

Special Edition - July 2020

Hi Everyone—

Ordinarily, as EO, I would not be writing you a message in early July during your breaks, but this spring and summer have been nothing but extraordinary, frightening, troubling and challenging – with some inspirational moments mixed in. I’m writing to reach out precisely as things become quieter in the warm weather to take stock and tell you I’m thinking about all of you -- our faculty, students, staff and alums -- in and around the Sociology Ph.D. Program and the GC for a number of reasons.

For one, as so many people and institutions of varied kinds (academic, corporate, retail, journalistic) have also written about in recent weeks, the horrors and pervasiveness of racism, and its class biased effects, became horrendously symbolized and exposed through the murder of George Floyd - - an act especially sadistic but that also, unfortunately, was one of innumerable unnecessary deaths that people of color have long suffered violently and because of deeply embedded biases. Whether George Floyd, or Ahmaud Arbery or Breonna Taylor or Tamir Rice or Sandra Bland or Eric Garner or Trayvon Martin, the list of names past and present goes on and on and is shamefully enormous, testifying to the ongoing vestiges of slavery and “the New Jim Crow” order that Michelle Alexander has strongly and rightfully condemned. We need to change -- as so many sociologists understand and agree. Many people, no doubt including many reading this email, bravely faced the pandemic to march and protest peacefully within a diversely passionate social movement ongoing and (re)activated about the need for social transformations and “Black Lives” mattering, thereby inspiring a majority of people in support as a result. I hope people will continue to proclaim ‘enough,’ and to seek to bring about concrete changes. With this recent movement in mind, I’m attaching a *New York Times* [article](#) that came out on July 3, 2020, quoting a number of sociologists about the historical significance of recent protests and marches.

Secondly, many of you have lived through worries, tragic losses, sicknesses and multi-faceted related problems bequeathed by COVID-19. Despite huge successes in the State of New York, we continue to face extraordinary high levels of anxieties about our individual and collective health. Some of you have lost people to the virus or known people affected, including GC professors and students. Moreover, the repercussions of the pandemic remain extraordinarily scary in terms of possible job losses and our City continuing to be affected by neighborhood closings, public and private school shut-downs and other community dislocations. In my own lifetime, I don’t remember collective uncertainties of such ongoing and myriad proportions.

Third and last, though, we are affected here at the Graduate Center. In particular, as I will be write you about separately (and, as most of you already know from the news and other emails), we are facing an awful challenge to the status of our international students. This is the case at CUNY and the GC, of course, but also all over the country, and across public and private colleges and universities, as international students face being unable to stay in the US if they go to a school that has online courses. I will write you more in a separate email about how the GC is responding to this as best we can.

What else, in addition to doing our best (which we will) to deal with all these things, can we do? For one thing, as I’ve written you in the recent past, I believe staying connected and interconnected, is exceptionally important as much now as ever. As I spoke to a number of you about at our early

June 'Zoom' graduation for 11 new Sociology Ph.Ds unable to attend in-person commencement, the Graduate Center has a long history of providing intellectual and academic community, and of engaging in public sociology and being concerned about social justice: let's keep all this going. Please know that Rati, myself and so many other of your professors both at the GC and all over the CUNY system are greatly concerned about how all of you are doing – and about supporting you and each other. Community and respect has long defined the GC, and it is a special gift and privilege we have that avoids the worst of academic competitiveness and elitism. Again, at the GC, we also tend to do 'public sociology' so please find – at the end of this email – write-ups about some of the amazing things sociologists have been involved with, from Rob Smith and DACA (see attached [article](#) Rob, also our newly elected ESS President, sent me), to a recent [town hall event](#) with Carla Shedd and Alex Vitale discussing about criminal justice reform and a diminished role for police. (Excuse me if this brief listing is insufficiently comprehensive, but we will make up for it with an early fall newsletter that discusses students' work as well as professors). Academically, a number of you – as Rati includes below in an impressive "Bragwagon" – keep working bravely and intrepidly, and even amidst disturbing events and the pandemic and protests, and your accomplishments are worth noting even before we begin, in fall, a whole new term.

At the same time, I have been telling all of my students and colleagues – anyone who will listen – not to be surprised if we are working more slowly than usual. This is a time to be understanding, respectful and kind to ourselves and each other as, of course (!), it is harder than usual to finish a paper or a hoped-for article or thesis chapter, or to study for your orals. Any good sociologist should be able to predict that people will be 'psychosocially' affected by all the pressures we are experiencing – from health problems to City University budget concerns and the fact that PSC CUNY is suing CUNY from also very understandable concerns about layoffs of adjuncts and employees. (A memo below from Luke Elliott-Negri, a PhD candidate in our program, suggests ways you may want to help.)

So, in sum and so as not to take up too much of your time this summer weekend, please know again that Rati and I, and Jeremy, and our faculty – will continue to try our best to be supportive. I will be in touch more often than usual until the fall term begins, and as soon as I hear any important news, I will share this with you. Emergency funding still exists at the Grad Center, and professors and administrators alike are concerned about trying to reach out and problem solve when and as issues arise for students here and those who are international. We will work as hard as we can to keep our GC courses at very high levels and to work with you individually and well – maintaining important programming (about teaching and mentoring, about how to do research in the Covid 19 pandemic – stay tuned). As *The New York Times* makes clear in the social movement related article below, there is room for hopefulness about social movement activism.

I hope some of the information provided below -- i.e., write-ups about our faculty, current social movements and responding against racism, how to get involved with PSC actions, as well as summer entries from 'Rati's Bragwagon' -- is even a little helpful and re-evokes even virtually the sense of community, before Covid 19 and I trust long after it, that distinguishes our Sociology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center.

Stay in touch, and Rati, Jeremy and I will do so as well. Sending warm regards, and a permissibly virtual hug, Lynn

Rati's Brag Wagon

Job Appointments

Carmela Dormani (Class of 2020)

Will join Mercy College as an assistant professor in the Sociology/Behavioral Sciences Department in Fall 2020. Carmela was featured in the GC Class of 2020 Series:

<https://www.gc.cuny.edu/News/All-News/Detail?id=55180>

Eric Ketcham (Class of 2020)

Has been working at the New York City Department of City Planning since June, 2019. Eric was featured in the GC Class of 2020 series: <https://gc.cuny.edu/News/All-News/Detail?id=55032>

Rebecca Karam

Will begin a postdoc position in Fall 2020 at Michigan State University as a Dean's Research Associate. She will defend her dissertation titled "Making Muslim Americans: Parenting Practices, Parochial Schools, and the Transmission of Faith Across Generations in Metropolitan Detroit" in August, 2020.

<https://socialscience.msu.edu/diversity/DRAP/research-assoc2.html>

Berglind Hólm Ragnarsdóttir ('2019)

Will start a tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor of sociology at the University of Akureyri, Iceland in Fall 2020

Tanesha Thomas

Accepted a tenure-track position as assistant professor of sociology at Montclair State University. Tanesha defended his dissertation titled "Is the South (still) America's Sacrifice Zone? A Regional Analysis of Toxic Emissions, 1987-2017" in June, 2020.

Anna Zhelnina

Will start a two-year postdoc position at the University of Helsinki in Fall 2020. Anna plans to defend her dissertation "'Engaging Neighbors: Housing Strategies and Political Mobilization in Moscow's Renovation" in August 2020.

Melanie Lorek ('2018)

Accepted a tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor with CUNY School of Professional Studies.

Awards (Current Students and Faculty)

Rob Smith (Faculty)

Received the 2020 Award for Public Sociology in International Migration from the ASA International Migration Section.

Prof. Smith's research was instrumental in winning two major victories. The Wells Fargo lawsuit used his current DACA research and was settled in favor of the plaintiffs for 20 million!

<https://www.outtengolden.com/news/landmark-settlement-reached-lending-discrimination-class-action-cases-brought-by-daca> [outtengolden.com]

Also Supreme Court's decision to uphold DACA is the other lawsuit he was working on last year. Over 650,000 kids get to stay!

Also, read Prof. Smith's recent interview with the GC: <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/News/All-News/Detail?id=55196>

Anna Zhelnina

Anna's paper titled "The Apathy Syndrome: How we are trained not to care about politics" won the 2020 Mayer N. Zald Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Student Paper Award of the ASA Collective Behaviors & Social Movements Section.

Publications (by Current Students and Faculty)

James Jasper (Faculty)

Co-published a book titled *Public Characters: The Politics of Reputation and Blame* (Oxford University Press, January 2020) with Michael P. Young and Elke Zuern. Prof. Jasper's work was featured in the GC website: <https://gc.cuny.edu/News/All-News/Detail?id=55054>

Daeshin Hayden Ju, Karen Okigbo, Sejung Sage Yim, and Jessica Halliday Hardie (Faculty)

Co-published an article titled "[Ethnic and generational differences in partnership patterns among Asians in the United States](#)" in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (online: June 2020)

Cristine Khan

Wrote a recent piece in *Medium* titled "On Anti-Blackness in the Indo-Caribbean Community" <https://medium.com/@cskhan91/on-anti-blackness-in-the-indo-caribbean-community-68bb9f052765>

Wendy Luttrell (Faculty)

Published a book titled *Children Framing Childhoods: Working-Class Kids' Visions of Care* (University of Chicago Press, February 2020). Prof. Luttrell's work was featured in the GC website: <https://gc.cuny.edu/News/All-News/Detail?id=54881>

Van Tran (Faculty)

Published an essay titled "[The Borders around Us: Forced Migration and the Politics of Border Control](#)" in a symposium on immigrants and refugees in *City and Community* (June 2020)

Forthcoming books in August, 2020

Margaret Chin (Faculty)

Published a book titled *Stuck: Why Asian Americans Don't Reach the Top of the Corporate Ladder* (NYU Press, Forthcoming in August 2020) <https://nyupress.org/9781479816811/stuck/>

Julie Suk (Faculty)

Published a book titled *We the Women: The Unstoppable Mothers of the Equal Rights Amendment* (Skyhold Publishing, Forthcoming in August, 2020)

<https://www.skyhorsepublishing.com/9781510755918/we-the-women/>

Alumni

Laura Limonic ('2014)

Kugel and Frijoles: Latino Jews in the United States (Wayne State University Press, 2019)

Winner of the 2020 Best Book in Latin American Jewish Studies

(It came out of her dissertation)

Jinwon Kim ('2016)

Co-edited a book titled *Koreatowns: Exploring the Economics, Politics, and Identities of Korean Spatial Formation* (Lexington Books, June 2020) with Soo Mee Kim and Stephen Cho Suh

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781498584524/Koreatowns-Exploring-the-Economics-Politics-and-Identities-of-Korean-Spatial-Formation>

Simone Kolysh ('2019)

Secured a contract with Rutgers University Press for their upcoming book *Everyday Violence: The Public Harassment of Women and LGBTQ People*, to be published in August, 2021.

They recently wrote a blog post titled "The Streets Belong to All of Us: Dismantling Violence in the Public Sphere" for an Australian organization fighting street harassment:

<https://www.itsnotacompliment.com/blogs/the-streets-belong-to-all-of-us-dismantling-violence-in-the-public-sphere>

And they followed it up with a short interview about their work seen here:

<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CB5V0S7j7-p/?igshid=f0hbwxzy7q3>

Jane McAlevey ('2015)

was profiled in *The New Yorker* with a heady title: "Jane McAlevey's Vision of the Future of American Labor." It touts her newest book and refers to her as coach and chronicler of the labor union movement. <https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/jane-mcaleveys-vision-for-the-future-of-american-labor>

Click <https://gc.cuny.edu/News/All-News/Detail?id=55163> to learn more about Jane's work.

Dirk Witteveen ('2018) and Paul Attewell (Faculty)

Co-published an article titled "[The STEM grading penalty: An alternative to the "leaky pipeline" hypothesis](#)" in *Science Education* (May 2020).

Click <https://gc.cuny.edu/News/All-News/Detail?id=55098> to read Prof. Attewell's interview with the GC on this project.

Fang Xu ('2016)

Published a chapter titled "Only Shanghainese Can Understand: Popularity of Vernacular Performance and Shanghainese Identity," in *Revealing/Reveiling Shanghai: Cultural*

Representations from the 20th and 21st Centuries. (Eds.) Lisa Bernstein and Chu-chueh Cheng. State University of New York (SUNY) Press

Fang also published an article titled "[Pudong is not My Shanghai: Displacement, place-identity, and right to the city in urban China](#)." in *City & Community* (April 2020)

Emeritus

Samuel Farber

Wrote pieces in the *Jacobin Magazine* and *New Politics*

["A Zionist State at Any Cost"](#) (April 21, 2020 in *Jacobin*)

["The Many Explosions of Los Angeles in the 1960s"](#) (June 29, 2020 in *Jacobin*)

[Cuban Doctors Abroad – Appearances and Realities](#) (May 30, 2020 in *New Politics*)

Links to:

1. New York Times Article: [Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History](#)

2. DACA Article from Professor Rob Smith: [Landmark Settlement Reached in Lending Discrimination Class-Action Cases Brought By DACA Recipients Against Wells Fargo](#)

* The Wells Fargo lawsuit used Prof. Smith's current DACA research and was settled in favor of the plaintiffs for 20 million!

3. Professors Carla Shedd and Alex Vitale on CUNY TV: [Town Hall: Police Defunding in a Time of Protest](#)

4. Memo from Luke Elliott-Negri (PhD Candidate) on Fighting Layoffs:

A couple next steps, with the idea in mind that ***we can still reverse this***

1. If anyone has relationships with their congressional rep, please let me know. That AOC letter came from PSC work, and we're trying to get others from the NY delegation to weigh in.

2. State legislators appear likely to raise taxes on the ultrawealthy this year, though it's not certain for sure, and the bigger question is: *how much?* They will likely get back into session over the summer, so anything we can do to pressure them to fill the budget shortfall and then some is great. If there's a union push around this, I'll reach out--but in the meanwhile, anyone who can get to their state senator or assembly person should be pushing them to raise taxes on the ultrawealthy. There's an op-ed coming out later today from Glick and Stavisky (the higher ed chairs in each chamber) about these layoffs and the need to raise taxes (also produced through PSC effort). Even emailing that to your assembly or senate rep could be helpful!

3. The next big PSC action is July 18th--there is a borough-level and Zoom component. We're aiming to have more participants than we've ever had before at an action. Please RSVP [psc-cuny.org]!

Contact Luke at: lukeelliottnegri@gmail.com

For latest updates, go to PSC-CUNY's website: <https://psc-cuny.org>

5. Statement from Professor Wendy Luttrell: [From the Heart and Hearth, Standing for Racial Justice](#)