

## Reflections on the past year



Coronavirus restrictions and lockdown made life hugely difficult for students in the past year, so it was great to see all the hard work of our final-year students pay off with fantastic results. Congratulations to all our graduates. **Saalika Ji-wani** and **Charles Hind** (pictured) shared The Dean's Prize for Excellence in Politics and International Relations (Overall Performance). Saalika is now working for the Civil Service, and Charlie is Development & Engagement Coordinator at



Leeds University Union. **Saalika** and **James Nash** shared The Dean's Prize for the Best Independent Project.

# 100%

The efforts made by staff to support students was recognised with International Relations courses scoring 100% for Overall Satisfaction in the National Student Survey (NSS), and Politics courses scoring 95%. Positive comments included:

*You are taught transferable skills and tested through a range of different types of assessments, which challenges you to use what you have learnt in different ways.*

*I came into this degree through clearing, I had a negative perception of non-Russell Group universities like Leeds Beckett but it has been one of the best things to ever happen to me. The staff are so attentive not only to your academic needs but also my personal needs. They are extremely supportive and intelligent and truly engage with students as equal. I could not be happier with my choice of university.*

*The teaching staff on my course were exceptional both in delivering the teaching of content, in support, and in being generally great human beings.*

## Student & Alumni news

**Ciaron Boles** (BA Politics) is working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at Holy Cross College, Bury, and was elected as a Labour councillor in his home ward of Moorside (Bury) in the recent elections. Ciaron said *"Before becoming a student at Leeds Beckett I had achieved 4 Us in my A level mocks and was in a poor state mentally. Fast forward a few years and I am writing this post as a Graduate Teaching Assistant with a first class Politics degree hanging on my wall and having recently been elected as a Labour councillor. I am in no doubt that I owe much of this success to the Politics department at Leeds Beckett and in particular to the volunteering module that allowed me to dip my toe into the waters of local activism"*

In a similar vein, **Lani-mae Ball** (BA Politics, MA Peace & Development) was re-elected as Councillor (Lab.) for Conisbrough and has been appointed Lead for Education, Skills & Young People on Doncaster Council

**Tess Humble** (BA Peace Studies & International Relations) is working as a Mobilisation Officer at the COP26 Coalition, which is organising to engage with world leaders at the Glasgow climate conference

**Tabitha Whitfield** for (BA International Relations & Global Development) has started a new position as Project Officer at The Royal College of Psychiatrists

**Chris Hyliger** (MA Peace & Development) is now the Diversity and Inclusion Programme Manager at the NGO Christians Against Poverty

**Yigit Cok** (MA International Relations) has started a new role as Border Force International Office Manager at the British Embassy in Turkey



## PIR Festival 2021



The Politics and International Relations Festival is an annual series of events for students and the wider public, which includes research talks and discussions of some of the pressing challenges currently facing political leaders. This year the events were virtual, and highlights included:

*Conflict, climate change and food insecurity in South Sudan: The work of humanitarian organisation Trócaire and CAFOD*, **Guy Biggs** (BA Global Development & International Relations 2015)

*Covid-19 and the failure of the Neoliberal State*, Dr. Lee Jones (QMUL)

*Countering Human Trafficking in Kenya*, **Prof. Rachel Julian** and Haart Kenya

*What a difference a mayor makes – getting gender on the devolution agenda in West Yorkshire*, Prof. Francesca Gains (University of Manchester)

*Resisting Militarism*, Dr Chris Rossdale (Bristol University)

*“Go back to your country”*: *An Anti-racist Anthology of Poetry*, which includes work by **Jamila Pereira** (BA International Relations 2021)

## Staff research

In his article for *The Conversation*, "Niger's democratic transition is good news, but the threat of insurgency remains high", **Dr Olayinka Ajala** recounts that in December 2020 Niger held its first election to transfer power from one civilian regime to another. The election marked the successful completion of President Mahamadou Issoufou's tenure. Nevertheless, despite key progress being made, there are still factors threatening the country's political stability. These include the trafficking of weapons, humans and drugs, and conflict in neighbouring countries. The threat of conflict is something that the newly elected president will need to confront in order to maintain the stability that has been in place since 2011.



Dr Jill Gibbon (Leeds School of Arts) and **Professor Rachel Julian** have been awarded £5,000 by the Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF) for their project *Picturing security in an age of climate breakdown*. Extinction Rebellion (XR) activists will team up with academics in peace studies and graphic arts to create collaborative drawings and montaged animations. Through the drawings, the group will share their experiences, insights and artefacts from their activism and research. They will develop an understanding of how we negotiate abstract concepts of the term 'security' in relation to our own lived experiences.

**Dr Sophia Price** is leading on a British Academy funded programme WARIA (Writing and Researching the Political Economy of Inequality in Africa). This is a programme of capacity building workshops and activities for Post Graduate and Early Career Researchers in any Development Assistant Committee country in Africa. It offers a series of workshops and mentoring for researchers interested in any area of inequality related to Africa. Participants take part in the workshops, and have a 1-2-1 mentoring programme to support them to develop and publish their research. Outside of these participants, anyone with an interest in the topic will be able to benefit from the free Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) being developed. The project is delivered by staff in a range of institutions in the UK and Africa, including former PIR PhD student **Dr Adewale Aderemi** who is a Lecturer at Lagos State University, and currently the Director of Democratic Studies at NILDS, the research/think tank arm of the Nigerian legislature whose mandate is to build legislative capacity.

