

# Recognizing Alumni Accomplishments

Three alumni nominated by their peers received the Harvard School of Public Health Alumni Award of Merit—the highest honor presented to an alumna or alumnus—at this year’s Alumni Centennial Weekend dinner held on November 2 at Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Art.



2013 Alumni Award of Merit winners Eiji Yano, Marc Schenker, and Debra Silverman.

## **MARC SCHENKER, MPH '80**

Marc Schenker has led the development of internationally recognized programs in occupational and environmental health, epidemiology, public health science, and global health. Since 1983, he has directed the Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, and since 1990, the Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety, both at the University of California at Davis. His work with these centers encompasses an array of projects addressing toxic, ergonomic, and environmental factors affecting the quality of life in underserved farm-

worker populations. His work applies a public health focus to underserved populations, social justice, global health, disease prevention, and the impact of migration on occupational health.

## **DEBRA SILVERMAN, SD '81**

Debra Silverman is a leading expert on the carcinogenicity of diesel exhaust, having conducted the landmark Diesel Exhaust in Miners Study, a 20-year collaboration with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. The study culminated in the publication of two landmark papers and the International Agency for Research on Cancer’s reclassification of diesel exhaust as a Group 1 carcinogen. Silverman is an internationally recognized authority on the epidemiology of cancers of the bladder and pancreas and an outstanding mentor of young scientists.

## **EIJI YANO, MPH '84**

Eiji Yano is founding dean of the first independent school of public health in Japan. As a professor at Teikyo University Medical School, he fostered continuous collaboration between Teikyo and Harvard Universities through his organization of the joint, international Teikyo-Harvard Symposium. It was at this symposium in 2009 that the idea of creating of a graduate school of public health in Tokyo was discussed. The Teikyo School of Public Health (TSPH) was established in April 2011, with Yano as dean, despite the devastation of earthquakes, tsunami, and a major nuclear accident in Japan that same year.

Four additional alumni awards, which recognize achievements in various arenas of public health and at various stages in public health careers, were presented earlier in the day.



Left to right: Leadership in Public Health Practice awardee Adam Finkel, Public Health Innovator awardee Royce Ellen Clifford, Emerging Public Health Professional awardee Kelechi Ohiri, and Public Health Innovator awardee Akudo Anyanwu Ikemba.

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH INNOVATOR AWARD**

**Akudo Anyanwu Ikemba, MPH '03**, advances the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria through her leadership of Friends Africa, a pan-African NGO she founded in 2006. Friends Africa mobilizes and builds the capacity of the African private sector, civil society, and governments to improve Africa's health.

It works across the continent to implement innovative projects, engage the underutilized African private sector, and leverage the power of African celebrities to advocate for better health systems and to fight stigma against people living with HIV.

**Royce Ellen Clifford, MPH '06**, explored the damaging effects of high-decibel noise exposure on the hearing and cognitive capacities of her fellow Marine Corps pilots. While at an Army hospital in Baghdad, she spent three weeks testing Armed Forces members with hearing loss, documented her findings, and spread the word of how prevalent the problem was. Her efforts influenced the Department of Defense to launch a "Global War on Noise" to reduce and treat noise-induced hearing loss, and resulted in her appointment as Operational Advisor to the Office of Naval Research.

#### **LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE AWARD**

**Adam Finkel, SD '87**, has for 25 years led governmental and research organizations in data-driven and precautionary campaigns to reduce a wide variety of occupational and environmental health risks, and pioneered transformative methods of quantitative risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis. For five years during the Clinton administration, he directed the health regulatory offices at the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA); during that time, he helped forge five of the seven final regulations to come out of the agency in the past 20 years that protect U.S. workers from chemical, biological, and other health hazards.

#### **EMERGING PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONAL AWARD**

**Kelechi Ohiri, MPH '02, SM '03**, advises the Minister of Health of Nigeria with leadership, analytical rigor, and advocacy. After working with the World Bank and McKinsey & Company, he returned to his native Nigeria, where he was a fierce advocate for improving access to healthcare for the underserved. As adviser, Ohiri pioneered the Ministry's Saving One Million Lives Initiative to reduce child and maternal deaths, and spearheaded the establishment of a \$500 million maternal health initiative. Ohiri played a lead role in establishing the Private Sector Health Alliance of Nigeria and is currently designing a comprehensive quality improvement and clinical governance program.