunedin Hospital, New Zealand, from 1968-2000, and was appointed Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Otago, New Zealand, in 1982. He served on a number of New Zealand Orthopaedic Association committees, and became the 25th president of the association in 1993. In 2003, he was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to orthopaedic surgery. Alexander passed away on 1 July 2015 at the age of 80. (Medical Fellow from New Zealand, Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Oxford)



THOUGHTS INTO ACTION

Lou Marinoff, Professor of Philosophy at the City College of New York, USA, spoke to Common Knowledge about academia, philosophical counselling, and table hockey.

Did you always want to work in academia?

I enjoy the professorial role immensely. Lecturing is a wonderful way to refresh ideas, cultivate young minds, and shape thoughtful citizens. Other hats that professors are wont to wear – engaging in research and publication, conferencing with colleagues, speaking and consulting in one’s field, and performing public service – are equally rewarding in their variegated ways. Working in academia confers duties, privileges, and opportunities alike. To me, the most delectable fruit of academe’s grove is the luxury of time for reading, contemplating, and writing, as well as indulging a hobby or two.

Was this something I always wanted to do? Perhaps strange to say, an academic vocation was something I never conceived pursuing early on. During a happily misspent youth, I aspired to careers as a musician, recording artist, poet, novelist, thespian, film director, and table hockey champion. Having succeeded primarily at table hockey but secondarily at little else, I returned to full-time academic studies in my thirties. At Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, it was my great good fortune to have encountered Professor (now Emerita) Elaine Newman, who had just founded Science College. She recruited motivated undergraduates, exposed us to leading-edge research, and guided us expertly toward postgraduate programmes. Her brilliant mentorship helped me win a Commonwealth Scholarship: a pivotal event in my academic and broader life journey.

How did you become interested in philosophy and counselling?

My interest in philosophy as a guide to the art of living began in my teens. Thanks to seminal teachers and writings, it gradually dawned on me that philosophy constituted an actual way of life, and not solely an abstract academic pursuit. This appears obvious in canonical works of ancient Chinese, Indian, and western civilisations alike.

Professor Lou Marinoff
is a 1984 Commonwealth
Scholar from Canada –
he studied for a PhD in
Philosophy of Science at
the University of London.



For several decades, along with a number of close friends, I used philosophy instrumentally in my own life only, as they did in theirs, chiefly as a sagacious guide during times of puzzlement or tribulation. This in itself is an ancient practice. For example, Emperor Marcus Aurelius penned his *Meditations* as a daily dose of philosophical self-counsel, to calibrate his moral compass and fortify his virtue. The importance of wholesome states of mind attained through virtuous ‘self-talk’ is also well known to even more ancient Hindu and Buddhist schools. All these teachings are used today across a global spectrum. But, during the 1960s and 1970s, we aficionados of applied philosophy never dreamed of delivering it as a counselling service for others.

That changed for me in the early 1990s, at the Centre for Applied Ethics at the University of British Columbia, Canada. Local and national news media regularly called on applied ethicists to offer insights into pertinent ethical issues of the day, from environmental to medical, commercial to political. At some point, ordinary citizens began to make a vital connection: if applied ethicists could engage with *abstract issues*, then perhaps they could also counsel *real persons* grappling with those very issues. Out of the blue, people began phoning the centre, asking to speak

with a philosopher. Some even walked in off the street, asking to see a philosopher. That’s how my first two clients materialised.

It then dawned on me that, even in Canada’s socially democratic ethos of national healthcare, there were no service providers explicitly trained to help people address their ethical quandaries or moral dilemmas, as well as perennial questions of meaning, purpose, and value at various junctures in life, from a secular philosophical standpoint. So I developed protocols to provide such services, and wrote up case studies. By stages this brought me in contact with the burgeoning international community of philosophical practitioners, which has since coalesced into a movement.

My interests in philosophical counselling are spurred by several factors. These include a fascination with the power of dialogue to facilitate positive change, the ability of abstract ideas to make concrete differences, the uniqueness of each client and his or her particular situation, and the unflinching applicability of a maxim shared by Buddhists, Taoists, and Stoics alike: that felicity and fulfilment depend largely upon the quality of one’s thoughts.

You are a three-time Canadian Table Hockey Open Champion. What is table hockey, and how did you get into it?

Table hockey is basically a miniaturisation of ice hockey, just as table tennis is a miniaturisation of lawn tennis. One salient difference is that table hockey captures most of the essential features of ice hockey, whereas not all miniaturisations retain that much essence of their respective models. Table hockey is much more compressed and intense: a five-minute game on the table is equivalent, score-wise, to a 60-minute game on the ice. Success and failure are measured in millimetres and tenths of a second. Table hockey players develop laser-like powers of concentration, and lightning-fast eye-hand coordination, along with the usual virtues of sportsmanship. Since table hockey neither requires nor rewards brute strength – rather, it favours speed, accuracy, dexterity, intensity, and

Felicity and fulfilment depend largely upon the quality of one's thoughts

time management – girls and boys and adults of all ages can play competitively, or just for fun. The game has remarkable allure.

How did I get into it? Well, it got into me first. Hockey is far more than a sport in Canada; it's really more akin to a religion. I grew up in Canada during table hockey's 'golden age' (1955-1985), when virtually every family had at least one board in their basement, and kids and adults played regularly. My parents bought me a table at the age of five. It was fun, and fascinating. As soon as he was old enough, my (late) younger brother Sidney and I became lifelong sparring partners on the table, and later co-organisers of the Montreal Table Hockey League (MTHL). Against a very tough field, I managed to dominate the MTHL for six years (1978-1983) and won three consecutive Canadian Open titles (1978, 1979, and 1980).

Nowadays, the sport is enjoying a tremendous resurgence, with a new generation of evolved tables and amazing talents on the scene. I made a comeback in 2006, and have since battled my way back into Canada's top ten. In 2014, a triumvirate of Quebec City Champion Burt Brassard, Montreal and World Champion Carlo Bossio, and I founded the National Table Hockey League (NTHL). In April 2015, I won the New York City and Tri-State Championships, and in July won the US Open title in Chicago, in my fourth trip to the finals. Clearly, table hockey is a sport for life. This is my best year so far since coming back, and thanks for asking.

I aspire to become an ambassador for the sport, to encourage more young people to play. Unlike video games, whose minute control pads can trigger repetitive stress disorders, table hockey employs the larger muscle groups in addition to the fine ones, promoting healthy breathing and movement. Also, unlike video games, table hockey pits flesh-and-blood opponents in real time, thus promoting wholesome socialisation and good sportsmanship. Significantly, it also boosts attention span, and is therefore an antidote to the epidemic of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) that plagues tens of millions of overly-digitised and gratuitously-medicated children in the west. The NTHL

recently introduced table hockey to a middle school in Saint-Sophie, Quebec, and the teachers told us that it put a swift end to bullying and bickering in the schoolyard. That's a lot of merit for a little game.

Has your Commonwealth Scholarship contributed to your work?

Absolutely, yes. Mostly, it was the learning that has both informed and supported lifelong work and academic interests. Beyond attending lectures by wonderfully knowledgeable professors, I spent the majority of my three years in London reading in the British Library (BL), with forays to its several annexes, as well as to nearby libraries at Senate House, King's College London, the London School of Economics, and University College London. I also made expeditions to libraries at the Imperial War Museum, the Institute of Strategic Studies, the Ministry of Defence, and the Peace Studies Institute at Bradford. I met fascinating scholars and luminaries galore, including Sir Karl Popper and David Bohm, as well as Tibetan Buddhist teacher Sogyal Rinpoche. But most of the time you'd find me reading under that magnificent blue-vaulted dome in the British Museum, which then housed the BL.

One day, Mikhail Gorbachev happened by the British Library with the then UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. He was on a state visit, and apparently had asked to see the actual seat in the British Library at which Karl Marx had written *Das Kapital*. Of course, no one had the foggiest notion where Marx had sat, so they pointed to a chair, and Gorbachev seemed satisfied. I jotted a note to the effect that Marx's writings had left a far more enduring imprint.

But in all seriousness, I still keep in my study an oversized leather satchel that I trundled daily to and from the British Library. It is stuffed with thousands of pages of handwritten notes, which formed not only the foundation of a doctoral dissertation, but also of many subsequent book chapters, scholarly articles, and other publications on a variety of topics. Even 30 years later, I still peruse those well-

worn pages from time to time, and never fail to glean a *bon mot*.

In retrospect, it is fair to say that my Commonwealth Scholarship was a mind-opening, horizon-broadening, and life-changing opportunity, which still pays handsome noetic dividends to this day, and for which I shall always remain profoundly grateful.

What advice would you give to our new cohort of Commonwealth Scholars?

Philosophers are full of free advice, and rarely chary of dispensing it. Here are three pieces for new Commonwealth Scholars.

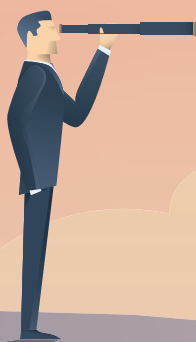
First: You are embarked on a life-changing journey, a magnificent opportunity of which you'd do well to make the most. I'd enjoin you to sustain that high level of motivation, throughout your research and writing-up.

Second: Do not expect smooth sailing throughout. You will be adapting to a new country, immersing yourself in its novel ethos, discovering new English idioms, and adjusting to myriad differences in the minutiae of daily life. You must find a place to live, fathom novel academic depths, establish productive relationships with your professors, enjoy supportive friendships with your colleagues, develop a viable research programme with your supervisor, and eventually write up a credible thesis.

Third: Remember the common bond that unites us all. You are entrusted with keys to the cultural treasure house of a Commonwealth of great nations. You are invited to explore it, learn from it, and ultimately make your own unique contribution to its vast collections. Relish this season of studious seeding and scholarly cultivation, for it will pass swiftly. The nourishing fruits of its abundant harvest, however, may persist for a lifetime. You will always be a Commonwealth Scholar. Ponder, then, the overarching duty of continuing lifelong to uphold those principles upon which commonwealths – along with free and reasoned inquiry itself – are founded and preserved.

TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

*The North East Regional Network of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows in the UK organised a conference on the state of postgraduate research training in Africa in February 2016. Common Knowledge spoke to **Herine Otieno** and **Dieudonné Che** about the potential of this initiative.*



What was the motivation behind the conference? How did you make it happen?

HO: The whole idea came from a personal reflection on what life after my PhD will look like. For me, a PhD is more than just an academic achievement or the title. There is no doubt that a lot of things come along or can be done with the title, especially in Africa. In most cases, you end up either as a lecturer in one of the universities, or you are appointed as an administrator. To me, this on its own will not be a fulfilled ambition.

As a Commonwealth Scholar, I was quick to realise the huge difference in how postgraduate researchers are trained here in the UK, compared to my home country, Kenya. From a personal perspective, I sensed that there may be loopholes in the research training strategy and curriculum structure in Kenya; some literature searches on this topic confirmed that is a crucial issue that needs attention. This view is not particular to Kenya, as most developing countries have common challenges that influence or impact how postgraduate research training is done. All systems have setbacks, but the determinant of progress and success lies in the recognition of these problems and seeking possible solutions to address them. Hence, there was a need to initiate an open discussion to stimulate the exchange of ideas on this issue.

The great challenge was to stimulate our group of emerging academics to add value to the research agenda, without waiting until we are professors.

Pushing through with this initiative required some effort in terms of time and other resources. I had to script a proposal, which I shared with my academic supervisors for their opinion and input. I also contacted the Doctoral School at Sheffield Hallam University for sponsorship. Then I contacted the key speakers and panellists, who willingly agreed to be part of this idea. The CSC was also solicited for support in communication and organisation, and the North East Regional Network of Commonwealth Scholars helped to organise the event at Sheffield Hallam.

What were you hoping to achieve?

HO: The main objective was to kickstart a conversation on the state of postgraduate research training in Africa. Keynote speakers or researchers who have done or are currently

doing research in Africa were invited to define the scaffold. Participants – including Commonwealth Scholars and other postgraduate students from across Africa currently studying in the UK – were stimulated to reflect and brainstorm not only on the weaknesses and challenges, but also the strengths and, most importantly, the opportunities that exist at the same time. Hence the theme: ‘Reengineering challenges into opportunities’.

The focus on opportunities was not from a selfish viewpoint, but one of adding value. The great challenge was to stimulate our group of emerging academics to add value to the research agenda of our continents, without waiting until we are professors. As such, critical reflection, brainstorming, and open conversations during breakout and panel sessions were key components of the conference.

What motivated you to attend the conference?

DC: My motivation was the fact that the primary concept of the conference hinged on a practical problem, which in my opinion is equally faced by my home country, Cameroon. Gaps in postgraduate research training are a common concern in most developing countries. So this was a great opportunity for me to be part of an initiative to discuss and share experiences from different backgrounds and perspectives.

What was the focus of the discussions?

DC: One of the main weaknesses identified in the area of postgraduate research training in Africa was the lack of access to research publications. A lot of research happening on the continent is not distributed or communicated locally. Research networks are struggling and unsustainable. We do not have journals that focus on the African research context. Most of our universities lack online research databases with current publications for students to explore. As a postgraduate student in the UK, I was stunned by the amount of research information I could access via online databases at my university.

Thus, one of the key interventions proposed during the brainstorming session was to create an online supported network of emerging African researchers. The coordination of such a network will then lead to the publication of a citizen-friendly journal, to share some of the current research being done on Africa and by African scholars.

TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES



To me, this is a very firm foundation for research – we can only build strong research based on existing knowledge. Secondly, the primary endpoint of research is always to contribute to this vast body of already existing knowledge. For this reason, research needs to be shared and communicated in a way others can understand. Thirdly, this can increase the real impact of research, through greater consideration of research findings in public policy and commercial strategy.

What is the advantage of sharing your research with other Commonwealth Scholars?

DC: It provides an excellent opportunity for me to connect with others – similar research interests are a good connection point, and lifelong career relationships can develop from this. It is also an opportunity to build self-confidence by facing a ‘familiar’ peer group, without the fear of being shut down. By doing this now, we become prepared to face an ‘unfamiliar’ audience in the future.



Sharing research helps not only to build on an idea, but also to incorporate input from feedback received. We can encourage each other, talk about some of the common difficulties encountered, and learn from each other how we can overcome them.

After such a great conference, what next?

HO: We Scholars come from diverse backgrounds, but we have common challenges. In my opinion, these challenges are open doors for opportunities. We may not have all the technical platforms or expertise in one ‘bundle’, but it is possible to galvanise our strength through sharing ideas.

Using the platform of the Africa MathScience Technology Research and Education Foundation (AMSTREF), of which I am a Founder Trustee, I am keen to shape intervention programmes aimed at improving the quality of higher education in Africa. My first key consideration is shaping a technology supported ecosystem of emerging and emergent African researchers on the continent and in the diaspora. I have already started taking the first small steps towards actualising this vision, by making presentations on the topic at two international conferences and one more planned for next year. One of my key objectives in presenting at these conferences is identifying likeminded organisations that I can learn lessons from and collaborate with.

I was also able to launch a postgraduate research students’ forum in Kenya this year, which I hope to build as the nexus of this ecosystem. In August, we were able to live stream our meeting online and have students join us from the UK and Australia. We will be stepping up these live streaming interactions in the coming months, and I would like to end by inviting fellow Commonwealth Scholars who may be interested either in participating in the discussions or running a webinar that could be of value to other students in the UK or developing countries to contact me. It will be a small but significant way of beginning to live out our commitment and desire as Commonwealth Scholars to contribute to the transformation of our countries!

Herine Otieno is a 2014 Commonwealth Scholar from Kenya – she is studying for a PhD in Maths Education at Sheffield Hallam University. She can be contacted at amstref@wordpress.com

Dieudonné Che is a 2015 Commonwealth Scholar from Cameroon – he studied MSc Molecular Medicine at the University of Sheffield.

SCHOOL OF ROCK

Daniella Tilbury's academic career has focused on education for sustainable development. The first female Gibraltarian university professor, she is now Vice-Chancellor of the territory's first university.

The University of Gibraltar is possibly the newest university in the Commonwealth. It opened its doors to the community on 21 September 2015, and formally enrolled its first cohort of students two days later. As inaugural Vice-Chancellor, I am excited by the possibilities this new institution offers. Located at Europa Point – the southernmost part of the Rock of Gibraltar and facing the continent of Africa across the Straits of Gibraltar – the university is uniquely placed to become a leading international education and research institution.

Prior to 2015, there was limited higher education provision on the Rock. Starting with a blank canvas has allowed us to create a university that can respond to global issues, as well as priorities of relevance to our locality. We are not held back by outmoded traditions or bureaucratic structures, and thus we are able to respond quickly to new opportunities. This freedom enables us to convene cutting-edge thinking, attract talent, and trigger innovation, which will inject dynamism and vitality across societies.

A year on from our inauguration, we have enrolled over 250 students (from 11 countries) on professional courses, undergraduate degrees, and doctoral study programmes. In our first year, we hosted the University Educators for Sustainable Development international conference and succeeded in attaining two large European Union-funded grants in this field of expertise. Our research on sustainable development is already making a meaningful contribution to Gibraltar, the Mediterranean, and beyond, as recognised by the academic collaborations arising from this work. We host two research institutes that serve as our research hubs,



▲ Professor Daniella Tilbury is a 1990 Commonwealth Scholar from Gibraltar – she studied for a PhD in Higher Education for Sustainability at the University of Cambridge.

generating new knowledge, building local research capacity, and helping make sense of contemporary and historical issues.

Small steps will pave the way in our initial years. We will expand our offering and our reach over a period of five years, and the development of our new halls of residence will help our student community to grow. Our strategic plan is currently being reviewed, as our board of governors works through the ramifications of Britain's referendum vote to leave the EU. It is difficult to identify the specific issues that we will face, as it is too early in the process, but we are clear on which key questions we must focus our minds on, including student and staff mobility and institutional partnerships.

The university is also looking forward to playing an active role as a member of the Commonwealth family. In May 2016, we hosted a reception for some of the 45 alumni who have benefited from a Commonwealth Scholarship

since 1960. The university plans to partner with Gibraltar's Department of Education to offer Commonwealth Scholarships from 2017. Speaking from my experience as a Scholar, the opportunities offered by this scheme are incredibly important to students who are seeking that all-important stepping stone to establish their careers.

I would like to invite everyone to explore and discover what our academic presence on the Rock has to offer, through extending an invitation to visit us in Gibraltar. Partnerships are core to our mission, and I am excited by the prospect of international collaboration that can arise through our Commonwealth connections.

GLOBAL PROBLEM, LOCAL IMPACT

Ahnivar Peralta looks at how climate change will affect small island states.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A NATURAL PHENOMENON, WITHOUT BOUNDARIES OR BORDERS. HOWEVER, THOSE HARDEST HIT TEND TO BE COMMUNITIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES THAT ARE UNABLE TO COPE WITH THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE DUE TO CONSTRAINTS ON RESOURCES SUCH AS FINANCE, PEOPLE, HOUSING, AND INFRASTRUCTURE, AMONG OTHERS.

Over a 17-year period, the sea level in the tropical western Pacific rose by around 12mm each year – about four times above the global average

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Developing island nations, such as those found in the Pacific and the Caribbean, are considered to be especially vulnerable to climate change and its consequences, such as rising sea levels, changes in rainfall, and tropical cyclones. As a Scholar from the Caribbean studying in the Pacific, I am ideally placed to compare and contrast the effects of climate change in both regions.

Rising seas

From 1993-2009, the sea level in the tropical western Pacific rose by around 12mm per year – about four times above the global average – according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). As a result, many Pacific countries have experienced coastal flooding and saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers. Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands have had several floods, while saltwater intrusion has affected the water security of Kiribati and Tuvalu by contaminating some of their drinking water supply and reducing the availability of groundwater for subsistence agriculture.

In the Caribbean, sea levels have not increased at a rate above the global average. Nonetheless, the region is at risk. In 2010, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicated that a sea level rise of one metre would displace about 110,000 people in the CARICOM (Caribbean Community) sub-region, with coastal flooding affecting the region's vital tourism and agriculture sectors.

Changing rainfall patterns

In the northwestern and near-equatorial Pacific regions, the IPCC expects rainfall to increase during the 21st century. Countries such as the Cook Islands, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu can expect an increase in average rainfall during the wet season. Consequences include, among others, soil erosion and degradation, reducing food security for these island nations.

On the other hand, rainfall is expected to decrease over most of the Caribbean region. In recent years, subsistence farmers in Jamaica have already been affected by droughts caused by decreasing rainfall patterns. The IPCC's projections indicate that Jamaica and other countries in the region remain vulnerable to droughts.

More intense cyclones

The south Pacific region will see a decrease in the annual frequency of tropical cyclones, but a slight increase in their intensity, according to the IPCC's model projections for the period 2081-2100. Coupled with ongoing sea level rise, this means that the region will be even more vulnerable to storm surges and other risks.

In the Caribbean, tropical cyclones are usually formed in the north Atlantic before passing into the region. Using the same models and timeline as for the south Pacific, the north Atlantic is expected to experience a decrease in the annual frequency of all tropical cyclones, but a 50% chance of an increase in category 4 and 5 cyclones – the most severe. An increase in cyclone intensity is also expected. So, projections indicate that the Caribbean will experience more tropical cyclones of a greater intensity, which will carry greater risks of severe property and infrastructure damage, loss of life, soil erosion, and flooding, including storm surges.



▲ **Ahnivar Peralta** is a 2015 Commonwealth Scholar from Belize – he is studying MSc Climate Change at the University of the South Pacific, supported by the CSFP endowment fund.

My contribution

Having gained knowledge on the impacts, vulnerability, adaptation, and climate science of climate change, I am keen to contribute to efforts being made to address its effects. I plan to work on identifying solutions and measures that are pragmatic and relevant to those being affected. Most importantly, I am positive that I will greatly contribute to the understanding of climate change impacts through community and stakeholder consultations, which are critical to understanding the specific needs and vulnerabilities of communities.

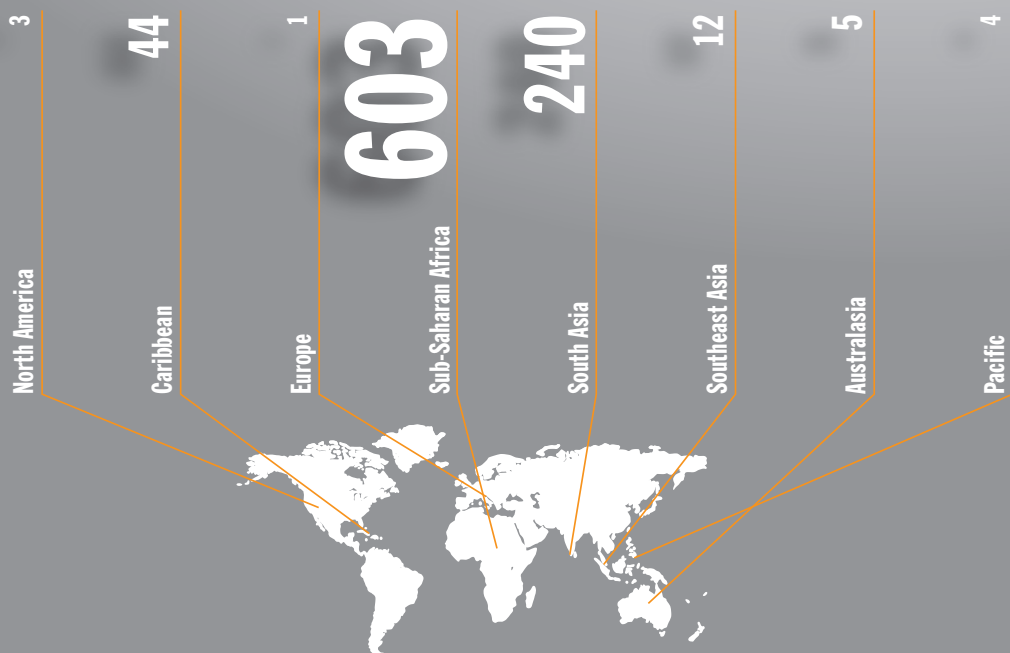
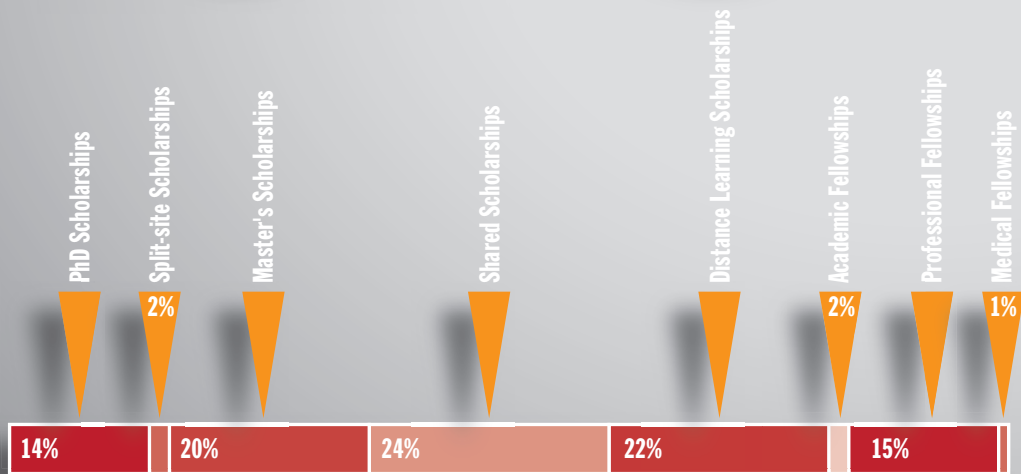
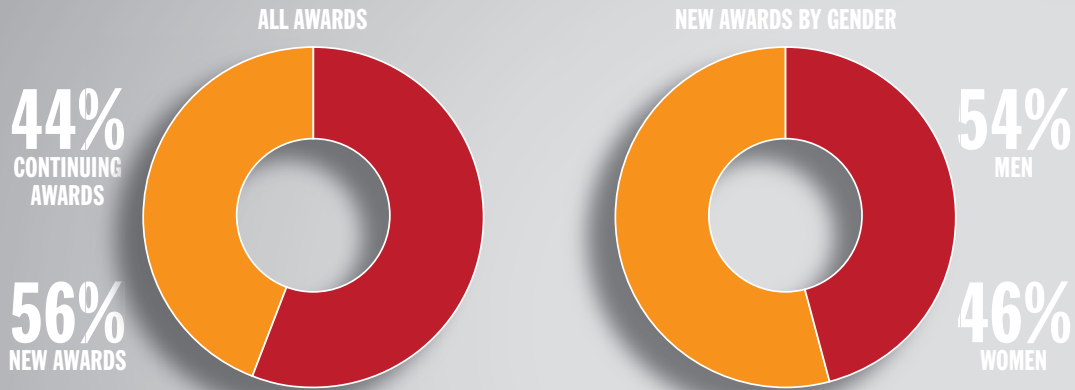
The Paris Agreement adopted in December 2015 is a beacon of hope for those vulnerable to climate change – such as the citizens of the Pacific and the Caribbean regions – as it focuses efforts on limiting the rise in global temperature to 1.5°C, promoting adaptation measures, and reducing greenhouse emissions. As a climate change advocate, I will do my part by creating awareness and building capacity to contribute towards the fulfilment of the Paris Agreement.

The CSFP endowment fund supports Commonwealth Scholarships hosted by low and middle income Commonwealth countries. The fund was established in 2009, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, and has been supported by donations from 13 Commonwealth governments and around 200 alumni.

The fund currently supports around 30 Scholars on two-year Master's courses any given time; 15 new Commonwealth Scholarships are offered each year. For more information, visit acu.ac.uk/commonwealth-scholarships

THE CSC IN NUMBERS

2015-2016 AWARDS



GET INVOLVED!

There are several ways to get involved with the CSC's activities, through events across the Commonwealth, promoting our scholarships and fellowships to potential applicants, and joining our alumni associations.

REGIONAL NETWORKS

Connect with Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows in the same university or region in the UK

Scotland

North West

North East

Wales and Northern Ireland

Midlands and Oxford

South West

South East

For full details, visit

bit.ly/cscuk-regional-networks

ALUMNI ASSOCIATIONS

Meet and network with former and future Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows

Australia

Lesotho

Bangladesh

Malaysia

Barbados

Mauritius

Cameroon

New Zealand

Canada

Nigeria

Ghana

Sierra Leone

Gibraltar

Tanzania

Guyana

Trinidad and Tobago

India

Uganda

Jamaica

Zambia

Kenya

For full details, visit

bit.ly/cscuk-associations-alumni

CALENDAR

2017

9 January

Applications open for Commonwealth Scholarships in low and middle income countries supported by the CSFP endowment fund (Round 1)

14 January

Welcome home reception
Dhaka, Bangladesh

16 January

Entries open for the 2016 Taylor & Francis Commonwealth Scholar Best Journal Article Prize

January

Alumni reintegration workshop
Kumasi, Ghana

February

Applications open for Commonwealth Professional Fellowships

18 February

Indian Association of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows event
Kolkata, India

March

Alumni breakfast meeting
Maputo, Mozambique

March

Welcome home reception
Delhi, India

March

Applications open for Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships

29 March

Final deadline for applications for Commonwealth Shared Scholarships

10 April

Applications open for Commonwealth Scholarships in low and middle income countries supported by the CSFP endowment fund (Round 2)

July

Applications open for Commonwealth:

- PhD Scholarships
- Master's Scholarships
- Split-site Scholarships
- Academic Fellowships
- Medical Fellowships



The Commonwealth Secretariat is calling for experts to join their Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) Talent Bank. The CFTC provides technical expertise to the public sector by employing professionals on specialist assignments in Commonwealth member countries. More than 350 experts are deployed each year on assignments that range from a few days to two or three years in length.

Assignments typically involve a mix of policy advice and guidance, strategy development and implementation, institutional capacity development, and mentoring and skills training for senior level officials.

For more information on how to register with the CFTC Talent Bank and other jobs offered by the Commonwealth Secretariat, visit thecommonwealth.org/jobs

Key programmatic areas of focus for the Commonwealth are currently:

- Democracy
- Public institutions
- Special development
- Youth
- Economic growth and sustainable development
- Small states and vulnerable states

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

ISSUE #3 DECEMBER 2016







▲ 2015 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholars studying MSc Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health at the Royal Veterinary College visited Boltons Park Farm as part of their orientation workshop in the UK in June 2016



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