International Women's Day: In Conversation with Dr Ibironke Odumosu-Ayanu

By:

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To mark the 2021 International Women's Day themed #Choose to Challenge, Afronomicslaw.org celebrates Dr Ibironke Odumosu-Ayanu's brilliant contributions to International Law. Dr Odumosu-Ayanu is an Associate Professor at the University of Saskatchewan College of Law. She has served as a consultant for the United Nations University (UNU) on a UNCTAD/UNU project on the rule of law and good business practices in zones of conflict. In addition to service on advisory boards, she serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Law and Society Association.

"#Choose to Challenge: A challenged world is an alert world and from challenge comes change. So let's all choose to challenge."

Afronomicslaw.org (A): How did you become interested in academia and international economic law?

Dr Ibironke Odumosu-Ayanu (IOA): As a child, I was interested in communicating my thoughts in writing and teaching. My parents supported these interests, guiding me along the way, and providing the space for me to explore the interests. At that time, however, I did not think that I would channel these interests into an academic career. While I was a student at the Faculty of Law, University of Lagos, I became interested in international law and oil and gas law. I completed my honours project/thesis on oil and gas law. My LLM research also focused on oil and gas but I encountered some questions that I now know could not have been answered within the confines of oil and gas law. In conversation with my LLM thesis supervisor, my next area of research became clear: international investment law. During my PhD, which coincided with the time when I decided to pursue an academic career, I became a student of international investment law. Now, as an academic, I make connections between international economic law and natural resource development while leaning on insights from other areas of the law. It has been a journey where I have had guidance, mentorship, opportunity, and space to do what I find important.

A: What lessons have you learned in the course of your career so far?

IOA: Like everyone else, learning is an ongoing process for me. One of the major lessons that I have learned so far is the importance of focusing research on issues that you are committed to. I have been fortunate to have found this early and to have the opportunity to do work that I am interested in.

A: What advice would you give to younger female academics and students?

IOA: First, community is important. I have received tremendous support from family, friends, mentors, and colleagues over the years. It is essential to have a community of people who share similar visions who can be part of your journey. Second, it is important to be purposeful and to have a defined agenda but also to be flexible enough to make changes where necessary. A core aspect of this is also to give yourself permission to say ‘no’ if necessary. Third, recognizing that academia has the potential to be consuming, it is important to be kind – to others and, also, to ourselves. I believe most of us understand the need to be kind to others but do not sufficiently pay attention to being kind to ourselves.

Yes, being kind to ourselves entails thriving in our careers but it also involves finding things outside our careers that make us happy.

A: Please describe yourself in three words.

IOA: Dedicated. Conscientious. Attentive.

A: What makes you happy?

IOA: In my career, I am excited when my students excel and when they achieve goals that they have set for themselves

A: What changes to the world would you like to see?

IOA: I would like to see a more just world where the voices of currently marginalized peoples are not silenced or ignored but where these peoples are principal architects of decisions that affect them.

View online: International Women's Day: In Conversation with Dr Ibironke Odumosu-Ayanu

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