

## THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

### *Regents Communication*

#### ACTION REQUEST

**Subject:** Report of Faculty Death  
**Action Requested:** Adoption of Memorial Statement

The Regents of the University of Michigan acknowledge with profound sadness the death of **Fernando Arenas, Ph.D.**, professor of Afroamerican and African studies and professor of Romance languages and literatures in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Professor Arenas died on October 30, 2019.

Professor Arenas received his B.A. (1986) degree from Northern Arizona University and his M.A. (1988) and Ph.D. (1994) degrees from the University of California, Berkeley. He joined the University of Michigan faculty as a professor in 2011.

Professor Arenas was widely recognized in his field for his innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to the complexities of the Lusophone world, as was highlighted in the co-edited volume he published in 2002, titled *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, a volume that made new inroads into the study of Portuguese since it examined the representation of sexualities in Brazil, Portugal, Angola, and Cape Verde from disciplines such as literature, history, popular culture, and modern dance. This volume was followed a year later by his first monograph, *Utopias of Otherness: Nationhood and Subjectivity in Portugal and Brazil* (2003), which explored shifting notions of nationhood, subjectivity, and utopia from a Trans-Atlantic perspective. Professor Arenas examined in this work the relation between different writing projects and the shifting economic, political, and cultural forces of globalization. His second book, *Lusophone Africa: Beyond Independence* (2011), which was augmented and recently translated into Portuguese as *África lusófona, além da independência* (2019), marked a fundamental change in his scholarly trajectory. A study of contemporary cultural production of Portuguese-speaking Africa, *Lusophone Africa* addresses globalization in the aftermath of colonialism by drawing on popular music, film, literature, cultural history, geopolitics, and critical theory, putting forth a conceptual framework for understanding, for the first time, recent cultural and historical developments in Portuguese-speaking Africa. At the time of his untimely death, he was preparing a third book project titled *The Rise of Afro-Portugal: From African Migration to European Citizenship*. He will be remembered as a tireless champion of the teaching of Portuguese language, understood in the broadest sense through its myriad geographies and cultural forms across the undergraduate and graduate curricula.

As we mourn the loss of our beloved colleague, we extend our heartfelt condolences to his partner, David Asselstine, his mother, Beatriz, his brothers, Alberto, Juan Pablo, and Carlos, and his father, Carlos.

**Requested by:**



**Sally J. Churchill, J.D.**

**Vice President and Secretary of the University**

**February 2020**