

PARTNERING *for* CHANGE

A PUBLICATION FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF THE RUTGERS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



Support the legacy of Bert Goldberg

Professor Bert Goldberg dedicated his illustrious career to cultivating the next generation of Social Workers and preparing them to lead human service organizations. Now, you can support his legacy by giving to the Bert Goldberg Memorial Endowed Scholarships to support the Management and Policy concentration and the Israel Study Abroad Program.

Management and Policy Concentration

Funds will be used to support students who enter the Management and Policy concentration. Just as Bert did, these students will develop the knowledge and skills to effectively take on leadership roles in human service organizations and build capacity within them.

Israel Study Abroad Program

Through this fund, social work students will be able to study abroad in Israel and witness different practices and social systems. Overall, this program will allow students to bring this knowledge back home, while building cross-cultural collaboration.

Our goal is to establish an endowed scholarship fund to carry on Bert's legacy in perpetuity. You can donate today by contacting Erin Capone, Director of Development, at 848-932-4436 or ecapone@sosw.rutgers.edu. Your gift can also be made online or in the envelope provided.

Thank you for helping to continue Bert's work.

CHALLENGING RACISM WITH DR. CARL HART

A CONFERENCE ON ADDRESSING RACE, POVERTY,
AND ADDICTION IN NEW WAYS

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t h o u g h t s



Pictured above, Rutgers NO MORE, a student-run chapter of the National NO MORE campaign, is aligned with Rutgers Student Affairs and looks to break stigmas and barriers surrounding domestic violence and sexual assault, just as the Center on Violence Against Women and Children does through their research and certificate program.

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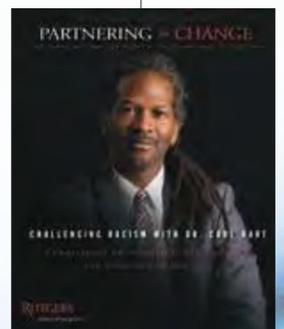
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ON THE COVER

Dr. Carl Hart and others
explore racial disparities
in first annual
conference.



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M E S S A G E F R O M T H E D E A N

Dear Friends,

As we begin a new school year, it is a great pleasure to reflect on the many opportunities for growth and impact that are represented in the stories we present here. I hope they will give you the same sense of pride and excitement that they give me. Rutgers School of Social Work is a diverse, vibrant, exciting place to learn and to serve. As you engage with this magazine, I hope you will think of ways that you can join our team.

In June of 2017, we held our first Conference on Race, an amazing event, with an inspiring kickoff from alumna LaTia McNeely-Sandiford and a thought-provoking, call to action from Dr. Carl Hart. Faculty members Marla Blunt-Carter and Doug Behan provided tremendous leadership for the event, which will become an annual gathering of New Jersey social workers.

The Center on Violence Against Women and Children, so ably led by Drs. Judy Postmus and Sarah McMahon, celebrated its 10th anniversary! The only comprehensive center on domestic and sexual violence in a school of social work, VAWC holds a prominent national presence across a range of practice areas where children and women are at risk. Dr. McMahon, funded by the Obama White House to develop a campus climate assessment tool and process, has just been funded by the State of NJ to head a team to manage that process across all Rutgers campuses. Rutgers is a leader in the campus sexual violence arena—because of VAWC.

Philanthropy plays an important part in the work of the school. In the last magazine, we brought you the story of the Price Family Fellows, a program for former foster care youth. In this issue, you will find ways that you could volunteer to support these amazing young people. Our alumni are present across the school in ways too numerous to mention. We feature two such alumni, Susan Darien, winner of this year's alumni award, and Alexis Jemal, a recent Ph.D. graduate, who knows something about wielding the sword of justice—definitely the sword part.

Please join our many amazing alumni in supporting the school. Join us at the Annual Alumni Winter Reception on Thursday, November 30, 2017. Please consider serving as a field instructor or part-time lecturer, or as a mentor for a student. Join us as participants in our many events and continuing education opportunities. Please consider adding your name to the Honor Roll of Donors, and make it possible for a student to join the profession without the debt that burdens so many students in our country.

As always, it is such a pleasure to be a part of the Rutgers School of Social Work. We are one of the largest, most diverse, most vibrant programs in the country. Our alumni are a powerful force for good in society. Thank you all for your service and for the commitments to human dignity and social justice that you embody.

Sincerely,

Cathryn C. Potter, M.S.W., Ph.D.
DEAN AND DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR
RUTGERS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



We are one of the largest, most diverse, most vibrant programs in the country. Our alumni are a powerful force for good in society. Thank you all for your service and for the commitments to human dignity and social justice that you embody.



ADVICE FROM A CAREER EXECUTIVE TURNED SOCIAL WORKER: FIVE KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

By: Janet LeMonnier '18



DURING LAST YEAR'S School of Social Work orientation, Associate Dean Arlene Hunter celebrated the wide age span of the incoming class by asking for a show of hands among the students as she called out each of the past six decades. I felt a strange combination of embarrassment and pride as I realized I was older than just about everyone in the room – including the faculty and administration. My initial embarrassment has been replaced with gratitude. After a career as a communications executive, I was hungry to be a student again, to take the skills and experience I had amassed over decades and apply them in an entirely new way—as a social worker. And it has been a great experience.

My desire to change careers developed after I lost my dad to Alzheimer's disease. At the age of 82, his fading mind forced him into retirement from his beloved neurology practice. Like my father, I don't plan on retiring early. Yet his struggle reminded me that life is shorter than we think, and forced me to consider how I want to spend the last chapter of my career.

I moved decisively once I chose to enroll in the two-year MSW program. But looking back, the process was hardly an easy "aha!" moment. In retrospect, this career change, like other shifts and turns over the years, was guided by asking myself these five core questions:

1. *If I were turned loose in a bookstore or a library, what section would capture my attention for the rest of the afternoon?*

Spy novels aside, since my dad's death, my personal reading has gravitated toward issues about aging and end-of-life planning. As his disease progressed, my mother was forced to place him in a nursing home. Thanks to the support and advice of the social work team, our family learned to face this wrenching change. We became more accepting and less reactive during our visits with my dad, even sharing laughs with him. I look back on those last weeks with him as among our most loving in our lifetime. I began to wonder if I could help other families in a similar way during such a difficult transition.

2. *What skills have I already developed, and that I enjoy using most, that I could bring to a new career?*

I am a writer by profession, but beyond just putting words on a page, I loved helping my colleagues figure out what they wanted to convey and how to shape their messages to reach their target audiences. The skill of discerning and then calibrating that message is applicable in a field like social work: communications with our clients are imbued with nuance and often call for a thoughtful delivery of carefully chosen words. As an intern I learned to apply my

skills to tap into our clients' needs and help them determine the next steps, locate appropriate resources, or at times, simply validate their feelings and experience.

3. *What kind of work environment would bring me the greatest satisfaction on a day-to-day basis?*

Social work naturally evolves through ever-emerging research, required continuing education and its vast professional networks, and I am drawn by the urgency of our clients' needs. Like everyone, I want a supportive, appreciative workplace with motivated coworkers, opportunities to grow and fresh challenges. Not entirely realistic, I know. Yet my first-year internship and my past volunteer experiences helped me pinpoint my needs in a job, enabling me to distinguish between the deal-breaking attributes versus those that would be "nice to have."

4. *Pragmatically speaking, where do I see a growing need for professionals in the job market?*

Graduate school is an investment of time and finances, so I wanted to choose a field with a steady stream of job opportunities. As a baby boomer myself, I recognize that this generation is moving toward retirement and facing end-of-life challenges in large numbers over the coming decades. Funding sources are always in flux, but the need is unquestionable, which helps shore up the employment market for social workers serving older adults.

5. *What kinds of experiences should I pursue that will position me for success once I embark on a job search?*

I see my return to school as a gift, so I have immersed myself in learning opportunities. I am pursuing a Certificate in Aging and Health and was awarded a fellowship for next year as an intern in a hospital system, working in palliative and hospice care. I also participated on an inter-professional education (IPE) team of Rutgers medical, dental, nursing, and pharmacology students, collaborating to provide patient-centered support to high-frequency utilizers of emergency departments. This experience helped me understand the inter-disciplinary nature of palliative and hospice care, as well as illuminated how lifelong poverty adversely affects health outcomes.

I am old enough to appreciate that no job is perfect. But I also know that if I can combine my interests with new skills, I have a better shot at job satisfaction in the coming years. I believe I have found the right fit to sustain me for the long haul. ■



PFF VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

In last month's magazine, we did a feature story on the Price Family Fellows. This fall, we're giving alumni an opportunity to assist with students like those we mentioned in that article.

Approximately 400,000 children and youth are in foster care in the United States today, and each year, about 20,000 of them age out of foster care. Of those, about 10% attend college, and an even smaller percentage (between 1 and 5%) graduate. Those who do graduate struggle to support themselves due to a lack of social/professional connections and experience.

It is the mission of the Price Family Fellows Program (PFF) to improve these statistics by helping young people graduate from college and prepare them for success after graduation. Since 2013, PFF has been supporting students with the help of Rutgers faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners.

Here are a few ways you can become more involved and create positive change for students who have few resources to support them.

Host an Intern: PFF offers stipends to students participating in unpaid internships, providing them with some additional financial security during the academic year.

Volunteer as a PFF Career Coach: For PFF students, getting high-quality, career-specific guidance, can be tough. By volunteering as a career coach, you provide valuable support to our students in navigating their individual career and personal development pathways.

Become a Price Family Fellows "Campus Champion:" The Campus Champions Advisory Committee meets once in the fall and once in the spring to discuss

ways to support students who have a background in foster care and/or are at-risk for homelessness, and help these students throughout the school year by leveraging the full resources that Rutgers and the local community have available.

Sponsor a Graduating Student: For PFF students, a safe and stable home does not exist after they get their diplomas. The PFF program has begun a "Graduate Starter-Fund Campaign" to help graduates pay for the cost of security deposit/first month's rent, professional clothes, and other essentials to help them during the first three months following their graduation.

Volunteer as a Workshop Presenter: Do you have a special skill, powerful personal experience, or valuable knowledge that could help our students? PFF hosts workshops throughout the year, and we are always looking for special guest presenters who will help our students succeed in the present and become better prepared for the future.

Participate in our Networking Event: Each year, the PFF program hosts a special networking event for our students, and invites professionals to participate by either sharing their professional stories in a panel discussion, or speaking with our students one-on-one or in small groups about specific careers.

For more information, please contact the Price Family Fellows Program Coordinator, Adam Staats, at astaats@ssw.rutgers.edu. Thank you!



RENEWED GIFT ALLOWS FOR CONTINUED PHILANTHROPIC RESEARCH FOR THE HUAMIN RESEARCH CENTER

In March of 2017, Chairperson Dezhi Lu of the Huamin Charity Foundation, Dean Cathryn Potter, former Chancellor Richard Edwards of Rutgers New Brunswick, and MSW alumna Silai Yi '14 signed an agreement to extend the operation of Huamin Research Center for the next five years. This generous gift advances Huamin Center's capacity to become a global philanthropy research center.

BY THE NUMBERS

This fall, we welcomed many new students who are either embarking on their social work educational journey or moving forward in a graduate program. Welcome our new students, by the numbers:



165

BASW new students

797

MSW new students

7

Ph.D. new students

19

DSW new students

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER BYRON



THE DANIEL JORDAN FIDDLE FOUNDATION FELLOWS CREATE RESOURCE SITE FOR FAMILIES

Recognizing the immense need, Linda Walder of The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation established a fund at Rutgers School of Social Work last year to provide support services to families whose adult children with autism were aging out of the system. These funds will assist the graduate-level fellows from the School to work directly with the families and develop a web-based resource guide for families to use nationwide.

The inaugural Fiddle Fellows, Dylan Goodwin, Nicole Paiva, and Michelle Bayha, envision the guide as a first step in helping families navigate this new stage.

"To get the knowledge and skill set to work with individuals who have autism is vital as a Master of Social Work student," said Bayha. "This fund gives me the opportunity to learn valuable information directly from the parents and professionals in the field."

Recently, the group met with Anne Holmes, member of the board of directors for the Autism Society of America and VP of the Division of Autism Spectrum Disorders Consulting Services, along with a panel of parents who shared what it is like to raise an adult child with autism. The parents spoke about the necessity of access to resources as well as knowledge about how to best navigate the system.

The parents on the panel recalled what it was like to raise their children during a time when doctors did not understand or even know about autism. The causes of autism were still being primarily blamed on detached parenting, and very few resources existed.

"No one feels your urgency," said one panelist. "I had to find my way on my own. I had no other choice." They described the education and training they received from Eden, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to improve the lives of children and adults with autism, as life saving.

Mark Lamar, Associate Professor of Professional Practice and Executive Director of Field Education at Rutgers School of Social Work, explained that the fellows have been advised to listen closely to the needs of the families. "Parents are the experts on their own situations, and so therefore, their expertise can serve as a huge asset. At the same time, different families need different things, and part of the social worker's role is to acknowledge that all support needs to be unique to the family," he explained.

After the panel, Paiva said, "What struck me the most in hearing from the parents was how important it is to work with the whole family, and not with just the individual with autism."

Though New Jersey has come a long way in assisting families, there is still much more work to be done, particularly as the child transitions into adulthood. Once he or she reaches age 21, there is a significant lack of guidance and resources available.

"Having a child with autism grounds you," said one parent. "It motivates you, humbles you, and inspires you." The parents emphasized the importance of peer support and groups like Eden. Having these systems in place helps lessen the feelings of isolation that so many parents describe. What the fellows hope to do with their work and resource guide is to supplement that support as much as possible.

"We must continue to make things better. Giving up is not an option. Despite challenging times, we will continue to collaborate until we make a difference," stated Lamar.

The fellows will host their resource guide on the School's website for use by the public.

FACULTY ACCOLADES: HIGHLIGHTS



DR. AYSE AKINCIGIL'S publication, "National Rates and Patterns of Depression Screening in Primary Care: Results From 2012 and 2013," garnered the highest Altmetric score out of all psychiatric services articles published in February. This study examined national rates and patterns of depression screening among visits to office-based primary care physicians.



The Presidential Fellowship for Teaching Excellence at Rutgers University was established to honor newly-tenured faculty members for outstanding teaching and scholarly work. **DR. EDWARD ALESSI** of the School of Social Work, who recently earned tenure as an associate professor, was just awarded this prestigious honor. On May 4, he received the award among his faculty peers at the university, along with a research fund.



DR. JACQUELYNN DURON was selected to participate in the Racial Democracy, Crime and Justice Network's Summer Research Institute (SRI), which was held at Rutgers University-Newark this summer.



DR. ANTOINETTE Y. FARMER'S proposal was accepted for presentation at the 7th European Conference on Social Work. The title of the presentation was "Rethinking Social Work Doctoral Education: Preparing Students to Engage in Translational Research." The conference was held from April 19-21, 2017 at the Aalborg University in lborg, Denmark.



DR. PATRICIA FINDLEY has been appointed to the Rutgers Health Group Board of Trustees by Chancellor Brian Strom. She is one of nine faculty representatives on the board with 25 members. She has been involved with the development of Rutgers Health for over a year as RBHS has been creating its infrastructure.



DR. JERRY FLOERSCH was inducted into the Case Western University Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences Hall of Achievement as an honored member.



DEAN AND PROFESSOR CATHRYN C. POTTER was elected to serve on the CSWE Board of Directors as the new Graduate Program Representative. Her three year term began this July.



The Gerontological Society of America (GSA), the world's oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to research, education, and practice in the field of aging, has unanimously granted **DR. KAREN ZURLO** fellow status through the Social Research, Policy, and Practice Section.

LISTENING FOR A CHANGE

We asked our faculty and staff to give us the most meaningful podcasts, audio books, and other resources that relate to social justice issues. Since many of you spend time on the road for work, our hope is that some of these podcasts or book recommendations provide you with entertainment, inspiration, and enlightenment while you're driving.

Here is a sample of what they sent.



From Patricia Findley, Assistant Professor

The *Social Work Podcast*: "Provides information on all things social work, including direct practice (both clinical and community organizing), research, policy, education and everything in between. The most recent episodes focused on the arc of therapy, death and grief in the digital age, and self-psychology for social workers."

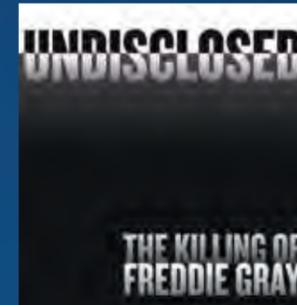
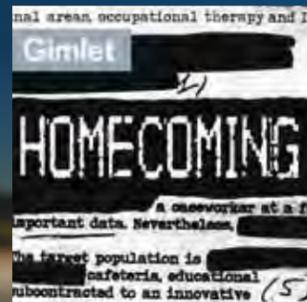
From Catie Buttner, Communications Coordinator, Center on Violence Against Women and Children

Strangers: "This is narrative pieces about people's experiences from first-person perspective and is hosted by Lea Thau, Peabody Award winner and former director of The Moth. The podcast features true stories about people we meet, the heartbreaks we suffer, and the duality we face. Recent pieces include a story about a Somalian refugee family, two dads interested in adoption, and undocumented citizens from Mexico struggling to maintain a safe home for their children."



From Erin Capone, Director of Development

Homecoming: "This podcast series has a fictional story line, much like a radio show, and the central character is a case worker counseling returning soldiers suffering from PTSD. The story grapples with the ethical dilemma of informed consent for treatment and the struggle clinicians have in getting their judgement calls respected by supervisors who may not be informed in counseling. I also recommend a *Love and Radio* episode called 'Stealth Mode,' about a mother raising a transgender child and the fierce love one has for a child."



From Madison Molner, Development Assistant

"I have a lot of favorites. I like *Undisclosed*, which looks at the wrongful convictions and all of the places where the system can fail an individual facing charges, while also uncovering new evidence that never made it to court. *We the Podcast* is also interesting. Hosted by Minnesota congressman Keith Ellison, the podcast offers topics related to the intersection of social justice and the law. Recent podcast looked at the 'diaper divide' as it relates to income inequality and the health of infants, the high cost of prison phone rates, and the double intersection of disenfranchisement among women of color."

From Dr. Kerrie Ocasio, Assistant Research Professor, Institute for Families

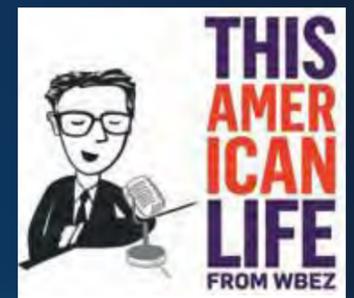
"I recommend a particular TedTalk called *On the Moral Mind*. In it, psychologist Jonathan Haidt studies the five moral values that form the basis of our political choices, whether we're left, right or center. In this eye-opening talk, he pinpoints the moral values that liberals and conservatives tend to honor most. This is helpful for understanding how to message policy in the current political climate."

From: Nutan Rubinson, Associate Program Manager, Institute for Families

Audio book: "*A Constellation of Vital Phenomena* by Anthony Marra, takes place in Chechnya over a time frame between 1994 and 2004 and determines the fate of a young child in a war-torn village. The complexity of the content, the style of writing and storytelling, and the rich characters and relationships made an exceptional novel that stayed with me. It brings cognizance to the destruction of war while highlighting the strength of humanity."

From: Christine Morales, Associate Director, Admissions

Batman podcast from *This American Life*: "This podcast focuses on Daniel Kish, a man who lost his vision as a child. He amazes people with his ability to ride a bike and lead hikes. He is known as Batman, because he uses a sort of echolocation to navigate the world. The podcast is really about society's expectations of differently-abled persons. People in the disabled community are inhibited by what social constructs dictate they are able to do. Personally, I love this podcast because I am the mother of a child who is a congenital amputee. I use this podcast to remind me that I cannot set limits on my expectations for him. I should not be surprised by his accomplishments, as people are with Daniel's bike riding."



Tova Walsh



R. TOVA WALSH joined the School of Social Work as an assistant professor and a faculty affiliate of the Institute for Digital Innovation in Social Work. Previously, she was an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research focuses on understanding and improving health and well-being in multi-stressed families, with an emphasis on pregnancy and early parenting in contexts of risk. She examines the parenting support needs of underserved groups including new fathers and military-connected parents, and collaborates to develop and test parenting interventions to meet their needs. In her intervention work, she seeks to capitalize on existing technology or create new technology to more effectively reach the target population and address their specific needs.

In her current research, Walsh aims to identify effective strategies to support emerging competencies in early parenthood and promote nurturing parent-child relationships among parents who face barriers to initiating or maintaining positive involvement with their children. Her research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the Doris Duke Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and National Institutes of Health.

We asked her to identify five meaningful objects in her office.

Calabash mask

As an undergraduate, I worked with Dr. Dessima Williams, then a professor at Brandeis University as well as the Director of a non-governmental organization that she had founded in her home country of Grenada. I got this mask, carved from the hard shell of a calabash, on my first trip to Grenada with Dr. Williams to work with the Grenada Education and Development Project (GRENED). My experience working with GRENED sparked lasting interest in efforts to help children thrive in the context of caring families and communities.



Colorful hearts painting

This painting was made by an eight year old girl that I got to know when I led a federally funded after-school program at a high poverty school. Her family had experienced substantial hardship in the country they left months before, and they encountered many challenges in the U.S., including social isolation, struggling to pursue education and employment in a new language, separation from loved ones, a tenuous living situation and scarce financial resources. I developed a relationship with the child and her family over several years in which she and her siblings participated in the after-school program. I witnessed their engagement, sometimes voluntary and sometimes involuntary, with services intended to support families in crisis.



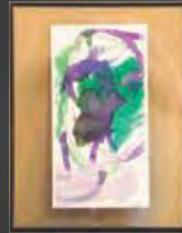
MI-AIMH wheels

The Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (MI-AIMH) created these *Baby Stages*, *Preschool Stages*, and *Rolling into Fatherhood* wheels for parents/caregivers as “a quick and easy tool to help you see the world from your baby’s perspective—and how to nurture and respond to her as she grows.” As a graduate student, I had the opportunity to serve as a member of the Board of MI-AIMH. This allowed me to augment my direct service experience with engagement in policy advocacy. Both experiences continue to inform my teaching and my research focus on identifying effective strategies to support emerging competencies in early parenthood and promote nurturing parent-child relationships. In my current research, I am examining the parenting support needs of new fathers and military-connected parents and collaborating to develop and test parenting interventions for these underserved groups.



Painting by Maya

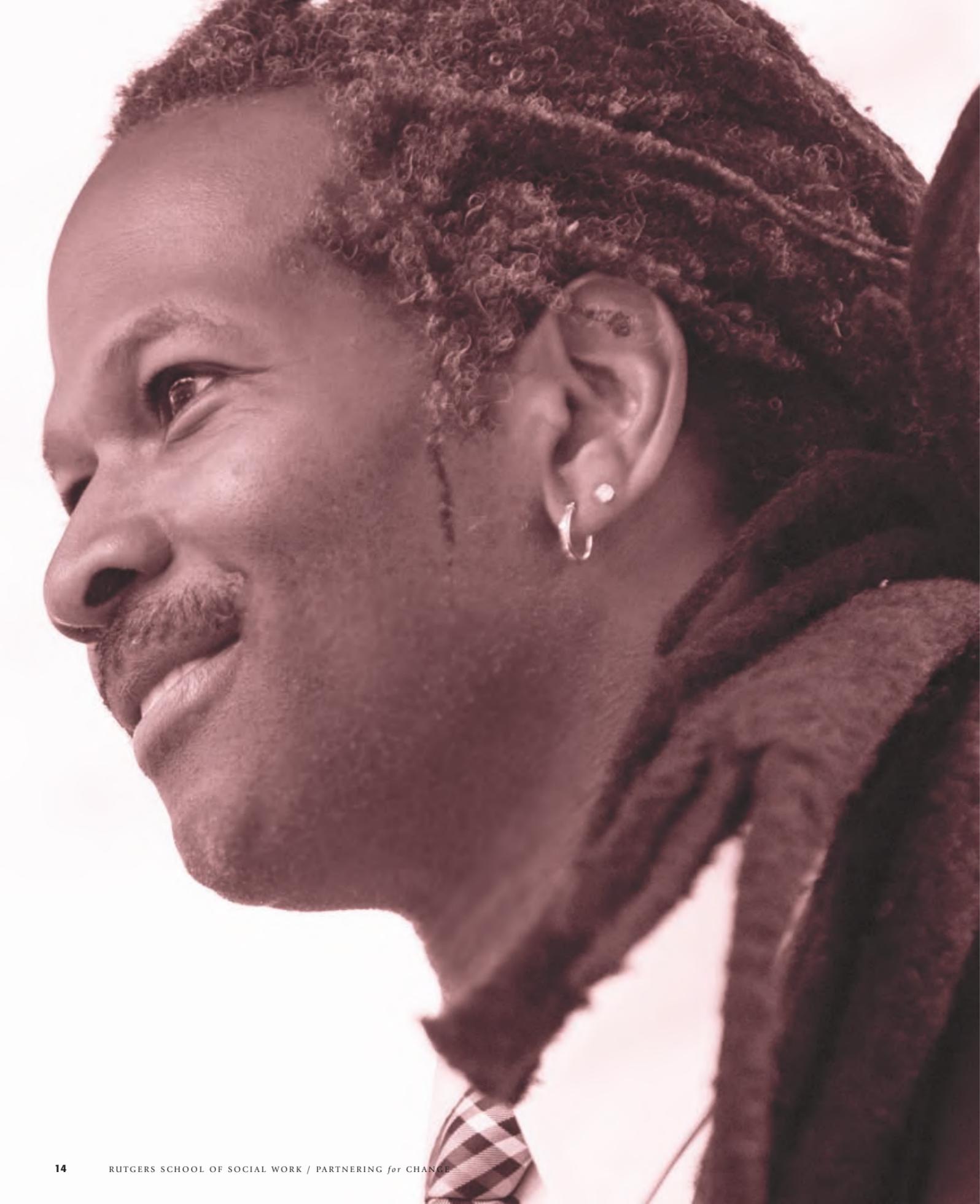
This painting was made by my daughter Maya at age 2.5. She loves art and I love seeing how she explores her ideas and understandings through her creative process. I study early child development, parenting, and parent-child relationships, and I’m also living it as the mother of an infant and a preschooler, so I spend a lot of time reflecting on what young children and those who care for them need to thrive.



Plaque

When I completed my postdoc at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the directors of my program gave me this gift, a miniature of a plaque that has a central place on the university campus. The words on the plaque date back to 1894, and call for “continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth may be found.” I value this historic and yet contemporary message about the importance of academic freedom, and the right and responsibility of faculty to pursue truth in service to the public. Here at Rutgers, I’m excited to engage with challenges and issues facing the state of New Jersey, and to do scholarship that matters in the lives of people and communities in this state and beyond. In addition to its substantive message, the plaque reminds me of some of the wonderful people I’ve had the privilege to work with and learn from.





Conversations on Racial Disparity with Dr. Carl Hart

E

ERIC GARNER. TAMIR RICE. AKAI GURLEY. FREDDIE GRAY. RAMARLEY GRAHAM. THEY'RE THE NAMES OF UNARMED BLACK MALES WHO DIED AT THE HANDS OF POLICE. THESE CASES MADE NATIONAL HEADLINES AS PAINFUL EXAMPLES OF THE RACIAL BIAS THAT EXISTS IN EVERY CORNER OF OUR SOCIETY. THIS DISCRIMINATION RESULTS IN A LACK OF EQUAL ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING, HEALTH CARE, SOCIAL SERVICES AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE.

How does racial discrimination impact social work? And how can social workers and the profession as a whole recognize and overcome it in practice? To answer these questions, Rutgers School of Social Work's Office of Continuing Education held its first conference on race on June 7: Challenging Racial Disparities: Poverty, Race, and Addiction.

The conference grew out of discussions among SSW faculty and staff, explains Douglas Behan, L.C.S.W., director of continuing education and assistant professor of professional practice. "We hold events on race and culture, but they're mostly workshops," he says. "We decided to do something with greater impact that would really get people thinking. Social workers help the most oppressed and vulnerable in our society, but we can do more. So this was really a call to action."

"Race is difficult for us to talk about, not just as social workers, but as individuals. Most people don't know where to begin," adds Marla Blunt-Carter, MSW '03, assistant professor of professional practice. "Our intent was to help our audience understand the experiences of race. We wanted to provide practical knowledge they can use. That's what social work is all about. You don't just study and read and theorize about it, you go out and do it."

Clearly, social workers found the topic compelling, with more than 300 participants signing up for the full-day conference. Said one attendee, Jodi Brodsky, L.C.S.W., "Everyone is unique and race is part of who we are. But as much as we try to be unbiased, racism is often unconscious and unintentional. I'm here to gain a stronger understanding of how race affects my relationships with clients, and learn ways to make them feel more comfortable."

Conference presenters included Rutgers faculty and alumni, outside experts, and two speakers: author, entrepreneur and



philanthropist LaTia McNeely-Sandiford, MSW '02, and keynote speaker Carl Hart, Ph.D., a neuroscientist, activist, and educator whose research challenges society's perceptions about drugs and addiction. Members of the conference planning committee were familiar with Hart's work and had seen him on the news program 60

Minutes. "We felt he'd be a powerful speaker who would generate great interest and be relevant to social workers in the field," says Blunt-Carter.

The conference organizers also knew McNeely-Sandiford's compelling personal story. A former social worker before founding her own media company, Lions Vision



Productions, she brings a unique perspective to the discussion of poverty and addiction. Her parents were both heroin addicts. Her mother died at age 26 and her father was unable to be an effective parent due to his drug use. McNeely-Sandiford was raised by her grandmother and had a baby at the age of 13. Living in poverty, she strove and achieved, fueled by her belief in the power of education.

Hart, who is chair of the Department of Psychology at Columbia University, also spoke about how his personal experiences have informed his work. Growing up in a poor Miami neighborhood, he saw first-hand the effects of crack cocaine. "We were told it was destroying the black community. I wanted to find a cure for that," he says.

Once Hart began studying crack users in the laboratory, he saw their behavior was not as addictive as everyone thought. When offered a choice of crack or financial incentives, many of the drug users chose the money, even when it was only \$5. "Given an appealing alternative to crack, they could stop using drugs and make rational economic decisions," he notes.

Through his research Hart became an advocate for drug policies grounded in science. He points out that the vast majority of recreational drug users are not addicted. Instead, they're responsible citizens who go to work, support their families, and pay taxes.

"We've demonized drugs, but they're not the real problem in our communities," he says. "The real problems are discrimination, poverty, poor education, and lack of jobs—the

L.C.S.W., L.C.A.D.C., and colleagues addressed the effects of racial perceptions on clients and social workers. "Issues around race, poverty and addiction intersect all the time in social work, sometimes subtly, sometimes not," says Howard. "A better understanding of our own socialization around race will help us build stronger, more effective relationships with clients."

She cites the theoretical example of a white female colleague counseling a tall, imposing African-American male. During the session he becomes excited and raises his voice. "Lacking an understanding of this man's experience, the social worker may describe him with terms like 'threatening,'" explains Howard. "If this case involves the correctional system, her recommendation might even be to send him back to prison. I've always told my staff: 'Not only do we help people—we can also hurt them, if we don't take the time to understand their experiences, and the impact on who they are.'"

The evaluations received from participants were overwhelmingly positive, with many participants expressing strong interest in attending another such conference. Plans are in the works to make it an annual

Hart called for social workers to put in the work and learn the science about drugs.

Separate the facts from the hype. Spread this knowledge, correct misinformation with information, and use empirical data in making assessments.

"Racial disparities in social work can't be discussed without also talking about race in America," she says. "We must look at our profession realistically. Social work is part of a greater society in which policies, resources, and practices were historically designed to benefit some groups while denying others access." To be agents of change, she encourages social workers to challenge prejudice and call out every instance of racism, whether it's big or small, passive or aggressive.

She adds her voice to the national debate about mandatory drug sentencing, pointing out it disproportionately impacts minorities, particularly males. "Becoming a convicted felon negatively affects an individual's employment and housing, the ability to vote or obtain a student loan or driver's license," she states. "Removing so many male authority figures from their homes weakens families and communities, creating a vast pool of second-class citizens. Social workers need to speak out against these discriminatory policies."

broader underlying causes of why people are struggling. It's much easier to blame drugs."

Hart called for social workers to put in the work and learn the science about drugs. Separate the facts from the hype. Spread this knowledge, correcting misinformation with information, and use empirical data in making assessments. "Knowledge can guide your decisions," he says. "For example, you may be asked to remove children from parents testing positive for drugs. Armed with the facts, you can look beyond drug use and focus on the real issues, evaluate parenting skills, and offer much-needed help."

Following the presentations, a panel discussion and breakout workshops offered innovative approaches to help social workers take effective action toward racial equality. Workshops covered a variety of topics, from racism in substance abuse programs to cultural competency in counseling Latino clients.

A workshop presented by instructor and field educator Lorraine Howard, MSW '08,

continuing education event, expanding the dialogue to encompass other ethnic groups and cultures.

A key skill of an effective social worker is belief bonding—forging strong bonds with clients through empathy, warmth, acceptance, competence, and genuine interest. "If we don't see people for who they are, if we don't accept their culture, their race, and their challenges, there's no bond created and we won't be able to help them," says Blunt-Carter.

She adds: "But if we do make an effort to really understand others, through this conference and in other ways, we can be more than culturally competent—we can be culturally courageous. This means we have the courage to say, 'Yes, we're different, but I see you. I won't act as if your experiences don't matter. I'm putting in the time to understand them so I can help you.'" ■



A PLACE FOR GOOD: VAWC STANDS FOR CHANGE

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER BYRON

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VERY DAY IN AMERICA, more than three women are murdered by their partners. One in five undergraduate females will be sexually assaulted as students. The same number of high school females are physically and/or sexually abused by their dating partners. Most of these acts will go unreported or unpunished. In New Jersey alone, the rate of sexual trafficking has increased over the last year, helping to fuel a \$30 billion annual international industry built on the rape and subjugation of young women and men. Domestic violence remains the leading cause of injury to women across the country—

more than muggings, car crashes, and rapes combined.

These startling statistics require immediate action. At Rutgers Center on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC), finding ways to respond to and prevent similar incidents serves as a daily call to action for the faculty and staff who work there. Using research, education, and community engagement, the Center strives to change cultural stereotypes and perceptions, and to reduce the victimization and perpetration of victimization across the private and public spheres by providing concrete resources and trainings.

While incidents of domestic and sexual violence continue to pose a major challenge, VAWC remains the only center in the country that has a certificate program specific to issues in the field. As part of the School of Social Work, the Center offers certification for students in the Master's of Social Work program, as well as individualized classes for any student at Rutgers.



The Center began in 2007 with start-up funding from the School of Social Work's dean at that time, Dr. Richard Edwards. Dr. Judy Postmus was the first to come on board. "I had experience in the field with youths and families, and that's what drew me to social work—being a voice for others," she says. "It soon became apparent that there were very few resources for those interested in specializing in issues related to domestic violence. That lack inspired our team to develop the certificate program, the first of its kind. It's still the only program geared toward this education."

Today, the Center functions with a small team of dedicated faculty and staff. Their research and outreach are funded solely by outside resources. This past year, they were awarded a \$5 million grant from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to continue their work. The grant "Rutgers Violence Against Women Consortium," is one of the largest ever received by the School of Social Work. It creates space for four years of focused research to improve services for women who experience violence and to educate the greater community about best practices and policies. VAWC's proven track record for results-driven projects such as the Campus Climate Project and Identification and Assessment of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST), helped to set them apart from their peers.

Other funding sources include Verizon Wireless, which recently renewed their commitment to fund scholarship support for graduate professionals to work on specific research projects related to the field and to provide on-line modules for training. In addition, staff member Nicole Oceanak recently launched a crowd-funding campaign to provide additional scholarship support for students entering the certificate program.

Postmus and her team believe that a greater understanding of the subject, coupled with collaborative research, give them the unique opportunity to share their knowledge with students and community partners, in ways that make it both meaningful and comprehensive.

Community engagement liaison Catie Buttner explains the significance of several key sources available: "We're focused on translating the great research work VAWC produces into more useable formats that can be directed toward practitioners and communities. Our goal is to use our website, training efforts, and educational programs to create a space for resources that will connect with communities inside and outside of Rutgers."

The Center's reach already goes far beyond the state of New Jersey. Associate Director Sarah McMahon has been instrumental in working on a national level with these issues. In 2014, she was chosen by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault to pilot a campus

climate survey tool developed by the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women. Similarly, researchers from the Center engaged in a comprehensive campus climate assessment project to raise awareness of sexual violence, to give students a platform for sharing experiences, and to expand its commitment to addressing violence on campus.

Over the last 10 years, the Center has graduated 432 students from the certificate program, and over 2,500 other students have received training from the Center. However, the need for specific training continues to grow. A new report from the New Jersey state police estimates that the number of domestic violence homicides increased by 16 percent in the last two years. "We don't yet know why this number has increased, and part of our mission at the Center is to uncover why this is happening, and what can be done to prevent those numbers from rising," says McMahon.

Despite the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence, McMahon remains hopeful that change is possible. "Most individuals aren't abusive and don't believe that these behaviors are acceptable." McMahon says that services are needed not only for victims, but also for those who commit violence. "That's a challenge for the field; finding the line between holding someone accountable and making sure that we're providing them with whatever services they need in order to change their behaviors," she says. "It's really complex to create change, so my research focuses on prevention and what we can do to build programs and communities that are built on respect and healthy relationships and don't tolerate violence. For example, bystander intervention programs allow us to see that we all have a role to play in interrupting potential volatile situations."

As the Center celebrates its 10-year anniversary, Postmus has a clear path forward for the next decade. "Our goal is to engage more people in the work we're doing by bringing on more faculty members and more affiliates from different disciplines," she says. "While the last 10 years have taught us a significant amount, there is so much we don't know from a research perspective. Plus, we need to accelerate the dissemination of that information to a larger audience."

To learn more about the Center, visit social-work.rutgers.edu/centers/center-violence-againstawomen-and-children. ■



Advice for Social Workers in dealing with Domestic and Sexual Violence

1. Challenge stereotypes and the perpetuation of sexist and racist language or remarks. This will help people understand that violence is not just physical violence or rape; it exists on a continuum. Challenging remarks allows for a counter arc to what seems to have become acceptable language and behavior.

2. Continue to seek information and education focused on understanding domestic violence, rape culture, and sex trafficking, so that in your role as a social worker, you are better equipped to manage cases where these things are happening.

3. Partner with VAWC to encourage offering research and education to the community. Consider giving of your time, talent, or gifts to one of the community engagement initiatives including UHopeline, the Customized Continuing Education: VAWC-PT, or the VAWC Speaker Series.

4. Mentor less experienced colleagues or students. All of the staff at VAWC cite great mentors as sources for inspiration—women and men who were instrumental in encouraging their work. Be part of this experience by contacting vawc@ssw.rutgers.edu

5. Enroll in one of VAWC's certificate programs for working professionals. Choose between the Foundation Certificate in Violence Against Women or the Clinical Work with Survivors Certificate.

Please note, VAWC does not offer private counseling, but can connect students or others with resources who can help.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER BYRON

A Walk in the Woods with Frank Greenagel



OVER THE LAST YEAR, Frank Greenagel, part time lecturer at the Rutgers School of Social Work and instructor at the Center of Alcohol Studies, has offered three hikes for alumni, including an 8.7 mile trek with a 750 foot vertical rise, which included views of the statewide famous Washington Rock, Manhattan, and waterfalls.

Check back on our event calendar for upcoming dates this fall and spring.

Spotlight on Susan Darien '66

RUTGERS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK presents its Outstanding Alumni Award to one alumnus/a each year who demonstrates effective leadership, made significant contributions to the field, and shows through action their deep commitment to social work values and ethics. Susan Darien '66 was nominated and selected for her rich career as a mental health clinician and private practitioner as well as her participation in the National Association of Social Workers. She was recognized during the May 15, 2017, School of Social Work convocation ceremony in appreciation for her years of service on our alumni council, her generosity toward social work and other Rutgers students, and her volunteer work with nonprofits throughout New Jersey.

Susan and her husband Steven RC '63 have supported other Rutgers projects including civic engagement at Eagleton Institute, Rutgers Future Scholars Program, and a Douglass College Scholarship.



RUTGERS

School of Social Work



Join us for the

Annual Winter Alumni Reception

Invite your friends for this once-a-year celebration exclusively for School of Social Work alumni. This free event features great food, drinks, your favorite photo booth activity, and fun give-aways.

When:
Thursday, November 30
6 to 8 p.m.

Where:
Rutgers Visitor Center
100 Sutphen Road
Piscataway, NJ 08854
Busch Campus*

Why:
Connect, network,
and enjoy.

For more information and to RSVP, please contact Madison Molner at mmolner@ssw.rutgers.edu or call 848-932-4437. Guest speakers include Dean Cathryn Potter and other esteemed colleagues.

Please RSVP by Nov. 15.

We are grateful

to the alumni and friends who support our efforts to advance social justice and improve the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Thank you to everyone who made gifts between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017. Your contributions have a positive and lasting impact on our students and strengthen our school community.

Please note that the names are listed as they were entered at the time of the gift.

Questions or changes can be directed to Madison Molner at mmolner@ssw.rutgers.edu.

Thank You!

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 Michael Jacobs
 Dr. Kathleen J. Pottick

In Memory Of
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 Raffaele Capone
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 Irene T. Costello
 Professor Ludwig L. Geismar
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IN MEMORIAM

We extend our deepest sympathy to the loved ones of the deceased alumni and friends listed below who have passed away since November 2016.

Kathryn Zillig Apgar DC'51, SSW'65
Alexandra Bachar SSW'17
Sylvia K. Brown SSW'70
Roselyn Y. Cole LC'75, SSW'77
Robert Joseph Friel SSW'60
Eileen Grogan SSW'79
Hugh E. Haynes NCAS'82, SSW'86
Dr. Chester H. Jones, GSED'82
Walter M. Knox SSW'64
Henry R. Levy SSW'68
Janet Elizabeth Lieb SSW'77
Daphne K. Loft DC'64, SSW'75
Vincent R. Lucrezi SSW'86
Dianne J. Lytz SSW'88
Madeleine L. Mann SSW'83
Denese M. Neide SSW'17
Georgia Thomas Parks SSW'63
Marianne Damiano Perzel SSW'79
Sunny G. Schwartz
Mary S. Sypek UCNB'85, SSW'91

Alexis Jemal '16: From Saberist to Social Worker

A DAY IN THE LIFE...



LEXIS JEMAL '16 has spent significant time as a student of Rutgers: she earned a B.A., J.D., M.S.W., and her Ph.D. from the University. But she didn't spend all of her time in the classroom. She was also an extraordinary athlete. As an undergraduate, she earned a coveted spot on the Rutgers fencing team. From there, she went on to be a gold medalist in the 2003 NCAA

Championships for the saber weapon, and ultimately, an Olympic hopeful. Today, Dr. Jemal is an assistant professor at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, where she teaches and studies the impacts of systemic inequality on the health of African Americans and other disenfranchised populations.

How do your students react when they realize that you had this whole other life as a fencing champion?

The fencing part of my life is not something I bring up. It's happened that my students and colleagues have discovered this history and will say things like, "Did you know that Dr. Jemal was a fencer?" Other than that, it doesn't come up in everyday conversation, though fencing gave me confidence, a good foundation for handling life, and it remains a major part of who I am.

Do you ever regret that you didn't get to compete in the Olympics?

I used to fence for the Peter Westbrook Foundation (PWF) in NYC. Peter Westbrook, the founder of PWF and a six-time Olympian, and I talked about what it's like to almost make it to the Olympics, and he said he didn't understand why people who didn't make the Olympic team feel a sense of regret when their lives are so rich and filled with accomplishments in other areas like education, career, and family.

I explained to him that I wouldn't categorize this emotion as regret. I liken life to a jigsaw puzzle. I don't have the "competed in the Olympics" puzzle piece and I can't fill the empty spot with any of the other wonderful pieces of my life. Making an Olympic team, in my mind, is such a unique experience that other great experiences, no matter how great, cannot replace the Olympic dream. So there's sorrow about not making an Olympic team, but also recognition of and gratitude for the other parts of my life.

Everyone has experiences, a mix of achievements and unfulfilled hopes, and I think it's up to the individual to figure out how all the pieces fit together for their life puzzle.

What drew you to the field of social work?

Even as a young kid, I've always had a need to stand up for others. There was a defining moment for me one day in elementary school when the teacher instructed the students to tell this one student everything we didn't like about her. When it was my turn, I stood up, looked at the teacher and said "no." I wouldn't do that. As I remember it, I eloquently and concisely told the teacher and the other students why this was inappropriate and wrong.

My calling to protect others initially drew me to law school, but I soon discovered that I wanted to help in a different way. I wanted to help people navigate the system as they experienced multiple and complex issues like substance abuse, racism, mass incarceration, and health inequities. But, more importantly, I want to build coalitions and collective power to uproot oppressive systems.

When I started in my Ph.D. in social work, I was against going into academia initially because I wanted to work on the frontlines with communities. But as I worked through the program, I discovered I could better fulfill my professional goals with the support of an institution. I said to myself, If I don't get tenure, I can always be a fencing coach...or a lawyer.

What are your areas of research?

I'm interested in how oppression impacts health and how to develop multi-level interventions that utilize the creative arts and social enterprise. We live in a society that embraces the myth of individualism and we're not good at acknowledging the help we received or the interdependence of all people, and that helping someone else, helps us. My dissertation looked more closely at critical consciousness, a concept developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. From his work, I developed a theory called transformative potential, which requires analyzing how macro processes have micro consequences and taking action to address inequity.

My research also puts theory into practice by encompassing participatory action research and social movement approaches to make visible the socioecological factors that cause harm, exploring the idea that hurt people hurt; developing alternative and creative methods for raising individual and collective critical consciousness; and building community collaborative initiatives to address inequity. My work bridges micro and macro practice and brings academics into dialogue with individuals with lived experience. I believe that through these types of collaborations, development of empathy, practice of open-minded listening, we can transform systems and overcome the divides that maintain injustice.

You spent time as an intern working with incarcerated individuals. What impact did that experience have on you?

Interning in a prison setting helped me to develop compassion and empathy. I saw how quickly we dehumanize and devalue people. I remember thinking, these women look like me. The experience always brought to mind, there, but for the grace of God go I. Most of us could be in that same situation, or homeless, or unemployed, or broke, if circumstances were even slightly different.

In addition to observing the criminal justice system break people down by treating them as less than human, I also saw a broken system. I remember calling the court for an incarcerated client, not being able to get an answer, and thinking, "I have a law degree and I'm having a hard time. What's that say for others with no legal training or even a high school diploma?" The experience helped me to stay grounded: critical of the system and less judgmental of the people. ■





Eddie Moser '85 has worked in inpatient psychiatric facilities and outpatient practice, substance abuse recovery, nursing homes, medical hospitals, home care, community mental health, wrap around, elementary school guidance counseling, as well as offering social work CEU classes. She states that as a social worker, “social justice is more than an ideal but is a daily intention. I take action steps; even more so since the election. I attended the Women’s March in Philadelphia and as a journalist, have written numerous articles about the impact of the current administration on the world in general and my experience specifically.”



Grace Heron '16 is an MSW and ACT Program graduate and currently works with Message of Hope, a non-profit outpatient substance abuse treatment agency. Heron provides services such as individual and group therapy for individuals struggling with their substance abuse. She is also an active member of the NASW. Most recently, Heron decided to continue being an active agent of change by running for her hometown City Council in Beverly, NJ where she won the primaries in June.



Jim Berko '68 has entered a new chapter of life and is “finally” loving retirement. He served in the mental health field for 45 years, retiring as CEO of Seminole Mental Health, which has recently merged to form Aspire Health Partners, one of the largest mental health and substance abuse services in Florida. Jim, who lives in the Sunshine State of Florida, likes to say he is now enjoying “playtime” with his grandchildren!



SEND US YOUR CLASS NOTES

We want to celebrate with you! If you have received an award or promotion, taken on a new job or interesting project, gotten married, or added a new member to the family, let us know. We would love to share your news with other alumni. Please include your class year and degree received.

**Name / Email /
Class Year and Degree / Note**

Send to Aimee LaBrie
at alabrie@ssw.rutgers.edu.

