

CENTER FOR IGBO STUDIES NEWSLETTER

in collaboration with Black World Studies



Editors:

Ms. Michelle Garcia
Ms. Montserrat Duarte Mejia
Mr. Ryan Mehlschau
Mr. Daniel Castro
Ms. Sandra Kozel
Ms. Angela Wong

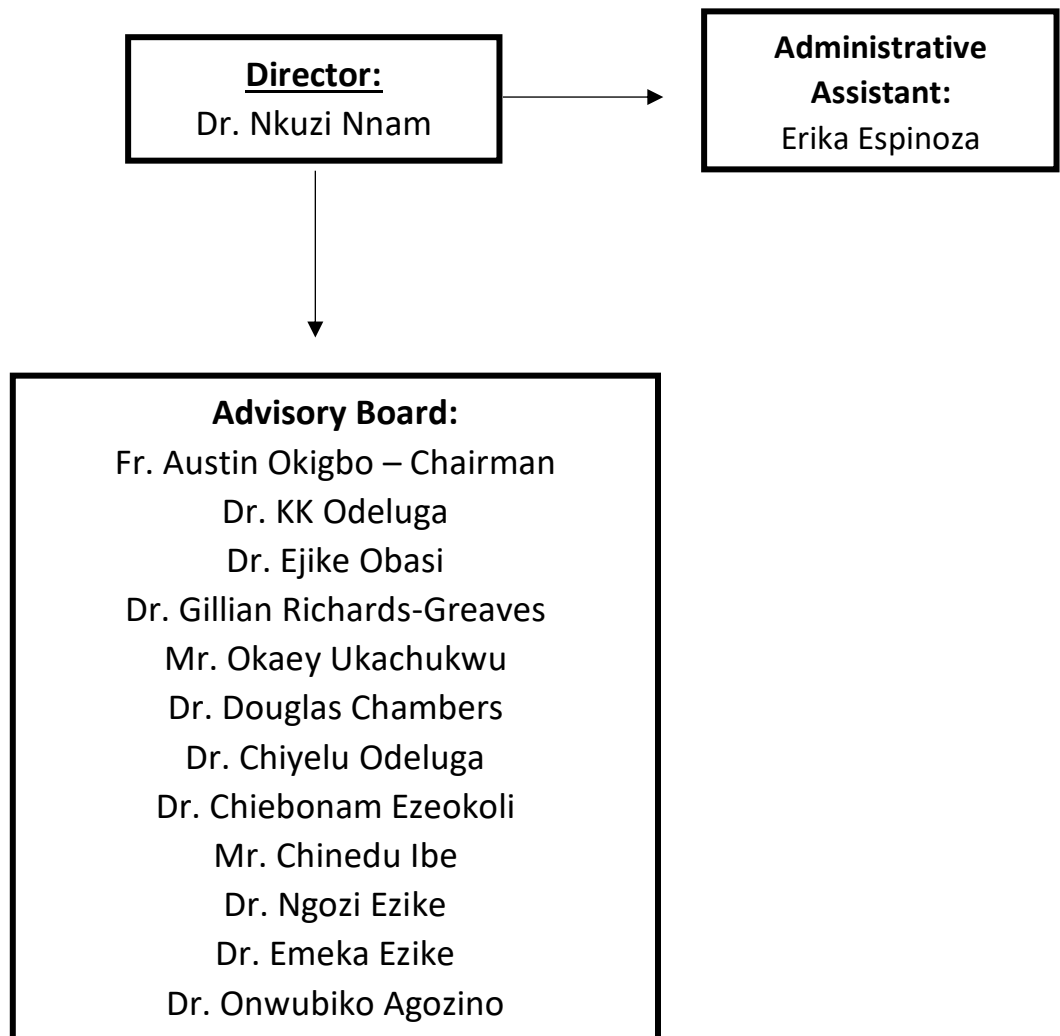
Ms. Erika Espinoza
Mr. Hansi Katterle
Mr. Lewis MacPherson
Mr. Zachary Frazee
Ms. Andrea Zermeno

May 2023

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The Center for Igbo Studies Leadership



Did you know that...

Dominican University has the 1st Center for Igbo Studies in the Western World?

Establishing the Center for Igbo Studies at Dominican University

The Igbo Studies Association (ISA) hosts a conference that meets every year. They began meeting at Howard University in Washington DC. The professor at that university, Dr. Mbanaso, moved back to Nigeria to fund a new school there.

A new place was needed for the conferences. Many universities all over the states wanted them but ultimately, in 2016, they chose Dominican mostly due to the proximity to Chicago and O'Hare. The ISA also stated that they were in awe with the beauty of the campus and the welcoming hospitality found there.

Ever since then, the ISA Conference is proudly held at Dominican University. Professors from all over the world come each year to share their Igbo research, writings, and stories. ISA needed to establish a secretariat, a headquarter, for ISA all over the world. They chose Dominican again. Professor Nkuzi Nnam, from the department of Philosophy and Black World Studies, became the director for both the secretariat and the Center for Igbo Studies (CIS).



The CIS is the first of its kind in the United States where anyone interested in understanding the history, civilization, religion, culture, and language of the Igbo Nation can come and find reliable resources. An advisory board was selected by Professor Nnam to support him. They helped raise the money to build the CIS. \$55,000 was raised and endowed at Dominican University.

The Center will not only help educate people on Igbo culture, but it will also display the many contributions that the Igbo people have made to the world in different fields and where one can learn about their stories.

The Center for Igbo Studies has also brought many distinguished scholars and political figures to reach the growing minds of Dominican University students. Some of these lectures are broadcast all over the world.

Rev. Austin Okigbo elucidates that the primary objective of the Center for Igbo Studies is to showcase and promote the accomplishments of remarkable Igbo personalities in diverse fields. These fields range from science, medicine, athletics, and beyond. The center will function as a channel for broadcasting and propagating their outstanding feats.

Dr. Nkuzi Nnam, director of the Center for Igbo Studies and professor of philosophy at Dominican University, said there is a strong fellowship supporting the awareness of the center. Unfortunately, the pandemic prevented a formal launch from occurring; therefore, in the future, this amazing center will be paired with an equally deserving launch.

Center for Igbo Studies Endowment



The 100 Igbos are a group of respectable people from Eastern Nigerian ancestry who dedicate their time, energy, and money to provide assistance and support for Nd'igbo in Nigeria and outside. Their goal is to assist Ndigbo in creating their own standards for the future, and by setting an example for others, particularly in Nigeria and Africa. The aim is to encourage others to follow suit. The organization's mission, which includes advancing Igbo scholarship, is in line with Dominican University's vision for the Center for Igbo Studies.

In 2018, the administration of Dominican University granted the Igbo Studies Association's request to create a Center for Igbo Studies that would be housed within the Black World Studies department. The goal of this institution is to investigate issues pertaining to Igbo history and culture from ancient times to the present. The goal is to critically evaluate the rich culture of the Igbo people and their contributions to the civilizations of the New World.

As of September 27, 2021, the 100 Igbos partnership supported the endowment with a donation of \$25,000 to the Center for Igbo Studies at Dominican University.

Long-term Goals

English	Igbo
hour	elekere
minute	nkeji
second	ntabj anya
day	ubochi
week	izu, izu uka
month	onwa
year	afo, aro
yesterday	echi gara aga, unyahu,
today	ta, tata
tomorrow	echi

The Center's purpose and its intended use for the immediate and long-term gain of the global Igbo community worldwide are as follows:

- Developing curriculum and teaching Igbo language for college credits
- Developing curriculum for teaching Igbo language as a second language for non-native speakers
 - Conducting Igbo language teacher training courses for community based in Igbo culture and language learning centers.
- Create/standardized course materials that will be used in the Igbo language instruction.
- Identify a list of books, articles, recordings, and other types of resource materials that can be readily accessed to support the teaching and learning of Igbo language and culture.
- Media programming: Create a website that provides an overview of the Igbo people, the Center, goals, etc.
- Annual Igbo Heritage Lecture series
- Establish "Igbo Landing" as a historic site.
- Establishment of a Speaker Bureau
- Hosting Scholars in Residency

Black World Studies

In adhering to Dominican University's mission of wishing to create a more just and humane world, Dr. Nkuzi Nnam sought full inclusivity of Dominican's student population when establishing the Black World Studies major and minor in the fall of 1989. Upon its creation, this interdisciplinary major was coined "African and African American Studies" at Rosary College. Ultimately, the decision to change the name to that of "Black World Studies" in 2009 was determined by student activism, faculty support, and most importantly, the need for immersion and interconnection in order to reflect the national and international focus of the courses offered as well as the study abroad programs and service-learning activities.

The choice of the name "Black World Studies" over Africana, African, or African-American studies, then, is a reflective one that embodies its global parameters. It is designed to engage themes like Atlantic history or culture, a revision of themes of culture; and contact between Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

Black World Studies also seeks to engage blackness in other distinct contexts such as the Pacific Rim and/or the Middle East examples of blackness, or evolving methodological questions around the validity of Afro-centricity and interpretations of blackness relative to subaltern and post-colonial themes, all of which coalesce in a well-developed Black World Studies program.

Black World Studies provides its 54 majors and minors with a multicultural and international education. Part of Dominican's Interdisciplinary Studies, the program draws from several disciplines including that of the social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, fine arts, and education. It is a major that is dedicated to having students demonstrate a deep understanding of black world experience, culture, societies, life, history, and philosophies.

Black World Studies Courses

BWS 101: Intro to the History of Black World Studies

BWS 107: Black Women in Society

BWS 109: Being Black in America

BWS 180: Pre-Colonial Africa

BWS 200: African and African-American Thought

BWS 202: Ethics and World Politics: USA and Africa

BWS 203: Race and Race Relations in the U.S.

BWS 220: Writing in Africa and the African Diaspora

BWS 238: Global Inequality

BWS 280: Discrimination and Society

BWS 320: From Slavery to Freedom: The African American Experience from 1619 to 1877

BWS 380: Contemporary Africa

Career Opportunities

- Attorney
- Business executive
- Civil rights advocate
- College administrator
- Counselor
- Government official
- High school teacher
- International relations specialist
- Law enforcement officer
- Politician
- Social worker
- University professor

Other opportunities made available to Black World Studies majors and minors include travel opportunities. Eligible students can travel to the annual conference of the National Council for Black Studies to hear professionals speak on important research and contributions related to black studies. Dominican also offers study abroad opportunities to Ghana, Stellenbosch, and Trinidad and Tobago.



Goals of the Black World Studies major/minor:

- To restore African dignity and consciousness
- Fostering the celebration of diversity, understanding and mutual respect needed to eradicate racism and ethnocentrism
- Interpreting the historical, cultural, political, and socioeconomic experiences of peoples of African descent
- Studying linkage and relationships between Africans on the continent and those in diaspora
- Understanding the experiences and, most importantly, the contributions of the people of African ancestry to the rest of the world
- To produce well-rounded graduates who understand cultural pluralism and racial diversity
- To challenge students to explore different cultures and countries through the study abroad programs

Study Abroad

At Dominican University, the Office of Global Learning offers entire semester-long programs or short, one-week programs to its student body. Students are given the chance to study at a university in Stellenbosch, South Africa for an entire semester, surrounded by mountains and vineyards and with easy access to Cape Town's rich culture.

Study Abroad trips to Ghana and Trinidad and Tobago are week-long trips that take place during Dominican University's spring break. These trips are open to the Dominican University community, Black World Studies students, external individuals, alumni, and many more. In fact, students with a major or minor in Black World Studies can be awarded scholarship money to fund their study abroad trips through the **Sr. Melissa Waters/Elders' Council Endowed Scholarship**, which will also earn them credit-hours that will satisfy and fulfill their Black World Studies program course requirements.



Study Abroad to Trinidad and Tobago

In traveling to Ghana, students are able to discover the history and culture of Ghana while exploring topics pertaining to Pan-Africanism and the diaspora. This trip was temporarily suspended due to travel restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, students will be able to travel to Ghana this upcoming academic year, in 2024.

The study abroad trip to Trinidad and Tobago, just recently launched in the Spring Break of 2023 (March 4-10), enabled students to experience the unique culture and traditions that exist in the gateway to the Caribbean within the context of the African diaspora. Students were given a tour of heritage sites and Maracas Beach in Trinidad, while then traveling to Tobago and receiving a historical tour of Englishman's Bay, Bloody Bay, the Main Ridge Reserve (the oldest protected rainforest in the Western Hemisphere).

African history was also discussed through a trip to Fort King George with university lecturer, Dr. Charleston Thomas.

Students also enjoyed a glass bottom boat tour to Buccoo reef, Coral Gardens and Nylon pool, where they were able to go snorkeling and swimming in shallow, crystal-clear waters. After that, a half-day was spent sight-seeing at South West Tobago, allowing students to experience Plymouth, Courland Monument, Fort James and Mystery Tomb.



Below is an excerpt of a Black World Studies student, **Ms. Leila Robinson**, illustrating the experience she had in studying abroad to Trinidad and Tobago:

Looking back at my Study Abroad trip to Trinidad and Tobago, only one word can describe it; Empowering. You might ask, 'Wow, empowering? Not refreshing, not 'lit'? But I can honestly say this trip has taught me more about African empowerment than the American education system has taught me in my 19 years of living. While the 7 days of packing, waking up at 7 am, taking notes, all day explorations, and trying new freshwater dishes, was not only exuberating and exhausting; I can honestly say I walked away from this trip with a sense of being grounded, meeting amazing people, and finding comfort and friends in an environment that you quite cannot find in your everyday Illinois experience.



We took a 20-minute flight from Trinidad to Tobago, a beautiful island that is surrounded by beautiful beaches, trees, and mountains. In Tobago, we saw the coco trees, the mud ovens that make sweet pastries, the Englishmen's Bay, and the Bloody Bay. The war caused most people to be killed there when the British fought the French. We go to the rain forest and learn about different native plants. We got to swim in the waterfall and see the beaches and nature of the native island. It was honestly so refreshing to feel the cool water suddenly surround me as I got to dive into the water as me and the rest of our group swam in nature. Being surrounded by tropical greenery is an experience that cannot be accurately described on paper. We see little native gift shops with the nicest of ladies, and we see how the natives' bond with each other and live peacefully with free range chickens, cows, and goats. Even the stray cats and dogs are friendly. Seeing how even though Trinidad is



a third world country, they live such a lifestyle where they maintain the utmost health, happiness, and a balance with nature with minimalism; something that America and its' people are not accustomed to with our destructive capitalism.

Dr. Charleston Thomas, former lecturer in modern languages, cultural studies, literature in English, and gender studies of UWI. He preaches about the mixing of the people shows how civilization works; "authentic people" do not exist because we come together. Africans in Tobago came from everywhere after colonialism because of the slave trade. Africans came from Ghana, Nigeria, Kikongo, etc. The movement of people, of what Africa is. Tobagians identify with their Africanism everyday while Trinidad does it occasionally to identify with it. Africa in Tobago lives as dance, herbalism, religion, clothes, and the culture. When the colonizers and social culture changed, Africanism changed in Tobago. When the British came to Trinidad and ran into the Spanish governance and French speaking, the English had to Englanize the people. Because of this, French Creole did not last, but remains in short catchphrases.



Africa takes a dominant place in Tobago's language. Creole was formed out of contact, specifically English lexifier creole. A form of the creole given an English vocabulary due to colonialism, but the grammatical structure is African. While colonialism shows itself throughout the language, Trinidad remains true in their African ancestry and respects it in everyday life. Creole can be divided into 3 forms, acrolect, assolet, besolet. Regardless of the linguistics, Africanism is what holds it all together: colonialism does not erase the African indigenous roots. There is a beauty in how African roots shows itself in everyday roots in the language they speak. Whether it's in the Caribbean, Africa, or in America itself. Religion in Tobago is very synchronized after Christianity came in with other African religions; but both share space with each other. Tobago has a thick music history where it shares many backgrounds and cultures.

Igbo Studies Association (ISA)



The Igbo Studies Association is a non-profit organization set on promoting and encouraging scholarship to Igbo history, culture and society in African studies as inaugurated and initiated at the African Studies Association (ASA) Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on November 8, 1999.

ISA wishes to forge intellectual links and network with scholars, policy makers, and activists inside and outside Nigeria; to participate actively and collaboratively in continental and global debates with interested organizations in Nigeria, the U.S. and other countries on issues specifically relevant to Igbo studies; to work actively for the promotion of Igbo language with interested organizations and/or institutions in diverse regions of the world.

ISA Executive Officers 2023-25

President: Dr. Chidi Igwe

Vice President: Dr. Nkechi Nwokoye

Secretary: Mr. Kingsley Ezeuwa

Treasurer: Sr. Dr. Bellamine Ezumah

PRO: Mr. Chukwuemeka Oko

Program Director: Rev. Dr. Chijoke Azuawusiefe



MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to individuals who are interested in the issues related to Ndi Igbo.

Membership is open to Igbo scholars everywhere who are committed to engendering and promoting scholarship of all disciplines in Igbo studies.

Membership dues shall be paid annually (January 1st – December 31st) by all members.

Please refer to page 2 of the constitution for the annual membership dues:

<https://igbostudiesassociation.org/images/pdf/constitution.pdf>

2023 ISA Conference



ISA conducts its annual conference as a way to garner professionals to share their research, studies, and findings on issues relevant to Igbo history, culture, language, etc. This year's annual conference will be held at Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois for the first time since 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic. The conference is scheduled to take place on **Thursday, May 11 – Saturday, May 13, 2023 in Parmer Hall.**

Theme: *Ndu na Odimma Ndi Igbo: Igbo Life and Wellbeing*

An anticipated 30-50 guests from the U.S. and from Nigeria will arrive on Wednesday, May 10th. Arrangements have been made for the hotel van and Dominican University's van to be the mode of transportation to and from the conference. Hotels will provide breakfast in the morning and guests will be fed Wednesday evening.

Coffee and tea will be served at 11am with the conference starting at 9am on Thursday, May 11th with opening remarks from DU's President, Dr. Glenna Temple. At 1pm, lunch will be served by the university. Presentations on various Igbo topics will proceed until 5pm. On Saturday evening, after presentations, a gala will be held in the hotel.

ISA Advisory Board

Dr. Christian Ukaegbu (chair)

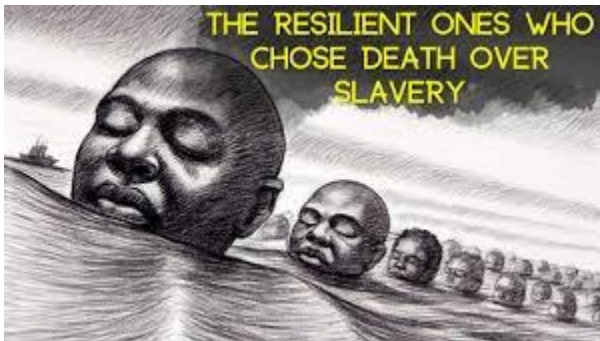
Mr. John Sherman (secretary)

Dr. Douglas Chambers

Dr. Lucy Apakama

Dr. Akachi Ezeigbo

Igbo Landing



Igbo Landing and the Creation of its Memorial Site

Furthermore, the center located in the Gullah Geechee Community of the Southeastern United States is aiming to secure a national historic designation for the Igbo Landing, situated on St. Simons Island in Georgia. Such a designation is of paramount importance to honor the memory of a group of enslaved Igbo people who revolted against their oppressors and tragically chose to end their lives by drowning in 1803, rather than endure the inhumane existence of slavery in America.

Professor Nnam visited the island last summer and now conveys that, “one of our plans this year is to turn that site into a memorial site for Igbo people all over the world to visit.”

The events that occurred on St. Simons Island is a testament to the invincible spirit of the Igbo people, who refused to submit to their domination and consequently challenged the prevailing image that enslaved individuals were surrendered to their fate, noted Okigbo. As he elaborates, the black experience in America has consistently been marked by an unwavering spirit of resistance and an unrelenting pursuit of freedom.

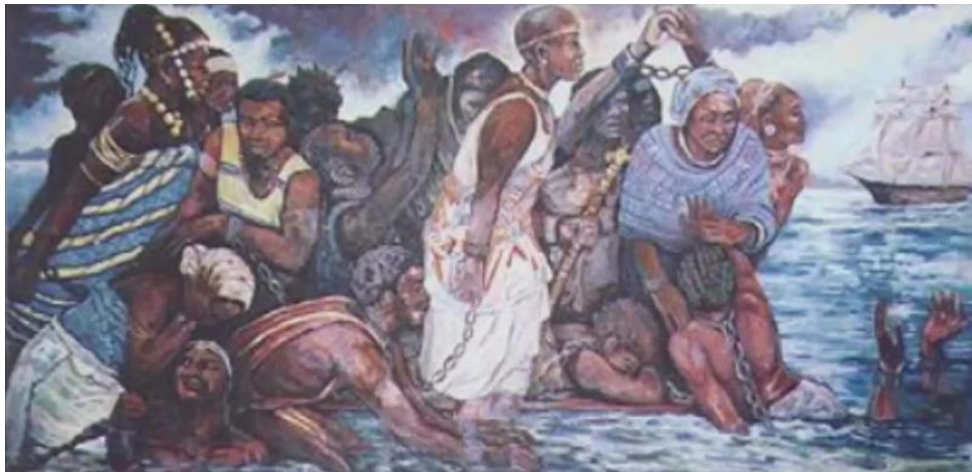
The Center for Igbo Studies was made possible by donations from various sources. 100 Igbos USA was among the contributors, providing a generous donation of \$25,000 towards the endowment. Subsequently, the former president of Dominican University, Donna Corroll, contributed an additional \$25,000 in a matching donation.

Nnam and Okigbo explained that while several sites across the country were considered for the location of the center, Dominican University emerged as the ultimate choice due to various compelling factors. These included its proximity to Chicago and O’Hare Airport, the significant population of Igbo individuals residing in Chicago, and the university’s welcoming and inclusive environment. Lastly, the ISA also conveyed how beautiful Dominican University is and stressed their appreciation towards the school’s staff and students in response to the amazing hospitality.

Igbo Landing History and Preservation

In May of 1803, a shipment of enslaved Igbo people landed on St. Simons Island, Georgia. These people refused to become slaves, so they walked into Dunbar Creek and drowned. Ever since, this “sight” has become a place remembered in local folklore as a “sacred place”.

“YOU MAY ENSLAVE MY BODY, BUT NOT MY MIND, NOT MY SOUL” – Igbo Landing’s Central Message



The Center for Igbo Studies has engaged in and organized a broad array of events to cultivate fundamental knowledge about the Igbo. Such prominent events include gathering Igbo scholars around the world to discuss the preservation of Igbo Landing, a historical landmark at St. Simon’s Island that is known as one of the nation’s largest mass suicides. In June 2022, Igbo Landing received the official recognition as a historic site. Yet the history behind Igbo Landing has gone unnoticed and ignored.

The Center for Igbo Studies seeks to conserve Igbo Landing for future posterity and to commemorate the many lives that were lost.

In the U.S., due to the international slave-trade, at least 60% of Black Americans are likely to have at least one Igbo genealogical ancestor. The Center for Igbo Studies greatest accomplishment is the preservation of the Igbo Landing historical landmark at St. Simons. There are plans to create a Visitors Center and a Museum. This will also be an opportunity to continue to provide educational, social programs, and an understanding of the global history of the Igbo people. To learn more about the Center’s national historic designation for Igbo Landing on St. Simons Island please visit: [Center for Igbo Studies Seeks Historic Designation for Site Linked to Slave Revolt](#) [Center for Igbo Studies Plans New Year of Lectures, Seeks Historic Designation for Site Linked to Slave Revolt](#).

The purpose of preserving Igbo landing is to protect the physical land it is on as it is being threatened by commercial development. Once this is done, we want to establish public access to the location where they can visit, as well as be educated on the local, regional, national, and international history of the Ibo people. By this Igbo landing can be converted into a site for cultural historical tourism. This will be achieved by constructing a historical site at the location and setting up a Global Igbo Museum. The cost of this will come to around \$10 million.

First Step Towards Preservation of Igbo Landing



The first step in the preservation of Igbo Landing was the public dedication on May 24, 2022 of an official Georgia state historical marker, "Ibo Landing: The Legacy of Resisting Enslavement". The Ethnology Club of Glynn Academy, a private high school in Brunswick, raised \$2,500 for the marker, which was matched by the Coastal Georgia Historical Society, and conducted the background research and historical marker application through February and November of 2021.

Second Step Towards Preservation of Igbo Landing

The second step was a community conference, Center for Igbo Studies and Gullah Geechee Small Group Meeting that took place on August 5th and 6th of 2022, sponsored by the Center for Igbo Studies, Dominican University, and organized principally by Dr. Gillian Richards-Greaves, CIS Advisory Board member and associate professor of anthropology at Coastal Carolina University, at the Coastal Georgia Historical Society. It was at this meeting that the attendees discussed and planned the proposed 3rd step in the process of officially setting up Igbo Landing as a historical site. This would be the **220th Annual Igbo Landing Commemoration** event which was held on May 26th through 28th 2023 in St. Simon's Island, Georgia.

Third Step Towards Preservation of Igbo Landing

The proposed 220th Commemoration will be the third step. Having achieved the emplacement of the historical marker, established relationships with CIS board members, and publicizing the significance of Ibo Landing to a statewide audience, now is the time to leverage these successes into a coordinated effort to preserve the site as a National Historic Site.

Upon online and on-site registration, guests within and outside of the United States joined one another in celebrating and recognizing the 220th year of the Igbo Landing site as a historical marker. This event was made possible thanks to the following sponsors: Saint Simons African American Heritage Coalition, St. Simons Land Trust, Dominican University and the Center for Igbo Studies, Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, Morehouse College through its Morehouse Mellon Public History and Digital Humanities Project, Coastal Georgia Historical Society, and the Robert S. Abbott Race Unity Institute, Inc.

Once guests were settled in St. Simons Island, the event began on Friday, May 26th, 2023. This day served as the welcoming day of the free 3-day event, allowing a maximum of 50 guests to visit and receive a guided tour of the Igbo Landing site via shuttle bus transportation. By 6pm U.S. Eastern Standard time, an opening reception was held at Emmanuel Baptist Church. The vice-chair of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, Commissioner Griffon Lotson; founding director of the Igbo History Foundation, LLC., Dr. Douglas Chambers; and director of the Susie King Taylor Institute and Ecology Center, Hermina Glass-Hill gave opening remarks.



"IGBO LANDING"
DIANA (DEE) WILLIAMS

220TH IGBO LANDING COMMEMORATION

ST. SIMONS ISLAND
MAY 26 -28, 2023

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED

IGBOLANDING220.COM
IGBOLANDING220TH@GMAIL.COM

SCAN TO REGISTER

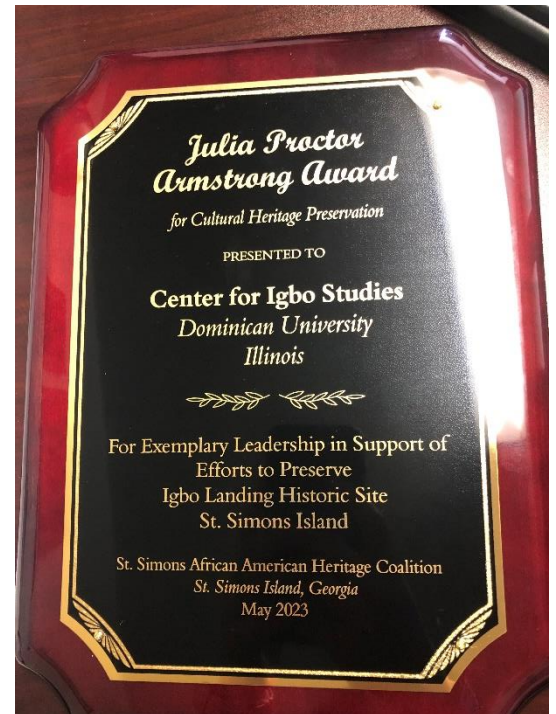




On Saturday, May 27th, the day commenced with a continental breakfast at 8:30am at Emmanuel Baptist Church, quickly followed by the Igbo Landing 220th Symposium. Elder T. A. Allen from the First African Baptist Church gave the invocation, while the founder/director of the Saint Simons African American Heritage Coalition, Amy Lotson Roberts; the vice-chair of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, Commissioner Griffon Lotson; and founding director of the Igbo History Foundation, LLC., Dr. Douglas Chambers gave opening remarks.

After the breaking of the kola nut, renowned Igbo scholars and professors spoke on various topics to the public and to those who joined via Zoom. For example, Dr. Nkuzi Michael Nnam, professor of Philosophy and director of the Center for Igbo Studies at Dominican University spoke for an allotted 10-15 minutes on the Traditional Igbo Concepts of Martyrdom. Dr. Onwubiko Agozino from Virginia Tech then performed a lyrical poem entitled Igbo Rising. Dr. Corrie Claiborne from Morehouse College provided introductory remarks on the screening of *Daughters of the Dust*, which was shown on screen through a projector. Neema Griffin, a student from Spelman College, also showcased a film entitled *Erase*.

In fact, during the luncheon, three awards were presented. Dr. Myiti Sengstacke-Rice, the CEO of the Chicago Defender Charities, bestowed upon the students and Mr. Jason Chasse-Fernald from the Glynn Academy Ethnology Club the Robert Sengstacke Abbott Award for Public Service. This award was also presented to Ms. Frankie Sullivan Quimby by Ms. LaTanya Abbott-Austin, President of the Robert S. Abbott Race Unity Institute. On the other hand, the Julia Proctor Armstrong Award for Cultural Heritage Preservation, sponsored by the St. Simons African Americans Heritage Coalition, was awarded to the Center for Igbo Studies at Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois for exemplary leadership in support of efforts to preserve Igbo Landing as a historical site. Judge Orion Douglass did the honor of presenting this award to the Center for Igbo Studies.





To finish off Saturday's symposium, Representative Rick Townsend from Georgia House District 179 read Gov. Kemp's proclamation. Representative Gabe Okoye from Georgia House District 102 and Representative Al Williams from Georgia House District 168 spoke alongside Ms. Victoria Smalls, director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. Geechee Gullah Ring Shouters gave a performance and so did the Atlanta Igbo School with a focus dance troupe. The day ended with a closing reception in the Fellowship Hall of Emmanuel Baptist Church.



Sunday, May 28th was designated the "Giving Thanks Day." There was a worship service at 10:30am followed by guided tours of Igbo Landing from 2-4pm.



Gullah Geechee: A Lasting Connection to West Africa

Enslaved West Africans lived and worked on St. Simons Island in relative isolation from the mainland. This allowed them to continue practicing their cultural traditions.

To survive in the colonies, the enslaved learned to speak English and

In fact, two other events scheduled to take place this year, 2023, will also aim in honoring and celebrating the 220th anniversary of Igbo Landing. Such events include:

Igbo Landing Symposium

May 23rd to May 24th, 2023 at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka
Nsukka, Enugu, Nigeria 410105

Pentagram Pictures University of Nigeria, Nsukka; The Centre for Memories, Enugu and Center for African Studies, Michigan State University, USA, Council of Igbo States in America (CISA), the Center for Igbo Studies at Dominican University are collaborating to commemorate 220 years of Igbo Landing. A symposium, mini art exhibition, and theatre production will aim to highlight the topical concern of the Igbo people and Africa by extension. The event will be hybrid to accommodate participants globally.

CISA Igbo World Festival of Arts & Culture

August 11th to August 12th, 2023 at Igbo Landing
Brunswick, GA 31520

The 25th anniversary of CISA's global festival will be celebrated at Igbo Landing. The choice of Igbo Landing for this year's festival is spiritually important, given that Igbo Landing holds a symbolic, powerful, and evocative brave story of active Igbo resistance against enslavement. Performances and displays of Igbo cultural traditions will help a collective body of Igbo people celebrate this groundbreaking festival.



Current and Active Members

- Dr. Ejikeme Obasi, M.D.
(Chairman)
- Dr. Nkuzi Nnam
- Dr. Martin Okoro
- Dr. Kanayo Odeluga, M.D.
- Dr. Chiyelu Odeluga, M.D.
- Mr. Medjo-Mezengue
- Mr. Kelvin Ward
- Ms. Roselind Parker
- Dr. Aly Drame
- Dr. Christian Ukaegbu
- Mr. Marcel Nwoko
- Mrs. Mercy Nwoko
- Ms. Udochi Nwoko
- Elder Nnamdi Agwuncha
- Mr. Peit Nwobodo
- Mr. Chinedu Ibe
- Dr. Mikel Rasheed
- Mrs. Ikeotuonye

Elders' Council

The Black World Studies program is advised by the Dominican University Black World Studies Elders' Council. Dominican University Black World Studies Elders' Council is an advisory board for the Black World Studies major. It is made up of former graduates of Dominican University, professionals and friends that have no personal relationship with the school. They come to the university simply to mentor our students, particularly the students with either majors or minors in Black World Studies.

Their goal is to showcase the rich and diverse culture of people of African descent and to broaden the educational experience of the students, community, and adjoining communities. Their mission is to seek, identify, and advise in the creation of programs and activities that enhance the Black World Studies experience at Dominican University.

ISA & CIS Lecture Series

This past year, the Center for Igbo Studies, housed at Dominican University, established the Lecture Series in collaboration with the Executives of ISA. The goal of these lectures is to bring established and well-known Igbo and international scholars to bring forth creative, informational news and ideas to the association. Students are open to 15 minutes of Q&A to ask any questions that they would like answered.

Dr. Ernest Uwazie



On October 15th, 2022, Dominican University was honored to host Dr. Ernest Uwazie as part of the Lecture Series via Zoom. Uwazie is a professor and chair of Criminal Justice as well as the Director/Founder of the Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution at California State University.

Dr. Uwazie spoke on the topic of restorative justice, more specifically, ***“Exploring a Restorative Justice Framework in domestic violence cases in the U.S. African diaspora communities and families: Challenges and Prospects.”*** His presentation outlined key demographics of the African diaspora population, identified key contributing factors to the problem of domestic violence, and suggested some ideas for thinking and developing a culturally responsive restorative justice approach.

Dr. Raphael Njoku



Dr. Njoku was also part of the Lecture Series via Zoom on December 3rd, 2022. Dr. Njoku is an African History and Global Studies professor at Idaho State University as well as the Chair of the Department of Global Studies at ISU. With research specialties in African history like decolonization, African intellectual history, African Diaspora studies, African politics, and global studies, Dr. Njoku has published 12 books and 45 articles in academic journal and edited volumes.

Dr. Raphael Njoku's lecture presentation was on ***“Queen Elizabeth II and the Biafran War: History, Memory, and Igbo Quest for Political Leadership in the Nigerian Setting.”*** Dr. Njoku stated, “The Biafran-Nigerian conflict of 1967-1970 remains one of modern history's most studied civil crises. Scholars have investigated aspects of the war but not precisely the role of the British Monarchy. This is crucial because the recent passing of the Queen reignited bitter memories of the conflict with extreme angry reactions from certain quarters.” This lecture revisits dimensions of the conflict, especially the roles played by Prime Minister Harold Wilson's led government, the OAU, and the Commonwealth under Her Majesty.

Dr. Mirian Alike



Dominican's most recent speaker, Dr. Mirian Alike, spoke on February 18th, 2023, via Zoom. Dr. Mirian Alike is a lecturer at Philosophy Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Doctorate Degrees from the Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Mirian specializes in Metaphysics with a special interest in African Philosophy and Cultural Studies. She has great passion for research, community services and volunteer services. She is an editorial member of some journals, including Unizik Journal of Arts (UJAH).

Dr. Mirian Alike's lecture presentation centered on ***“Life and Sacredness: A Synergy in Abating Blood Shedding for Wealth Acquisition among Igbo Youths.”*** She spoke on the Igbo youth and how these youth have delved into the spilling of blood to acquire wealth. In other words, “Killing Rituals.” There have been many reports of missing Igbo youth who are later found dead with their bodies disemboweled. The shedding of blood in Igbo land is an abomination against *Ala* – the Earth goddess, according to Dr. Mirian Alike. This lecture critically examined the emerging trends and yearning for wealth acquisition among Igbo youths through these rituals.

Speakers brought by the Center for Igbo Studies to Dominican University

Honorable Timothy C. Evans



Timothy C. Evans serves as the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, the largest of the 24 judicial circuits in Illinois and also one of the largest unified court systems in the world. More than 1 million cases are annually filed in the court, which serves Cook County's nearly 5.2 million residents.

Chief Judge Evans was first elected Chief Judge in September 2001 by unanimous vote of the circuit judges. He was subsequently re-elected in 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019, and 2022.

Various organizations have honored Chief Judge Evans with dozens of awards for judicial excellence, distinguished service, and humanitarian causes. Academic scholarships have also been established in his name. In 2009, he became the first judge from Illinois to receive the William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence from the National Center for State Courts. The award is one of the most prestigious judicial honors in the country and has been presented annually since 1996 by the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. In 2017, Chicago Lawyer magazine named Chief Judge Evans the Person of the Year. In 2022, Judge Evans was honored with the Howard T. Markey Award by the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law and inducted into the National Civil Rights Hall of Fame by the National Civil Rights Library. In 2023, the Pilsen neighbors Community Council awarded Judge Evans the Rosa Parks Award for his work on restorative justice.

Chief Judge Evans is a 1965 graduate of the University of Illinois. He received his J.D from The John Marshall Law School in Chicago in 1969. Upon graduation from John Marshall, Chief Judge Evans embarked on a lifelong pursuit of public service. He entered city government in 1969 when he joined the City of Chicago's Law Department as an assistant corporation counsel. He later joined the City of Chicago's Department of Investigations, rising to deputy commissioner. In 1973, voters elected him to represent the 4th Ward of the City Council, a position he held for 18 years while maintaining a private law practice.

With the election of Harold Washington as mayor in 1983, Chief Judge Evans assumed the post of floor leader of the City Council. He also chaired several committees, such as the Finance, Budget, and Health committees.

In 1982, he ascended to the Cook County judiciary as a circuit judge. Three years later, he was appointed the presiding judge of the Domestic Relations Division. In 2000, he was appointed presiding judge of the Law Division, where he served until his election as Chief Judge.

Dominican University was honored to welcome Chief Judge Evans in February 2023 as a keynote speaker in commemoration of Black History Month. Chief Judge Evans spoke about on **"Restorative Justice"** and his vision for a judicial system focused on reform of the current misaligned system, shifting a greater focus to preventing offenders from re-imprisonment. He's taken it upon himself to reform the prison system to center it around giving people second chances and keeping first time offenders out of jail.

He also spoke about his implementation of what he calls a community-centered restorative justice court. He has developed it for emerging adults between the ages of 18 to 26, who are typically the most vulnerable in the court system because they are tried as adults. His restorative justice court allows the community to decide the punishment for malefactors rather than widespread prison-based punishments. When one of these emerging adults commits a crime, they are tried in this restorative justice court where they must admit to their wrongdoings as well as apologize and repair the harm for the crime that they committed. This program is called the Repair Harm Agreement (RHA), and must be signed by the victim, the malefactor, the judges, and the officers who made the arrest. From there, if the malefactor completes the RHA, the case is dismissed, and the record of the emerging adult is expunged.

Finally, Chief Judge Evans mentioned he has established three restorative justice courts across Cook County. He has also established mentally ill courts and veteran's courts across the state. Overall, his work has shown to come to fruition as emerging adults charged in the restorative justice courts are only re-charged 10% of the time.

Mayor Rory Hoskins



Mayor Rory Hoskins is the Mayor and Commissioner of Public Affairs of Forest Park. He was elected Mayor of Forest Park on April 2, 2019, and was the first African-American to have ever been elected to any public office in the Village of Forest Park when he was elected to serve as a village commissioner in 2007. Hoskins assumed the Office of Mayor on May 13, 2019.

He is responsible for presiding at all meetings of the Village Council, has jurisdiction and supervisions of the Police Department, executes all agreements/contracts on behalf of the Village, and has general supervision over all departments, officers, and employees of the Village. In addition, Mayor Hoskins acts in the capacity of Local Liquor Commissioner.

In 2009, Hoskins and a group of volunteers established Forest Park's annual Juneteenth celebration. While serving as a village commissioner, he pushed for the creation of Forest Park's Diversity Commission (established in 2015). Having been elected to serve two consecutive terms as a village commissioner, Hoskins declined to seek a third term. In 2019, Mayor Hoskins convened a group of neighbors and established the village's first ever Hispanic Heritage Month event.

Mayor Hoskins graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1992 with a B.A. in Government. Hoskins earned a Master of Social Work degree from Loyola University Chicago in 1999, and graduated from Loyola University of Chicago School of Law in 2012. Hoskins is a member of the Illinois Bar.

In February 2023, Dominican University was honored to welcome Mayor Rory Hoskins to speak about ***“Justice in a Time of Racial Turmoil.”*** To begin his speech, Hoskins launched into his early years as the head of public office. He said that he had eight “easy” months as mayor before the COVID-19 pandemic became the forefront. During this time of heavy stress and unrest, Hoskins stated that the “social worker in me came out.” As was the case across national government, Hoskins told the audience that there was “a lot of hostility in Village Hall.” This was a completely unprecedented time for the entire nation, and Hoskins spoke about the struggles he faced, but eventual success he found.

Mayor Hoskins also spoke about the police reform of the River Forest police that he sparked. In the light of the racial reckoning that the entire nation was and continues to be under, Mayor Hoskins engaged in sweeping reform of the local police department. This was all heavily sparked after a young African American male died in the custody of the River Forest police right at the beginning of the pandemic, and not long after the George Floyd murder. Mayor Hoskins took part in many peaceful protests marches across the city, all of which were organized by community members and grassroots organizations. Perhaps one of Mayor Hoskins greatest accomplishments as Mayor, however, was making Juneteenth a household term in Illinois.

Dr. Myiti Sengstacke-Rice



Myiti Sengstacke-Rice is the President and CEO of the Chicago Defender Charities. She also oversees the iconic 94 year old Bud Billiken Parade and Festival. Sengstacke-Rice is the author of *Chicago Defender*, a book that captures the newspaper’s impact on American history. She is also a contributing author to *Building the Black Metropolis: African American Entrepreneurship in Chicago* (New Black Studies Series). Sengstacke-Rice has worked in journalism, publishing, and academia, and has been featured in several publications, including *Black Enterprise*, *Essence*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, and *CNN*. Sengstacke-Rice is the award-winning founding editor-in-chief of magazine “UPTOWN” in New York City. Sengstacke-Rice holds a Masters in Education in Inner City Studies from Northeastern Illinois University and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Governors State University in Illinois. Her critical contributions to the history of media, culture, and politics connect to American and African American history and literature.

Dominican University was honored to welcome Ms. Myiti Sengstacke-Rice as the keynote speaker at the Black Achievements Ceremony (BAC) on Tuesday, April 25th 2023. She was brought by the Center for Cultural Liberation (CCL) here at Dominican University. She spoke about legacy and questioned the audience on how they wish to be remembered. In addition, she offered valuable advice on how she found her legacy and purpose. First, she explains the importance of dreaming big and having a vision.

Second, she states you must write your vision down in the present tense. Third, she mentions you must speak the vision out loud, quoting Proverbs 18:21 which says, "Life and death are in the power of the tongue." As such, she underscores how you must speak life to your vision. Finally, she offers the words: "Find inspiration." In speaking about her inspiration, her great-grand Uncle Robert Sengstacke Abbott, she mentions he founded the Chicago Defender newspaper in 1905. He was a Black newspaper publisher, lawyer, and businessman who used his platform to promote and inspire his community to achieve excellence. He was responsible for the Great Northern Migration.

Sengtsacke-Rice encapsulates her great grand Uncle's legacy with a reminder to all people to strive for excellence in their own lives and make a positive impact on the world. She proceeded to speak more on the true meaning of legacy, which to her is, "something that you create every single day, through your actions, your words, and your relationships." She assures that everything a person does builds their legacy and that the legacy you leave behind is your choice.

Sengstacke-Rice moved on to action steps on how to create a meaningful legacy that last, for which she cites three key elements: maintaining a purpose that goes beyond yourself, cementing your values as your guiding principles, and cultivating positive relationships based on love, connection, and support. She closed with several helpful tips for completing the three key elements she mentioned. First is to make a difference in your community through volunteer work. Also, she advises, "Be mindful of how you treat others, how you use your resources, and how you contribute to society."

Justice Joy V. Cunningham



Justice Joy Virginia Cunningham has served as Associate General Counsel for Loyola University of Chicago and Loyola University Health System, and as a litigator with the law firm of French, Rogers, Kezelis & Kominiarek. She also served as an Assistant Illinois Attorney General and as a Judicial Clerk to Illinois Appellate Justice Glenn Johnson. Justice Cunningham was elected President of the Chicago Bar Association (2004-05), where she became the first African American woman to lead the nation's largest municipal Bar Association. She has also served on the Board of Directors for the Chicago Bar Foundation, the Center for Conflict Resolution, and the Center for Disability and Elder Law, and the Chicago Legal Clinic.

Justice Cunningham attended the City University of New York where she obtained a Bachelor of Science degree. She later attended John Marshall Law School in Chicago where she earned a law degree in 1982. Before joining the Illinois Appellate Court, she served as Senior Vice President, General Counsel, and Corporate Secretary for the Northwestern Memorial System, which includes Northwestern Memorial Hospital and Northwestern Memorial Foundation. Prior to joining Northwestern Memorial in 2000, she served as a Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, where she had a diverse assignment, including jury trials. She is admitted to practice law before the Illinois, New York, Federal, and the Federal Trial Bars.

She has authored professional publications and is a member of a number of professional and civic associations, including the American Bar Association, Chicago Bar Association, Cook County Bar Association, Illinois State Bar Association, and Women's Bar of Illinois. She has been recognized for her volunteer service to several community and civic organizations including the Chicago Volunteer Legal Services, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, Chicago Association for the Education of Young Children, and the March of Dimes. She is a member of the Economic Club of Chicago and the Chicago Network. In December of 2006, she became a Justice of the Illinois Appellate Court.

Dominican University was honored to welcome Justice Cunningham in November 2022 to speak about the ***“Need for Justice Reform and [greater] Diversity on the Bench.”*** She spoke specifically about the need for greater representation of both women and African American people on the judiciary bench in Illinois and across the nation.

Dr. Ngozi Ezike



Dr. Ngozi Ezike is a very familiar name and face to the residents of Illinois. She is the immediate past Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). She was the first Black woman ever appointed to lead the nearly 150-year old state agency and she valiantly navigated the state through the most difficult waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Ezike is a board-certified internist and pediatrician, who previously worked at Cook County Health (CCH). She served for more than 15 years in various direct patient care and administrative roles, including medical directorships at the Austin Health Center and Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. She also has delivered inpatient care at Stroger Hospital and primary and preventive care in community and school-based clinics.

Dr. Ezike is a nationally recognized public health and health leader. In addition to her degrees from Harvard University and the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine, Dr. Ezike holds honorary doctorates from Knox College, Southern Illinois University, and Rosalind Franklin School of Medicine.

She is the recipient of dozens of awards and accolades, including the Lester H. McKeever Individual Service Award from the Chicago Urban League, the Jane Addams Medal of Freedom, and USA Today's Inaugural Women of the Year Award for the State of Illinois.

An advocate for promoting self-care and healthy living, particularly in challenging times, Dr. Ezike is an avid tennis player who recently won a USTA League National Championship. Dr. Ezike also loves to travel with her husband and four children.

Dr. Ngozi Ezike was selected to be the keynote speaker at Dominican University's Black Achievements Ceremony, which took place on Monday, April 25th, 2022. In the Lund Auditorium.

Professor William Leslie Balan-Gaubert



William Leslie Balan-Gaubert – University of Chicago Professor ***"The Price of Freedom: The Experience of Africans in the Americas"*** (February 1st, 2022)

Mr. Mike Asongwe, Mr. Efi Tembon, Mr. Henry Njiwah



Mr. Efi Tembon is the founder and CEO of the Oasis Network for Community Transformation, an organization serving minority language groups in the Sahel Region of Africa developing leaders to lead change in their communities. Tembon is an advocate for peace building and has been involved in advocacy to end the ongoing atrocities and the war in his homeland of Southern Cameroons/Ambazonia. He has spoken in the US Congress House Sub- Committee for Africa, Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, the UK, Canadian, and German Parliaments. Tembon chairs the Cameroon Working Group, an organization that brings together 26 human rights organizations and academic institutions doing advocacy and research on the ongoing conflict in the Southern Cameroons.

He also served as the Executive Director for Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) from 2012-2018. Additionally, he was the Facilitator of the Network for Impact in Cameroon from 2013- 2018. The Network for Impact brings together the various denominations and Bible translation agencies to serve communities in Cameroon. Also, Tembon tenured as the President of FOBA -Cameroon (Forum of Bible Agencies Cameroon) from 2012-2016. The forum brought together nine Bible Agencies in Cameroon, including a denomination. Similarly, he was the co-leader of the Impact Conference of Global South Leaders from 2012-2018. This conference brought Bible translation leaders from Asia and Africa bi-annually to share best practices and encourage one another. Finally, Tembon was the Church Relations Director for SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) and CABTAL from 2008 -2012. Tembon has an MA in Organizational Leadership from Crown College in Minnesota.

Mr. Henry A. Njiwah is an American Citizen of Ambazonian origin, who resides in Chicago. He has worked for United Airlines as a Customer Service Agent since 2006. He is a part-time real estate agent and is also President of the 501 C. Southern Cameroons Humanitarian Initiative, an organization created for outreach, mobilization, and support to the victims of the ongoing crises in Southern Cameroon/Ambazonia. He is a part of the class of '81 from the University of Houston Down Town College. He graduated with a B.Sc in Business and Commerce and a minor in Banking.

Dominican University was proud to welcome Mr. Mike Asongwe, Mr. Efi Walters Tembon, and Mr. Henry Njiwah on February 17th, 2022. Their presentation, **“Global Silence: Ongoing Genocide in Southern Cameroon,”** focused on the ongoing conflict between the English and French-speaking people of Cameroon. The three speakers also educated our students on the history of Cameroon, a country in Central Africa.

Their presentation covered Cameroon’s history when it was under a German Protectorate from 1911 to 1918, the year Germany lost the First World War. Other countries under a German Protectorate at the same time included both Namibia and Togo. After the war, the League of Nations along with Allied Forces divided Cameroon between France and Britain. The North-Western and South-Western part became the British-Cameroon. The North-Eastern and South-Eastern part, which was and remains much larger, became the French-Cameroon.

As mentioned, there is a conflict in Cameroon today between the English and French Cameroon. The English Cameroon wants to secede and become an independent country because they feel threatened by the rest of the country. They claim not to have ever produced a leader of the country since independence simply because of tribalism, neglect, and unjust treatment from the French-speaking part of Cameroon. Both Mbida, Ahidjo, and Paul Biya are from French Cameroon. The problem, they said, is not only their place of origin, but the fact that they are oppressed, threatened, and about to be exterminated with unjust laws and brutality from police and soldiers who are supposed to protect them.

President of Cook County Board of Commissioners Toni Preckwinkle



Toni Preckwinkle is the 35th president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, an office she has held since 2010. She is the first Black woman to be elected to the office. A dedicated and effective public servant, President Preckwinkle has worked to transform County government through increased fiscal responsibility, transparency, and improved services. Leveraging more than 30 years of political experience and leadership, President Preckwinkle has restored credibility to County government, solving for more than \$2.87 billion in budget deficits and providing supplemental pension payments of almost \$2 billion above the required contribution since 2016, significantly reducing unfunded pension liabilities.

As the top executive in Cook County, the nation's second most populous County, President Preckwinkle oversees one of the nation's largest public health and hospitals systems and one of the nation's largest criminal justice systems. Under her leadership, Cook County used the Affordable Care Act to create CountyCare, a managed care program for Medicaid-eligible residents. Cook County provides quality care to more than 500,000 individuals through the health system and health plan.

Promoting equity, specifically racial equity, has been a central principle of President Preckwinkle's leadership. In November 2018, the Office of the President released the Cook County Policy Roadmap: Five-Year Strategic Plan for Offices Under the President to guide her administration's policy and equity work.

Prior to holding elected office, President Preckwinkle was a high school history teacher for ten years, before serving as an economic development coordinator for the City of Chicago and the executive director of the Chicago Jobs Council. A native of St. Paul, Minnesota, President Preckwinkle came to Chicago to attend the University of Chicago, from where she holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees. She is the proud mother of two and grandmother of three.

Upon her visit to Dominican University on November 11th, 2021, Preckwinkle spoke to students majoring in Black World Studies, Criminology, Sociology, and Political Science on the topic of **“Necessity of Equity Driven Governance in Our Times.”** Dealing heavily with Cook County’s criminal justice system, Toni Preckwinkle mentioned the problematic nature of money bail/cash bond and how it serves to prolong the stay of many poor individuals at our local county jails. In fact, her office, at the time, was looking for ways to alleviate this widespread issue. It was evident that President Preckwinkle has remained committed to reimagining our criminal justice system, for both adults and juveniles, and taking an approach that also addresses mental health issues, substance abuse and addiction as illnesses to be treated, not crimes to be dealt with punitively.

U.S. Congressman Danny Davis



Danny K. Davis was chosen by the people of the 7th Congressional District of Illinois as their Representative in Congress on November 5, 1996. He has been re-elected by large majorities to succeeding Congress.

In the 117th Congress, Representative Davis has been reappointed to the Committee on Ways and Means and is the Chairman of the Worker and Family Support Subcommittee. Davis also serves on the Oversight and Reform Committee. Congressional Davis is a member of several Congressional Caucuses including the Congressional Black Caucus, the Progressive Caucus, the Urban Caucus, the Community Health Center’s Caucus, the Congressional Sugar Caucus, the Congressional Caucus on Black Men and Boys and Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Re-entry.

Congressman Davis has distinguished himself as an articulate voice for his constituents and as an effective legislator able to move major bills to passage. He has developed a unique and energetic style of communication and interaction with his constituents setting up dozens of advisory task forces to consider significant questions of public policy. He hosts several weekly television and radio shows which feature audience call in and produces regular written reports to every household in the district.

In addition, he maintains weekly office hours in the district and is widely sought after as a speaker at conferences and events.

In the 117th Congress Representative Davis is resolutely committed to preserving our democracy, protecting social security, maintaining our nation's gains in civil and human rights, women's rights, voting rights, protection of the environment, consumer and labor protections, reducing inequality, and ensuring quality, affordable health care for all, while maintaining his long time focus on issues of job creation, poverty, health care, education, youth and criminal justice reform.

Before seeking public office, Congressman Davis had productive careers as an educator, community organizer, health planner/administrator and civil rights advocate. He has received hundreds of awards and citations for outstanding work in the areas of health, education, human relations, politics and advocacy including six honorary Doctorate Degrees from well-known Colleges and Universities.

U.S. Congressman Danny Davis, alongside with Professor William Leslie Balan-Gaubert from the University of Chicago, spoke on the topic of **"Unshackling Haiti"** on September 16th, 2021. The lecture discussed Haiti under French colonial rule and how Haiti was the first nation in the Western hemisphere where black people revolted and sought independence, along with discussing the bilateral and multilateral relations between Haiti and the United States.

Commissioner Richard R. Boykin



Former Cook County Commissioner Richard R. Boykin, 1st District, began his career in public service as a Lyndon B. Johnson Intern for U.S. Representative Bobby Rush. He went on to serve as a Congressional Black Caucus Fellow for former U.S. Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, the first African American woman elected to the United States Senate. Former Commissioner Boykin went on to make his mark as Legislative Director and then Chief of Staff to U.S. Representative Danny K. Davis.

He served as Congressman Davis' Chief of Staff for nine years, where he was responsible for a staff of twenty-two and a \$1.4 million annual budget. He was instrumental in the Congressman's welfare-to-work, health care, energy and utility, and appropriations accomplishments.

Born in Jackson, Mississippi and raised in the Englewood community in Chicago, Former Commissioner Boykin spent a part of his childhood on public assistance. He attended Chicago Vocational High School and accepted an athletic scholarship to Central State University (CSU) in Ohio. While at CSU, Former Commissioner Boykin majored in Political Science, and consistently made the National Dean's List, going on to attain the President's Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement. He graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1990. In 2015, Central State University inducted Former Commissioner Boykin into its Achievement Hall of Fame. Following graduation, Former Commissioner Boykin returned to Chicago to teach in the Chicago Public Schools for a year.

In 1991, he began his legal education at the University of Dayton, School of Law. In 1992 he received the prestigious Benjamin H. Logan NAACP Scholarship in recognition of his excellence in legal education. Former Commissioner Boykin practiced law in the Chicago and Washington D.C. offices of Barnes & Thornburg LLP.

In November of 2014 he was elected Cook County Former Commissioner for the 1st District, and sworn in on December 1, 2014. His agenda on the County Board of Commissioners prioritizes the reduction of gun violence, criminal justice reform, jobs, economic development, and the expansion of mental health services. Former Commissioner Boykin has been a champion for human rights. He demanded a Department of Justice investigation into allegations of Human and Civil Rights violations at the Homan Square Police site. Former Commissioner Boykin led the initiative to place referendum question regarding expanded funding for mental health treatment on the November 2014 ballot. The referendum was county-wide and passed with over 1.4 million votes. Former Commissioner Boykin led the effort to encourage Facebook to be more responsive in removing horrific and vile videos from their platform. In 2015, Former Commissioner Boykin was the sponsor of numerous ordinances that benefited the residents of Cook County, including: a "no choke" ordinance that bans Cook County Law Enforcement from using chokeholds on suspects; an ordinance that created stiffer financial penalties for individuals caught carrying illegal handguns; an ordinance that created a Cook County Commission on Youth; an ordinance placing a tax on ammunition; an ordinance creating a Cook County Gun Violence Coordinator and Task Force; an ordinance that removed the tax on Feminine Hygiene Products and an ordinance that urged Cook County Law Enforcement to adopt the ACLU's Stop and Frisk recommendations. Further, he stood with the people and voted "no" to the 1% sales tax increase and he voted "no" on the beverage tax increase.

On Thursday, February 27th, 2020, Former Commissioner Boykin spoke on the topic of "Access to Justice in Cook County." Access to justice in Cook County is experienced differently for our white and minority populations. Unfortunately, people of color, especially young black men, get stopped, arrested, charged, and convicted at disproportionately higher rates than white people – such experience is evident within cook county. Thus, there is relatively a lack of justice for our communities of color.

Attorney Chris Stacey



Chris Stacey has spent his career fighting injustice and protecting the rights of some of our community's most vulnerable. As an accomplished attorney, he has worked with victims of fraud to recover what's been taken from them and helps victims of corporate negligence get justice.

Chris' faith walks compelled to follow the lead of his Church even as it relates to his legal career. Chris attends the LaSalle Street Church. In the 1970's, the LaSalle Street Church decided to create the Cabrini Legal Aid Clinic. As a member of the church, Chris followed in the steps of parishioners and became involved with Cabrini Green Legal Aid – an organization that, for 40 years, has provided legal representation for individuals who would otherwise have none. For 18 years, Chris served on the board and raised funds, enabling a large number of community members to be represented in court. Beyond that, the legal aid clinic provides social services and employment assistance to those they serve. Chris knows that good works require providing for all the needs of the individuals who seek assistance.

Chris' faith, and his commitment to justice, led him to serve immigrants and refugees as an attorney and as an advisory board member of World Relief International, which empowers churches to serve the most vulnerable among us. He has worked to help refugees who escaped the genocide of the Killing Fields of Cambodia to find new homes and lives in Chicago. He assisted with everything from finding a safe place to live, to navigate the complicated immigration red tape, to simply being a friend to those who have lost everything and seek nothing more than the chance to experience peace. Chris and his wife hosted and assisted a refugee family from Cameroon, Africa while helping them find a permanent place to settle.

Attorney Chris Stacey was welcomed by Dominican University and its students to discuss matters on *"Access to Justice in motion – Cabrini Green experience"* on February 27th, 2020. Attorney Stacey started his speech with a history of what he called the "Cabrini Green experience." Cabrini Green was a "ghetto" in Illinois where low-income African-Americans were sent and almost forgotten. It was not well-maintained, and crime was rampant. Eventually, it was turned down and residents scattered all over the city and suburbs.

It was always a topic of debate by politicians to the point that former Mayor Jane Byrne, the first female leader of Chicago, once moved to live in order to bring peace and tranquility to that part of the city. Yet, crime went up as soon as she moved out.

Attorney Chris Stacey decried that episode and maintained that access to justice is only fulfilled when justice is targeted to affect everyone – regardless of race or gender.

Justice Sharen Oden Johnson



Justice Sharon Oden Johnson currently serves on the First District of the Illinois Appellate Court. Prior thereto Justice Johnson was elected to the Circuit Court of Cook County, where she served in the Domestic Relations Division and Traffic Section from 2010 to 2020. Before joining the Illinois Judiciary, Justice Johnson owned a small boutique law firm for 13 years, worked for the Chicago Mayor’s Office of Employment and Training, served as a Law Clerk for the Honorable Lawrence M. Lawson of the New Jersey Superior Court, and externed for the United State Department of Justice. A native of Illinois, Justice Johnson is a proud graduate of Bradley University, in Peoria, Illinois, and Howard University School of Law, in Washington, D.C.

A proven leader among judges, she has served dutifully on the Illinois Judicial Council (former President and Scholarship Committee Chairperson); Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Professional Responsibility (Unauthorized Practice of Law Subcommittee Chairperson); Chicago Bar Association Task Force Subcommittee Working Group on the Sustainable Practice of Law; Illinois Judges Association subcommittee: Restoring Confidence in the Legal System; Cook County Bar Association; Cook County Judicial Mentor Program; Judicial Education faculty; National Bar Association; Alternative Dispute Resolution Exploratory Committee; Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County Expungement Summit (Hearing Judge); Cook County Bar Association Foundation Law Day Committee (Judicial Coordinator); Abolitionist Institute, South Suburban NAACP; National Hook-Up of Black Women, Lansing Christian School Parent Club (President); International Pentecostal Assembly Ecumenical Network (IPAE); Operation PUSH; and Musical Arts Institute Board of Directors.

As a result of her commitment to the law, she has received and accepted many awards, and speaking engagements: Cook County Bar Association Judicial Award; Illinois Judicial Council Chairperson's Service Award (under three administrations); Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County Outstanding Women in the Judiciary; Illinois Judicial Council "Conversations with Judges" panelist; Annual Black History Month Courthouse Tours; Legal Services Honorary Civic Committee; Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court "Community Treasures" Master of Ceremonies; "As Judges See it: Top Mistakes Attorneys Make in the Domestic Relations Court," National Business Institute; "Domestic Relations Court Judicial Forum," National Business Institute; "Mediating Domestic Violence – Knowing what we don't know, but need to do?" LEDDED, Ltd.; "Intimate Partner Violence – DV Rules, Regulations, and Remedies," LEDDED, Ltd.; "When Economic Struggles Constrain Family Choices," Schiff Hardin LLP; "Changing Landscape of Family Law in the 21st Century" Panel Member, LEDDED, Ltd.; "Liberia: The Restructuring of a Legal System in a Reemerging African Nation," Africa International House, African Political Action Committee, The Liberian Consulate and Illinois Judicial Council; and, "Community Conversation Project," Chicago Department of Family and Support Services Office on Violence against Women and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

She has also been recognized for her contributions to the community she serves: Phi Beta Sigma Crescent Award; Alpha Gamma Pi Community Service Award; Black Businesswoman of the Year – Parkway Community House; National Hook-Up of Black Women Community Service Award; Top Ladies of Distinction – Skyline Chapter; Project A.C.H.I.E.V.E. Outstanding Service Award; Kizzy Award – Revlon Special Student Fund; Prairie State College Single Parent Day Panelist; Christian Tabernacle Church Black History Month Guest Speaker; "Straight Talk Radio featuring My Community Plan Foundation" guest host on WVON 1690AM; "Community Forum" panelist, Chicago 26th Ward; and, Chicago Pastor's Rally Excellence in Leadership Award.

Justice Johnson served as one of the keynote speakers on February 27th, 2020 at Dominican University, where she spoke on the topic of **"Black History from the Bench."** Justice Sharon Oden Johnson expressed the need to bring more African-Americans to the bench, especially women. She went on to encourage Dominican students to study very hard as they are the future of the justice system in America. She talked about her history: how she was struggled and of the role models who have helped her get to where she is now: First District of the Illinois Appellate Court. Students were enamored by her speech, especially the pre-law students. Since then, the Black World Studies office has been inundated with calls on how to bring her back to Dominican University.

Rev. Mitchell L. Johnson



Reverend Mitchell L. Johnson has been a Chicagoland community leader for over two decades. He is a nationally recognized economic development expert who has helped hundreds of churches, non-profits, and for-profit organizations serve as catalysts for economic growth and empowerment in their communities. He is a member of the African American Chamber of Commerce, the National Forum of Black Public Administrators, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., the Small Business Capital Fund of MS, Inc., and an Advisory Council member of the Midwest division of the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance. Johnson currently serves as a member of the Illinois Baptist State Association Committee on Order of Business and is the Chaplin of the National Policy Alliance.

Reverend Johnson currently serves as the Chairman and CEO of My Community Plan Foundation (MCP). In his work with MCP, Johnson helps direct financial resources to approximately 20,000 churches and other non-profit organizations. Johnson's focus on community economic development and collaboration has led to roles serving as Executive Director of Developing Communities Project (DCP) – a position previously held by Former President Barack Obama. Reverend Johnson has served as the Economic Development Officer for the Baptist State Convention of Illinois as well as a faculty member of Lifeway Black Church Leadership and Family Conference. Johnson has served as a consultant for Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi), the world's largest Jewish college fraternity, operating chapters on more than 190 college campuses in seven countries. Johnson is the Executive Producer and Host of Straight Talk Radio featuring My Community Plan Foundation which is a public service talk show reaching MCP members and friends across the country and in Africa. Johnson also serves as an Associate Minister at Hillcrest Baptist Church where Dr. Adron Robinson is the Senior Pastor.

Reverend Johnson's work at DCP resulted in community bonding companies, as well as local minority owned electric companies, receiving contracts for public sector projects including the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Redline upgrade. His work also helped foster the growth of community based private enterprises in underserved communities.

A graduate of Fisk University in Nashville, TN, Johnson received his Juris Doctorate from Case Western Reserve University School of Law. His further studies included studying law at Downing College in Cambridge, England and at the University of Connecticut School of Law in Storrs, Connecticut. He is currently studying at Northern Seminary where his concentration is Christian Community Development.

Reverend Johnson and his wife, Cook County Justice Sharon O. Johnson, live with their wonderful children in Calumet City, Illinois.

Speaking on **“Black History No Justice,”** Reverend Mitchell L. Johnson, an attorney at law, went through the history of blacks in America and showed how the concept of justice has not been applied to them. He talked about slavery in America, Jim Crow Laws, *Plessy v. Ferguson* – which supported the concept of “separate but equal” and which was eventually overturned by the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* – thanks to Justice Thurgood Marshall.



Reverend Mitchell went on to talk about how the Civil Rights law would not have started were it not for the “good trouble” from Rosa Parks, who refused to sit at the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama. He pointed out that it was this problem that started the young Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. with the non-violent preaching, which eventually led to the Civil Rights Movement in 1964.

Since then, blacks still have not been treated with justice as their counterparts in America. This is evident by the lack of housing, jobs, police brutality in America, and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement – which is still being heavily misunderstood by a lot of people, including some Black Americans themselves.