

# Call for Papers

## A Virtual Conference on Farooq Kperogi, the Digital Age and US-African Diaspora Diplomacy

15 June 2023



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
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African Centre for the  
Study of the United States

Afrika-sentrum vir Bestudering van die  
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- Host:** African Centre for the Study of the United States, University of Pretoria
- Convener:** Toyin Falola, Extraordinary Professor of Political Science, University of Pretoria
- Book Reviewer:** Dr. Dannica Fleuss, Centre for Future Media, Democracy and Society, Dublin City University
- Keynote Speaker:** Professor Christopher Isike, Director, African Center for the Study of the United States, University of Pretoria (ACSUS-UP)
- Date:** 15 June 2023

### CONCEPT NOTE

The conference aims to use **Toyin Falola's** forthcoming publication, *Citizenship and the Diaspora in the Digital Age: Farooq Kperogi and the Virtual Community* (<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781666933413/Citizenship-and-the-Diaspora-in-the-Digital-Age-Farooq-Kperogi-and-the-Virtual-Community>) to reflect more broadly on the impact of social media on Africa, as well as United States-Africa relations.

Culture, the aggregating nomenclature for every aspect of a people's past and present existence, has always had technical or technological innovations as one of its material aspects and technical or technological knowledge in its immaterial components. The earliest known humans of the hunter-gatherer era had technology that suited their time and needs, such that they could craft tools from stones and sticks to make life easier and actions quicker for themselves. From that period to now, there has been a huge evolution, one that its pace increases by the day. It all started with the invention of fire. Since the boom and full blossoming of the digital age in the early 2000s, technology has brought about globalization in all ramifications, with the growth of one simple, single, virtual super-society that is regrouping

humans of different ages, races, and backgrounds being one of the most phenomenal results of technology in today's world. This technological advancement moved from the one-sided information and online communication system that dominated the early years of the internet and the world wide web to Web 2.0, the game-changer that made interactive communications in real-time possible, significantly changing how humans use the internet, connect, relate, and transact online.

In this age, one of the biggest uses of digital media is communication and information sharing, a human activity that is mainly being furthered and advanced through a suite of platforms categorized under the common nomenclature of social media. Social media has brought about an exponential increase in access to information while greatly reducing the period between event occurrence and access to event information. As a result, human reliance on traditional media platforms like the radio, television, and newspapers for news on events and happenings is dwindling by the day, especially as dependence on traditional media comes with the burden of having to wait a long period for news preparation and eventual broadcast or publication, as against the instantaneity that is one of the core features of all social media platforms.

Two phenomena are the most prominent at this point in the digital age. First is the increasing competition among social media platforms to deliver better on the promise of immediacy, relevance, and satisfying users' content consumption needs. This competition has brought about several trends in the digital media space, such as innovative features that keep the audience engaged, increase usage time, and promote positive user experience on social media platforms. The second phenomenon has been the race among these social networking sites to be the best at delivering a unified virtual community experience to users in furtherance of globalization and world unification goals, especially in light of the insights the COVID-19 pandemic has brought on the common humanity and inter-dependence of the human race.

Incidentally, these two phenomena — which meant that the platforms focus on features such as video and audio to enhance real-time communication — have brought about a spike in citizen journalism and individualized information sharing. However, the disadvantage is that citizens are now more prone than ever to being fed disinformation and misinformation, especially in a way that makes it difficult to separate truth from untruth, seeing as technological advancements have made room for the fabrication of believable proof to support maliciously distributed information. This problem, along with the seeming inability of traditional media organizations to seamlessly transition to digital media, paved the way for the rise of individual media experts.

The rise in the usage and adoption of social media platforms and the increasing ease in the creation and management of blogging and content creation platforms all form part of the emergence and growth of the creator economy, democratized content publication, journalism, and social criticism. This meant that citizen writers and journalists, especially social critics, did not have to fully rely on traditional means like a newspaper column or a weekly television or

radio show to critique societal happenings and contribute cumulatively to the media's effect on governance. Relatedly, the digital age has also contributed to the rise of citizens' engagement and participation in the public policymaking process. For example, the democratization of content publication, journalism, and social criticism enables people to participate in setting the public policy agenda. The affordances of social media as interactive platforms that democratize popular speech and enable new forms of sociality are not limited to geographical borders of states. It crosses state boundaries and connects people in cyberspace, where they freely engage in public diplomacy and diaspora diplomacy that impact international relations. For instance, diaspora populations are increasingly connecting and engaging with their home countries in cyberspace, using social media as a tool for awakening consciousness. They are also invoking their dual-citizenship agency to influence inter-state relations between their home and host countries.

Farooq Kperogi, a Professor of Journalism and Emerging Media at the Kennesaw State University in the US, is a Nigerian social critic and citizen journalist whose work, influence, and achievements have charted new perspectives to the study of digital media in citizen journalism, citizen engagement, and social criticism. Traditional journalistic practices position field work as the Holy Grail of information collection and accurate reportage. However, emerging media and the practices of Professor Farooq Kperogi, who resides in the United States but is one of Nigeria's most vocal and factual socio-political critics in Nigeria, challenge the tenets of journalism practice as advocated by traditional journalism.

The Nigerian diaspora's involvement and contributions, although largely in the economic and financial aspects of Nigerians' lives, extend to active citizen engagement and socio-political discourses. Having witnessed other countries' processes, conditions, and operations, Nigerians in the diaspora serve the purpose of politically and socially awakening Nigerians to the need to not settle for the less-than-humane realities of the average citizen. Aside from the structured and semi-formal social criticism and citizen engagement of the likes of Farooq Kperogi, there is an emerging category of diaspora Nigerians heavily involved in citizen engagement through video content on new-age and youth-targeted social media platforms.

Through his citizen engagement and socio-political criticisms, Farooq Kperogi's work has fast-tracked the rolling back of unfavorable policies. The professor has also, through research, produced a body of work focused on the Nigerian citizenry and the use of digital and emerging media. Kperogi belongs to the select class of academics who have found a nexus between their research and its applicability worldwide. He has successfully put his research to practice, building a socio-political criticism ecosystem that engages the citizenry, informs, provides contextual analyses of happenings in the country, and influences positive government decisions.

Through the years, Kperogi's works have presented a holistic view of political, social, religious, and economic crises. Drawing on his body of work and digital milestones, this conference's thematic focus is based on the book *Citizenship and the Diaspora in the Digital Age: Farooq Kperogi and the Virtual Community* by Toyin Falola. The African Centre for the Study of the United States at the University of Pretoria (ACSUS-UP), therefore, calls for papers examining various themes in the following and other related areas:

- Traditional Media: Survival and Limitations
- Social Media and Global Politics
- Social Media and the Democratic Process in Africa
- Digitalization and Citizen Engagement in Nigeria
- The Multidimensional Role of Nigerians in Diaspora in Nigeria's Development
- The Diaspora Diplomacy Agency of the Nigerian Diaspora
- The Soft Power Value of the African Diaspora
- Citizen Journalism in the Digital Age
- Citizen Journalism and Government Policies in Africa
- Citizen Journalism in Nigeria
- Digitalization and Social Criticism in Africa
- Change and Chaos Agents
- Farooq Kperogi and Citizen Engagement
- Farooq Kperogi and the Virtual Community
- Farooq Kperogi and the Reinvention of Journalism
- Social Media Trends and Citizen Journalism
- The Digital Age, Government Surveillance and Control
- The Emerging Media, Citizen Journalism, Misinformation and Fake News
- Web 2.0, Web 3.0 and Virtual Community Building
- Social Media and the Future of the World

### Submission Guidelines

We welcome submissions from researchers from multi-disciplinary perspectives across the humanities and social sciences. The criteria for selection are originality, quality of research, and relevance. Comparative perspectives are welcome. Paper proposals should include the paper title, names, affiliations of author(s) and a 200-word abstract that specifies the key research question, methodology and main findings.

**The deadline for abstract submissions is 15 April 2023, and acceptance will be communicated on 30 April 2023.**

**Email all paper proposals to:** [u19146842@tuks.co.za](mailto:u19146842@tuks.co.za) and [bcmanager@toyinfalolanetwork.org](mailto:bcmanager@toyinfalolanetwork.org)

### Publication

Selected papers shall be peer-reviewed for publication in an edited book by Toyin Falola and Christopher Isike, which will be published by a reputable publisher.

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