



Our July 2022 UDSM Alumna

This is a “light corner” on the UDSM portal intended to feature for one month in turns two among many of the University’s graduates—alumni—since its foundation in 1961. The corner is designed to inform the public and the University itself, without prejudice in terms of historical precedence but guided only by professional information search, on the past graduates of the University, their whereabouts, their current position or engagement, what is remembered of them as past ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ of their time and, finally, on what is reckoned about their contribution to their Alma Mater, their nation, the Africa region and/or the wider world.

Marjorie Jane MBILINYI



Year of matriculation: 1968

Year of graduation: 1970

Award: PhD (Education), University of Dar es Salaam (1970/71)

More info:

- **B.Sc. (Child Development), Cornell University, USA, 1961-1965);**
- **M.A (Educational Psychology), Stanford University, USA, 1965-1966).**

One of the UDSM’s early alumnae and a second female doctoral graduate in 1970, Marjorie Jane Mbilinyi is the University’s ‘Alumna of the Month’ for July 2022. She is the University’s alumna at the doctoral level. There is surely a lot to say about her and her work and passions in the 55 years she has been connected with Tanzania and the University of Dar es Salaam.

Marjorie was born in New York, USA, in 1943, and had her junior and high school education there. She went to university at Cornell, where she studied psychology and social science, getting a BSc degree in Child Development (1961-1965). Thereafter, she proceeded with a Master’s degree programme in Educational Psychology at Stanford University in California (1965/66). At the end of 1966, she came to Tanzania to join her future Tanzanian husband, Prof. Simon Mbilinyi of the University’s Economic Research Bureau. No sooner had she settled in her new homeland than she began an active academic and professional career. She began as a lecturer with the Tanzania Institute of Education, which was then part of the University College [of the University of East Africa] responsible for curriculum development for schools and teacher training colleges (TTCs) in Tanzania. When the Institute separated from the University in 1975, she chose to remain with the Department of Education within the then Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, although, as a scholar, she maintained her links with her former colleagues, especially in organising and executing joint academic seminars and research. These came to serve as a useful context in evaluating school curricula and teacher methods in teacher training colleges in matters of theory and practice of participatory research.

Within the Department of Education, Marjorie played a dynamic and supportive role as a senior member of staff grooming or else mentoring young academics in conducting field research, as well as in putting up well-anchored points of argument in debates and seminar papers. Back in 1974, she and the senior staff (Prof. Geoffrey Mmari, then Head of Department, Mrs. Laura Okumu of the Institute of Education and the Department’s Visiting Professor James Breeden of Harvard University) had helped to inaugurate one of very few University-based academic journals, *Papers in Education and Development*. The journal was inaugurated in tandem with the establishment of an earliest postgraduate (Masters) class in the Department—later Faculty and now School—of Education. This year is the grand forty-eighth (48th) year in the business that involves tens of doctoral candidates as well. Marjorie was truly active and in many ways proactive in all these developments.

Along with this dedicated side of scholarship, Marjorie—early in her career—developed into a strong and dedicated feminist and gender activist, devoting herself to close collaboration with women of various educational and administrative backgrounds in the fight against *patriarchy* and *neo-liberalism*. Patriarchy is an institutionalized social system in which men dominate over others but particularly over women, a socio-cultural phenomenon that had grown endemic in African society. Neo-liberalism, as has been perceived, is a resurgence of 19th-century ideas associated with free-market capitalism. Over a long period of Marjorie Mbilinyi’s researches, both these tendencies—patriarchy and *neo-liberalism*—have been blatant in Tanzanian society. Being “an American-born and [a] white female married to a Tanzanian”, as she once said in a 2017 interview [with Janet Bujra of the *Review of African Political Economy*, ROAPE], she was “forced to confront the challenges and struggles of patriarchy in the family and on campus, as well as in the general community, while also actively engaged with others in efforts to implement socialist

principles, transformative pedagogy and participatory action research. My position, as an American-born European/white female married to a Tanzanian, complicated these struggles.”

Professor Mbilinyi’s strong ideological drive made her decide on her own to transfer internally within the University system from the Faculty [now School] of Education to the Institute of Development Studies in order to these issues in order to pursue these issues more consistently. She left IDS in 2003 on formal retirement from University service. But for this whole period of 36 years with the University, Marjorie Mbilinyi was an icon not only of a feminist struggle but also of a prolific research-and-publication industry.

After her retirement from academia, Professor Mbilinyi was invited by the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP, popular in Kiswahili simply as ‘*Mtandao*’), where she served as its principal policy analyst (2004-14) and where she trained scores of younger women into as many research and organisational as was possible.

Over the years, Marjorie has drafted, written and published tens of works. Only a few can be mentioned hereunder:

The education of girls in Tanzania: A study of attitudes of Tanzanian girls and their fathers towards education (1969) by Marjorie J Mbilinyi (Book, based on her PhD thesis); *Challenge of Education for Self-Reliance: A Report* (based on a Workshop on Education, March 22-23, 1974); *Women in Tanzania* (co-authored with Ophelia Mascarenhas, 1983); *Big Slavery: Agribusiness and the Crisis in Women’s Employment in Tanzania* (1991); *Reviving Local Self-Reliance* (Co-edited with Wilbert Gooneratne, 1992); *Gender Profile of Tanzania* (editor, TGNP, 1993); *Gender Patterns in Micro and Small Enterprises of Tanzania* (editor, 2000); *Food is Politics* (E&D Ltd., 2002); *Activist Voices: Feminist Struggles for an Alternative World* (co-edited with Mary Rusimbi, Chachage S L Chachage and Demere Kitunga, 2003); *Against Neoliberalism: Gender, Democracy & Development* (co-editor C.S.L. Chachage, 2003); *Nyerere on Education [Nyerere kuhusu Elimu]: Selected Essays and Speeches* (co-edited with Elieshi Lema and Rakesh Rajani, 2004); ‘Gender Struggles at the University of Dar es Salaam: A Personal Herstory’ in *Tanzania Journal of Development Studies*, Vol.11, No.1-2, 2011). The University congratulates her so warmly.



Stressing points on gender equity and social justice both in urban as well as in rural settings.



Fondly described by many admirers and organisations as “Queen of the Feminist Revolution”

Marjorie Jane MBILINYI is Our July 2022 Alumna, and her great stories begin here!

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