End of Year Recap and Celebration

As we close the 2022-2023 academic year, I would like to share a brief recap of student accomplishments and achievements this year. PhD students in Social Welfare have:

- Published papers across 11 different scholarly journals and academic outputs;
- Presented at seven different local, national, and international conferences;
- Engaged in leadership and advocacy at the GC, local, and national levels; and
- Received over eight different types of fellowships and/or funding opportunities.

Let's take the summer break to rest and restore and celebrate all of our achievements. - Barbra Teater, EO PhD in Social Welfare

We also celebrated our graduates: Yasmine Awais, Kojo Ayernor, Thomas Bane, Gleneara Bates, Robert Considine, Julia Gomez, Trang Kelly, Khudodod Khudododov, Emily Lopez, Adashima Oyo, and Jeannette Sucre!

Call for Student Funding

We are pleased to announce a call for funding for all registered students. The funding can help support your presentation at an academic conference taking place this Summer or Fall, 2023, or can be used to support you in your completion of data collection and/or data analysis (e.g., transcription costs; services of an editor). If you are interested in applying for funding, please complete the application form at:

[Call for Funding]
Deadline is July 1, 2023.
Gilbert Nick has been selected to be a part of a cohort of students, postdoctoral fellows, research faculty, changemakers and professionals across the sciences and humanities to participate in the Mind and Life 2023 Summer Research Institute (SRI), “Trauma, Resilience, and Flourishing”, which will be held at the Garrison Institute in NY. SRI, now in its 20th year, is a weeklong immersive program providing cohort participants opportunities for deep dialogue across disciplines as well as inquiry through first-person reflection and contemplative practice. The program incorporates plenary lectures, panel discussions, breakout groups, spaces for relationship building, poster presentations, networking opportunities, and daily contemplative time (meditation, yoga, QIGong, walking in nature, contemplative arts, and silent periods including two half-day retreat periods). It moves away from hierarchies of knowledge to foster an integrative, richer, and fuller understanding of the mind and society, focusing on current issues and positive actions that lead to real-world outcomes. For more information on SRI: https://www.mindandlife.org/events/summer-research-institute/

Increase in Student Funding!

Student advocacy is an important tradition within the PhD Program in Social Welfare, Building upon past cohorts' efforts, Katrina Hannan, Brie Scolaro, and Ian Williams organized an ongoing effort to advocate for increased financial support for students from The Graduate Center. In Fall 2022, a letter making the business case and explaining importance of increasing funding was drafted, circulated, signed by the 2021 and 2022 cohorts, and submitted to The Graduate Center administration. After an extended campaign including multiple meetings with GC administration, extensive research conducted by Brie, and advocacy involving the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Council (DGSC), we were informed in May that GC administration had identified additional funding sources and committed to extending Graduate Assistant D fellowships to all students through their third year, and tuition remission for all students through their fifth year.

Student Achievements: April & May

Becca Cadoff and Shermira Busby are working with CUNY’s Public Science Project and the Staten Island Equity and Belonging Project to assist in furthering the knowledge and understanding of wellbeing, community, wellness, health, and mental health on Staten Island. Under the tutelage of faculty, Becca and Shermira explore, plan, and co-facilitate culturally appropriate workshops with a select group of NYCHA “Community Wellness Fellows” using a Participatory Action Research model aimed at addressing the rise in suicides on Staten Island, supporting community healing, and exploring approaches to community wellness.

Jamie Borgan and Ian Williams were awarded the Futures Initiative’s Dr. Louise Lennihan Arts & Sciences Grant for their project “Developing a Technology Inventory for Social Work Students: A Tool For Practical Exploration of Affordances, Constraints, and Risks”

Tabashshum Jahan (TJ) Islam’s long-form poem "Allz A Miracle" will be published in the NY Writers Coalition's upcoming anthology 'Common Unity'.
Hi Social Welfare community!

Most of you know me, but if not I'm Becca Cadoff and I'm thrilled to fill a new role in our program: Stats and Quantitative Methods Coach ("Quant Coach"). I'm finishing up my fifth year in the program and I'm working on my dissertation, which uses a national, longitudinal dataset to examine the relationships between having a criminal record, housing status, and income. I'm on my way to completing the Quantitative Certificate and have taken courses on specific quantitative methods throughout the GC. I also have worked for nearly a decade as a researcher for various organizations that use research and data to advocate for policy reforms. I taught undergrad stats at Hunter College, and was a teaching assistant for Alexis Kuerbis' stats class this past year. Importantly, I used to be totally afraid of math and stats (my second grade teacher refused to teach me long division because I was so bad at multiplication) -- so I totally get where you are coming from if you feel that way too.

My goal as a Quant Coach is to provide resources and support to all Social Welfare students who are using or are thinking about using statistics and/or quantitative methods in their research or learning. No question is too big or too small, and my "office" is always open (I'll be online for most of the semester). You'll be able to book time with me to talk through research you're already doing but feel stuck on or just want to talk through, coding questions in R, Stata, & SPSS, research you want to do but don't know how to set up, or a specific stats method you've never used before but want to explore. I definitely won't be able to answer every question, but I can also point you in the right direction within the GC or externally to get you what you need. Along those lines, in addition to offering individual tutoring or consultation sessions, I'll post resources to our soon-to-be-updated CUNY Academic Commons site, and I'll host a monthly Quant Coaching series—similar to our Meet the Professor or Lunch and Learn series. When I'm not stats-ing, I try to spend as much time as possible outside: running, rowing (and coaching rowing), lifting weights, hiking, and playing tennis. I also love to read, so if you have any book recommendations, please send them my way! I look forward to working with you during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Earlier this month I attended the 2023 HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Sciences, Technology Alliance and Collaboratory) conference from June 8-10, held at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Themed around critical making & social justice, it featured a range of disciplinary and creative perspectives on producing artifacts in our increasingly digital society, including art exhibits and performances. I presented on the ongoing #SocialWorkAIArt Twitter collaboration on a panel for HASTAC Scholars that also included a project on a digital community archive of borderland folklore and an examination of Venezuelan diaspora documentary filmmaking. I encountered a number of Graduate Center students, staff, and faculty, including recent Social Welfare graduate Dr. Adashima Oyo, who is currently Director of the Futures Initiative. The keynote talk on Design Justice, by Dr. Sascha Costanza-Chock, was riveting and the sheer abundance of creativity, invigorating.

This conference left me wondering how we think about the tools, projects, and knowledge infrastructures we create in Social Welfare and how we imbue them with social justice values - and wanting to encourage more social workers and social welfare students to get involved. I encourage you to check it out the conference posting on Twitter by searching the hashtag (or clicking the link) #HASTAC2023. You can also join the Humanities Commons here: https://hastac.hcommons.org/
Student Spotlight: Kimona Spencer

Let’s Have a Conversation with Kimona!

Why did you apply to the PhD in Social Welfare? - I applied to the PhD in social welfare program several years after working in the field of social work, as a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW). Through my work in the field, I gained particular interest in certain facets that influenced the populations that I had spent a great deal of time serving. My goal being to improve clinical outcomes for people of color and decreasing the negative interactions that many people of color have with the mental health and criminal justice systems.

What has been your favorite course so far as a student? Why? - I’m going to cheat a little and list a couple. Statistical Data Analysis with Dr. Alexis Kuerbis must be named because the course changed my perspective on data analysis as I initially was concerned going into the course (because of past statistics courses I had taken at other institutions) however the way Dr. Kuerbis teaches the course is really from the perspective of wanting you to learn the material and get the most out of the course, which for me was super impactful. Next, I’m going to give a shout out to the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy! As I was able to take several valuable elective courses there, that I not only found valuable to my research but also to my clinical practice as an LCSW. My final favorite course is going to be another elective, which is an English course called Flashpoints in African American Rhetoric with Dr. Todd Craig, Ph.D (if you have the opportunity to take a course with him DO IT!) this course was definitely highlight of my academic career at CUNY and made me consider different angles I could take with my research.

What do you want to do after you graduate? - I’m currently working at the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), and after graduating I would like to work in a role where I can do research, teach, and do a bit of clinical work where I still see patients and have a small caseload. There are positions with my current employer where I would be able to do this...so fingers crossed!

What’s something that people would be surprised to know about you? - I’m a sneakerhead or sneaker enthusiast. Specifically, I collect Jordans/Nikes and have over 100 pairs.

What is the focus of your research? - My research focuses on justice involved Black veterans and access to the Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare. My overall research interests involve criminal Justice, mass incarceration, and racial disparities in the criminal justice and mental health systems.

What are you currently reading, watching, or listening to? - I tend to start my mornings off with a little gospel music and when I get in the car it’s time for the "turn up" which is the music that is going to get me pumped for the workday which can be anything from Drake to Taylor Swift.

What’s something we should ask you? What’s your answer? - How do you balance working full time while being a full time PhD student? This is relevant as I was recently asked this question by a potential Social Welfare program applicant. My answer is not simple because I often ask myself how I’m making it all work. AND let me tell you! my faith is what I lean on daily and sticking to a routine before and after work to get things done. I will say this was much easier in the first two years of the program when I was taking courses and had a more structured schedule/assignments due, now I have to find different ways to motivate myself and remember my WHY because its bigger than me. It’s for everyone that looks like me.
Welcome to the PhD in Social Welfare Incoming Cohort of 2023

**Eden Bamawo**, LMSW is a passionate leader in the field of social services with several years of experience working with varying populations such as school children, LGBTQ adolescents, adults experiencing homelessness, adults living with mental health and substance misuse disorders, and homebound older adults. Eden received her Bachelor of Science in Health Science from Stony Brook University and her Master of Social Work from Lehman College. Presently, Eden operates as a medical social worker in a private hospital in the Bronx. She is an active member of the NASW-NYC chapter, formerly serving as a member of the Committee on Nominations and Leadership Identification (CNLI) and currently serving as a member of the Immigration and Global Social Work Committee (IGSWC). Eden's lifetime goal is to make a positive impact in the lives of as many people as she can throughout the world. She is particularly interested in the accessibility of equitable, adequate, and sustainable resources and life essentials such as water, food, and healthcare for vulnerable populations nationally and internationally. As a member of the incoming 2023 cohort, Eden is looking forward to continuing her journey of learning, growing, and becoming further equipped to operate as an effective global leader and world changer.

**Michael G. Clements**, the son of a former sharecropper and the first in his family to attend college, earned a B.A. in Sociology and American Studies from Brandeis University and a M.S. in Education from Syracuse University. As one of the founders of the Brandeis Intercultural Center (ICC) and leader of student organizations, Michael found his voice as a staunch advocate for the marginalized. Throughout his career Michael has focused on a range of youth issues, from justice-involvement to gender-based violence. As a result, he is widely recognized as a community leader and mentor, committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Michael is currently on the Alumni Advisory Board of the ICC, Vice Chair of the East Harlem Human Services Consortium, and Director of Strategic Partnerships at Today's Students Tomorrow's Teachers.
Welcome to the PhD in Social Welfare Incoming Cohort of 2023

Shawn Dougherty completed his MSW at Lehman College in spring 2023. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the American Conservatory of Music, a Master of Music degree from Northwestern University, and an MBA from the University of Central Florida. Shawn has worked for years in nonprofit management, beginning his career as Executive Director of an HIV/AIDS service organization. His passion for direct work with clients led him to pursue his MSW. Shawn is completing two years of work for a prisoner reentry organization, which will be followed by work as a psychotherapist for a mental health clinic as he begins to accrue hours towards LCSW eligibility. He wishes to refine his research interests in criminal justice, reentry, and desistance. Shawn is the single adoptive father of a 23-year-old daughter.

Kathleen McKenna is a licensed social worker, community organizer, and adjunct lecturer. As Senior Policy Social Worker at Brooklyn Defender Services, she seeks to make systemic changes to increase equity and fairness for people with legal system involvement while shrinking the scope of the criminal legal system. Her current research interests include sustainable macro social work methods, vicarious resilience and hope in long-term anti-carceral organizing, and abolitionist social work practice. Kathleen has a BA in Sociology and Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies from American University and an MSW with a concentration in community organizing from the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. She lives in Brooklyn with her partner and their rescue dog.

Kiani Oro is a strategic thinker and youth advocate, who is passionate about dismantling oppressive structures that have historically placed students of color at a disadvantage for economic mobility. She earned her M.A in Human Development and Social Intervention at NYU. She is focused on addressing inequity in education (and the school to prison pipeline) by incorporating youth voice in the design of equity-focused programs. Kiani currently works for Good Shepherd Services, where she partners with residential child welfare programs to engage in data-informed planning. She co-facilitates the agency’s youth advisory board, a group of participants that are committed to using their voice to invoke change within their programs. She will expand this work by learning more about social policy; and using mixed-methods research in the development of youth programs/initiatives
Welcome to the PhD in Social Welfare Incoming Cohort of 2023

Jaclyn Reyes earned her master's degree in Education from Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her professional journey spans esteemed organizations, including the International Rescue Committee, the United Nations, the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Penguin Random House, Condé Nast, and the US State Department. She has engaged in cultural organizing within New York City's immigrant communities and engaged in humanitarian research in the Philippines, exploring the intersections of education, armed conflict, climate disasters, and community resilience. Her doctoral studies aim to critically examine alternative approaches to paternalistic humanitarianism, and advancing inclusive and empowering practices. Specifically, she will investigate diaspora engagement in humanitarian assistance, development, and transnational care systems to foster equitable, sustainable, and transformative solutions.

Tracey Rho is a native New Yorker with over 8 years of experience working with HUD programs, which inspired my interests of entitlement programs, income, poverty, and economic mobility.

Bobbie Watkins has a Master of Science degrees in Economics and International Community Development from Eastern University and provided support in international communities. She is graduated with a Master of Science in Social Work from the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College with a specialization in Aging and research in Intellectual Disabilities and Aging communities. Bobbie is an Adjunct Professor at Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, teaching Research Methods in the BSW Program and Adjunct Professor at the College of Staten Island in the Department of Social Work. She is a therapist at Droste Mental Health Services and provides counseling for individuals and couples. She spent 11 years at NYU Langone Health Care Management & Social Work Department and is currently an LMSW Medicine Social Worker.