

**AYO SEKAI, Ph.D.**  
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## EDUCATION

### **Howard University—Doctor of Philosophy Political Science, 2020**

*Ph.D. Specialty:*

Black Politics & Diaspora Studies: Empirical analysis of political systems, liberation movements, and governance structures within African American and Black Diaspora contexts.

International Relations & Policy Analysis: Intersection of global inequality and redistribution, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and political economy through a decolonial lens.

*Dissertation:* Linguistic Imperialism and the Political Rhetoric of Domination Against and Through the African American Lens (ProQuest, 2020)

### **University of South Florida—Masters in International Affairs, 2011** Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean (ISLAC)

*Thesis:* Europe/Russia's political allegiances and corruption and its impact in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **Buffalo State University—Bachelor of Arts, English, 1998**

*Certification:* Secondary Language Arts Teacher

*Certification:* Preparing Future Faculty Program

## RESEARCH & TEACHING INTERESTS

- Linguistic Imperialism & Political Rhetoric: Investigating language as a tool of power and resistance in governance and law.
- Afrocentric Research & Decolonial Thought: Advancing African epistemologies and knowledge production.
- Higher Education Policy & Faculty Development: Strengthening institutional research capacity and mentorship models.
- Qualitative & Discourse Analysis Methods: Developing culturally relevant methods in ethnographic research, critical discourse analysis, and oral history methodologies that can examine sociopolitical phenomena.
- Black Political Thought & Global Governance: Examining how Black liberation movements shape international politics.

## PROFESSIONAL TEACHING SUMMARY

Passionate educator and visionary leader committed to empowering scholars through transformative teaching and mentorship. Mentorship is a core component of my teaching philosophy which extends beyond coursework, guiding students toward publication, tenure, and professional success. Harnessing over 20 years of business acumen brings a nontraditional lens to my expertise in interdisciplinary education. My scholarship

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challenges Eurocentric frameworks of knowledge production, advocating for linguistic justice, decolonial research methods, and African-centered intellectual traditions. My work is recognized in Black Studies, African Studies, Political Science, Educational Leadership, Education, Business, Qualitative Research, and Interdisciplinary scholarship, where I intentionally shape conversations on the power of language, resistance, and reclaiming epistemic sovereignty and agency. My approach is rooted in:

- Critical engagement with Political Science, Black Studies, and International Relations.
- Mentorship-driven learning, guiding faculty and students through academic & publishing success.
- Decolonial research methods, linguistic justice, and interdisciplinary scholarship.
- Bridging academia, government, and publishing to create pathways for institutional impact.
- Entrepreneurship, Business Ethics, and Business Policy

### **GRANT PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

#### **Veterans Legacy Grant Program (V.L.G.P.)**

*Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington DC.*

National Cemetery Administration (NCA) | Office of Engagement and Memorial Affairs (OEMI)

2020-2023

- Instrumental in establishing a \$3.2 million grant program, collaborating across interagency offices with legal, senior leadership, OPM, and other governmental agencies to accurately develop a functioning and impactful grant program.
- Worked strategically to convert the contracts program to grants.
- Trained all staff and provide developmental plans, resources, and certification requirements to become fully successful grant officers.
- Oversaw Implementation of (NOFA, SOP, federal regulations, CFR 200 oversight).
- Briefed Senior Leadership, Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs (USMA), Chief of Staff, SES and Deputy Director (Director Report)
- Mitigated relationships with Internal contacts, including executives, administrators, faculty, provosts, presidents, and administrators. External contacts include consultants, non-profits, VSOs, representatives from other colleges and universities, visitors, internal stakeholders, and the public.
- Responsible for implementing, interpreting, developing, writing, preparing, and, when necessary, updating program guides, best practice guidelines, manuals, forms, information letters, fact sheets, directives, site visit reports, and other written material related to the development, implementation, and monitoring of grant program.

### **GRANTS MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST**

*United States Federal Department of Education* | Office of Post Secondary Education, Office of Postsecondary Education Washington DC. Senior Education Program Manager 2011-2020

Senior Education Program Manager

(OPE) -Programs: Student Support Services (SSS) | McNair | CCAMPIS | Javitz

Washington, DC

- Engaged directly with HBCU presidents, provosts, faculty members, and administrators.
- Designed and implemented student retention initiatives,

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- Secured faculty research grants.
- Expanded institutional sustainability efforts to ensure that postsecondary institutions of first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students are equipped to create pathways for long-term success.
- Partnered with leading high-profile, multi-million-dollar national grant competitions that shape the future of higher education funding.
- Managed the entire grant lifecycle, from drafting and publishing funding opportunities to overseeing peer review panels and awarding grants.
- Ensured that funding aligns with federal priorities and institutional needs, **including** programs that support teacher leadership, mental health services, TRIO programs, and faculty research, fostering holistic student and institutional development.
- Worked closely with Congressional representatives to ensure legislative compliance and transparency, reinforcing national policies that advance education equity.
- Independently fast-paced environment with a caseload docket of upwards of 400 grants over seven states, combining Community Colleges and four-year institutions.
- Specialized programs include but are not limited to Student Support Services (SSS), McNair, Jacob Javits, and Training Program. HEP programs in application reviews for Fullbright, Upward Bound, Gear Up and Talent Search, and Hispanic Serving Institutions.
- Agency oversight and financial reviews for structural fundamental soundness. Site Visits, Training, Policy compliance, and Grant Development, Closeout, and Federal Register notices.
- Negotiating terms and conditions of grants/assistance awards to include costs, oversight analysis, and liaison between the Government and awardee institution.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **FOUNDER & CEO**

#### **Universal Write Publications LLC (Academic Book Publishing Company)**

2002-Present

Founded in 2004, Universal Write Publications publishes rigorous scholarship that reclaims the rich histories of the culturally diverse peoples who make up our society. Our focus is to publish various topics through the framework of Black Scholars who write through the African lens: the lived experiences of the diaspora without compromising the rigor of academic scholarship that dignifies the essence of research, data analysis, and the scientific methods of the academy.

Recognizing the importance of sustainable funding, I have cultivated cross-sector partnerships with philanthropic organizations and corporate sponsors in the ongoing effort to sustain a Black social science institution that is instrumental in elevating Black scholarship and institutional leadership. These collaborations expand funding opportunities for publishing scholarships, workplace development, and systematic infrastructure to strengthen the press's long-term viability.

### **SAGE PUBLICATIONS**

Strategic Publishing Partner

2020-Current

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Launched initiative with Sage Publications (One of the Big Five), a global social science press. Raised \$500,000+ in grants to amplify publications by Black scholars, expand academic disciplines, and deepen research spaces for the scholars publishing research. Sage's strategic vision and brand recognition is the first of its kind historically to partner with a Black press, independently owned and operated.

## **EDUCATIONAL & LEADERSHIP EXPERTISE**

- Faculty Development & Research Expansion: Proven success in mentoring faculty toward tenure, overseeing grant applications, and increasing institutional impact.
- Strategic Leadership in Higher Education: Strengthening HBCU research ecosystems through external partnerships, publishing initiatives, and interdisciplinary collaborations.
- Academic Leadership & Innovation: Expertise in developing transformative programs that enhance student learning, faculty research, and institutional sustainability.
- Student Success & Career Pathways: Designing programs that increase graduate school placement, policy leadership, and global engagement opportunities.
- Grant Development and Resource Allocation: Extensive experience screening, evaluating, and managing multimillion-dollar grants to fund student success programs, faculty research, and institutional innovation.
- Higher Education Policy and Advocacy: Deep knowledge of national higher education policies, including federal funding mechanisms, accreditation, and regulatory frameworks impacting HBCUs.
- Fiscal and Human Resource Management: Proficient in managing substantial budgets, aligning financial strategies with organizational goals, and ensuring effective allocation of resources to support key initiatives. Experienced in leading diverse teams, fostering talent development, enhancing employee engagement, and performance excellence.
- Dynamic leader in Academic publishing, industry expert, and emerging author book development and research scholarship while designing and delivering community and academic-based projects.
- Professional presentation skills – Expert in professional oral presentation skills, specializing in persuasive communication, audience engagement, and thought leadership. Areas of strength include structuring impactful presentations, clearly delivering complex ideas, and using storytelling to inspire action.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- Sekai, A. (2026). Political linguistics and epistemic agency: Universal Write Publications and the defense of global Black knowledge. *Wagadu Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies*, Special Issue: *The continuation of the revolutionary African woman* (Eds. O. Nwabara & K. Sall).

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- Sekai, A. (forthcoming). *Spirit words: The metaphysics of voice*. In C. Alexander & J. Mellis (Eds.), *Writing with the gods: African influences in African American and Caribbean literature*. CUNY Press.
- Sekai, A. (forthcoming). *Surviving the existential question: The scientific method of poetical science discourse in African storytelling*. In E. Ezepue & E. Michaelia (Eds.), *African storytelling: Recalling traditions, bridging boundaries & exploring futures*. Routledge.
- Sekai, A. (Series Editor). *The Black Lexicon: Defining the language of Black disciplines* [Ongoing academic book series]. Universal Write Publications.
- Stewart, J., & Sekai, A. (2025). Transdisciplinary Africana Studies and Africana Poetical Science: A Conversation. *Journal of Black Studies*. SAGE Publications.
- Sekai, A. (2024). *A2: A Scholarly Poetical Science Discourse*. Universal Write Publications.
- Rosier, D. (2020). Linguistic Imperialism: An Analysis of the Political Rhetoric of Domination Against and Through the African American Lens, *Howard University*, (Dissertation) ProQuest.
- Sekai, A. (2018) *Fitted and Tailor Made for me*. Caribbean Quarterly Journal. Taylor & Francis.
- Sekai, A. (2017) Linguistic Imperialism. Trump and Making America Great Again. In D. T. Harris (Ed.), *Newschaser: The Rhetoric of Trump in Essays and Commentaries* (pp. 197-208). Universal Write Publications.
- Sekai, A. (2016) *Afrocentric Before Afrocentricity: A Quest toward Endarkenment*. UWP Books.

## TEACHING LECTURES

*African Systems of Thought (AFST 111)* – Howard University, Spring 2024

- Led undergraduate courses examining Linguistic Imperialism in legal and political documents, fostering critical analysis of language as a tool of power.
- Designed and implemented a syllabus centered on poetical science, political discourse, inclusivity, and the role of Black intellectual knowledge production in resisting systems of oppression.

*Graduate Seminar: Miracles of Mary (AFST122)* – Howard University, Fall 2024

- Examined African thought and civilizations, emphasizing historical continuity, epistemologies, and cultural frameworks in relation to Marian narratives.
- Engaged graduate students in critical discussions on Ethiopic literature, archival history, and African-centered perspectives on spirituality and knowledge production.
- Provided insights on the role of African civilizations in shaping theological and historical discourses, connecting lived experiences to broader intellectual traditions.

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*Thesis Research (AFST301)* – Howard University, Fall 2024

- Led an in-depth presentation on academic research and publishing during the thesis process, providing foundational knowledge on scholarly publishing for students unfamiliar with the process.
- Explained the responsibilities of academic faculty in research dissemination, mentoring students on their role in knowledge production and the significance of publishing in their academic careers.

*Introduction to Political Science (POLS001)* – Howard University, Fall 2018

- Black Politics and Its Significance in International Relations – Examined the influence of Black political thought on global power structures and diplomatic relations.
- BRICS Nations and Their Global Influence – Analyzed the political and economic roles of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa in shaping international governance.
- Linguistic Imperialism in International Documents – Investigated how language functions as a tool of power in treaties, policies, and global governance structures.
- Systems of Oppression in Global Politics – Explored the intersection of political decision-making, systemic inequalities, and international institutions.
- Research and Academic Writing – Guided students in producing analytical papers that critically engaged with course themes and real-world political developments.

## **SELECTED PRESENTATIONS & CONFERENCES**

Sekai, A. & Stewart, S. (2026, March). "FIRESIDE CHAT - The Spear, the Word, and the Gap: Reconnecting Black Studies, Cultural Production, and Community Liberation" National Council for Black Studies (NCBS), Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland.

Sekai, A. (2026, March). "Reclaiming the Spear: Black Studies, Linguistic Imperialism, and the Rebirth of Black Epistemologies." National Council for Black Studies (NCBS), Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland.

Sekai, A. (2025, September). "*A2: A Scholarly Poetical Science Discourse and the Weaponization of Oral Traditions in African Warfare.*" Association of African Studies Association (ASA), Atlanta, Georgia.

Sekai, A. (2025, March). "*Linguistic Imperialism and Power Struggles.*" Invitational Symposium on Edgar Ripley's Symptomatic Thought Process at the MKA Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Sekai, A. (2025, March). *Decolonizing Academia: Black Scholarship in a Post-Affirmative Action Era and the Fight Against Erasure.* Building Global Black Studies: African and African Diaspora Perspectives on Black Studies' Global Impact, National Council for Black Studies conference in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Sekai, A. (2025, March). *Decolonizing Academia: Black Scholarship in a Post-Affirmative Action Era and the Fight Against Erasure.* Afrocentricity Generations of Theory, National Council for Black Studies conference in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Sekai, A. (2024, June). *Publishing as Revolution: Academic Publishing as a Tool for Liberation.* Panel discussion at the Annual Caribbean Studies Conference, St. Lucia.

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Sekai, A. (2024, July). *Standing Our Ground: Resistance in the Face of Anti-Blackness through the Power of Black Publishers*. ABPsi TALKS Lightning Session presented at the Association of Black Psychologists Conference, Detroit, Michigan.

Sekai, A. (2024, March). *Breaking the Invisible Glass Ceiling: Using the Power of Academic Publishing to Harness the Power of Black Narratives by Dismantling the Language of Oppression*. Presented at the Howard University African Studies International Conference, Washington, D.C.

Sekai, A. (2024, August). *The Power of Independent Black Publishing in Shaping Academic Discourse*. Spotlight Symposium with Blaise Simqu, CEO, SAGE Publications. Association of Black Sociologists Annual Conference, Quebec, Canada.

Sekai, A. (2024, August). *Repatriating African Studies*. Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) Annual Conference, Ghana, Africa.

Sekai, A. (2023, August). *Invisible Allies: Recognizing the Vital Role of Minority-Owned Publishers in DEI*. Association of American Publishers. At SCHOLASTIC. Summit, New York, New York.

Sekai, A. (2022, May). "Jamaican immigrant creating Social Science publishing space and only Black woman own Academic Publisher," Publishers Roundtable at the 46th Annual Caribbean Studies Association.

Sekai, A. (2021, February). "Getting it out the door: Essentials for Publishing." American Educational Research Association (AERA), University of North Carolina Wilmington, Invitational Speaker on publishing.

## INVITED LECTURES & KEYNOTES

**18<sup>th</sup> National Black Writers Conference**, "Beyond Banned Books and Censorship of African Diasporic Literature." Speaker. Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn, New York.

**SAGE Publications**, "Amplifying Voices: Strategies for Early Career Black Scholars in Academia." Speaker. Webinar. (February 2026)

**Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA) Publishing University (2025)**. *Re-Thinking Business Models: Independent Publishing and the Future of Academic Presses*. Conference Keynote Speaker. Minneapolis, Minnesota (May 2025).

**Broadleaf Books (2024)**. *Justice for Marcus Garvey: Legacy Reflections & New Efforts to Pardon His Name*. A discussion of the movement and his book: Justice for Marcus Garvey: Find Me in the Whirlwind. Virtual.

**Marymount University (2023)**. *The Power of Allyship in Dismantling Racism & Hate: Teaching the Next Generation*. Keynote Presentation at Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia.

**Morehouse University Collective (2023)**. *The Power of Black Founders in Entrepreneurial Spaces*. Morehouse Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (MIEC), Atlanta, Georgia.

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**MKA International Symposium on African Epistemologies (2023).** *Challenges in Afrocentric Publishing*, Molefi Kete Asante Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**MKA Institute Master Class (2021).** *The Threat of Linguistic Imperialism Through a Political Lens*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**Diaspora and the World Program (ADW), Spelman College (2021) –** *The Power of the 6%: Decolonizing Knowledge Systems*. Atlanta, Georgia.

**African Diaspora Association (FADA), Georgia State University (2021) –** *The Power of the 6%: Decolonizing Knowledge System*. Atlanta, Georgia

## PRESENTATIONS

**Howard University African Studies International Conference (2024) –** *Global Africa in The Twenty-First Century: Visions, Objectives, Challenges & Opportunities*

Organizers: The Howard University Department of African Studies | The Howard University Center for African Studies | The Global Peace Foundation | In Partnership with The University of Lagos (Nigeria) | The University of the Free State (South Africa) | Ojaja University & KU8+ University Consortium (Nigeria) | Universal Write Publications | Université Cadi Ayyad (Marrakech, Morocco)

**The National Council for Black Studies 48th Annual Conference (2024)** *Afrofuturism: The Discipline's Leading Edge*.

**Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (2024) –** *Repatriating African Studies*.

**The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Yale Bouchet Conference on Diversity and Graduate Education (2019) –** *Cite Black Women...Period! An Interdisciplinary Gaze on the Experiences of Black Women Scholars*.

**NCOBPS National Conference for Black Political Scientists (2017) –** *Black Culture and the Criminalization Effect*.

**Northeast Modern Language Association (NeMLA) (2016) –** *Harriet Beecher Stowe "Uncle Tom's Cabin"*.

**African Heritage Studies Association 47<sup>th</sup> Conference (AHS) 2016 –** *Scholar-Activism in Africa and the Diaspora*.

**International Conference Pan-Africanism and Negritude (2015) –** *Pan-Africanism and Negritude: Dialogues between Africa and the African Diaspora*.

**MCA Conference, Howard University (2014):** *The Paradigm of Afrocentricity and Molefi Kete Asante*.

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## **MEDIA APPEARANCES**

The Caribbean Exchange with Nati Kamau-Nataki at WEAA 88.9FM (2025) A conversation on Black empowerment, decolonized scholarship, and the unapologetic resilience of Caribbean culture.

Rise Sister Webinar (2025) Sharing insights, tools, and scholarly guidance on navigating the academy and circumventing historical traumas.

Prime-Time LIVE TV on FOX 5 DC (2024), discussing my research and the power of words to weaponize, politicize, and legislatively destabilize marginalized groups.

Tuesdays with Dr. Traci Wyatt (2024): The significance of Black academic publishing.

Juanita Farrow Radio Show (2022) The power of Black women's resilience and self-determination in the face of adversity.

SAGE Publishing Fireside Chat (2021) Discussing the historical significance of Black History Month with Dr. Ayo Sekai & Molefi Kete

Radio One, WYCB, Spirit 1340 The Lyndia Grant Show (2022) In-depth Discussion on Critical Race Theory

## **Peer-Reviewer**

- Blind Peer-Reviewer - Caribbean Quarterly Journal. Taylor & Francis.

## **ACADEMIC AWARDS & RECOGNITION**

- **Inaugural Cohort Member, Alumni Leadership Academy**  
*Howard University Board of Trustees*  
*January 2025 – Present*
  - Engage in monthly virtual sessions led by trustees, focusing on various aspects of leadership development, including strategic planning, governance, and community engagement.
  - Collaborate with fellow alumni to enhance leadership skills and strengthen connections within the Howard University community.
- **Yale Bouchet Conference and Graduate Education** (Spring 2018)
- **Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honor Society** (2017)
- **National Conference for Black Political Scientists Conference Scholar Award** (2017)
- **RACE Mentoring Conference Travel Award** (2016)
- **Golden Key International Honor Society Member** (2011)
- **Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society Member** (2009)

## **PROFESSIONAL AWARDS**

**FEDEX Entrepreneur Fund** (2025)

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- Participate in a competitive program that provides expert-led sessions, education and mentorship, a peer support network, and business scaling guidance. The FedEx Entrepreneur Fund is an initiative that provides \$10,000 in grants to selected small businesses in the United States. Partnered with Hello Alice to further support grant recipients' growth through the **FedEx Boost Camp**, which is a new six-month growth experience. The dedicated program space will be home to monthly business coaching workshops, mentorship, networking, and more resources personalized for the grant winners.

## **AFFILIATIONS**

- The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)
- Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi)
- African Studies Association (ASA)
- Molefi Kete Asante Institute for Afrocentric Studies (MKAI) – Fellow, Life Member
- The National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) – Life Member
- Association for the Study and Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) – Life Member
- Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE) – Life Member
- National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) – Life member
- Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)
- The Association of Black Sociologists (ABS) – Life Member
- National Communication Association
- DC Democratic Women's Club
- Association of American Publishers (AAP)
- Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP)
- Independent Book Publishers Association (iBPA)

## **SELECTED EXECUTIVE & BOARD SERVICE**

- Inaugural Howard University Trustee Board Leadership Academy (2025)
- American Association of Publishers -Freedom of Expression Committee (Director Deputy General Counsel) 2023-24
- Friendly Law Non-profit Advisory Board, Washington, D.C. (2019-2026)

## **PROFESSIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, Ph.D.  
Professor, Temple University  
[MAAsante@Temple.edu](mailto:MAAsante@Temple.edu)

Nah Dove, Ph.D.  
Asst. Professor, Temple University  
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Melissa Harris, PhD

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