

Dear New Wesleyan Students,

We are writing to give you your very first homework assignment from Wesleyan! Each year Wesleyan's "First Year Matters" (FYM) program identifies a common reading for all new students, providing a shared experience for the entire class as well as an introduction to intellectual life at Wesleyan. This year, the FYM Committee unanimously selected Find Me Unafraid: Love, Loss and Hope in an African Slum by Kennedy Odede '12 and Jessica Posner '09.

In their memoir, Kennedy and Posner co-author the story of their lives growing up in vastly different worlds. Kennedy reflects on the poverty, violence and desperation he experienced growing up in Kibera, one of Kenya's largest slums, and translating those feelings of disenfranchisement into community work by creating SHOFCO (Shining Hope for Communities). Posner, a Wesleyan student from Colorado who was studying in Kenya with an interest in community theater, came to know Kennedy and together they have changed one another's lives as well as those of vulnerable girls and the urban poor in Kenya. This is a story of hope, of connection, of opportunity, of love, and of the possibilities and support that Wesleyan opens for its students. David Brooks in the *New York Times* describes the book as "gripping" while Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf states, "A bright beacon, an important tale of perseverance calling for the female leadership Africa needs and must have. Shining Hope for Communities is an example of the way development in Africa should be done."

We are enthusiastic about introducing the Class of 2023 to the powerful work of our alumni and look forward to the important discussions we will have about these issues during New Student Orientation. Kennedy has also agreed to speak on campus during New Student Orientation. An electronic copy of the book will be available to you; information will be in your WesPortal in early July.

Each student must complete an FYM Response, designed as a tool for you to begin articulating your synthesis of the book and will be made available to the faculty and student leaders that will be leading the group discussions during orientation. The submission deadline for the FYM responses is 5:00 pm on August 16 via this [link](#). You will need to read the book closely and file your response by this date in order to be fully prepared to engage with the material and get the most out of orientation.

If you have any questions, please be in touch with Jennifer Wood, Dean for the Class of 2023, via jpwood@wesleyan.edu or the Orientation Interns via orientation@wesleyan.edu.

We hope that you enjoy this summer reading and we very much look forward to welcoming you to campus at the end of August. We are thrilled that you will be joining this wonderful community.

Sincerely,

Rob Rosenthal,
Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dean Mike Whaley,
Vice President for Student Affairs