

The Politics of Culture, Gender and Identity

By Dr. Josephine Dawuni



On Monday September 26th, 2016, the Department of Political Science co-sponsored an event with the Department of African Studies, the Center for African Studies and the Office of the Provost at the Ralph Bunch International Affairs Center at Howard University. The event, dubbed “*African Royals at Howard University*” featured three Royals from Ghana and Nigeria with the goal of engaging in an open discussion on the intersection of African gender identity and culture in a global system. Her Royal Majesty Naa Tsostoo Soyoo 1, an award-winning Queen from the Ga tribe of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana spoke of her work in

advancing the rights of girls to education and empowerment. This, she does through her organization Ten Talents National Skills Based Learning Initiative (TENTACLES). The second speaker was Her Royal Highness Princess Toyin Onagoruwa-Abod, a CEO and experienced multi-skilled Facilitator and Management Consultant. She works with various organizations as an ambassador of African cultures and customs. Through her various organizations and board memberships, she aims to *Motivate, Inspire* and *Empower* women and girls to believe in themselves within the various aspects of their careers. The third speaker was Her Royal Highness Princess Moradeun (Deun) Adedoyin- Solarin, granddaughter of HRM Oba William C. Adedoyin II, Akarigbo Anoko of Sagamu, Remo-land, Nigeria, whose professional life spans a broad range of areas including journalism, politics and activism. All three presentations were anchored around their personal experiences as royalty and how they continually navigate the politics of gender, culture and royalty identity to promote African cultures, and the rights of women and girls through entrepreneurship. The presentation highlighted the politics of culture and how Africans have to navigate intersecting identities in the global system in attempts to hold on to their cultural heritage and as ambassadors of the continent. The presentation also highlighted the fact that the achievements of African women in both the domestic and international spheres is nothing new. African women are a living embodiment of matriarchal power and personal agency. The empowerment of women and girls across Africa is an ongoing process, one that lies in the hands of African women themselves. Tawndalya, a senior political science major who attended the event had this to say “*for me, it was empowering to see real African princesses from Nigeria and a Queen from Ghana because as black women in society today, there are numerous negative stigmas that cast a shadow on our entire existence. One of the most touching moments was when a mother and daughter attending the event and the mother broke down explaining that she wanted her daughter to see the true image of a Queen with standards for her daughter to live up to. The Royals also opened up with a libation and had a divine down to earth presence*”.

