

## **Copyright your work and earn royalties, Prof. Fisher urge artists.**

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Kenyan artists have been advised to protect their original pieces of work by applying for patents and copyrights so that they can earn royalties from their innovation and creative works. This was the message by Prof. William Fisher, from Harvard School of Law during his public lecture at the University of Nairobi, Taifa Hall on April 26, 2018.

According to Prof. Fisher, virtually all original works can be patented and copyrighted. From music, films, movies, fashion, food recipes, yoga, among others. He gave examples of movies that have copyrighted and have earned millions of dollars to the creators. Such movies mentioned during the public lecture include “Black Panther” which had Kenya’s very own film actor Lupita Nyong’o as one of the leading characters. “Even yoga has been copyrighted, the original creator makes money by teaching people the yoga moves, speaking engagements, selling licenses, selling the movies via CDs, DVDS and even online. He makes close to \$ 4.9 million annually from teaching yoga”, he said.

Other pieces of work that can be copyrighted according to Prof. Fisher include photographs, architectural pieces of work and choreography. He highlighted photos of world leaders that could have earned the owners of the photos millions had they been copyrighted. One such photo is the photo of former USA President, Barack Obama, that was used during the 2008 Presidential Campaign and in producing the ‘Hope’ poster. Dance moves too can be copyrighted according to Prof. Fisher.

Universities and institutions of higher learning were challenged to copyright the works of students

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and staff. The research findings need to be patented and commercialized. It is a well known fact that Harvard, Stanford among many other Ivy League universities have earned billions of dollars from copyrights and patents. Prof. Fisher urged Kenyan universities to follow suit. In his concluding remarks, Prof. Fisher underscored the need to recognize artists, reward artists, pay them revenues and royalties based on the popularity of their works as judged by consumers.

Prof. Fisher was accompanied by Prof. Isaac Mbeche, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students Affairs, who represented Prof. Peter Mbithi, the Vice-Chancellor, University of Nairobi. The University has been at the forefront in protecting its research findings through patents and copyrights through the Intellectual Property Office, which was established in 2007. "The university as well offers courses on intellectual property to help create awareness. In the recent past, with the support of World Intellectual Property Organization, (WIPO) University of Nairobi is conducting an intellectual property audit. This is aimed at finding strategies on how best to commercialize the products of research," said Prof. Mbeche.

The public lecture was attended by the University management, staff, students and members of the public.

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**Contact Person:**

Peter Oluoch

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