

**Thomas Benjamin, Research Project Assistant, Center for Research on Ending Violence
Rutgers School of Social Work 00:34**

Hello, and welcome to the first episode of the third season of Toward a More Just Future, a podcast from Rutgers School of Social Work. My name is Thomas Benjamin, and I'm a research project assistant at the Center for Research on Ending Violence at Rutgers School of Social Work. I'm also a member of the school's inclusion, intersectionality, diversity, equity, and advancement committee, also known as the IIDEA committee. This season, I'll be speaking with some of my fellow IIDEA committee members about critical topics related to IIDEA. Today, I'll be speaking with Zan Haggerty, a clinician scholar who has a dual role as both doctoral student and a staff member at Rutgers counseling and psychiatric services, also known as CAPS. In maintaining two roles, Zan hears from students about growth areas for Rutgers in the way of DEI while also witnessing it in their own doctor of Social Work program. As a clinical social worker, their focus has typically been on serving communities with marginalized identities, who experience pervasive mood challenges, self-harm, or suicidality. Though many diagnostic criteria will focus on an individual and their role in their disorder. Zan's belief and perspective has always been that symptoms typically are a result of larger issues within a system. As such, Zan sits on many consultation teams where they push themselves and colleagues to look for system related impact in their clients. In doing so, clinicians can hold themselves accountable, to move beyond individual interventions, and instead focus on creating systems, communities and cultures of wellbeing. Most of Zan's career has focused on bringing justice to populations and communities that are routinely and systemically marginalized. As a trans non binary person, Zan has seen the immense impact of systems that do not recognize your existence, or demean your value. Above all, Zan's commitment is to create a culture and community of belongingness, where people of every identity feel welcome and represented. So Zan, thank you so much for joining us today. You wear a lot of hats at the university, could you talk about your different roles and all the ways that they intersect?

**Zan Haggerty, Assistant Director, Next Step Program, CAPS Rutgers, The State University of
New Jersey 03:14**

I really appreciate you having me, I'm glad to be here. So yeah, I have, I guess, three main Zen hats that I wear with Rutgers. And on the one hand, probably where I spend most of my time is my my nine to five role over at CAPS running the next step program. And I love that work, it is as rewarding as it is stressful. What I like a lot about it is that it gives me I feel really in tune with students and the student needs as well as how, like every day socio political events are impacting students and young adults. And so that is really where my head is most of the time. And then as a as a doctoral student, my head is just very deep in the research, the literature, all those kind of like nerdy and helpful things. What I appreciate a about having those two roles in particular is that prior to being in the DSW program, I was doing a lot of program development, curriculum development, evaluating the program. But being a doctoral student has added this additional skill set of being able to do some research and really dig deeper into some of those nuanced experiences that are that my students and my clients have. So for example, this year being able to do a qualitative study on what does it really like for trans emerging adults to be in therapy? What is that process like what's working, what's not working? And then apply the the

results of that research to the program that I'm running where we do see predominantly queer and trans students of color, being able to really see where are we doing well, where are we missing the mark and I umm, And being able to do it from a place that is not just my own opinion, but rather like really hearing the voices and doing it in a way where I know the methodology actually makes sense. It's it's really rooted in some some solid research foundations. So I love having those two be able to interact with one another. And then my, my recent, like joyful part time thing is being a part time lecturer, which I didn't realize how much I would really like it. But being a clinical social worker, I remember going through the MSW program and how important it was to have professors who were not only knowledgeable, but also had like, inclusive pedagogical approaches, and who were able to deliver information in a way that was inclusive, that's really has a pulse of what's happening currently, as opposed to really just like, here are these very old articles, read them, you have to know about them. And so I have really enjoyed both like my role at CAPS and my role as a doctoral student, I feel way more equipped to teach clinical social work from an anti oppressive standpoint, and being on the IIDEA committee has actually really helped me with that giving me additional access to the pedagogy, the inclusive pedagogy canvas, which has been phenomenal. So, yeah, a long winded answer for all of my roles, definitely. They interact with one another so much. And so well, I feel like I'm kind of constantly assessing like what are student needs, what are staff needs, what are faculty needs? And then what are my needs? And how can I like, who am I serving when sort of.

**Thomas Benjamin, Research Project Assistant, Center for Research on Ending Violence
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So what are some of the defining characteristics of the next step program? And how does it serve trans students and students of color?

**Zan Haggerty, Assistant Director, Next Step Program, CAPS Rutgers, The State University of
New Jersey 06:47**

So big shout out to our Next Step team, Janelle Richards and Joyce Darakcioglu, we are a really small team of really skilled clinicians who serve students who well, I guess, let me back up. So the the program was built out of data collected through CAPS. And so they noticed that essentially, every year about anywhere from 300 to 400, students will come into CAPS and be referred to a higher level of care. So they have some mental health concerns that the need is greater than what the Counseling Center can provide. Over time, we realized that if you look at the numbers on who connects to those services, it's really pretty low. People are not necessarily connecting, they tend to then lose a lot of money by like unenrolling in the university, they'll lose some of their funding, if they have funding, or they'll just miss out on the tuition that they already paid, depending on the timing, and then they won't land with treatment. And what we noticed, if you look even further into that data is that the students who didn't land in those, like intensive mental health treatment programs, if they hold marginalized identities, they're even less likely to land. So our students of color or queer students, our international students, they were not really landing there. And essentially, it's a huge interruption to their goals. So the next step program was really built to see can we fit some of those needs. And so we function a little bit like an intensive outpatient program, with a few differences. One being that we don't require insurance. So any student who's a Rutgers student is eligible for our services, they will not be

billed, so their parents caregivers, guardians will not find out about it. We're located on Busch campus, which means you can take Rutgers bus systems, which say what you will about them, it will still get you there, even if it is sitting in an hour long traffic. So transportation is then removed as a barrier. And then our schedule is different, because we really, we specialize in serving students. So we change our group schedule to really go around the schedule of classes. So whereas someone who might need to do an intensive outpatient program could only go Monday, Wednesday, Friday, from nine to 12, they would have to reduce their course load, maybe take a full leave. With us, our groups are scattered all throughout the week. And so they're able to really fit it in and piecemeal a schedule that works. So they attend groups, they attend individual services. And they get it's a slightly lower level of care than an intensive outpatient program. But we are still able to provide a lot of those adjunctive services, we coordinate with Dean of Students we coordinate with Hurtado for health service needs, we coordinate with VPVA, SJE, other campus partners. And so in that sense, it's really helpful to be able to do this treatment in place. And then in terms of the reason we see predominantly like queer and trans students of color, that goes back to really like the systemic barriers, right? We, we know it's not, it's not their identities that cause mental health challenges. It's that this world was built in a dominant culture, white supremacist way. And so moving through spaces where you're told you can't exist, or moving through systems that really weren't designed for you takes its toll. And so that tends to really be part of why those are the students that we see more. And in many ways, it's great because our stuff tends to reflect our student population. And I think that's probably helpful for them. Because it's nice to go into a space and be like, Oh, this is actually designed for me. And like, look to your left and right and see students who are using similar pronouns to you or who just look like you and know that you're, you're not alone, it, it helps with our greater goal to build a community of wellness and a community of belonging. So I could talk about Next Step forever. But I'll pause there for now.

**Thomas Benjamin, Research Project Assistant, Center for Research on Ending Violence
Rutgers School of Social Work 10:47**

Well, it's a privilege to hear about the impact of your work and the work in the program and how seemingly tremendously benefit students. With your background in many roles at Rutgers, you're certainly well suited to be part of the School of Social Work IIDEA committee. And could you talk about some of the work that you do on the committee?

**Zan Haggerty, Assistant Director, Next Step Program, CAPS Rutgers, The State University of
New Jersey 11:09**

Yeah, absolutely. I've really, really loved being on the committee. The one of the things I like most is being a student rep. And so being able to have that role where I, I see my main function as being a voice and advocate for the DSW students. So I really bother my cohort, a lot to make sure that I'm hearing what's going on with them and what their concerns are, what the needs are. I try and keep in good touch with all of the DSW cohorts to see what's happening within this program that is going well, and where are the areas that we need to adjust and change and grow? So a lot of what the focus this year has been, in terms of the DSW has been, how do we navigate when we have either visiting professors or sometimes even like long term tenured folks interacting in a way that causes harm to students, whether it's microaggressions, or maybe their

unconscious biases that come out and how they interact with specific students? And so navigating as the student rep on IIDEA committee, How can I push everyone, like any person who's going to be involved in teaching to really dive deeply into the inclusive pedagogy course and really begin to examine what is going on for them at their own unconscious biases? How are they engaging with folks? And how can we really hold people's feet to the fire to create classrooms that are that are really like safe enough learning spaces? Right? You know, we can't have a, there's no such thing as a safe space for sure. It's going to be a little uncomfortable at times. But can we make that uncomfortable space be uncomfortable for people of the majority instead of constantly taxing people who hold minoritized identities? So that's been one of my biggest pushes is like, how do we have this become, Like, how can we have different faculty members or visiting instructors really be able to get us and center, all of us as opposed to ignore folks, mistreat folks, make ignorant statements that they certainly don't mean, and yet, they have a real harm. And it has a real cost, and it takes people out of the ability to learn. So I've been really grateful for Dr. Farmer, and all of her leadership. And it's been cool to see doing like evaluations of how the inclusive pedagogy course has worked for those who have done it. And the, for better or worse, Rutgers is very bureaucratic. So it's a slow moving machine. But I'm just glad that it's moving. And I'm glad to be part of that. And that's been probably my biggest focus this year.

**Thomas Benjamin, Research Project Assistant, Center for Research on Ending Violence
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And how does your involvement in so many different spaces across the university, impact your view of DEI work with the IIDEA committee?

**Zan Haggerty, Assistant Director, Next Step Program, CAPS Rutgers, The State University of
New Jersey 14:08**

I think, I think it really allows me to have different lenses. So, for example, like when I'm moving through spaces at CAPS, I, like every interaction I have, I know that there's an element of race in it. I know there's an element of gender in it. And I know that everything I do and everything I don't do really matters. And I constantly examine that for myself and with my team. So that I can see like, how am I interacting with folks. And in that way, I'm constantly focused on the student experience, I want to make sure that that is better. In the DSW program, I have a bit of the opposite. I get to look at a look to my left and my right and I see my my colleagues in my cohort and I asked myself, How are they being treated in this moment by visiting professors by each other? What are we doing? And again, Every one of those interactions has race and it has gender and it has ableism in it right? We don't ever have an interaction that you should not be thinking of these different areas of identities and what's included, what's excluded? And what are we saying or not saying about what's happening? So in having these different roles, I feel like I am either thinking of the student perspective, or the faculty perspective, or when, like, when I'm teaching, for example, I'm wondering about like that clinical perspective, both from the instructor and the student side, like how do I convey a clinical message as an instructor that, again, is fully inclusive. It's not just coming from my own identities and my own backgrounds and understanding.

**Thomas Benjamin, Research Project Assistant, Center for Research on Ending Violence
Rutgers School of Social Work 15:49**

So I'm noticing what I consider an important trend. And it seems as if your work in a helping profession, your work in mental health, is helping the student as a person as a whole person, but also helping them be retained and stay in school. And so given that, have you ever considered your work on the IIDEA committee to be somewhat, if not totally a human service? Or a helping service?

Zan Haggerty, Assistant Director, Next Step Program, CAPS Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 16:27

Yeah, that's a good question. I think I do. Yeah, I consider it to be a human service and a helping service. Yeah, I, for me, the IIDEA committee is sort of the place where I get to put my student hat on and advocate and be the squeaky wheel. And so in that sense, absolutely. That's that's what I hope to do. I hope to always maintain great relationships, because I love everyone on the committee. And yet I know I'm causing a ruckus. And that's with with good reason.

**Thomas Benjamin, Research Project Assistant, Center for Research on Ending Violence
Rutgers School of Social Work 17:04**

So I know you have a lot of experience with community agreements. Could you talk about what community agreements are? And when were you first exposed to them?

Zan Haggerty, Assistant Director, Next Step Program, CAPS Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey 17:15

Yeah, absolutely. So I spent some time living and working in Thailand. And that's where I first learned about community agreements, I was working with an NGO. And we were doing a lot of grassroots movements against different development corporations, different like agricultural rights. And it was the first time I ever saw a framework that outlined a process as opposed to the content. So I think in our kind of typical schooling, whatever that means, for folks, we learn a lot about, here's the content, and I'm going to deliver it in this way. And you have to just accept it. When I began to see community agreements, and use them, and really like, like, live them within the org, I was when I saw that the content really is secondary, no one's gonna want to help you achieve your goals, if you're not interacting with them in a way that they feel understood, heard and respected. And so understanding that the process for accomplishing the different goals is, in my opinion, it's actually more important than like the content that you're delivering. That's really what had me start to realize that community agreements for me, and like how I move through the world, they're crucial. I'm definitely kind of like a team person, I've always really thrived working in a team environment, as opposed to working solo. And to that end, it's important to me that there's cohesion on the team. And so I need everyone on the team to feel like they have a voice, even if we're not necessarily doing what each individual person wants to do. And so community agreements are just a phenomenal way to ground us in an understanding of, here's how we'll interact with one another, when we start to like fly off the handles, and there's an interaction that goes south, here's how we'll address that, here's how we'll will engage with one another in a way that still conveys respect, allows us to grow and allows us to examine, hey, like that, that comment might have been harmful. And you might not

admit it. And yet, here's how that landed, are some other ways you could say that, what's the way we can repair that impact on this relationship? I find if people are feeling really good relationally they will do 1000 times more work for you. And that, I mean, that tends to be like the goal of capitalism. But, you know, in terms of like, I, we have a team, we have clinical needs, we do actually have to get the work done. And so being able to have those processes in place allows that work to be done in a way where I trust the team is taken care of and I trust that the work is getting done.

**Thomas Benjamin, Research Project Assistant, Center for Research on Ending Violence
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What's the value of creating a community agreement?

**Zan Haggerty, Assistant Director, Next Step Program, CAPS Rutgers, The State University of
New Jersey 19:59**

So in creating community agreements, you're really building a community. And that is really, I think the the path to healing is through community and belongingness. And I know that sounds like very pie in the sky and quite vague. But until we're able to really come together and see that we are all in a community together, and that and have like a commitment for how we engage with one another, we're not going to get anywhere, we're going to kind of keep coming up against these polarized views and this inability to work with one another. And so it just literally comes down to building a community. And my whole goal in all that I did is to continue to like, increase that sense of belongingness. So if you've got a community and you've got community agreements, you're going to feel like you belong somewhere, you're going to be like, have someone or ideally a group of people who get you who you can voice your concerns to, who will hear you out. And I think that that's, that's really the path to liberation.

**Thomas Benjamin, Research Project Assistant, Center for Research on Ending Violence
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While no one person can speak for an entire group, as a trans non binary person, what would you want people to know, to understand or to take action around in order to support the trans community?

**Zan Haggerty, Assistant Director, Next Step Program, CAPS Rutgers, The State University of
New Jersey 21:24**

So this is a really great and super timely question. I think that there are a couple of main things first, just like big picture, we need to get really actionable about legislation. There's a ton of anti trans legislation out there. And we're in Jersey, which is policy wise, a very progressive state. And at the same time, there are still six or seven anti trans laws proposed right now in the state of New Jersey. And so the policies will really do nothing if we don't have the people behind it, to actually enact them and really demonstrate that we need more support for trans folks, we need more access to gender affirming processes and procedures. So I think sometimes if, like law or right doesn't pertain to us directly, we can get really sedentary. And that is when we start to, as we saw with like Roe v. Wade, for example, we start to see these rights get taken away more and more and more and more. And we're seeing the same thing with the with the trans

community. And so we really now more than ever need people to get extremely active social workers in particular, it's not enough to call yourself a social worker and say you want change, you got to go and make that change happen. We need people to call their reps, we need people to build senators to be accountable to really fight against this legislation. It is completely aligned with our code of ethics. And we're just, it doesn't make sense to me to ever imagine a subset of any population shouldn't exist. So we're really we're talking about some pretty grave circumstances here. So we absolutely need a ton of support for advocacy and, and changes for legislation. Even with the progressive policies in place, the students who we work with at Rutgers, they're really lucky to have a lot of access to services within the Rutgers community, shout out to Lynn Fryer at Hurtado for holding it down for gender affirming services. But when they graduate, it's really hard to help them connect to providers, even in a liberal state like New Jersey, which is crazy, because trans people have been existing and using gender affirming care, medical procedure, specifically for so many years. And the research is really overwhelmingly supportive to outline the benefits of it and the life saving the life saving outcome of using those services. And yet we have providers who just refuse to prescribe for trans people because of their own biases and concerns and probably a lack of knowledge as well. So we need to keep pushing the limits because when students graduate from Rutgers, they don't stop being trans, they need to still be able to access services. So I need people to get on the phone and start bothering the state, please and thank you. That's, that's my first one. And then, in terms of like more micro individual and group based interactions. I'd love people to know that like trans folks, we're really tired of the pronoun conversation too. I know cis, people don't like it. We don't either. It's really boring. But what will have that conversation stop is if y'all could just get behind us. It's you don't need to understand something to respect it. And I think that people seem to want to understand, but only they can understand it through their lens. And if that's the way you need to understand something, maybe it's not for you to understand, maybe it's just something you can do. And so I think the more that we can get cis people to use pronouns, the pronouns that whoever they're talking to, or working with uses, that will be a huge step. The hemming and hawing around it, as well as, again, really tiresome. There are countless people who will come up to me or other trans folks or other non binary folks and be like, Oh, I'm so sorry in advance. But this is really hard. For me. It's really like it's a difficult adjustment. And I can't tell you how many times we've heard that. And I want you all to know that we hear that as your existence is difficult for me, Your existence is a burden to me. And so in the same way, no one would want to hear that. We like respectfully don't want your apology, we would love your behavior change. And I think that that can make the most affirming thing that folks can do. So having our cis allies really come through would be phenomenal. I think sometimes, sometimes I think people think that the trans community takes gender too seriously. I think if we look at it, the cis folks can sometimes take, take gender too seriously. Like, my femininity or masculinity is not taking anything away from anyone elses. And so, you know, if, if people have a problem with it, I wonder what gender work they might be able to do on their own and what, what exploration do they need to do it on their own understanding of gender roles and presentation, because that's valuable work to do, but it doesn't need to get all over me or any of us in the trans community.

Thomas Benjamin, Research Project Assistant, Center for Research on Ending Violence
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So thank you, Zan, we appreciate you sharing your time and your journey with us today. Very insightful. I certainly learned a lot and I hope other folks do as well.