

# **Environment, Food, Culture and Identity: A Global Perspective**

Suleyman M. Demi ● Njoki N. Wane

Editors

## Environment, Food, Culture and Identity: A Global Perspective

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## Table of Contents

### PART I: Food and Environmental Sustainability

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Chapter 1:</b> Environment, Food, Culture and Identity:<br>A Global Perspective, An Introduction<br><i>Suleyman M. Demi, Njoki N. Wane and Carmen Armignomette</i>                                                                                  | 1  |
| <b>Chapter 2:</b> Critical Examination of Environmental Education<br>Through the Pedagogy of Indigenous Food Cultures<br><i>Suleyman M. Demi</i>                                                                                                       | 17 |
| <b>Chapter 3:</b> Interrogating Food and Environmental Policies in Canada in Light of<br>Persistent Inequalities<br><i>Chinelo Dorothy Nzenwata</i>                                                                                                    | 34 |
| <b>Chapter 4:</b> Healing the Land and Heeding the Call of “Dzomo ɔa Mupo”,<br>the Voice of the Earth<br><i>Mphaʔheleni Makaulule, Patricia Lethole, Vhonani Netshandama,<br/>Butshabelo Mabunda, Enid Pitsoane, Janet McIntyre-Mills, Norma Romma</i> | 55 |
| <b>Chapter 5:</b> Commercializing the Sacred and Its Implications on Environmental Health,<br>Culture and Food Production in Africa: A Case of Ghana<br><i>Isaac N. Darko and Suleyman M. Demi</i>                                                     | 73 |
| <b>Chapter 6:</b> Effects of Decentralization on Environmental Sustainability and Indigenous<br>Food Systems in Ghana<br><i>Suleyman M. Demi, Anisatu Alhassan and Rahama Adam</i>                                                                     | 88 |

### PART II: Food, Identity and Culture

|                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Chapter 7:</b> Food (In)Security: The ‘Ragging War’ of Jollof Rice in West Africa<br><i>Paul Banahene Adjei</i>                                                                      | 106 |
| <b>Chapter 8:</b> Nourishing the Nation: Indigenous Food Preparation and Processing<br>Knowledges among Bantu-Speaking Communities in Kenya<br><i>Njoki N. Wane</i>                     | 115 |
| <b>Chapter 9:</b> Cultural Connection and Identity with Food: From Heart to Health<br><i>Cindy Sinclair, Kawalpreet Kaur, Nishat Mehdi, Shayla Ahmed and Nooshin<br/>Sarreshtehdari</i> | 124 |

|                                                                                                                                                                     |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Chapter 10:</b> The Neoliberal Marginalization of Indigeneity: A Case for “Orphaned Indigenous Food Crops.”<br><i>Morris DC Komakech and Chantal Nyirakanani</i> | 137 |
| <b>Chapter 11:</b> Healing Beyond the Body: Culture, Beliefs and Environment in Indigenous African Health Practices<br><i>Isaac N. Darko and Suleyman M. Demi</i>   | 156 |
| <b>Chapter 12:</b> Determinants of Incomes for Farmers with Disabilities<br>Mark Arhin and Michael M. A Antwi                                                       | 170 |

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**Chinelo Dorothy Nzenwata** is a scholar, educator, and social justice advocate whose interdisciplinary work addresses structural inequality, economic justice, and community resilience. Dr. Nzenwata is the Founder and Executive Director of Nelo Immigrant and Community Services (NICS) and President of Canadian Education and Training Institutions (CETI). She holds a B.Sc. in Physics from LASU, a Master's and doctorate degree in Social Justice Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. Grounded in themes of Indigenous empowerment and economic justice, her work bridges high-level policy analysis with frontline social work and grassroots advocacy. Her recent publications include co-authoring a chapter in the Handbook of Anti-Discriminatory Education (Springer, 2025), titled "International Handbooks of Education, Emotions, Spirituality, and Equity: Transforming Anti-discriminatory Education in South East Nigeria."

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Canadian Women Empowerment Mentorship Award, the GOWN Distinguished African-Caribbean Scholars Alumni Award, the Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Award. She has been featured across various platforms such as TVO Today, the Guyanese Chronicle, Faculty of Arts and Science and OISE, and was mentioned more recently for her advocacy and leadership in seeking to recognize DFCM Alum, Dr. John Big-Canoe's legacy, which led to the establishment of the Dr. John Big-Canoe Chair of Indigenous Health in the DFCM. Dr. Sinclair holds a Master's in Sociology and Equity Studies and a PhD in Social Justice Education. She continues to champion inclusive and culturally grounded approaches to healthcare with a goal of ensuring equitable and compassionate care for all.

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**Kawalpreet Kaur (MBBS, India)** is an internationally trained physician with diverse clinical and academic experience across India and Canada, with a strong focus on Family Medicine and comprehensive primary care. She has achieved high performance in key Canadian licensing examinations, including the NAC OSCE and MCCQE Part I, reflecting her readiness for medical practice within the Canadian healthcare system. Her background includes experience in medical education, clinical practice, and healthcare delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Canada, she is actively engaged in clinical integration, professional development, and community-based

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**Mark Arhin** is a Municipal Development Officer at the Department of Agriculture in Ga West. His research focuses on promoting inclusive agriculture, with a particular emphasis on empowering farmers with disabilities and advancing agricultural extension development. His work seeks to enhance accessibility and equity within the agricultural sector, contributing to sustainable and inclusive rural development.

**Micahel A. Antwi** is a lecturer at the University of South Africa in the Department of Agriculture and Animal Health. His research interests encompass food security, landforms, climate change, cooperatives, agricultural marketing, impact assessment, poverty alleviation, and rural finance. His work aims to address critical challenges in agriculture and rural development, fostering sustainable livelihoods and economic resilience.

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**Nishat Mehdi (MBBS, India)** is a second-year Family Medicine resident at Western University with a passion for helping people improve their health through practical, sustainable nutrition. Born and raised in India, I grew up in a multicultural environment where food was deeply connected to family, culture, and well-being. After moving to Canada, I embraced the diversity of cuisines and the convenience of modern eating, but I also recognized the challenges of maintaining a healthy diet in a fast-paced lifestyle. This inspired me to combine the wholesome food traditions of my upbringing with evidence-based medical knowledge. My interest in gut health led me to make intentional changes to my own diet, resulting in significant improvements in my digestive health and mental well-being. That personal journey, together with my experience caring for patients, inspired me to write this book. My goal is to help readers build healthier eating habits while celebrating the connection between food, culture, identity, and lifelong wellness.

**Njoki N. Wane**, a professor at the University of Toronto and former Chair in the Department of Social Justice Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). An accomplished educator, researcher and educational leader, Professor Wane headed the Office of Teaching Support at OISE from 2009 to 2012, establishing its priorities and activities while recognizing equity as a central dimension of good teaching. From 2011 to 2014, Professor Wane served as Special Advisor on Status of Women Issues, contributing to research and policy development concerning the intersectionality of gender with race, disability, sexual orientation and Aboriginal status, and the impact of these issues on the lived experiences of women faculty, staff, and students at the University of Toronto. From 2018 to 2021, she also served as the advisor of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for the Vice-President, Human Resources and Equity. She also served as

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**Paul Banahene Adjei** is an Associate Professor and the Interim Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Research) at Memorial University of Newfoundland. He was previously the Dean of the School of Social Work at Memorial University. Paul received his undergraduate degree in Social Work from the University of Ghana, and his Master's and PhD degrees from the University of Toronto, specializing in Social Justice Education. In his teaching praxes, Dr. Adjei takes an intellectual and political stance that challenges, exposes, and subverts colonial and racist hegemonic knowledge and practices. He provokes critical thinking and challenges learners to not only think outside the box but also to disrupt the box. Dr. Adjei's teaching and research interests are in areas of social justice, de/anti-colonial, indigenization, Critical Race Theory, and critical Whiteness studies to ask new questions and to identify potential answers to what W.E.B. Dubois (1903) describes as "colour-line problem" (p. 5) in society. He also draws on his African Indigeneity as rich cultural sources of knowledge to (re)imagine new futures for education. Dr. Adjei has secured several funding sources and published over 40 refereed essays in scholarly journals and book chapters, and co-edited book publications. He has presented over 100 papers at national and international conferences; featured in several newspapers, radio and television programs in Canada. He has supervised and mentored several students to the completion of Bachelor's, Master and PhD degrees. In 2021, Dr. Adjei was offered the Carnegie Diaspora Fellow/Visiting Scholar award at the University of Ghana. In 2022, he was honoured as one of the Most Inspiring Immigrants in Atlantic Canada, and in 2023 was awarded Black Excellence Award for Lifetime Achievement by the Coalition of Black Communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2024, Dr. Adjei was offered a Carnegie Diaspora Fellow.

**Rahama Adams** holds a Bachelor of Midwifery from University for Development Studies, Ghana and a BSc in Nursing at Laurentian University, Canada. Rahama is a passionate individual who likes to challenge herself in learning new things. Among her passions is the safe delivery of babies, and delivered over 100 babies in Ghana as a registered Midwife with over five years of experience. Rahama loves travelling and would like to visit the four corners of the world in her lifetime.

**Suleyman M. Demi** is a Ghanaian-born educator, researcher and environmental activist dedicated to addressing issues affecting society's marginalized population. Before joining Algoma University as an Assistant Professor, Dr. Demi was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Furthermore, he was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Health and Society of the University of Toronto Scarborough and a Senior Doctoral Fellow at the Department of African Studies, New College of the University of Toronto, where he contributed to the department's work. His research interest is multidisciplinary, stemming from social and environmental justice, anti-Black racism, Indigenous health and food systems, sustainable food and environmental practices, health equity, and social determinants of health. He has authored and co-authored articles on health equity, food security, decolonizing food systems, food and chronic illnesses, and co-edited books on African proverbs and retheorizing anti-colonialism. Dr. Demi has won several awards from the University of Toronto, including the African Scholars Emerging Academic Award, the Lisa Robinson Award for Excellence in Research, and the 2019 Gordon Cressy Student Leadership Award. Dr. Demi has worked with TAIBU Community Health Center to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the food security status and well-being of the Black Community in Scarborough. He has been featured on various media, including CBC radio, CTV Timmins, U of T News, etc. and has delivered several keynotes locally and internationally. Dr. Demi currently teaches and researches at the School of Social Work, Algoma University, Sault Ste. Marie Campus was the immediate former Chair of the anti-Black racism working group of the EDI office and a member of the Algoma University Graduate Council. He obtained his BSc from the University of Cape Coast, MPhil from the University of Ghana and MA and Ph.D. from the University of Toronto.

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**Vho-Mphatheleni Makaulule (Mphathe)** is an environmental activist and defender of sacred sites, and a researcher in the transfer of indigenous knowledge to future generations. She is a founder and executive director of the Dzomo la Mupo (previously Mupo Foundation), where she facilitates indigenous knowledge systems dialogues for the interaction on issues of environmental injustices through collaborations with Earth Life Africa for the local Vhembe district and Eastern Cape communities. She is a non-executive Director to the Wild Law Institute (paying attention to the voices on human coexistence in connection with the rights of the wild). In 2023, she obtained her Master's degree from the University of Venda on African studies, concentrating on indigenous knowledge perspectives on holistic indigenous uses of *Luranga cucurbit* pumpkin plant. The findings highlighted the interrelated functions of *Luranga* on the nourishments as food, material product uses for multiple purposes, ecological, spiritual and psychological identity associated with womanhood.

**Vhonani Olive Netshandama** is a trained nurse with a PhD in Nursing Education and over twenty years of experience in community-engaged research. As Director of Community Engagement at the University of Venda, she has pioneered participatory research methodologies and decolonial scholarship by integrating indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) into higher education and local development initiatives. Her innovative work includes creating intergenerational learning spaces and collaborating with traditional and municipal leadership to build a thriving ecosystem for sustainable communities. Renowned for her strong supervision capabilities, she mentors interdisciplinary teams in IKS, community engagement, and public health, effectively bridging academic inquiry with practical, locally grounded solutions. She has published widely in these fields.

## Acknowledgement

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