



The School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies (SIGS) deeply mourns the loss of Dr. Omotayo "Tayo" Jolaosho (*they, them, theirs*) who passed away on October 22, 2021. Dr. Jolaosho joined the SIGS faculty in 2015 as a scholar of Africana Studies and taught courses on African culture, African American social movements, race and racism. As an active, energetic and engaged member of SIGS, Dr. Jolaosho was warm, friendly, generous with their time, and always interested in projects that would serve vulnerable populations and enrich USF's diverse community.

Dr. Jolaosho earned the doctorate in Cultural Anthropology in 2013 from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. They went on to complete a post-doctoral fellowship at The Center for the Humanities, University of California, Merced. Dr. Jolaosho's major research endeavor explored the significance of disruptive performances that challenged state power and generated new modes of collective solidarity among poor residents in South Africa. Women activists in Johannesburg provided the fervor and richness for an ethnographic study of resistance to systemic apartheid that continues to affect Black families well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dr. Jolaosho's book, *You Can't Go to War Without Song: Performance and Community Mobilization in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, is based on 16 months of fieldwork in Johannesburg working with and learning from women activists. The book is in publication with Indiana University Press. Dr. Jolaosho also co-edited *African Women Writing Resistance: Contemporary Voices*, a collaborative anthology of essays, interviews and poetry, and published articles on embodied performance, freedom songs, the politics of aesthetics, and freedom movements in Africa and the United States.

Dr. Jolaosho was a vibrant contributor to several professional organizations, including the African Studies Association, the American Anthropological Association, the Association of Black Anthropologists, the Association for Feminist Anthropology, the Association for Queer Anthropology, and many others. At professional conferences they organized panels, performed, presented scholarly papers, mentored students, and volunteered for many organizational initiatives.

Dr. Jolaosho's contributions to the University of South Florida were indicative of their boundless intellectual energy and multiple interests. They served on the College of Arts and Sciences Technology Committee and the Institute for Research in Art Faculty Advisory Committee. In 2020, Dr. Jolaosho was awarded two USF grants to research Anti-Black Racism. They were the Principal investigator on "Surpassing Survival: Black Bodies on the Frontlines of Anti-Racism," a project examining the mental and physical toll of racism in the lives of Black academics, artists, and activists. They were also co-investigator on a project on art and education with faculty on the USF Sarasota campus. Even as a junior faculty member, Dr. Jolaosho's leadership ability led them to serve as the Chair of the College of Arts & Sciences Anti-Racism Initiative, a

committee whose goal is to develop an undergraduate Anti-Racism Certificate. Passionate about graduate mentorship, Dr. Jolaosho was an advisor to several graduate students at USF and organized a writing group. They were also closely engaged with the USF Office of Multicultural Affairs where they contributed programming to support students with non-binary identities.

An anthropologist, ethnographic researcher, yoga enthusiast, poet, and performer, Dr. Jolaosho leaves an indelible legacy of love, generosity, intellectual achievement, and service that has touched lives locally, nationally, and internationally. In the days to come, USF faculty and friends will honor the work, spirit, and passion of this rising star who left us much too soon. We hope you will join us in our celebration of Tayo's life.

A funeral service will be held on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at Blount & Curry, Terrace Oaks Funeral Home. Information on the time of the service will be available soon at <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/tampa-fl/omotayo-jolaosho-10424370>

In honor of Dr. Jolaosho, a passionate advocate and mentor for vulnerable students, the Omotayo Jolaosho Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established to provide scholarship support for vulnerable USF students. Contributions to the scholarship fund can be made at <https://usf.to/jolaosho>.