

**Victoria Okoye**

**Department of Urban Studies and Planning**

**University of Sheffield**

**PhD Research Project Title**

Youth space-making in Nima: Tracing young people's affective experiences and embodied spatial practices

**Abstract**

This collaborative PhD research in Accra's Nima neighborhood situates youths' everyday embodied spatial practices in community space within a global landscape of Black space-making. I undertake this research with Spread-Out Initiative NGO, and together we work with 17 of the NGO's students. We shape this research project through the NGO's Pan-Africanist ethos and my decolonial feminist research orientation to inform a Black decolonial feminist methodology. Through collaboratively designed participatory arts-based methods and site-specific intervention, we make visible youths' affective and embodied geographies of experience, encounter, and play. Our research examines youth's experiences of their neighborhood's community spaces, the power dynamics that they continually navigate, and what it means for these young people to inhabit these conditions and creatively make place for themselves. This research brings into discussion decolonial/anticolonial scholarship, geography and urban studies, and Black Studies (including Black feminism) scholarship; local community discourses; youth's articulation of their own experiences; and reflective discussions with the NGO team members. While the city's dominant imaginary orients toward aspirations of global modernity, this research critically centers young people's modes of being, feeling, and imagining space, and we ground our theorizing in localized conceptions of the human, intersectionality, and imaginative spatial practice. Our research demonstrates that while Nima's young people do face multiple constraints that limit their access to community spaces, their practices of finding, inhabiting, and making use of seemingly unusable spaces represents an embodied, space-making practice that produces new geographies of play, providing an alternative reading of the city that disrupts and perforates Accra's dominant "modern" spatial imaginary.