

**Cynthia Nkiruka Anyadi**

Royal Holloway University of London  
Human Geography

**PhD title:** ‘Mapping death, migration, and material culture through memorial souvenirs: a case study of Igbo Nigerians’

**Placement:** African Digital Heritage, Nairobi, Kenya

**Duration:** 6 weeks

In the first year of my PhD I spent 6 weeks in Nairobi, Kenya, working for the organisation [African Digital Heritage](#) as a visiting researcher. African Digital Heritage is a Nairobi based non-profit organisation working to encourage a more critical, holistic and knowledge-based approach to the design and implementation of digital solutions within African heritage.

I wanted to do this placement because, among their other research specialities, ADH are focussed on how digital solutions can be used alongside archives, community knowledge, and oral histories in order to increase access and engagement. This is a big part of my PhD, and was something that I felt was a big knowledge gap for me. The key aims of my placement were to gain technical digitising skills, learn more about accessible digital knowledge sharing and how to meaningfully involve a wider community, and how to practically engage with current decolonising theory. It was also really important to me that I take as many opportunities as I can to work with organisations based in Africa that had a good knowledge of the cultural networks and organisations across the continent.

I really enjoyed the work I was able to do with the team whilst I was there. Working alongside Chao (ADH Director) I led an interview session with a farmer whose family’s property lay on the site of some Mau Mau mass graves. We took a day trip to Nyeri County and I conducted a 2 hour unstructured interview and site tour. It was great to get back into doing fieldwork again, since it has been a couple of years now since I’ve done it. I also worked alongside two of my colleagues on different projects. The main one was the development of a Cultural Practitioner Toolkit. The project was ran by my colleague, who had been working for several months on assessing the needs of cultural organisations across Kenya. This was particularly interesting because I was exposed to many new people and organisations, but also because I gained a better understanding of what the challenges are to engaging the public in cultural work and research.

I’m really happy with the placement and feel it was an invaluable opportunity. I gained practical knowledge around interviewing and producing accessible research, and learned more about progress in the arts and culture sector in Kenya and beyond. Beyond this, however, I think one of the most valuable outcomes was the networks that I built. I was able to connect with so many new people through ADH and all offered a new perspective or new considerations for my research. I definitely think that the experience has made me think differently about not just the practicalities of my fieldwork, but also more broadly about undertaking research and the challenges that come with it.

Overall, organising the placement was actually quite a smooth process and it was so worth it. I had an amazing time, learned so much, and made some great connections that will be invaluable for my research. I’d absolutely encourage anyone thinking about doing a placement to go for it, and if you aren’t thinking about it maybe explore some options!