

SALAADO QASIM · FAISA QASIM · PRISCILLA OSEI



BLACK FACULTY

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Black faculty

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Layout & Cover: Books on Demand

Publisher: BoD – Books on Demand, Helsinki, Finland

Manufacturer: BoD – Books on Demand, Norderstedt, Saksa

ISBN: 978-952-80-8111-1

Black faculty

The Black Faculty

In this book, we celebrate the contributions of Black scholars and educators to the academic world, highlighting their achievements and excellence in various fields. Throughout history, Black academics have faced significant challenges and obstacles in pursuing their academic careers. Despite this, they have persevered and overcome these challenges, significantly contributing to their fields and paving the way for future generations.

Black scholars and educators have brought diverse perspectives and experiences to academia through their research, teaching, and community engagement. They have challenged conventional wisdom, brought fresh ideas, and broadened the scope of academic discourse. They have enriched the academic world with their innovative research, ideas, and thought-provoking insights.

We highlight the diversity and richness of Black faculty members' contributions to Finnish academia, featuring the achievements of scholars from various disciplines. From ground-breaking research to influential teaching, from activism to community service, the contributions of Black faculty members have been vital to shaping the intellectual landscape and promoting social justice in Finnish academia.

The need for Black academics' representation in Finnish universities is just as important as it is in any part of the world. While Finland is often praised for its progressiveness and commitment to social equality, it is not immune

to issues of racism, discrimination, and exclusion. Black academics bring valuable perspectives and experiences to academic discourse and can serve as role models for Black students in Nordic universities. Their representation can also help to address the underrepresentation of Black scholars in Finnish academia and contribute to a more inclusive and diverse campus culture. Furthermore, a diverse faculty can enhance the quality of research and education by bringing different viewpoints, experiences, and methods of academic work.

Our goal is to celebrate scholarly achievements and highlight academic journeys made by many in our community so that they do not go unnoticed. It also seeks to create an inspirational platform for young people interested in higher education. With the major aim of honouring Black academics in Finnish institutions, the book will provide guidance on building a successful academic career.

We hope these stories inspire readers to appreciate the importance of diversity and inclusion in Finnish academia and to recognise the value of diverse perspectives and experiences. We hope that it also serves as a reminder of the significant contributions of Black scholars to the academic world and the importance of celebrating their excellence.

Salaado Qasim, Faisa Qasim & Priscilla Osei

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Adefunke O. Koyejo

Adefunke O. Koyejo

My name is Adefunke and I was born in Nigeria. I am a Doctoral Researcher in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Turku (UTU). I obtained my undergraduate degree in Industrial Chemistry from Osun State University in Osogbo, Nigeria and my Master's degree in Chemistry from the University of Eastern Finland in Joensuu. At the start of my career, I worked as a high school teacher. This was followed by posts of operation supervisor, quality control chemist, marketing executive and project researcher in several manufacturing industries across Nigeria and Finland.

With a passion for learning and an interest in making an impact, I began my doctoral journey in 2018. My research has been supported by the Department of Chemistry, UTU, the Real Estate Foundation, Turku, the University of Turku Graduate School (UTUGS), Business Finland, and the Magnus Ehrnrooth Foundation. In my research, I explore several areas, including the synthesis and characterisation of functional and hybrid materials, polymers and their composites, electrocatalysts, semiconductor materials, and other nanomaterials applicable for electrochemical energy storage and conversion. My work largely tackles one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 13 – climate action).

Since beginning my doctoral research, I have made scholarly contributions to my field in peer-reviewed research papers and shared my expertise at national and international conferences and workshops. I have also co-supervised a few master's thesis projects. Currently, I am a reviewer for several journals in the field of chemistry.

My journey has been quite straightforward. I have always been curious and am unsure whether I chose chemistry or whether chemistry chose me. As a young child, I was more interested in learning how things worked, and to me, the laboratory is a bit like a kitchen. I love cooking, and the closest thing to a kitchen at school was the chemistry lab, so my love for chemistry came naturally from there. Coming from a background in which my parents were accountants, I lacked role models in academia. But since my parents

were educated, they supported and encouraged me to believe in myself and be anything I wanted. I believe that inspiration comes from God; I can do nothing on my own, but with God, endless possibilities open up. My support system has been God, my family and a few friends who understand the travails of the academic journey. In an era where representation matters, I see myself as an ambassador for women of colour in STEM. Furthermore, I see myself as an advocate for mentoring girls and changing the narrative of girls' participation in STEM subjects.

Outside my career and besides my love of food, I enjoy travelling, which provides an opportunity for me to meet new people and learn about new cultures. I love flexing my electrochemical muscles with cycling and swimming. Recently I have discovered a new love, skating. I am fortunate enough to work in the city of Turku with an international and diverse research group that also enjoys and encourages these outdoor activities.

Having gone through, or still going through, the academic career path, I know the challenges that academics face. The academic journey can be isolating, and no one can really prepare you for it. It is a huge sacrifice and a huge commitment. Be prepared to be misunderstood by people who haven't experienced it first-hand. If you are a woman of colour, be prepared to be really misunderstood. Pursuing a PhD is difficult enough, which means it is important to find a community of friends (within the academic and non-academic environment) to keep you balanced. My advice to incoming academics is not to be afraid to reach out to other PhDs, to ask questions, and seek mentorship; life is easier when you have people around you that understand your struggle. Don't let imposter syndrome get the better of you, and most importantly, don't ignore your mental health. Some universities, like UTU, offer mental health awareness talks for their researchers. Don't strong black man/woman your way into depression. There is no shame in it, and there isn't a single academic who hasn't been through an episode or two. The journey might be isolating, but you're not alone. Reach out!

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