



FROM MASISI TO KENTUCKY: A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE AND PURPOSE

My name is Gashema Kalisa, and my roots trace back to Masisi in the Democratic Republic of Congo—a place that shaped my earliest memories and taught me the meaning of strength long before I understood it myself. My journey has not been simple. After leaving my home, I spent 15 long years in a refugee camp, a chapter of life defined by waiting, uncertainty, and resilience. Those years challenged me, but they also molded me, teaching me patience, humility, and a deep appreciation for every opportunity that followed.

Today, I am grateful to call the state of Kentucky my home. Arriving here opened a new chapter filled with hope, stability, and the chance to rebuild my life with purpose. The transition was not always easy, but every step has been a reminder of how far I've come and how much is possible when determination meets opportunity.

Becoming a part of OCRS has been one of the greatest honors of my journey. This community welcomed me not just as a member, but as family, and I take great pride in serving in the distinguished role of secretary. It means a great deal to contribute to an organization that stands for support, unity, and empowerment—values that resonate with my own experiences and dreams.

Alongside my service, I am currently pursuing a master's degree in chemistry at Ohio University. Education has always been a cornerstone of my aspirations, and this program represents more than academic growth—it is a continuation of the hope that carried me through difficult years and a step toward making a meaningful impact in the world around me.

From Masisi to a refugee camp, from years of uncertainty to a new life in Kentucky, my story is one of perseverance, faith, and the courage to keep moving forward. And while this chapter is still being written, I am committed to using my experiences, my education, and my role in OCRS to uplift others and honor every part of the journey that brought me here.