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# PARTNERING *for* CHANGE

A P U B L I C A T I O N O F R U T G E R S S C H O O L O F S O C I A L W O R K

IMAGES OF FERGUSON:

AN EXAMINATION OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



WINTER 2015

PARTNERING *for* CHANGE

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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Greetings Alumni and Friends,

**O** **NCE AGAIN** I am happy to welcome you to another issue of our magazine. This issue debuts our new and updated look with stronger visuals and a reorganized narrative. We hope you will enjoy it!

Across the country in August of 2014, people followed the unfolding events in Ferguson, Missouri, with dismay. We explore these events in this issue. I am reminded of the inequities in our society, and the great difficulties we have in acknowledging and responding to institutional racism. As social workers who support families and communities, there may be feelings of anger and powerlessness. As we prepared for the beginning of the school year, Rutgers School of Social Work faculty took the opportunity to focus on the events in Ferguson with students through a dedicated portion of discussion time in all core classes. Two seminars were held, on the New Brunswick and Newark campuses, and the commentary from students was engaged, thoughtful and perceptive. It is vital that social workers feel empowered to bring their skills to the table for communities in crisis. We should not be silent on these issues.

The school continues to engage in exciting work. One example of excellence is the work of Judy Postmus, associate professor and founding director of the Center on Violence Against Women and Children, who was featured extensively in the national media about her work with The Allstate Foundation to evaluate the effectiveness of the "Moving Ahead through Financial Management" curriculum. This curriculum is a comprehensive package of financial tools and information designed to empower victims and survivors of domestic violence to be self-sufficient with their finances.

Our alumni are making a difference in a variety of traditional and nontraditional ways. Theresa Lyons '01, one of the first graduates of a Rutgers dual-degree program that combines a J.D. with a MSW, launched an app that connects users instantly to every domestic violence shelter and hotline across the Garden State. One thing our alumni have in common is that wherever their career paths have led them, their commitment to the values of social work is evident in their lives. We are very proud of our alumni. If we have not heard from you for a while, please take the time to connect. It has been my great pleasure to talk with so many of you during the past year.

Cathryn C. Potter, Ph.D.  
DEAN  
RUTGERS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

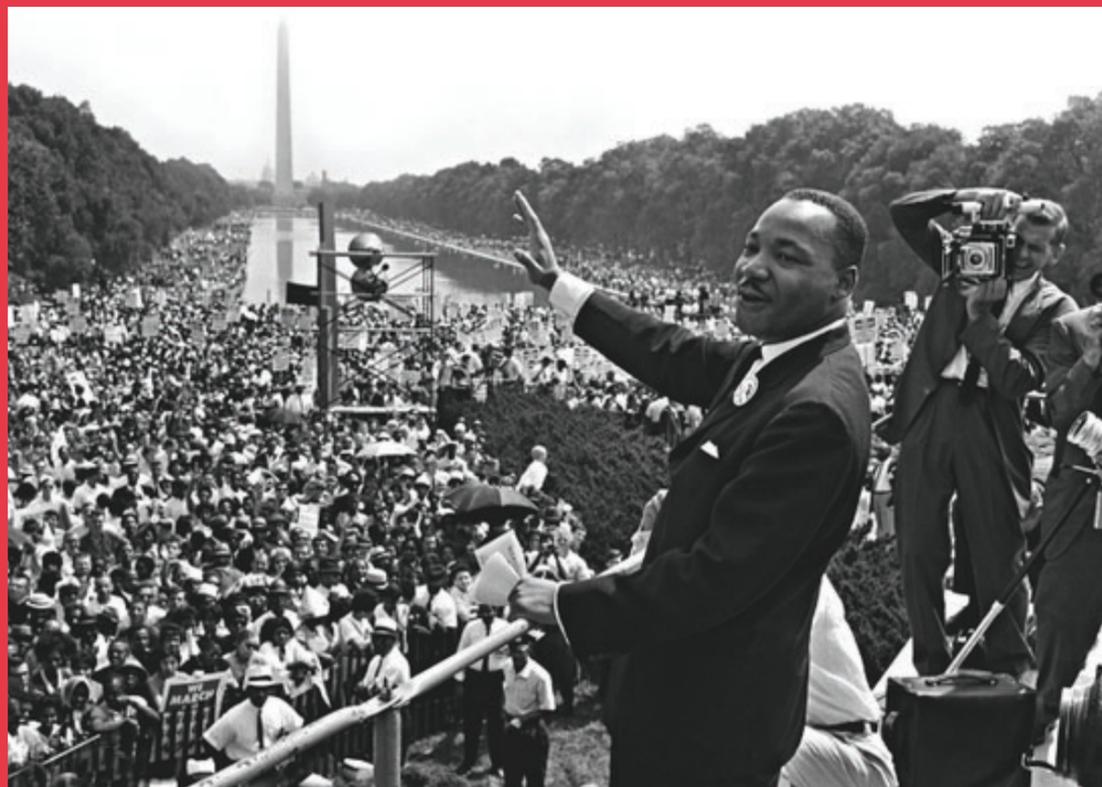


**"Washing one's hands  
of the conflict between  
the powerful and the  
powerless means to side  
with the powerful, not to  
be neutral."**

— PAULO FREIRE

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t h o u g h t s



“History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

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ON THE COVER

Protestors rally outside of the Ferguson Police Department on August 11, 2014.  
*Photo by Christian K. Lee/The Alestle.*



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## 60th Anniversary Alumni Celebration

On November 6, more than 120 alumni, faculty, staff and students came together at the Rutgers Visitor Center to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Rutgers School of Social Work.

*"In the past year, I have come to know and love this incredible school. It is a vibrant group of faculty and students. We are one of the largest, most diverse and best schools in the country. We and you, together, we serve this state very well."* – Dean Cathryn Potter

*"This is the top of the top- we are the best social work school around. I don't need numbers or U.S. News and World Report to tell me that. All I need is your story. The stories of what the great people in this room do for others every day...Tell your stories to each other. We are all incredible teammates, doing remarkable work."* – Kyle Smiddie, NLAW'11, SSW'11

## Social Work 'Architects' Reflect on 60 Years

It's no surprise that the group of individuals who convened at the Retired Faculty Luncheon in September were the social work leaders who helped build a strong foundation for our school. This dynamic group of former faculty are making the most of their retirements by engaging in activities such as teaching writing skills in their community, chairing emeriti groups at Rutgers or continuously fighting for an increased presence of social workers in schools. During the luncheon, these six social work pioneers shared their wisdom with the dean, reflecting on past experiences and providing a rich perspective of the school's history.

"Their feedback helps develop a deeper understanding of our school, and it is essential that we make use of their wisdom as we pursue new and exciting ventures at Rutgers," said Cathryn Potter, dean. As the group shared their memories at the school, retired faculty member David Antebi called it the "glorious years of my life at Rutgers," and was proud to be a part of the faculty leaders who drafted blueprints and created a framework that would bolster the school's future for years to come.

FACULTY/STAFF IN THE NEWS



**Michael LaSala**

Michael LaSala, associate professor, received extensive national and international media coverage for his recent study. Published in the *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, the study "Condoms and connection: Parents, gay

and lesbian youth and HIV risk," found that positive family relationships and open dialogue led to an increase in safe sex practices, including the use of condoms, while disrupted family relationships resulted in risky

sexual behaviors. LaSala's research was featured in *U.S. News & World Report*, *PinkSixty News (TV)*, *The Washington Blade*, *Psych Central*, *Philly.com*, *HealthDay* and *Futurity*.

**Doug Behan**

The School of Social Work's Continuing Education department hosted a highly successful conference in September for professionals to exchange knowledge on how to best protect vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, from falling victim to post-disaster predators. Doug Behan, executive director of Continuing Education, received a \$239,924 grant from the New Jersey



Department of Human Services' Adult Protective Services unit to develop a curriculum on post-disaster exploitation. "Preventing

Post-disaster Financial Exploitation: Lessons Learned from Superstorm Sandy" was a free, public conference for professionals in the fields of behavioral and public health, business, law enforcement, disaster management and government/human services. Keynote speakers included Paul Greenwood, deputy district attorney in San Diego who is a nationally known expert on elder abuse, and Steve Crimando, who administers terrorism and disaster training for the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. A follow-up conference will be held in the spring. The grant money also will be used to conduct 60 free educational seminars around the state through September 2015.

Call 848-932-0510 for more information or to schedule training at your location.



**Sarah McMahon**

Sarah McMahon, assistant professor and director of the Center on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC), joined legislators in East Rutherford for an October press conference regarding domestic violence and the National Football League. Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg (D-Bergen) and Senator Jennifer Beck (R-Monmouth), along with a bi-partisan group of women legislators from the Senate and Assembly, held a press conference at the Meadowlands Sports Complex to call for stronger action in response to the recent cases of domestic violence in the NFL.

McMahon and Ruth Anne Koenick, director of the Office of Violence

Prevention and Victim Assistance at Rutgers, were also invited to provide written and oral testimony to a NJ Senate panel that recently convened to discuss five pending bills on campus sexual assault.

VAWC is at the forefront of the issue of the prevention of sexual assault on campus. In October, McMahon and her research team piloted #iSpeak, a student survey and evidence-informed method for assessing the climate regarding sexual assault on the school's New Brunswick campus.



**Patricia Findley and Donna Van Alst**

To better understand the effects of Superstorm Sandy, the New Jersey Department of Health is supporting a joint research team from Rutgers University and Columbia University to conduct The Sandy Child and Family Health (S-CAFH) Study, one of the largest disaster recovery projects and assessments in the region. The research examines the potential long-term effects of Sandy on the health and well-being of state residents exposed to the storm and sheds light on what has helped or hindered people in their ongoing recovery. Patricia Findley, associate

professor, and Donna Van Alst, assistant research professor, are spearheading the research, along with David Abramson, deputy director of Columbia University's National Center for Disaster Preparedness. Going door-to-door in the affected areas, community-based interviewers conducted face-to-face surveys with a random sampling of 1,000 New Jersey households situated in communities that experienced storm surges, flooding or substantial property damage.



## Lenna Nepomnyaschy

In October, the School of Social Work held a university-wide event, co-sponsored by the National Association of Social Workers – New Jersey (NASW-NJ) and the school’s Social Policy Network. The event, organized by Lenna Nepomnyaschy, associate professor, was a screening of *American Winter*, a documentary film following the personal stories of formerly middle class families struggling in the aftermath of the Great Recession. The film puts a face on the economic challenges in the country to break down

stereotypes of poverty and illustrate the need for access to social services. The screening was followed by a panel discussion with Harry Gantz, the film producer and director, and several leaders of local policy and advocacy organizations: Cecilia Zalkind, executive director of Advocates for Children of NJ; Serena Rice, executive director of the NJ Anti-Poverty Network; and Walter Kalman, executive director of NASW-NJ. The event was attended by more than 300 students, faculty and alumni.

## Andy Germak and Chien-Chung Huang



The Center for Leadership and Management was featured in an article in *The Star-Ledger* this fall about visiting delegates from China. NewBridge Services, Inc. welcomed 23

delegates who are all enrolled in an executive master of philanthropy degree program at Beijing Normal University. The visit was part of a



four-day study tour of six model non-profits in New Jersey and New York, which was hosted by the Center for Leadership and Management and the Huamin Research Center.

During the course of the tour, attendees also met with leaders from Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey, the Nicholson Foundation, Glassroots, the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisers and United Way New York City. Andy Germak, professor of professional practice, is executive director of the Center for Leadership and Management, and Chien-Chung Huang, professor, is director of the Huamin Research Center.



## Bill Waldman and Mia Sena

On June 16, Bill Waldman and Mia Sena, on behalf of the School of Social Work, accepted the 2014 Academic Excellence Award for Outstanding Education and Training in Human Services as conferred by the American Public Human Services Association at their National Policy Forum. Commissioner Jennifer Velez of the New Jersey Department of Human Services presented the award on behalf of her department along with the Department of Children and Families. She enumerated all of the partnerships that the school has

with the state and highlighted mutual endeavors relative to Child Support Enforcement, Child Welfare, the ACT program, research conducted in the area of mental health and substance abuse and various training initiatives. Pictured are Mia Sena, director of Education and Training at the Institute for Families; Bill Waldman, lecturer and executive in residence; Tracy Warding, executive director of APHSA; Susan Bechtold, president of the Board of APHSA; Reggie Bicha, director of the Colorado Department of Human Services.

## Emily Greenfield



The old proverb says “Good fences make good neighbors,” but a Rutgers study has found that having continuously low levels of contact with neighbors, or losing contact with them altogether, is associated with

declining levels of psychological well-being in middle and later life. “We found that lack of that support contributes to a sense of loss and decreased well-being,” says Emily Greenfield, lead researcher and associate professor. The study, called, “Continuity and Change in Relationships with Neighbors: Implications for Psychological Well-being in Middle and Later Life,” was published in the September issue of *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological and Social Sciences*. Greenfield says her findings support an “aging in community” framework, which emphasizes developing supportive relationships among community members.



## Judy Postmus

Judy Postmus, associate professor and founding director of the Center on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC), was featured extensively in national media about her work with The Allstate Foundation to evaluate the effectiveness of the “Moving Ahead through Financial Management” curriculum. This curriculum is a comprehensive package of financial tools and information designed to empower victims and survivors of domestic violence to be self-sufficient with their finances. Domestic violence survivors experienced

increases between 42-103 percent in overall financial literacy as a result of their exposure to this information. Dr. Postmus and The Allstate Foundation announced the study findings at a symposium in Washington, DC, on July 24. Postmus was featured on *NBC News*, the *Huffington Post*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *RealClear Politics*. For information about the research and financial empowerment programs, visit [www.ClickToEmpower.org](http://www.ClickToEmpower.org) ■

## IMAGES OF FERGUSON: AN EXAMINATION OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



PROTESTORS RALLY OUTSIDE OF THE FERGUSON POLICE DEPARTMENT ON AUGUST 11, 2014. PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN K. LEE/THE ALESTILE

T

**HE FATAL SHOOTING OF MICHAEL BROWN**, an unarmed African-American 18-year old youth, who was killed by a white police officer on August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri, was an event of tragic significance and a catalyst for both local civil protest and national debate.

After the shooting, protests and rioting lasted for over two weeks in this racially divided city of over 20,000. The death incited violence and intense debate about race, class and access to social justice in the United States, both historically and today. Ferguson provided an example of how racism has affected public policy and the actions of law enforcement in a

particular community, and has fueled national discussion about the continuing impact of racism in our modern society.

Social workers across the county are grappling with how to best address the root causes of institutional racism and find ways for individuals, communities, organizations and governments to bridge the deep divides. To further explore this challenge, Rutgers School of Social Work integrated discussions about racial inequality and social justice into the curriculum, as well as larger events spearheaded by faculty. A portion of all core classes was dedicated to a discussion of the events in Ferguson and student awareness and action around the larger issue of institutional racism has been encouraged.

"The events in Ferguson remind us of the inequalities in our society, and the great difficulties we have in acknowledging and responding to racial injustice. As social workers who support the family and the community, we must challenge ourselves and our profession to not be silent on these issues. The New Jersey chapter of the National Association of Social Workers has established a Diversity and Affirmative Action Plan which states that culturally competent, culturally sensitive practices should be infused in all of our daily approaches. We must address key issues that involve race and class, such as the overrepresentation of racial groups in foster care and prisons. As social workers, we should be at the forefront of change," says Cathryn Potter, dean and professor.

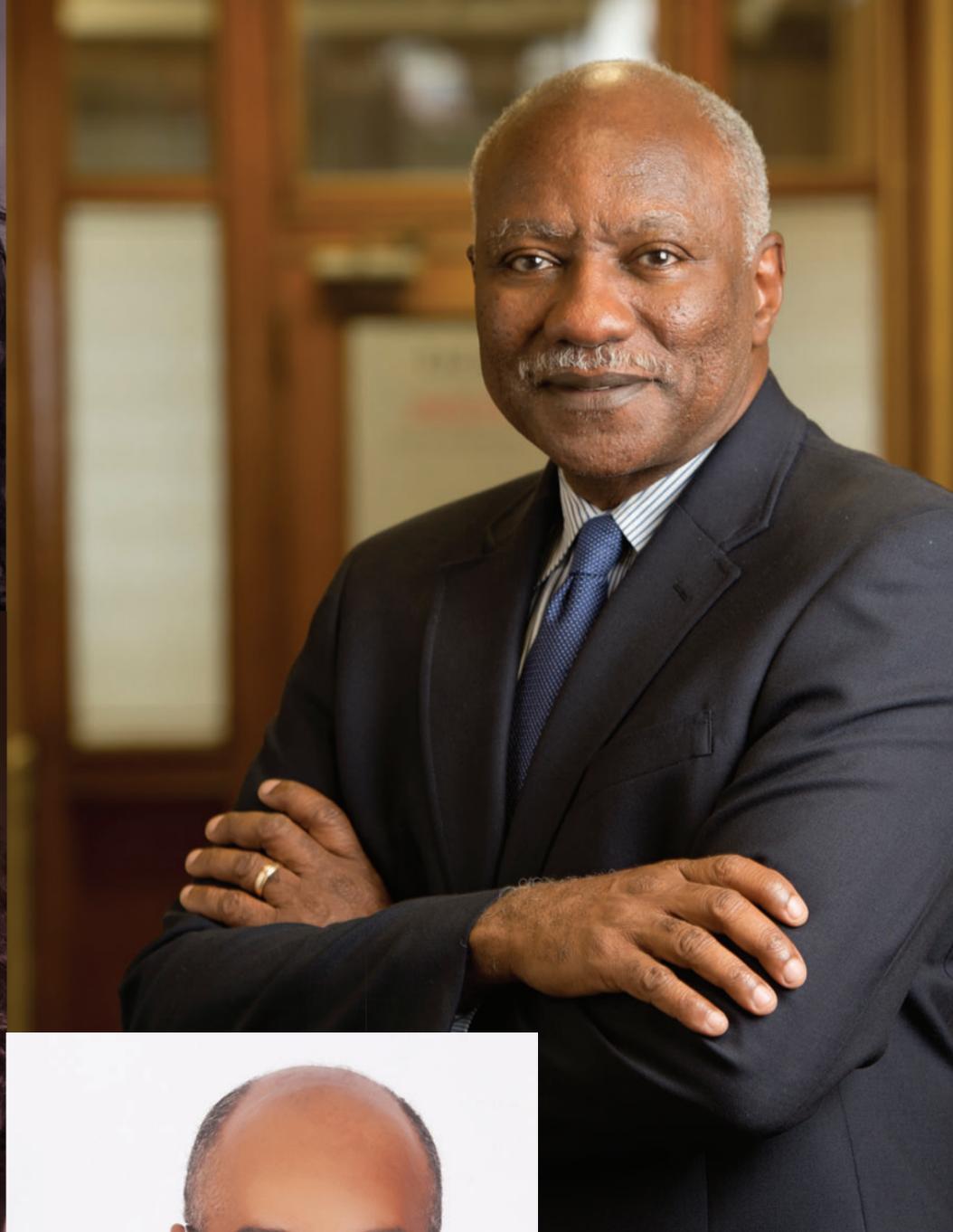
### A CITY DIVIDED

As of a 2010 census report, 67.4 percent of Ferguson's 21,000 residents are African American, but only three of the 57 total police officers on the force are African American. Ronald Quincy, professor of professional practice for the School of Social Work, traveled to Ferguson during the unrest and spoke about his experiences at an event for students, faculty and staff.

"Ferguson residents very much feel that they are living with a 21st century version of Jim Crow laws and that they have little recourse for their situation. They are not poor, but rather middle income, and the issue is not one of poverty but of institutionalized racism. There is a sense of lack of empowerment that is reflected in their low voter turnout, with less than six percent of registered voters participating; and thus underrepresentation among elected officials," says Dr. Quincy.

The events surrounding Brown's death fueled an already perceived prejudice by the legislative and law enforcement community toward African Americans in the town. Each unfolding step of that warm August day seemed to further disrespect the community.

"Citizens saw law enforcement leave Brown's body on the ground for over four hours and they felt that was a micro-aggressive psychological message for their community. They are committed to the search for psychological empowerment in their home community," he adds.



from left to right:

Lenna Nepomnyaschy,  
Ronald Quincy, Laura Curran  
and DuWayne Battle

## WE ARE FERGUSON

"We are Ferguson: A Social Work Call to Action," was held on October 8, in the student lounge. The program was guided by Social Work faculty Drs. DuWayne Battle, Ronald Quincy and Lenna Nepomnyaschy, and organized by associate professor Laura Curran, and associate dean Antoinette Farmer. Faculty led a conversation about the events of Ferguson, situating them in a local and national context and discussing the ways in which social workers can take social action.

Nepomnyaschy provided a vivid explanation of how institutional racism still occurs nationally in areas of housing, employment and criminal justice. In regard to employment, a study found that when equally matched job applicants sent out resumes, white applicants received a response 33 percent of the time; Latino applicants 25 percent of the time, and African-American candidates only 15 percent of the time. Even when white applicants had a criminal record, they were still more likely to be contacted for the job than African-American applicants with clean records.

"In housing, research has shown that blacks are two and a half times more likely to be denied mortgages and they are more often offered subprime loans than are equally qualified whites. In the criminal justice system, there is a one in three chance that a black male will go to prison in his lifetime compared to a one in 17 chance for a white male," says Nepomnyaschy.

In speaking to the student group, Battle reflected on an experience he had assisting at a middle school where an act of violence had occurred. As he spoke to the young students, one boy said, "Violence is a way of communication."

"When people don't have a grasp on ways to more effectively communicate, they use the language of violence. This is where institutional racism and violence intersect," says Battle.

Battle emphasized that social workers "cannot separate from the fabric of who we are" and must use their role to respond to institutional racism.

## SOCIAL WORKERS IN ACTION

In the classroom, social work students have been introduced to issues of race and social justice. In one class, faculty played a NPR podcast about the historical context of Ferguson. Instructors teaching Research Methods used video clips to show students the arbitrary nature of discrimination. In the Management and Policy (MAP) concentration, which trains social workers to lead social service organizations, faculty and

students discussed the responsibility of social work managers and leaders to address the underlying issues raised by the events in Ferguson within the context of the organizations they lead and manage. In the Diversity and Oppression classes, students watched a YouTube video of children from the Ferguson community and discussed the NASW-NJ Diversity and Affirmative Action Plan, which was drafted in response to the NASW National Call to Action regarding institutional racism.

Students at the SSW event asked many articulate, searching questions, trying to come to terms with these challenging issues. Some spoke of the Michael Brown case, while others addressed larger issues, such as the all-encompassing nature of social injustice, from racism to lack of political power.

"We encourage students to engage in dialogue about these significant issues. A broader understanding of institutional racism will help them as social workers to make groundbreaking changes to unjust policies and support families and communities in upheaval," says Curran. ■

## Newark SSW Discusses Ferguson

On November 4, an event was held at the Paul Robeson Campus Center on the Newark Campus, called "Ferguson, Missouri - The Quest for Social Justice: An Analysis of the Underlying Issues, the Historical Context, Public Policy Solutions and the Role of Social Workers." This program featured faculty members William Waldman from the School of Social Work and David Troutt from the Newark School of Law. Students on all campuses had consensus about the role social work agencies could play in social justice efforts. An example of a student's response:

"Social workers could facilitate meetings between local police units and introduce them to community leaders as well as young residents of buildings in the neighborhood, especially those buildings that were designated by the police as having a higher likelihood of reported problems. This strategy would enable the police to build strong relationships with community leaders with whom they could foster and sustain network ties for support and communication. It would also enable the police to recognize non-troublemaker individuals based on prior friendly contacts, so that at least these youth would be accorded the benefit of the doubt in potentially violent situations."

## FERGUSON: A PERSONAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

BY WILLIAM WALDMAN

*Mike Brown supporters appear at a vigil on August 18, 2014 during protests in St Louis, Missouri. Christian K. Lee/The Alestle*

**T**HE EVENTS IN FERGUSON, Missouri have revived painful and searing memories for me of the civil disturbances that occurred in Newark, New Jersey in July of 1967. I grew up in Newark, my family owned and operated a business there for forty years, and during that time I served as a case-worker for the Essex County Welfare Board with an assigned geographical district covering a part of the central ward of the city.

The civil disturbances in Newark, sometimes characterized as riots or a revolution, resulted in 27 deaths, many more injuries, massive fires that destroyed homes and businesses, the deployment of the New Jersey National Guard and the weapons of war; and, a legacy of fear, anger, racial tension, frustration and resentment. Similar events during that same time period occurred in New Jersey in Plainfield and New Brunswick. Nationally, Detroit, Michigan, the Watts area of Los Angeles and other metropolitan areas experienced similar events — some even on a larger scale.

The city of Newark changed dramatically. Rows of burned out buildings were scars that took years to remove. There was a spike in “white flight” to the suburbs and the city declined in population and economic activity. I continued my work there but under a continuing shadow of doubt, fear and unease.

On July 25, 1967 then U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson established the National Commission on Civil Disorders — the so called Kerner Commission. The appointees to the Commission consisted of

a group of distinguished civic leaders and scholars. The Commission was given the following charge with respect to the civil disorders:

“What happened?

Why did it happen?

What can be done to prevent it from happening again?”

The Commission held hearings, received testimony and examined the political, social and broader societal contexts of the events that so troubled all of us. They issued their report in March of 1968 which contained and/or led to very powerful conclusions that I will quote or paraphrase below.

- “Our nation is moving towards two societies, one black and one white, separate and unequal.

- Police violence is often the spark that ignites the fuel comprised of inequality, social injustice, lack of opportunity and frustration. Indeed the events in Newark were ignited in large part by the brutal arrest by police of an African American taxi driver and the rumor that he had been later killed while in custody.

- With respect to the fact that the fires, looting and violence ravaged the communities in which the protesters resided — “The most dangerous creation of any society is people who feel they have nothing to lose.”

The Commission, in its final report, called upon the nation “to mount programs on a scale equal to the dimension of the problems.” These initiatives were proposed to be directed to police practices, unemployment and underemployment, housing, education and a broad variety of other social welfare issues.

The recent events in Ferguson, Missouri call into question just

how far we have come and how far we need to go as a society. People of color remain disproportionately underrepresented in the agencies of social control such as corrections and child welfare. Significant gaps by race continue to exist in the attainment of the elements of the American dream in such areas as employment, income, wealth, housing and education. The Affordable Care Act holds promise as to equalizing access to high quality and affordable healthcare for all, yet, at this moment significant disparities remain to the extent that people of color have significantly higher rates of morbidity and mortality.

The events in Ferguson could be examined exclusively through the lenses of police tactics, police violence and militarization of police in this country — or even the lack of equal representation in political leadership; however, we must also consider them in the historical context of the Kerner Commission as well. Recent census and other demographic data and analyses are not at all encouraging as inequality has grown significantly in our nation. The amount of income and assets controlled by a very small percentage of our population and the diminution of the middle class seems to be moving us to a permanent class divide — and, as we all know, race and class intersect in America.

Dr. Quintard Taylor, Jr., Professor of American History at the University of Washington, points to the testimony presented to the Kerner Commission during its hearings by Dr. Kenneth Clark, a noted scholar of that period. Dr. Clark testified that he had read the reports issued in connection with other civil disturbances including those relative to events in Chicago in 1919, the events

in Harlem in both 1935 and 1943, and the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. He testified:

“I must again say to you members of the Commission — it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland — the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.”

My experiences in Newark in 1967 opened a curtain for me that provided a deeper and more troubling view of social injustice, racism and inequality in Newark and the United States; and, perhaps, was the motivation that committed me to the profession of social work. Ferguson was a wakeup call to remind me, and hopefully to other social workers and individuals of good will, that not nearly enough has changed and that the “same inaction” is no longer acceptable.

The dream for America so eloquently expressed by Dr. Martin Luther King at the Washington Monument so many years ago remains elusive. The struggle must continue — social workers must be a part of that struggle — for no less than the future of our nation is at stake. The slogan of those who protested in the 1960s, “no justice — no peace” continues to resonate today. ■



*William Waldman is a lecturer and executive in residence at Rutgers School of Social Work.*

## NEWS FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR FAMILIES

## Sara Munson Brings Fresh Vision to her Role as Executive Director for the Institute for Families (IFF)



As an undergraduate at Brown University, Sara Munson saw a posting for work-study students to care for infants with HIV/AIDS in a residential nursery. Since the babies were young and often sick, much of the casework was done on site — family visits and reunifications, case meetings, adoptive family introductions, even court hearings. Through this intense bedside experience, Munson became immersed in advocacy and the complex child welfare service system, and found her calling. She went on to lead foster care programs, provide policy analysis and consultation, and, for the last ten years, engage in national child welfare workforce and leadership development. Now, as the new executive director for the Institute for Families, Munson has found the perfect marriage of these various elements of her professional path.

“I am so impressed with the range of projects and partnerships our staff are implementing, and the dedication, skill and professionalism evident in their work. We all believe in making a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and families, in social justice and systems change,” says Munson.

In July of 2007, the Institute for Families was officially created at the School of Social Work to support families and communities by building the capacity of human service professionals and organizations. Munson’s goals include greater focus on child welfare and integration among programs to encourage sharing of innovations, as well as heightened visibility nationally. As Munson notes, “my vision includes our core components of training and professional development, research and evaluation, and direct service, as well as new areas — policy analysis and advocacy, consultation and technical assistance, and collaboration and strategic partnerships.”

Munson established a national reputation in human service workforce development and organizational capacity-building through the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, a center of excellence funded by the Children’s Bureau, and is bringing many of those lessons to bear at the IFF. “Each year, IFF engages in 20 different evaluation projects, trains 10,000 professionals, and supports the leadership and college pathways of nearly 400 current and former foster youth. Research has shown that knowledge is retained and reinforced when supported through transfer of learning tools, such as coaching, mentoring, research-to-practice briefs, webinars, social media, and

outreach. So we are moving towards an emphasis on this sort of ‘high touch, high impact’ in all we do, customizing content and delivery so products are most relevant and useful for all of our participants and funders, and the field,” says Munson.

Munson considers herself to be a servant leader. “What makes an organization healthy internally — and vibrant and visible externally — are clarity of mission, dynamic projects, active partnerships, and staff members who feel a sense of engagement and support. Leadership is most effective when it is collaborative and inclusive, and when all of the talented, dedicated professionals who do the work every day get the chance to help guide and support the ship,” she says.

## Meet Alex Figueroa of the New Jersey Child Support Institute (NJCSI)

Alexander Figueroa, who is associate program manager of curriculum for the New Jersey Child Support Institute (NJCSI) at IFF, began his professional career as a probation officer in child support in Union County. Over time, he developed a strong working relationship with the parties involved with his caseload. Knowing that a better paying job would result in financial stability and longevity for families,



Figueroa often went beyond his job responsibilities to provide fathers resources that could enhance job skills and assist with gaining and/or sustaining employment. Figueroa was viewed as an advocate to both parents. It was his love and passion for

helping others that led him to further his education and obtain a MSW degree from Rutgers University.

“One of the things I most enjoyed was working with families to connect the dots for a more holistic approach. The families knew I was trying to help by empowering them to take control of their own financial destiny,” says Figueroa.

Today, Figueroa uses his passion for helping others in the field of training and development. Figueroa manages the curriculum development process for NJCSI, which encompasses over 45 course offerings and multiple web-based trainings (WBTs), servicing over 3,000 participants for all child support professionals in New Jersey.

“Child support income provides a level of stability for families and ensures a basic level of care with everything from housing to medical needs. It is incredibly rewarding to know that our work at NJCSI enables child support professionals to enhance their skills, which in turn allows them to become more effective and make a positive impact on the families they serve,” he says.

Figueroa is a member of the SSW’s faculty as a part-time lecturer and teaches both BASW and MSW students.

## Rutgers Law—Camden/SSW Alumna Develops Domestic Violence App

Theresa Lyons ’01, one of the first graduates of a Rutgers dual-degree program that combines a J.D. with a MSW, has with her New Jersey family and divorce law firm, Lyons & Associates, launched an app that connects users instantly to every domestic violence shelter and hotline across the Garden State.

“Oftentimes victims may not have access to a computer or to outside resources, but they likely have their



cell phone or know someone who does. The app also serves as a public service and educational tool,” advises Lyons of the program’s

other features that include assisting with child support calculations, divorce records, as well as instantly connecting with the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency.

With more than 70,000 incidents of domestic violence and more than 60,000 incidents of suspected child abuse each year, New Jersey was in need of an innovative tool like this to connect victims with professionals trained to help.

“The more people who use the app (and not just potential clients are using it — also law enforcement, teachers, and medical professionals), the more likely those people may be to pass on life saving information to persons they encounter who may be

suffering from abuse,” says Lyons, who serves as the firm’s managing partner.

Just as this app represents the first of its kind, Lyons herself was a trendsetter at Rutgers. She was one of the first two graduates in the state to earn simultaneously a J.D. and M.S.W., which garnered her special recognition. This decision to take a chance on a new program ultimately proved advantageous to her career.

As Lyons was navigating the demands of two programs at once, she also capitalized on Rutgers Law — Camden’s strong tradition in clerkships. “The fact that Rutgers — Camden stresses clerkships so emphatically also helped me obtain my clerkship at the New Jersey Supreme Court, and that opportunity has opened more doors than I ever could have imagined. I also value the vast network of so many Rutgers alumni across the state.”

As Lyons works to improve the lives of New Jerseyans through her app and her practice, she also personally opens her doors to the state’s most vulnerable: children in foster care. A foster and adoptive parent for many years, the Rutgers alumna says it’s been those kids who have taught her the most.

Developed in coordination with GetLegal, the Lyons & Associates app is downloadable for free on Apple iPhone and Android devices by keying in “Lyonspc” in the App Store. ■

## NEWS FROM OUR CENTERS

## Center for Gambling Studies Will Conduct the First Comprehensive Research Study on Internet Gambling in the US



The Center for Gambling Studies at the Rutgers University School of Social Work has been awarded \$1,287,504 to study the impact of Internet gambling in New Jersey. New Jersey became the third state to allow gambling online when betting started last November.

Funded by the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement (DGE), in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the three-year project will be the first comprehensive investigation of betting behavior on the Internet in the U.S. It comes in response to a mandate from Gov. Chris Christie to examine the impact of Internet gambling on problem gambling behaviors across the state.

"New Jersey is one of only three states where Internet gambling is legal," said Lia Nower, professor and director of the Center who also serves as the principal

investigator on the grant. "But iGaming is a new frontier and no one knows quite what to expect. It's a real testament to the Governor and the Division that they're taking such a responsible approach to evaluating potential negative impacts, and we are really honored to be a part of it."

The project began in January of 2015 with a statewide baseline prevalence survey of New Jersey residents. In the first wave of the study, a representative sample of 1,500 adult residents will be interviewed by cell and landline phone and 2,000 residents will be interviewed online regarding gambling behavior and Internet gambling. A follow-up survey 18 months later will evaluate any changes in past-year prevalence of Internet gambling and problem gambling as well as changes in the characteristics of Internet gamblers.

"Since the inception of Internet gaming, the Division of Gaming Enforcement has been committed to maintaining

the highest level of responsible gaming standards, and information from a study such as this will only help in that regard," said Division of Gaming Enforcement director David Rebutk.

The Center also will provide four yearly reports to the Governor, based on statistical analyses of the betting behavior of gamblers across Internet gambling sites.

In New Jersey, patrons can play casino games as well as table games and poker online. Currently there are six operating Atlantic City casino Internet gambling permit holders with 14 authorized online gambling websites available to those who establish accounts and play within the borders of New Jersey.

"Unlike casino gambling, people don't have to travel or make time to gamble on the Internet," Nower said. "You can bet from your iPad at the breakfast table or on your work computer. And you're not handling cash so the money doesn't seem real. Our studies will identify what type of person chooses this very private form of gambling, who develops problems, and how those problems are different from other forms of legalized gambling."

The Center for Gambling Studies was created in 2007 and serves as the only gambling research, policy and training center in a school of social work in the nation. The center is a non-partisan resource for clinicians, legislators, academics, students and other policymakers in New Jersey and internationally on gambling-related issues.



## Center for International Social Work

This semester the Center for International Social Work (CISW) became field unit partners with the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA) to provide an internship for MSW student, Colin Leibtag, a student in the Management and Policy concentration. For Leibtag's internship with GSSWA, he helped to disseminate resources and data that strengthen the workforce that supports the healthy development, wellbeing and protection of vulnerable children and families in middle and low income countries. The internship provided valuable experience in the development of a non-profit organization.

The CISW is also partnering with a team of faculty members on the *Going Global!* project, which aims to internationalize the undergraduate social work curriculum. Through a grant from the Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs at Rutgers University, Rebecca Davis, director of the CISW, is

working with DuWayne Battle, director of the Bachelor of Arts in Social Work program, Francis Barchi, assistant professor, and Patricia Findley, associate professor, to develop online course content that can be infused in the core foundation courses. These courses will be developed to include specialized topics such as global migration and immigration, global health and global perspectives on gender-based violence.

In addition, the CISW is assisting several faculty members on increasing international education opportunities for students. In November 2014, Dr. Battle and Dr. Davis made an exploratory visit to meet with representatives of the social work program at the Autonomous University of the Yucatan in Merida, Mexico. It is expected that an initial study abroad program to Mexico will begin in winter or summer of 2016 and will include a three-credit course and service-learning opportunities.



## Center for Leadership and Management



On November 19, more than 320 social work professionals attended a one-day conference called "A Brave New Workplace: Ending Stigma and Promoting Behavioral Health as a Key to Wellness" at the Livingston Campus Student Center. The conference was a

joint effort between the Rutgers School of Social Work's Center for Leadership and Management and the Office of Continuing Education, as well as corporate sponsors.

The theme of the conference was the reduction of stigma surrounding behavioral health issues in the workplace. Former U.S. Representative Patrick Kennedy was the keynote speaker and the event included a panel of social work experts. The conference was comprised of several interesting breakout workshops including "A Self-Care Toolkit for the Workplace: Small Investment, Big Return" and "Blurred Lines in Therapeutic Relationships: How They Happen. How to Avoid Them."

"Through this event, we aim to raise awareness of these behavioral health issues so that workplace leaders and social work professionals can work together to enhance employee wellness," said Andy Germak, executive director of the Center for Leadership and Management.

The conference was sponsored by Prudential Financial, Johnson & Johnson, Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, Lifecare, FEI Behavioral Health, Advanced Health and Education, Carrier Clinic, E4 Health, HARP Palm Beach, Livengrin and NR Pennsylvania Associates, LLC.



## Center on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC)

■ From October 27 through November 5, the entire Rutgers student body in New Brunswick had the chance to take an online Sexual Assault Climate Survey, #iSpeak, and contribute their voice to the national discussion about how to eliminate sexual assault on college campuses and universities. Rutgers University is at the forefront of a national effort to measure the scope of the problem. VAWC was invited by the White House to pilot the survey, the only school chosen nationally for this project. iSpeak is based on a model created by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women.

■ The U.S. State Department asked the Center to host a small group of 15 distinguished visitors from the Middle East and North Africa for an International Visitor Leadership Program on preventing and confronting domestic abuse and violence in those areas. The group included government officials, researchers, educators and legal experts who are visiting the U.S. as part of the program sponsored by the State Department. They met to discuss the work and research done at VAWC.

■ For the month of October, VAWC welcomed Dr. Donna Chung, head of Social Work at Curtin University, to the Center as a Visiting Scholar. Dr. Chung has been involved in social work education and social research for over 15 years. Her research interests include male violence against women, homelessness, gender and sexuality and social policy.

## The Huamin Research Center

The Huamin Research Center and the Center for Leadership and Management were pleased to host a lecture titled "Donations from Wealthy People in China: Level and Changes"

by Dr. Guosheng Deng from Tsinghua University.

"Tsinghua University is one of our hosting institutions for the China Study Abroad program and they have been unbelievably kind and generous in welcoming our faculty and students to their campus. This is a very important topic for both China and the U.S., and we welcome Dr. Deng to Rutgers," said Chien-Chung Huang, professor and director of the Huamin Research Center.

Dr. Deng detailed how a new social class of wealthy people has emerged in China, with a 2.3 fold increase in five years of individuals with \$1.64 million or more in assets. Most charitable giving in China has followed in close relationship to how the government views philanthropy. Before 1978, the Chinese government viewed charitable giving as a negative, making private donations impossible. The attitude relaxed through 1994, and now the Chinese government has progressed to positive encouragement of individuals and corporations for setting up charitable foundations. ■



ILLUSTRATION: ERIC MILLER

## NEWS FROM OUR PROGRAMS

### Internship provides Intensive Weekend Students with an Enriching Experience



Michael Russomanno, a licensed clinical social worker at Mental Health Clinic of Passaic, hoped to pass on knowledge to his two interns from the Rutgers School of Social Work and enhance their clinical skills. He was pleased to find that in working with Boni Shevelove and Denise Banks during their three-year internship, he not only helped to shape their careers as future clinicians, but he also learned more about the profession himself through their enthusiasm.

"When you have the right interns, you can really learn from them too, and I was lucky to have that situation with Boni and Denise. They reinvigorated my belief in the

profession and renewed my excitement about why we do what we do," says Russomanno.

Shevelove and Banks participated in the internship through the Intensive Weekend MSW program, which provides individuals working full time with the opportunity to pursue a MSW degree while continuing with full-time employment. Launched in 2006, the program is a way for high performing social service workers to expand upon and professionalize their practice. The program has grown from a few cohorts to 178 students in four years. Students come from areas of practice including behavioral health management and substance abuse treatment

agencies, child welfare, corrections, healthcare, eldercare and county social services.

Classes meet once a month on weekends at one of four locations, Mays Landing, Bordentown, Parsippany and Jersey City. Students complete 8-14 hours each week in their field placements and can expect to complete their MSW education in two to three years.

For Shevelove, a practicing occupational therapist who wanted a career change, the extended internship provided a unique opportunity to work with a variety of clients and follow their progress over time in a way students in shorter field placements might not experience. She worked with complicated cases, neglected children, parents with severe depression, and children with mental illness who were practically homeless.

"It was such a phenomenal experience. The field placement could not have been more perfect. I learned so much from Mike and he really challenged us and brought out the best in each person. It truly exceeded all my expectations," says Shevelove.

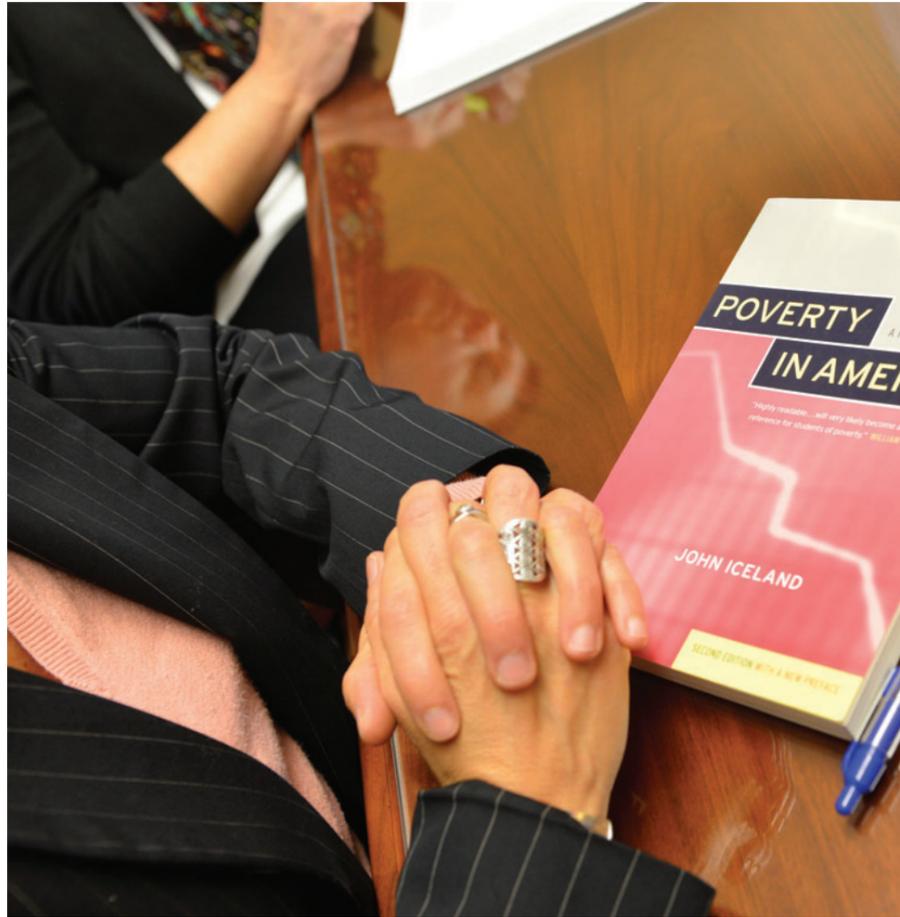
Banks enjoyed the opportunity to get acclimated to a professional environment over

an extended period of time. "Being at my internship for two and a half years allowed me to truly get to know my clients. I had the chance to create a long-lasting rapport with them. I also had the opportunity to really use what I was learning in classes and apply lessons to real-life conflicts," says Banks.

Rutgers School of Social Work has more than 800 field placements, and these supporting employers and field agencies supervisors are valued for the important training they provide for students.

"Mike has incredible clinical skills and was invested from the beginning in the quality education of these future clinicians. He was able to encourage, support and teach all the qualities we hope IW students will have upon completion of this program," says Ilana Mazur LCSW, field liaison for the Intensive Weekend Program.

Call 848-932-4429 for more information.



## Bachelor in Social Work (BASW)



USA Today College recently ranked Rutgers School of Social Work in their top three undergraduate schools in the category "Top Colleges for Social Work."

Their rankings are based on a variety of factors, including the ability of the graduates to earn a living in their field. We are proud of this distinction and believe that our program expertly prepares graduates for beginning social work practice and beyond. Our accomplished faculty

members provide both teaching and opportunities for advanced research. Rutgers BASW graduates go on to pursue advanced degrees or to a variety of social work positions. They provide essential services to individuals, families and communities, as well as leading state and non-profit agencies. "Through our undergraduate program, we are educating the social work innovators of tomorrow," says DuWayne Battle, director of the BASW program.

Visit [socialwork.rutgers.edu](http://socialwork.rutgers.edu) for more information.



## 100% Online MSW

The 100% Online MSW program currently has two cohorts of students in field placements across the country. Many of our students are interested in working with military families and veterans and we have developed relationships with several agencies providing services to these populations. Placements at remote military bases, such as in California, or internationally in Germany have provided opportunities for students affiliated with the military (including veterans, enlisted personnel, military spouses and civilians working on base) to participate in field work within family advocacy, community service and behavioral health programs. Students have also had the opportunity to work at veteran medical centers in different states, as

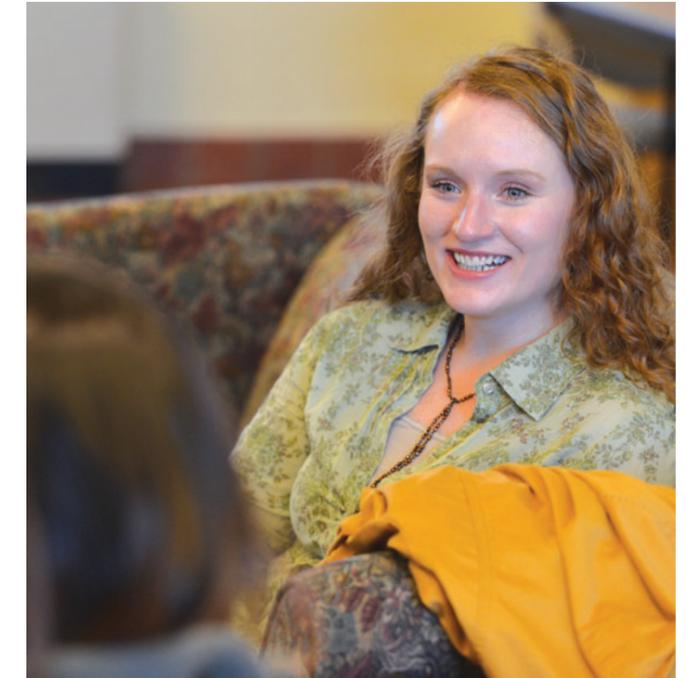
well as programs that provide social work services to veterans and their families.

As they move into the advanced portion of the curriculum, interested students will have the opportunity to complete their advanced clinical field practicum within veteran's hospitals and other settings working with this growing population. Our students have very diverse backgrounds, many with military experience in some fashion, which contributes to their learning experience both in and outside the classroom. Growing relationships with military bases and programs serving veterans is a priority

for the online MSW program and is clearly meeting a need in social work and the development of social workers in this area.

If your agency is interested in hosting a student, please contact our assistant director of Online Education, Rachel Schwartz, at [rschwartz@ssw.rutgers.edu](mailto:rschwartz@ssw.rutgers.edu) or (848) 932-4422.

## The Addiction Counselor Training Certificate Program (ACT)



Dual-licensed clinicians (LCADC, LCSW or LPC) will be the clinical leaders in New Jersey, and the ACT Certificate program offers an excellent learning opportunity. Developed with funding from the NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, ACT provides:

- All the required LCADC education hours in a 6-course curriculum
- Convenient hybrid course format that reduces in-class hours to 4 or 5 per day, per semester
- Courses on Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays in New Brunswick, Camden and Newark
- All the required supervised field hours in a DMHAS-approved treatment organization
- Preparation for the application process and licensing exams
- Individualized advising and specialized workshops while enrolled in the program
- Mentorship from dual-credentialed clinicians and other addiction professionals

If you have questions, please email [ACT@ssw.rutgers.edu](mailto:ACT@ssw.rutgers.edu).

## Doctorate in Social Work, DSW

The Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) program is committed to exploring the growing and troubling distance between theory and practice, between the ways we actually practice and existing models of practice. Our curriculum bridges this gap by preparing practitioner-scholars to reconnect knowledge production with practice while they create new practitioner knowledge in the field.

More than 50 universities offer a Ph.D. in social work. Consequently, there are many programs and opportunities for licensed clinical social workers seeking careers in academe and research. For those seeking to develop clinical scholarship, however, the choices are quite limited. In the past, financial and organizational forces combined to create the conditions for practitioners to hold long tenures at field agencies, and this, in turn, provided contexts for the development of field-based scholarship and the production of knowledge in clinical social work. These leaders often used supervision as the medium for practice knowledge transfer within and between generations of practitioners.

Presently, there are fewer tenured practitioners at field agencies providing supervision, while evidence-based methods and funding requirements have created



new contexts for practitioners seeking to provide clinical leadership. Indeed, a 2009 NIH "National Action Plan for Workforce Development in Behavioral Health" identified clinical leadership as a major goal for social work, and our DSW Program has been designed to not only address this critical need for practitioners in New Jersey and beyond, but to also provide an innovative educational model that will impact and change the profession at large.

For more information visit [dsw.socialwork.rutgers.edu](http://dsw.socialwork.rutgers.edu)



## Doctorate of Philosophy in Social Work, Ph.D.

We recognize and congratulate several recent Ph.D. graduates who have obtained or recently completed post-doctoral fellowships. These competitive awards allow graduates to continue to develop their research skills and interests under the mentorship of faculty, research scientists and/or policy experts.

OUR CURRENT AND RECENT AWARDEES ARE:

- James Lister, post-doctoral fellow, Department of Psychiatry, Wayne State University, NIH-funded research on treatment modalities for disordered gamblers;
- Hillary Mi-Sung Kim,

post-doctoral fellow, Department of Pediatrics, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Institute for Child Development, research on early parent-child interactions that affect children's psychological development;

- Anasuya Ray, James Marshall post-doctoral fellow, sponsored by the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), congressional and foreign policy research, Office of U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (Vermont), Washington DC.

Graduates who recently completed post-doctoral positions include: Cory

Morton, post-doctoral fellow, National Drug Institute, New York City; and Esther Son, post-doctoral fellow, Lurie Institute for Disability Policy, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University.

We will welcome our next cohort of Ph.D. students in fall 2015. Our cycle has a January 15 deadline each year for fall admissions. Information is available on the social work website [socialwork.rutgers.edu/Academics/phd.aspx](http://socialwork.rutgers.edu/Academics/phd.aspx) or by contacting program director Allison Zippay at [zippay@ssw.rutgers.edu](mailto:zippay@ssw.rutgers.edu).



## MSW Certificate in Aging Program

The MSW Certificate in Aging Program continues to grow, with the addition of 25 students since October 2014. This brings the total number of MSW students in the certificate program to just over 100. As in past years, students are conducting their field work in a wide variety of settings that touch the lives of older adults and caregivers, including hospice, skilled nursing facilities, community-based nonprofit organizations and hospitals.

We also welcomed this year's cohort of six MSW fellows in aging, with fellows beginning their leadership projects as part of their advanced internships. The fellows are placed with the Statewide Clinical Outreach Program for the Elderly (S-COPE), the Francis E. Parker Memorial Home in Piscataway, The University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro, AARP-New Jersey, the Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Morristown Medical Center and the LIFE at Lourdes program (a program of all-inclusive care for the elderly).

This fall, there has been a particular emphasis on engaging our students to participate in interprofessional health education workshops across the three campuses. For example, this past September, a case conference on geriatric care management took place in Piscataway and engaged more than 50 faculty and 500 students in a variety of disciplines. With the addition of the Rutgers Biomedical Health Sciences schools (i.e. medical, dental, pharmacy and nursing schools), the school continues to plan ways to enhance students' experiences in social work and healthcare. Future events include a case conference focused on a patient who has a stroke, to learn about the issues such a patient faces.

Visit [socialwork.rutgers.edu/aging](http://socialwork.rutgers.edu/aging) for more information.



## Scholarships Make a Difference

When student debt surpassed \$1 trillion in the U.S., the public began looking closely at why education costs have risen so sharply over the past three decades, and how this rise in cost can negatively impact students, families and the labor force. Unfortunately, Rutgers University and the social work profession are not shielded from these harmful trends. New Jersey is currently spending 27% less per college student than it did in 2008, which is particularly harmful for students at state schools like Rutgers. This pushes the cost of a college education on to students, who at Rutgers now pay for nearly 70% of the bill, up from 32% in 1990.

MSW students across the nation have an average debt of \$36,000, with 1 in 4 graduates coughing up credit card payments above \$500 a month.

Students at Rutgers School of Social Work are stepping up to protect themselves and their peers from these trends by building a strong stream of scholarship support through the development of a culture of philanthropy at the school. Through the Students Supporting Students Campaign, student leaders are working tirelessly to spread awareness about giving back, and making a statement by giving a gift of \$1.00 or more so their peers can have better access to scholarships.

Jennifer Calchi, current MSW student and recipient of one of the Students Supporting Students scholarships said, "It is my belief that the recipients of this award will benefit greatly from receiving this scholarship. Without this award I would have had a difficult time purchasing the books I needed for my classes." Jennifer plans to specialize in healthcare social work, and intends to use her training to provide support services and education to those who are too ill to care for themselves or their families.

Although the awards are only \$1,000 each, they can allow students to work less at

their part-time jobs, to focus on their studies, cover transportation expenses to their field placements, or like Jennifer, be used to supplement the cost of textbooks. The campaign committee hopes that students recognize the importance of giving back by continuing to make gifts as alumni, ultimately increasing scholarship revenue and improving the educational experience for the students who follow in their footsteps.

To make a gift, visit [support.rutgers.edu/socialwork](http://support.rutgers.edu/socialwork).

## Summer Housing Internship Program (SHIP) Changes Lives for the Better



When alumni Don, RC'69 and Penny, DC'70 Pray heard about the Summer Housing and Internship Program (SHIP) and Student Internship Program (SIP), they felt compelled to help support these worthy program endeavors run by staff from the Institute for Families at the School of Social Work. Their donations have funded both scholarships and sturdy duffle bags for participants.

"SHIP/SIP is a great program that has grown significantly and it is something for which Rutgers, the School of Social Work, alumni and friends can be very proud. We are pleased to support the program over the years and have seen the transformational impact it has had on the lives of students," notes Don Pray.

Overseen by Rutgers School of Social Work's Transitions for Youth, SHIP is aimed at an underserved population: young adults who successfully found their way to college but have aged out of services through the public child welfare system. Launched in 2006, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) funds the program. SHIP is a lifeline for students. For many of these youth who have no families to rely on,

there are very few options for housing during the summer months. The SHIP program provides a place to live on campus, full access to student services and a connection to a paid, supervised internship.

In previous summers, SHIP served 10 young adults each year, housing them at Rutgers' Rockoff Hall, an apartment-style dormitory in downtown New Brunswick. But through new interest from private donors and increased funding from DCF, SHIP expanded in 2013 to serve a total of 40 students in dorm settings on Rutgers' New Brunswick, Camden, and Newark campuses, as well as Montclair State University. The program runs from the end of May through mid-August.

All SHIP participants are helped to attain and maintain part-time employment through paid internships. They also receive:

- Individual and group coaching sessions
- Skill-building (Positive Youth Development) workshops on financial literacy, job readiness, emotional resiliency and others



SHIP participants receive duffle bags.

- Free lunch program
- Field trips and other recreational, cultural and educational events
- Visiting scholar status, which allows students to fully access the library and gymnasium.
- A summer filled with positive



Don and Penny Pray attend a Rutgers football game with their granddaughter.

opportunities and experiences that will last a lifetime.

Participants have been placed in internships as diverse as RU-tv, the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. One recent SHIP participant interned with the Highland Park Police Department, graduated with honors from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in May 2010 and attended the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, this past summer.

"Donors like the Prays create a safe and enriched summer environment for students, changing and improving their lives in the process. We are grateful for those who make these programs possible," says Cathleen Palace, SSW director of Development. ■

For more information about SHIP, please contact Transitions for Youth, Lesley Dixon, assistant program manager, at 973-353-5776 or [ldixon@ssw.rutgers.edu](mailto:ldixon@ssw.rutgers.edu). To make a donation to the program, please contact Cathleen Palace at [cathleen.palace@rutgers.edu](mailto:cathleen.palace@rutgers.edu)

## ALUMNI UPDATES



During her time as a BASW student at Rutgers, **Heidi Peck, LC'04**

was elected to the position of Committeewoman of Middlesex County for Piscataway, New Jersey Ward 4, District 6, where she served two terms. Peck began her formal career as a social worker at Realization Center, Inc., a privately owned substance abuse outpatient treatment center in Union Square Manhattan, where she then became the senior counselor for the Intake Department. Peck served as a social worker at the U.S.

Department of Veterans Affairs in the Ambulatory Substance Abuse Program at the Brooklyn VA Hospital as well as the VA's Harlem Based Community Outpatient Clinic. In addition to clinical services, Peck served as a professional advocate for the clinic working directly with the District's Congressman's Office, Manhattan Legal Services and the Harlem Vet Center. During her time at the VA, Peck was selected for LGBT Workgroup for the Federal Office of Diversity and Inclusion in Washington, DC and currently serves on the Advisory Board for Women Veterans at the New York City Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs.

After many years of advocacy and volunteerism, Peck decided to leave her federal employment and formally pursue her passion to work in the LGBTQ community of which she is also a part. In 2013 Heidi became the associate director of Adult Services at The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (The Center) in Manhattan. There she oversees all programs in center wellness including mental health, the lesbian cancer initiative, immigration support and social action groups, the gender identity project (for transgender and gender non-conforming people), the LGBT smokefree project and HIV testing and support groups. Within her department she receives 8 -12 MSW and MHC interns annually. Peck manages clinical staff, about \$500K in grant funded programs, and coordinates department operations for community-wide social events such as the annual LGBT Immigration Fair with 35 partner

organizations and 500 attendees each year. Peck is a member of the Harlem Bronx LGBTQ Task Force, and was most recently hired to teach Social Work Practice III at New York University's Silver School of Social Work MSW program.

**Theresa A. Bivaletz, SSW'09** recently accepted a new position at William Paterson University as Campus Victim Services Coordinator in the Women's Center. The center works collaboratively with on and off campus services and programs to help formulate and review campus policies, procedures and programs relating to gender equity with the aim of enabling all individuals to feel safe, supported and empowered to pursue their intellectual, professional and personal goals.

**Molly Fagan, SSW'10** recently accepted a position with the northern New Jersey chapter of the Alzheimer's Association as the vice president for Programs and Services. With the ultimate goal of eliminating Alzheimer's disease, the Alzheimer's Association strives to advance research, provide and enhance care for those with Alzheimer's, and reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

**Nina N. Ortiz, SSW'14** is a recent MSW graduate from the VAWC certificate program. With her interests geared towards working with children experiencing trauma, Ortiz began serving as a wraparound therapist with the Mental Health Association of Monmouth County in the Family Crisis Intervention Unit. There she provides in-home counseling to adolescents 11-17 experiencing an array of behavioral issues such as parent-child conflict, truancy, substance abuse and mental health issues. Ortiz is thankful for being a part of an amazing program that prepares students to work with women and children, and encourages many first-year students to apply. ■

Keep us posted! Send your personal and professional news to [alumni@ssw.rutgers.edu](mailto:alumni@ssw.rutgers.edu)

### Nominate an Outstanding Alumnus today!

Dean Potter and the School of Social Work Alumni Council are pleased to recognize an outstanding alumnus at the 2015 convocation ceremony this May. Don't miss this opportunity to recognize the hard work and accomplishments of a friend or colleague who demonstrates leadership and commitment to the field of social work. Nominations are due no later than March 31, 2015, and award winners must attend the convocation in May.

More at [socialwork.rutgers.edu/Alumni/Award](http://socialwork.rutgers.edu/Alumni/Award)

## Message from the Alumni Council



After we became an official chartered organization as of June 2013, the Rutgers School of Social Work Alumni Council has been busy ever since. Since the charter, the Alumni Council has hosted two alumni receptions and an annual Career Day which included a career fair, resume workshop, licensing information session, and a panel discussion. The Council created an Outstanding Alumni Award to recognize the accomplishments of our many talented and hard working alumni, and also revitalized the alumni web platform to help improve alumni communication. We look forward to continue strengthening our alumni community in a way that cultivates lifelong relationships with the School of Social Work and with each other.

Your involvement with the School of Social Work can help enhance the student and alumni experience at Rutgers. There are many ways to stay connected with our alumni community. These include:

- Nominating a friend, colleague, or yourself for the Outstanding Alumni Award;
- Attending the annual alumni reception each fall;
- Attending the Social Work Career Day in April as either an employer or a career seeker;
- Volunteering as an online ambassador for our first ever crowd funding campaign in March;
- Becoming a field liaison, instructor, or supervisor;
- Supporting students and programs by making a gift;
- Sending us your professional or personal updates;
- Keeping your contact and employment information up to date;
- Sending us your ideas or feedback.

Alumni at the School of Social Work are taking a stronger position on supporting current students and programs, which is evidenced by an increased giving rate of 5% in 2014, up from 3.5% in 2012. Alumni giving is a component of the ranking score in the *US News and World Report*, so we thank those who donated for coming together to make our RU social work degrees more valuable.

Our alumni community is composed of countless dynamic and talented individuals, who have so much wisdom and experience to offer to the social work profession. It is our hope that we can come together as an alumni community to hone in on our individual strengths and build relationships, network, and make connections that will lead to increased opportunities in the field. The work you do every day makes our world a better place, and together we can partner for change to have an even stronger impact on our communities and the people we serve.

Dawn Apgar, SSW'93, GSNB'02  
 Alexis R. Biedermann, SAS'10, SSW'11  
 Marla K. Blunt Carter, SSW'03  
 Lynne M. Healy, GSNB'85  
 Tawanda L. Hubbard, SSW'05  
 Daveen L. Mann, LC'95, SSW'09  
 Susan L. Parish, RC'88, SSW'94  
 Kyle Smiddie, NLAW'11, SSW'11

## In Memoriam

*The Rutgers School of Social Work family extends its deepest sympathy to the loved ones of deceased alumni, faculty and friends.*

*Ms. Carole Taylor Reynolds, DC'55, SSW'57  
 June 26, 2014*

*Mr. Barry L. Moore, SSW'66  
 June 12, 2014*

*Mrs. Karen H. Stevenson, SSW'69  
 June 25, 2014*

*Mrs. Virginia D. Kline, SSW'70  
 June 21, 2014*

*Mr. Roosevelt Whitted, SSW'74  
 January 2, 2013*

*Mr. Manuel R. Gomez, SSW'77  
 August 29, 2014*

*Mr. Paul W. Robb, SSW'78  
 June 21, 2014*

*Mrs. Barbara Gorman Cody, UCNB'74, SSW'78  
 October 22, 2014*

*Ms. Ann L. Cordon, SSW'80  
 September 29, 2014*

*Ms. Elaine S. Gross, SSW'81  
 July 15, 2014*

*Ms. Mary A. Hunt, LC'77, SSW'82  
 September 22, 2014*

*Ms. Jane G. Lough, SSW'86  
 October 11, 2014*

*Ms. Debra K. Hotmar, SSW'94  
 July 10, 2014*

*Mr. Robert A. Lodge, CCAS'98  
 October 8, 2014*

*Dr. Marsel A. Heisel, Professor  
 March 2, 2014*