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Vanessa Obenewaa Antwi Doe studies effect of second-hand clothing market on Ghanaian seamstresses

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Categories: News, Research

Tags: Edna Wangui, Geography news, Risa Whitson, Vanessa Antwi, women's and gender and sexuality studies news



Vanessa Obenewaa Antwi Doe

[From Ohio University News](#)

Getting Ready for Expo

Vanessa Obenewaa Antwi Doe spent seven years living in Ghana, enjoying the custom-made clothing created by local seamstresses, but she and her friends also wore fast fashion second-hand clothing that arrived from afar into the nation’s

ports.

Now a master's student at Ohio University studying communication and social change, Doe is asking questions about the lives and livelihoods of the seamstresses, the economics of free-market capitalism, and more. She'll talk about her research, "Implications of fast fashion's second-hand clothing market on seamstresses in the Ghanaian Textile Industry," at the [Student Expo](#) on April 7.

"I always wondered how the mass importation of the cheap second-hand clothing affected seamstresses. I chose to embark on this project because I am a Ghanaian, born American, who has seen the effects of fast fashion first-hand during my stay in Ghana from 2013 to 2020," said Doe, a student in the [Master of Arts in Communication & Development Studies](#) in the Center for International Studies.

"I was introduced to both cultures, getting clothes custom-made for occasions, special programs, school and work, while also experiencing scrambling for the 'first selection' (the best of the lot) of second-hand clothing in the markets of Accra," said Doe, who is also pursuing a [Graduate Certificate in Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies](#) in the College of Arts & Sciences.

Doe's study is exploring the effect that the second-hand clothing market in mass-produced fast fashion is having on seamstress' business and livelihoods in Ghana. And one of her foci involves questions about formal and non-formal education the within the trade. Drawing on 12 semi-structured interviews in Accra, the capital of Ghana, she argues that background, location, skill and the education of seamstresses all impact the seamstresses' business and livelihoods.

"The results suggest that there are both positive and negative impacts of the fast fashion second-hand market. In addition, it shows that education is complicated, as both formal and non-formal avenues of training are accepted in the custom-made industry," Doe said. "Furthermore, fast fashion is portrayed as just one of the many ways neoliberalism affects the economy and the movement of materials between the global North and the global South."

One result of her work might be that "policy makers and development planners can use the insights presented in this work to support legislation and programming that limits the importations of damaged second-hand clothing into Ghana to curtail the influx of textile waste being shipped into the country on a daily basis through the ports."

Doe noted that the best part of her project "was hearing the stories from the seamstresses and listening to their perspective. So many times their perceptions are overlooked by assumptions. So it was fun hearing from them their thought on the research."

She also has thanks for the mentorship of her thesis committee, [Risa Whitson](#) and [Edna Wangui](#) from the Geography Department in the College of Arts & Sciences and [Saumya Pant](#) in the School of Media Arts & Studies in the Scripps College of Communication. "They have all been very instrumental to my research and they have inspired me in various ways," she said.

"The chair of my committee is Dr. Whitson, has been key in guiding me throughout my research journey, giving me great suggestions to my overall project, and ensuring I produce my best work. Dr. Wangui has been amazing in inspiring me to think about a project that would be important to the overall climate of gender and environment in Africa, specifically Ghana. She was one of the biggest inspirations for this project," Doe said.

"Dr. Pant, my program director, always reminds me to think development and to think about the core tenant of [CommDev](#), which is the participatory approach in creating a dialogue for people to share what their problems are and suggest their own solutions to the issues. I have learnt so much from working with these three professors. They have been more than just faculty to me, they have been my mentors."