

COVID-19 & SOCIAL JUSTICE MEET HEAD-ON

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION: SPECIAL EDITION

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A Message from the Dean

During the past few months, we have had to deal with the problematic realities of COVID-19, while concurrently dealing with the renewed and horrific history of this country and racism. COVID-19 has given us time to slow down in many ways, which has allowed us opportunities to think, communicate, and live very differently.

I have lived through other health-challenging, racial-laden, inequitable, and protesting events, but the current events are very different. Not only have we been shut down by COVID-19, but the world has done the same. The faces of past protests were predominantly Black. Today, Black is just one hue in the sea of white, yellow, and brown. COVID-19 will pass. Will racism?

For the first time ever, I have been contacted via e-mail, social media, phone and snail mail by several white colleagues and friends who, for the first time ever, are attempting to explain, to express, be reassured, or apologize about what is and has historically been going on in the lives of Black Americans. The most recent killings of African Americans like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmad Aubery



Boyce C. Williams, Ph.D.

seem to have awakened a sleeping giant. The funeral of congressional representative John Lewis awakened the "Me" who has been quietly and comfortably sleeping at the wheel. More often than not, some white Americans do not know what to say or what to do but have felt a need to say something. Even though we reside on a University campus amongst our peers, there seems to be a vocabulary void in talking about racism.

Today, we are going to begin to dialogue about racism and COVID-19. It can be UNCOMFORTABLE, but it is necessary if growth is to occur. We will begin to see the economic,

A Message from the Dean *(continued)*

social, racial, and health disparities between COVID-19 and today's racial movement. Each essay is different. In my opening essay, I will share personal experiences that I have never shared openly. Dr. Kiel looks at his years of teaching and trying always to be aware of the diversity of the students as he stays relevant. Dr. Boayue speaks with a voice whose skin color is the same as a Black American, but her experiences are far from the same. Dr. Hurst reflects on her research and practices to become a more unbiased and anti-racist scholar. As a new American from Romania, Dr. Buta is struggling with the "why" of it all. Dr. Baker presents CDC data and research that shows the alignments and congruency of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement. Additionally, these essays have been complimented by students' views, the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and finally the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs from the University System of Maryland.

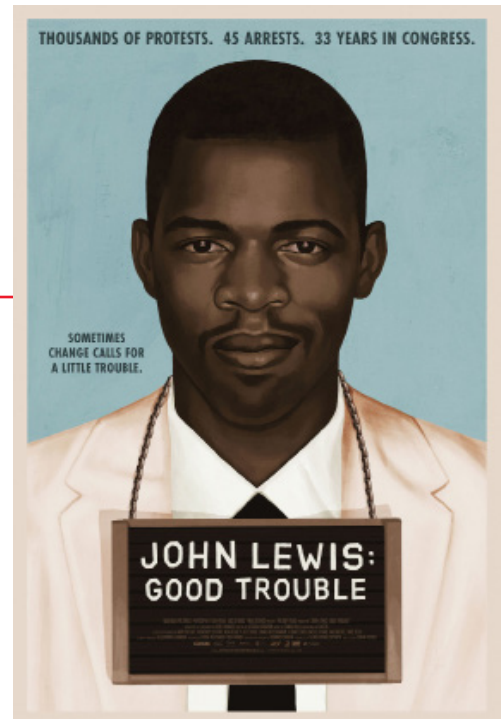
I suspect some of the reading may make you feel uncomfortable, but "To not have the conversations because they make you uncomfortable, is the definition of privilege. Your comfort is not at the center of this discussion" – Brené Brown

Good Trouble: Let the "Lewis-ing" Begin

As I watched Rep John R. Lewis' body leave the Capitol grounds on his final journey home, I was filled with mixed emotions. Sadness that our great civil rights leaders are leaving us, though to receive their just reward for all of their courageous work. Abandonment, as I have no inkling of a notion as to how the mission of creating an America where kind, respectful, aware, and engaged global citizens are valued, may ever be completed. And disappointment that so many who embodied the legacy of civil rights have passed under the cruel and damning watch, all but extinguishing the fire of hope their work created. As I watched the fanfare of that final journey, it struck me that the body was gone, but what he did, how he did it, and why it had to be done was left for us to actualize in our work, for our cause, to our country. So, I propose that we take his name, Lewis, and make it our activator. As he marched to the tune, "we shall overcome" in a quest for change, we can tweet, rally, demonstrate and, yes, march to the decree "we shall Lewis." His life was a life in constant action; hence, I have taken the liberty of creating the verb – TO "LEWIS".

"Lewis-ing" would have been appropriate the evening I found myself in a medical episode in a Burger King parking lot. Having taken medication that should have been accompanied by food, police officers assessed my situation with bias and racism as a backdrop, handcuffing me. After telling them why I may have been incoherent and offering my money to purchase food so that I could attain some chemical balance, I was treated as a common drunk and taken to jail. How could I have "Lewis-ed" the situation instead of entering the jail angry, frustrated, and afraid? No food, no consideration, just "a drunk Black woman driving a very expensive car" – the officer's words, not mine. While Dylann Roof, apprehended after slaughtering eight black church members, gets a Burger King meal paid for out of the officer's pocket.

As I watched the motorcade leading John Lewis' body to the services honoring his life, I remembered the fear associated with knowing my son was driving home from school and should have been home, but the driveway was empty. I know he was tired and reminded him to pull onto the side of the road if he felt sleepy. When he finally arrived home, I could see the trauma in his eyes and feel the anger in his heart. Yet, all I could think of was that he was not at the bottom of a river tied to a fan, or hanging from a tree in someone's backwoods, or lifeless under some officer's knee, calling for me with his last breath. That, as traumatic as it was, it was all right because



[John Lewis: Good Trouble \(2020\)](#)

Good Trouble: Let the “Lewis-ing” Begin *(continued)*

Boyce C. Williams, Ph.D.

all they did was bang on his window, pull him out of the car, handcuff him, put him on the ground, ransack the car, and ask him over and over, as if the repetition of the questions would somehow conjure a different truth, where he got his nice car and where are the drugs. My soul ached with the humiliation, but my heart cried out, thank you, Lord, at least they didn't kill him...this time. In times like these, how do we teach our sons to “*Lewis*?”

I firmly believe that if you are Black and over 50, you have a similar story – probably more than one or two. However, in light of recent events, it's time that we get past the story-telling and into the action plan on how and when to “*Lewis*.” If we have learned nothing else in the last 50 years, it's that neither justice nor equity will ever be given without a struggle or sacrifice. If it is to be, indeed, be, for all people, it will have to be taken. Now the work “taken” will unsettle some folks because the connotation is negative – that someone has to give up something unwillingly and even forcefully. In a society such as ours, the distribution of power and money will always be unbalanced. But if the access to that power and wealth is equitably distributed, there still may be justice. It is that access that must be “*Lewis-ed*” from those that hold it in disproportionate amounts. I am referencing “*Lewis-ed*” in the sense of taking a chance, being unafraid, and going for it. We are done waiting; we are done towing the party line...we are tired!

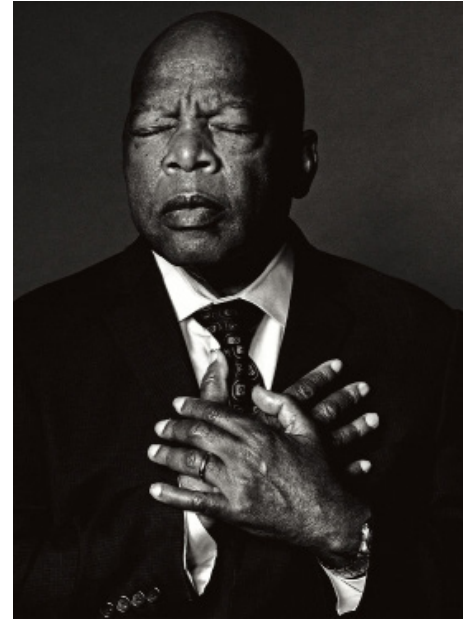


Photo: Michael Avedon

As I sit here in my office at Frostburg State University surrounded by degrees, awards, and accolades – as the Dean of Education, responsible for the training of many of those charged with teaching our youth, I realize that I am empowered to be a catalyst for change that can have an enduring ripple effect. Through the policies I initiate, the practices I support, and the programs I bring, I can be a force that molds the minds of those who will mold minds. It is in this moment that I know I must be careful, honest, genuine, open, and willing to learn just as much if not more than I teach. I must *Lewis*! The work of my entire career has prepared me for this place in time, and I will not let those who molded me, mentored me, poured into me, honored me, and educated me, ever question if their good works were in vain. I respectfully ask that each and every person who is absorbing this do the same. It is time for us to “*LEWIS*.” John R. Lewis is one of the best of examples of how to live a life that is true to its mission – the mission that we all should have – the manifestation of the words that ALL men are created equal, that they are treated as such under the laws and tenants of this country, and the eradication of systems manipulated based on race and privilege.

For me to “*Lewis*” is to be kind, respectful, and honest; not shy away from hard conversations; listen to understand, not to respond; have and show empathy; do my research for knowledge is power, and always be prepared because I never know when an opportunity to enlighten will present itself; face my fears head-on; speak my peace even when I think no one is listening; to use all available platforms to champion the cause of social justice and the elimination of system racism; and to do all these things not for accolades or self-promotion, but for the betterment of my community and the world. If each one of us who “*Lewis*,” teaches one to “*Lewis*,” we will have an army of equity champions – each with their own ripple effect. Will this take time, yes, but we all have our own “*good trouble*” to get into, and this is mine

None of us can ever be John B. Lewis, but if our hearts and minds are clear in our commitment to seek justice through fair and respectful dialogues where all voices are heard and appreciated, we can, at least, “*Lewis*.”

My door, mind, and heart will remain open; so, let the “*Lewis-ing*” begin.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my thoughts regarding social justice and the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is so much hyperbole and misinformation swirling around right now that I believe it prudent, as a first step, to ground the discussion by looking at relevant data. I have appended eight figures to this piece that, I believe, tell the story of what's happening far more clearly than words alone can convey. Three themes emerge from the data:

1. COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting racial and ethnic minority populations.

- The COVID-19 hospitalization rate for African Americans, Hispanics, and Indigenous populations is five times that of whites. (Figure 1)

- The COVID-19 mortality rate for African Americans and Indigenous populations is twice that of whites. (Figure 2)

2. The availability of affordable health care for those affected by the pandemic is unequal.

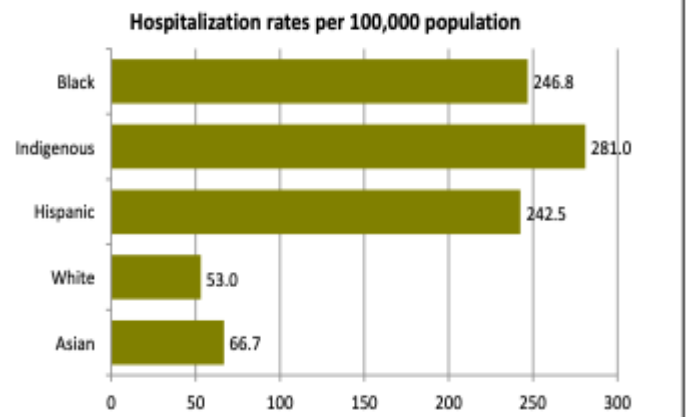
- One in every four Hispanics is without health insurance, as compared with one in ten whites. (Figure 3)

- The percentage of African Americans without health insurance is 39% higher than whites. (Figure 3)

3. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 is not limited to health issues.

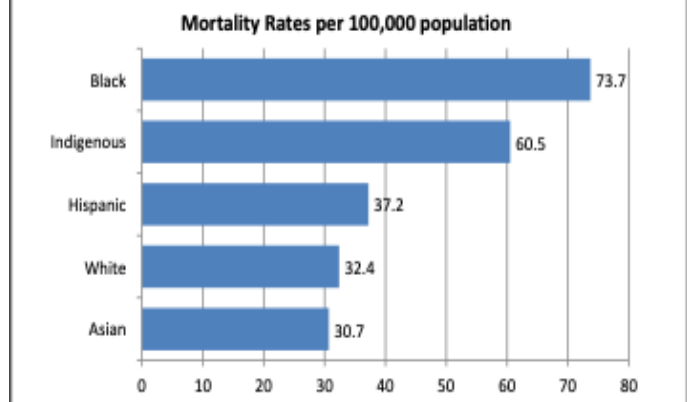
- The unemployment rate for African Americans and Hispanics is more than 30% higher than that of whites. (Figure 4)
- As of April, 41% of African American owned businesses and 32% of Hispanic owned businesses had been lost, as compared with 17% of white owned businesses. (Figure 5)

COVID-19 Hospitalization Rates by Race and Ethnicity
March 1 to July 18, 2020



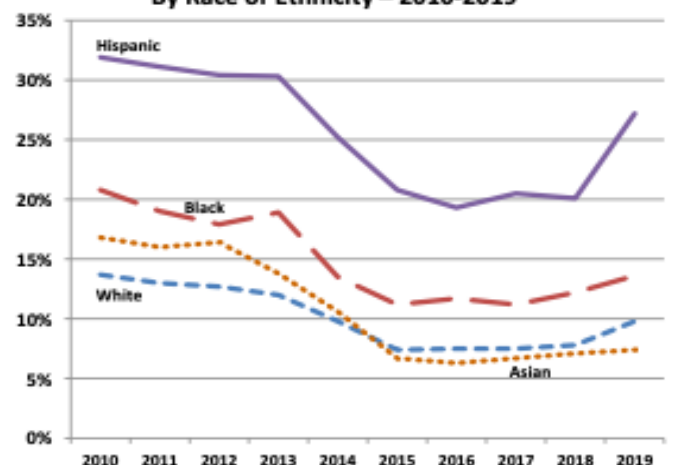
(Figure 1): Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(2020\).](#)

COVID-19 Death Tolls by Race and Ethnicity
Through July 21, 2020



(Figure 2) Source: [APM Research Lab \(2020\).](#)

Percentage of Americans Without Health Insurance
By Race or Ethnicity – 2010-2019



(Figure 3): Source: [Rudden, J. \(2020\). Statista.](#)

A CDC Examination of Social Justice & Covid-19 *(continued)*

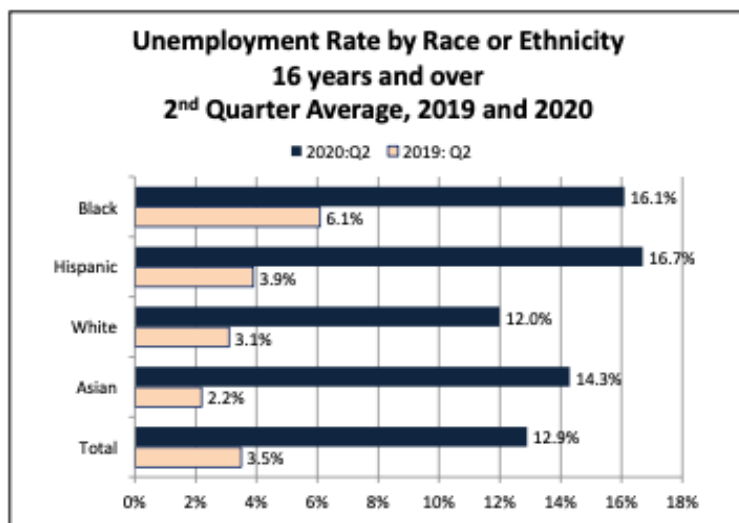
These statistics should come as no surprise since they are a continuation of longstanding trends. For example, in my lifetime, there have been two other health crises that frequently are mentioned as among the worst ever to afflict the United States: H1N1 in 2009 and HIV/AIDS (which continues to persist). Like the COVID-19 pandemic, both of these crises disproportionately affected minority populations.

- At the height of the H1N1 epidemic, the hospitalization rates for African Americans, Hispanics, and Indigenous populations were twice that of whites. (Figure 6)
- As of 2018, African Americans were 7.2 times more likely to contract and 6.5 times more likely to die from HIV than whites. (Figures 7 and 8)

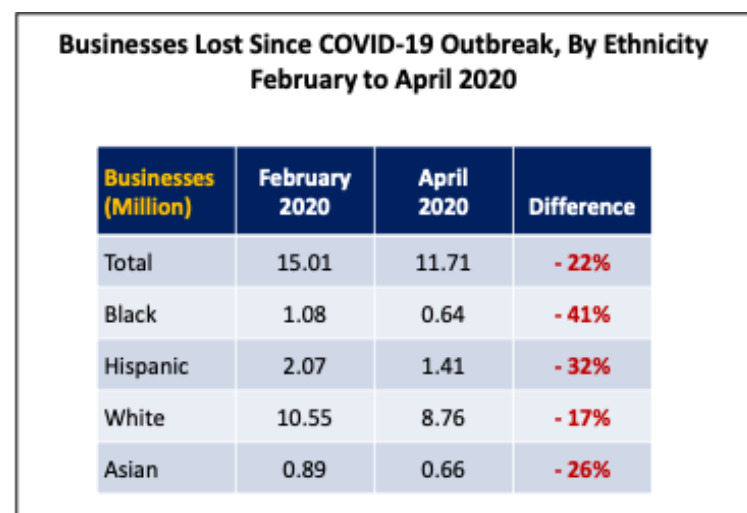
Equity issues involving public health are pervasive and extend far beyond the pandemic. As I write this piece, for example, I note the cover story of today's The New York Times Magazine which indicates that "black Americans are 75 percent more likely than others to live near facilities that produce hazardous waste."¹ So what is to be done?

It is important to note that equity issues relating to the pandemic are but pieces in a larger mosaic of inequitable treatment in the United States. Nonetheless the severity and urgency of the pandemic calls for aggressive and immediate interventions. Today, coordinated and meaningful action is needed to limit both the spread of the virus and the associated financial harm to those who are most affected by COVID-19. Fundamentally, the time has come for a holistic examination of equity issues in America and their root cause, one that prompts a program of fundamental reform.

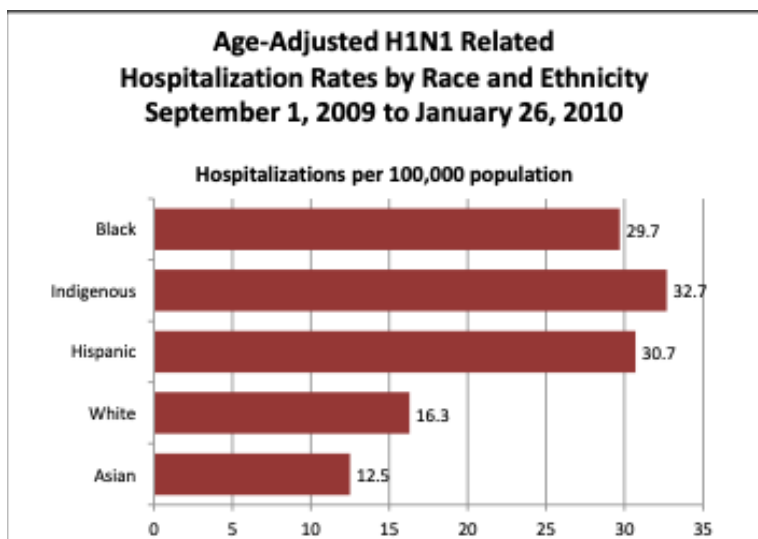
I encourage you to read or listen to Representative John Lewis's posthumous message that was published in the [New York Times](#).² Of particular note was Rep. Lewis's story of the genesis of his personal activism, which he described as getting into "good trouble":



(Figure 4): Source: [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).



(Figure 5): Source: [Fairlie, R. W. \(2020\). The impact of COVID-19 on small business owners. Working Paper 27309.](#)

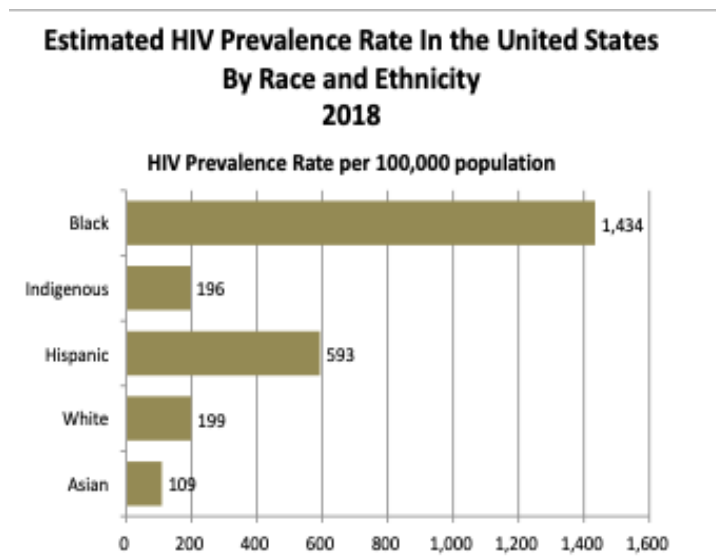


(Figure 6): Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(2010\).](#)

*Dr. Curt Baker*

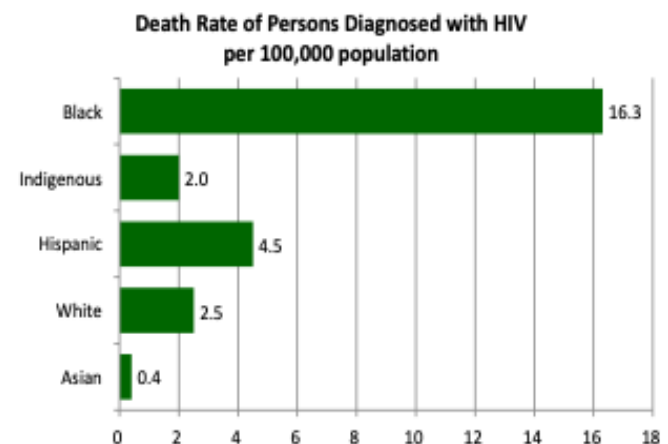
“I heard the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on an old radio. He was talking about the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. He said we are all complicit when we tolerate injustice. He said it is not enough to say it will get better by and by. He said each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up and speak out. When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something.”

In my personal view, the inequities associated with the pandemic (and more generally) are a national disgrace. It is not my normal bent to advocate for activism, but it seems to me that if ever there were a time for broad-based public outcry, this is it. Lend your voice to effecting change. Get into some “good trouble”.



(Figure 7): Source: [Spach, D. H. \(2020\). National HIV Curriculum. \(Using CDC data.\)](#)

Death Rates of Persons with Diagnosed HIV Infection 2018



(Figure 8): Source: [Spach, D. H. \(2020\). National HIV Curriculum. \(Using CDC data.\)](#)

Dr. Curtis Baker is an Assistant Professor in the Masters of Education and the Doctorate of Educational Leadership programs at FSU.

¹ Villarosa, L. The refinery next door (2020, August 2). The New York Times Magazine. Page 28.

² Lewis, J. (2020, July 30). Together, you can redeem the soul of our nation. New York Times.

An Open Letter on COVID-19 & Me

2020 Graduate: Ellie Bolton

When I started my undergraduate career, I never thought the greatest celebration ending my undergraduate career would be taken from me, as did thousands of students around the nation. Graduation, for many students, solidifies that the countless hours and hard work over the last four, maybe five and maybe six years, were well worth the struggle. That happy day, centered around you, was no longer.

Graduation day was just a fraction of what COVID-19 took away from students, especially graduating seniors. I was one month into my final internship with Kindergarteners when we were informed that we would have to stay at home for two weeks, which quickly turned into the rest of the semester. My professors always spoke about how teachers are flexible and have to manage whatever changes are given to them. By remembering

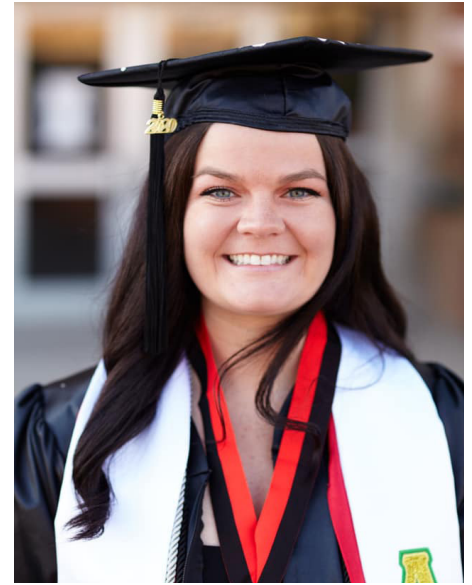
An Open Letter on COVID-19 & Me *(continued)*

2020 Graduate: Ellie Bolton

these golden words, I knew some significant changes were about to surface within my internship experience and that as a teacher candidate, I could handle those changes with my mentor and her students.

It saddened me immensely to know that I may never see those sunshine-y kindergarten faces again and that I may never get to soak in my mentor teacher's perfect performances. Still, I knew something good had to come out of COVID-19 shortening my internship. That vital connection with my mentor teacher and Kindergarten students was something I looked forward to my whole college career, and I am grateful to say I did get that connection. It just did not take me an entire semester; it only took me one month.

I know no one knows what the future will look like, as far as academically, socially, or in our everyday lives. However, I do know that my outlook on teaching will never change. I will do all the things I can to help my students thrive within the classroom, physically in the classroom or virtually. Every teacher wants the same for their students, to watch them grow and succeed. COVID-19 puts no barrier on the drive and dedication



Ms. Ellie Bolton- 2020 Graduate

Ms. Bolton is an MED graduate student and graduate assistant in the Children's Literature Center.

My Life in 2020

Junior - Jahlil Scott



Mr. Jahlil Scott- Class of 2021

As a student, the pandemic has affected me in so many ways. I thank God that no one in my life has passed due to the pandemic, and just the thought of that happening still worries me every day. My family means everything to me. Not being able to see them as much as I would like due to the pandemic is painful. Still, despite the hard times we're facing right now, we continue to find ways to overcome adversity together, making us stronger.

Another challenging aspect of my life during this pandemic came after my mentor, Ms. Arlene Cash was let go from FSU due to COVID related budget cuts. Finding out that the university let Ms. Cash go affected me emotionally. I was also looking forward

to positively impacting youth by being a camp counselor at the Coach Morgan Wootten's Basketball Camp this summer. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the camp was canceled.

One positive change has come from this global pandemic, though; more people than ever before are now aware of the social injustices that have been happening every day to black and brown people in this country, and they are outraged. It's this outrage that led me to organize a peaceful protest here in Frostburg this past summer. During the demonstration, we remembered Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Elijah McClain, Stephon Clark, Atatiana Jefferson, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Sandra Bland, and Oscar Grant. These are just a few African Americans who were brutally murdered by police officers who wanted their power over black people recognized and respected.

I am grateful for the people in the Frostburg community who joined me this summer in that historic moment. Together, we demanded change against police brutality. I believe that this peaceful protest was just the

My Life in 2020 *(continued)***Junior - Jahlil Scott**

first event in Frostburg to spread awareness for the Black Lives Matter movement. I hope this event will create more opportunities for me to organize future events to spread awareness for Black Lives Matter in Frostburg. My three friends Erik Davenport, Nimata Wahid, Quincy Fairy, and I, are starting a student organization called *Leaders of Change*. For more information about this organization, please email me at jcscott03@frostburg.edu.

Mr. Scott is currently in the Department of Kinesiology and Recreation.

A Pandemic & Civil Unrest: An Immigrant's Perspective**Fannia Boayue, Ed.D.**

At a recent virtual gathering, participants were asked to engage in a seemingly benign activity, a sort of icebreaker to get the meeting started. We were each asked to share a positive or happy event and something challenging. As I listened to others tell their pleasing and happy stories with their families, gushing about their pets and other possible fun destinations they wish to visit provided stay-at-home restrictions are lifted soon, I was panicked with an over whelming sense of loss, sadness and uncertainty. I knew what I had to say but uncertain of how it might be received. You see, in that moment, happy was not my experience. It seemed I was at a confluence of new and devastating social issues I was, at best, unprepared for. These issues generated more questions than answers for me.

First, by March of 2020, COVID-19 struck and spread very quickly in the USA. Then came the phenomenon of “essential workers”. Who were these persons? How did they come to be classified as such and was the designation a part of their employment contracts? If not, when and who made the decision to identify and classify them as essential? Or, is this simply a crisis-related phenomenon? At the time when it seemed physicians, researchers and the CDC know very little about the disease; when workers had limited access to personal protective equipment, did “essential workers” have the choice or right to opt out of their classification? What happens when equipment and materials required to effectively and securely do one’s job are persistently not available and who bears responsibility for mitigating these problems? Could this be me- an essential worker? I had no answers but as the daily death count mounted across the United States, I experienced an increased level of uncertainty and insecurity. A number of my family are health care providers and they too were “essential workers”. These family members were of varying ages ranging from young adult to middle age and, generally, in good health. They did not fit the given risk factors for the disease. When some were diagnosed with the disease and became very ill, uncertainty and insecurity became fear.

Then, the killing of Mr. George Floyd. I did not know this America. You see, I came upon the video of the killing by chance and was not previously aware of the event or what I was about to see. The horror and terror depicted on the video of that tragic event that was broadcast worldwide was traumatic. Afterwards, I could not un-see what I had seen. Somehow it seemed lodged in my psyche. I could not focus. I lacked clarity of thought. The ensuing national and world-wide protest against systemic racism in particular, coupled with the repeated airing of the video, only compounded the trauma.

But wait a minute. Did you say “systemic racism”? What do you mean? Should I now fear living in America? Do you mean this horror is ongoing for a long, long time in America? How is it that this horror is just now being identified for what it is? Incomprehensible! Is there another pathway out and who will lead that path? I’m not sure but there has to be another path because I believe in the aspirations of America, even when those aspirations seem



Dr. Fannia Boayue

A Pandemic & Civil Unrest: An Immigrant's Perspective *(continued)*

lofty. You see, I am an individual who fled war in my native country. Even as I fled the many horrors of war, I never saw a dead body nor witnessed a killing as are common during such times. The pandemic has provided space and time for us all to witness events that would have otherwise not been noticed around our busy lives. The seemingly cold and callous manner with which that “officer of the law” publicly executed Mr. Floyd, in full view of the world, was my traumatic first. No, this was not the America I came to for peace, justice



Kerem Yucel / AFP / Getty Images

and the pursuit of happiness. This is not the America that promised me these virtues. Where was that America, my America? Help!

I started this piece with a call to participate in an activity during a virtual meeting. I was anxious and unsure of how my words would be received by others in that environment. Yet I knew with clarity, that my trauma, pain and uncertainty were real. I could have made up a happy story to fit the atmosphere and sound like everyone. It seemed to be the easier, perhaps, even the acceptable response strategy for the activity. But I was not everyone. Terror and trauma should never become normal or acceptable. They have no nationality, color, or creed. I chose to, perhaps, go against the grain and shared my unhappy truth that by so doing, we may in our collective truths, find pathways towards lasting solutions.

Dr. Fannia L. Boayue is an Associate Professor and Program Coordinator for the Early Childhood/Elementary Program in the Educational Professions Department.

I believe Black Lives Matter. Now what?

Heather Hurst, Ph.D.

Earlier this summer, I showed my spouse a horrifying video that I'd just come across on Twitter. The video was shot in Central Park as a White woman, Amy Cooper, called the police because a Black man, Christian Cooper (no relation), had asked her to leash her dog in the area where he was birdwatching. I was shocked and alarmed that she was unapologetic in her racist weaponizing of the police against him, claiming boldly – and falsely – that a Black man was threatening her life. That same day, George Floyd was murdered by police. In the videos of his death, Floyd gasped for air, telling the police, “I can’t breathe.” Meanwhile, across the country, Black men and women were also gasping for air on hospital beds, disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 virus.

It has long been time to commit to serious anti-racism work, yet active work against racism seems more urgent than ever. I have been thinking about a student I observed during my dissertation research. In a reading log, Chris complained that he couldn't connect with a main character of a novel because she is a Black female, claiming that her experiences were too unique and fictional. Underlying his comments was the sense I'd gotten from him and other students that they had already learned about the Black female experience from another novel they'd read that year, as if only one Black female experience exists. As an adolescent, Chris had concluded that stories about Black females weren't for him and that he'd already learned what he needed to know about what Black women experience.

In some ways, I have been like Chris, despite not wanting to admit it. I have been tempted to think across

I believe Black Lives Matter. Now what? *(continued)***Heather Hurst, Ph.D.**

time that my learning is done. After all, my teaching and research for years has been focused on social justice. I am now convinced, though, that if we believe that every child can succeed, we must commit ourselves to disrupting the racist systems that make some children's lives more trauma-filled and challenging than others.

I keep coming back to the idea that anti-racist work is especially important in a College of Education and what unites our two departments is our close work with other humans, whom we want to have every opportunity to thrive - in sport, in body, in mind. As a College of Education, we know how to learn, unlearn, and grow. After all, isn't education always about hope and investment in the future? Layla Saad, in her introduction to *Me and White Supremacy*, writes that anti-racism work is being a good ancestor; we may not see the fruits of our labor in our lifetimes, but we are creating a better foundation for our children and, like Lisa Delpit reminded us years ago, *other* people's children.

I have struggled with White apathy, which Layla Saad describes as the sense of overwhelmedness many White individuals experience when considering systemic racism. Where do we begin? Or how do we continue our anti-racist efforts? I think the answer differs for each of us, but as a starting point, I offer what I have engaged in this summer:



Dr. Heather Hurst

- Every morning, instead of scrolling through social media on my phone, I instead read a chapter of a book about racism/anti-racism written by a person of color to help my learning and unlearning. A chapter is generally a manageable amount for me to get through without its disrupting my family's schedule. Connect with me on Goodreads to see what I've read, am reading, and would recommend.
- I claim thought space throughout the day to reflect on these chapters and on elements of lists like common racist actions of White people and the elements of White supremacy culture (Tema Okun's work on these elements and their antidotes has been revelatory for me). Thought space exists in the times when we are engaged in a time-consuming but mindless activity: driving; picking up clutter; showering; exercising. I often reread or glance at a text (or listen to an audiobook or podcast) during these times to examine my own actions, values, and behaviors through the lens of anti-racism.
- I am participating in several anti-racism accountability and learning groups each week. Each group has its own focus, and each has been essential and life-giving. I leave the meetings feeling challenged and inspired to continue anti-racist work in every aspect of my life.
- I am revising my courses and syllabi to incorporate more diverse perspectives and, when not possible, to openly address why those perspectives are so limited: why are the "foundational" thinkers so often White? What is perpetuated by assuming that their perspectives on leadership/research or their educational theories are the only perspectives worth learning?

As I have learned this summer, anti-racism is not just a topic that I might teach during one session of a course. It is a stance that affects every aspect of my life. Yet I have come to believe that this work is necessary if I am to love my students. I cannot say that I love my students and then stand by impassively and callously, benefitting from systems that oppress them. I hope you'll take the next steps toward anti-racism with me.

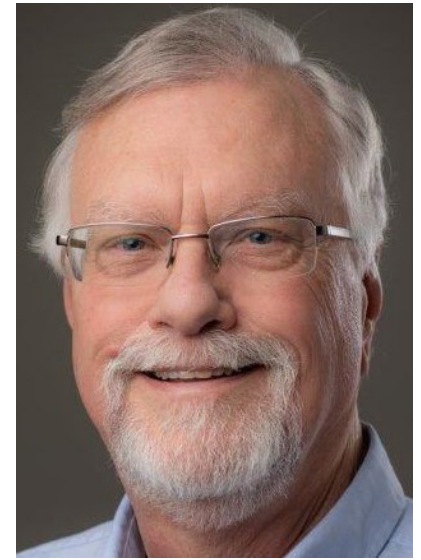
Dr. Heather Hurst is an Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator for the Doctorate in Educational Leadership Program. Dr. Hurst can be contacted at hlhurst@frostburg.edu and welcomes further discussions about anti-racism work.

Preparing Transformative Leaders

Gerald Kiel, Ed.D.

This is my 40th year working in public higher education but, as a relative newcomer, just my second year in a full-time faculty role at FSU. From 1981 until coming to Frostburg last August, I served in varied administrative roles in academic and student affairs that helped students of all ages and backgrounds access higher education and achieve academic and personal success. Growing up in a lower middle-class family in Akron, Ohio, my parents' expectation was that my two brothers and I would go to college, with the understanding that we would work to pay for our schooling while reducing costs by living at home. I attended Kent State at a time (early 1970s) when college was more affordable than it is today. Having the opportunity to attend a public university had a profoundly positive impact on my life and I have been a champion of public colleges and universities ever since.

Serving the community is a foundational element of my personal ethic and I have acted on that value by helping individuals from groups that have been historically underrepresented on college and university campuses to become students. Why? Because I am convinced that having a college education and



Dr. Gerald Kiel

earning a degree leads to a better life. For more than two decades while serving in senior leadership roles I sought opportunities to act on my personal and professional beliefs. Whether working with Native American students in western North Carolina, Black students and their families in inner-city Cleveland, Hispanic students and their migrant worker parents in Erie, Pennsylvania, or students from Appalachian communities in Ohio, Georgia, and, now, Maryland, my calling has been to support students chart a course to and through college and earn a degree that can position them for a satisfying and productive life.

Teaching and guiding graduate students provides incredible opportunities to share my knowledge about higher education with those who are, or will become, the next generation of leaders in PK-12 and higher education. As a member of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) initiative, FSU is committed to honoring the guiding principles espoused in CPED's framework for the professional doctorate, the first of which states that the degree is "framed around questions of equity, ethics, and social justice to bring about solutions to complex problems of practice" (CPED Framework, 2019). I think I am in the perfect place at this stage of my life and career - that which I have focused on professionally for many years aligns perfectly with the expectations of my teaching role.

I have always studied the sociological concept of generations to better understand and meet the needs of diverse students who enroll in our universities. As a Baby Boomer, I have worked with students from my generation, Gen Z, Gen Y (millennials), and now Gen Z. Gen Z, on our campuses today, is an especially appealing cohort that seems to possess a collective sense of obligation to fix long-standing social issues involving racism, injustice, poverty, and inequality. The effort will not be easy but it must be undertaken. Throughout my career I would like to think that my courses help prepare some of those who will help to effect lasting change in our schools and society.

This summer I read Jon Meacham's book *The Soul of America: the Battle for Our Better Angel*. Professor Meacham looks at the challenges of the current era with its widespread strife, disenchantment, and disillusionment and recounts other times in the nation's history when strong presidential leadership helped the nation overcome its most daunting challenges and tribulations. In the book, Professor Meacham shares several comments that served to inspire our nation's leaders in troubled times. He discusses Franklin D. Roosevelt, who, in his fourth inaugural address, recalled the words his old Groton School rector, Rev. Endicott Peabody, shared with him many years before:

Things in life will not always run smoothly. Sometimes we will be rising toward the heights – then all will seem to reverse itself and start downward. The great fact to remember is that the trend of

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civilization itself is forever upward; that a line drawn through the middle of the peaks and the valleys of the centuries always has an upward trend. (Meacham, p.8)

Professor Meacham also references Frederick Douglass who, in the aftermath of the Dred Scott case in 1857, said, “I know of no soil better adapted to the growth of reform than American soil.” The thoughts expressed by Endicott Peabody and Frederick Douglass inspired hope in our leaders during troubled times for our nation and they inspire me today. During a time when strong and effective leaders are needed in our schools and colleges, I am proud to teach the students who will bring about the social reforms that will make us a nation that truly embodies the ideals on which it was founded. They will continue to embody the ideals and values upon which the United States of America was founded.

Dr. Gerald Kiel is a Lecturer in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership program at FSU.

Meacham, Jon. *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels*. 2018. Random House.

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“The Land of the Free and Home of the Brave”**Natalia Buta, Ph.D.**

Dr. Natalia Buta

On February 7th, 2020 I became a US citizen after almost 16 years of living in the United States. A day I will never forget. The oath ceremony, the flags, the happy faces of a large group of people from all the world becoming citizens of a country they once dreamed to be part of. “The land of the free and the home of the brave” officially became my country of citizenship. In a month or so after this special day, the world got hit by a pandemic. In May, after the George Floyd incident happened, social justice protests were occurring all over the country. The pandemic was new and alarming, but the racial turmoil affected me as much because I couldn’t comprehend how there was still so much racial injustice in United States. The American in me was asking why is this happening, how this can happen in an America that values freedom and diversity, what can I do, how can I contribute to change? I was trying to “peel an onion” that seem to have a rotten part and like in a dream, I could not. I didn’t know where to start, I did not know enough to be able to understand what was happening.

I can definitely say that after 16 years in US I am still learning about

the race dynamics in the US. I have always been surprised to hear our African American students talking about how many times they have been stopped by police for no clear reason. Since I have been in the US, I have been stopped by police two times and I have never received a ticket even when probably I should have. Coming from a different country, hearing stories of social injustice, I always had a feeling that something was not right, but I could never see what the real cause was for all the injustice. The more I read I can see that there are multiple answers to this and some very much driven by legislation. In this new context, I was surprised to hear people talking about “fear” to have a conversation about racism, fear of not knowing what to say. Fear of what to say does not compare with the fear which leads to anger of always being perceived as a possible criminal. Some see the fear zone as the comfortable zone, avoiding hard questions and maybe even denying racism is a problem. We need to move past the fear zone. We need to be brave considering we live and work in a university environment, the learning and growth zone should prevail.

Personally, I want to learn and grow. I want to educate myself about race and structural racism and to

“The Land of the Free and Home of the Brave” (continued)

Natalia Buta, Ph.D.

promote and advocate for leaders and policies that endorse social justice. I want my profession to be a stronger advocate for access to parks and open areas for minority groups. As frequently reported in the media, the corona virus pandemic has disproportionately impacted Black and Latino neighborhoods. Once again minority groups were disadvantaged and one of the reasons was access to parks. According to a report completed by the Trust for Public Land in 2020, “parks for people of color are half the size and serve nearly five times more people per acre as those for majority-white populations”. Parks and open spaces have direct implications for physical exercise, mental health and overall quality of life. Let’s make sure we find open space for all to use! I also want to continue to make deliberate efforts to listen to others who think and look differently than me. I want to hear more about how our African American students feel about their experience on our campus. I want our university to play a bigger role in social justice discussions since we are the right environment for intellectual discourse and transformative ideas and actions. I want to be brave and ask more questions, listen to our students and speak up when someone’s freedom is threatened.

Dr. Natalia Buta is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Kinesiology and Recreation.

Acknowledging Trauma & Its Connection to Identity

Attorney Dewayne Morgan

It has been months now since the video of thug officers squeezing the life out of George Floyd as he laid helplessly calling for his mother became public. Across the nation and even world, we all were outraged and enraged. The eight minutes of torture are some of most horrific ever caught on video. I heard many of my friends and colleagues incredulously ask, “how could this happen here in this country in 2020?” However, unlike those friends and colleagues, I was not surprised by the modern-day lynching we had all witnessed.

Like many Black and Brown males, I have my own set of personal experiences where officers of the law or persons in positions of power have blatantly used the color of my skin combined with my maleness as the impetus for unwarranted harassment. One of my most humiliating experiences occurred while I was driving on a long stretch of Florida’s turnpike in Lake County, Florida. At the time, I was an undergraduate studying at the University of Florida and was traveling alone from Gainesville to Orlando to visit friends and family. Upon seeing flashing blue lights in my rear-view mirror, I immediately pulled the car over to the shoulder. Years before this incident, my parents had given me “The Talk” about how to survive encounters with the police. Nonetheless, as the Lake County deputy officers approached the car, my nervous mind began to race about what possible traffic infraction I could have committed --- Had I been speeding? No—not this time. Had my tags and registration expired? No—they were all current.

The officers instructed me that they pulled me over because I had changed driving lanes without using my turn signal. I thought to myself, “That’s odd. I always use my turn signal because that’s one of my pet peeves about other drivers.” The officers then asked for my driver’s license, registration, and proof of insurance. I informed them that those items were located in my glove compartment and that I would be reaching to retrieve them. I handed the materials to one officer who was on the driver’s side of my vehicle. They then, told me to get out of the car and sit down between my car and their squad car. By now, my nervousness had turned to fear and eventual humiliation as I sat on the Florida sunbaked asphalt and watched the two officers search my car while driver after driver passed. After what seemed like an eternity, the officers informed me that they were letting me go with a warning and that I was free to go.



Attorney Dewayne Morgan

Acknowledging Trauma & Its Connection to Identity *(continued)*

Atty Morgan

To this day, I have never shared the details of this incident with my own parents. However, I share this very personal episode with the readers of this important edition as an attempt to illustrate one of many types of lived experiences that compel Black and Brown people to embrace the fight for social justice and equity in whatever their chosen career or profession. As higher education faculty, leaders, and administrators, we have the unique perspective and opportunity to take the very personally humiliating and sometimes life-threatening events from our past and/or present to help inform how we make decisions about the social, emotional, and academic growth and development of ALL of our students, no matter their race or ethnicity.

The mission of the University System of Maryland is *to improve the quality of life for the people of Maryland by providing a comprehensive range of high quality, accessible, and affordable educational opportunities; engaging in research and scholarship that expand the boundaries of current knowledge; and providing knowledge-based programs and services that are responsive to the needs of the citizens of the state and the nation.*¹ If we are to truly live up to this impressive mission, we must acknowledge the trauma (diagnosed and undiagnosed) that students (as well as faculty & staff) bring with them to various learning settings. Some of this trauma could be similar to the one I described above. Regrettably, more common types of psychological trauma come at the hands of educational professionals in schools or other educational settings. For instance, a student might have had a teacher(s) in their elementary school years who repeatedly called them dumb or told them they cannot learn. Students internalize harmful words like these and carry them for the rest of their lives unless this trauma is acknowledged and repaired by subsequent positive educational experiences. As we begin the third decade of this century, let us think critically about the words we use in our university policies, programs, and practices; let us work intentionally to create safe, supportive learning spaces; let us provide training and other support for educators and administrators about the effects of trauma on learning and knowledge acquisition; and, let us move forward together acknowledging the need to lift us up the downtrodden.

Attorney Dewayne Morgan is the P-20 Director for the University System of Maryland, Office of Academic Affairs.

¹ USM Mission statement accessible at https://www.usmd.edu/about_usm/

An Interview with Assistant V.P. Robin Wynder

Whitney LaMont

Ms. Robin Wynder's position as the Director of the Center for Student Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was recently promoted to the position of Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs. Over the summer, she joined Executive Administrative Assistant Whitney LaMont for a virtual interview to discuss our students' diverse backgrounds and some of the biases that they experience on and off-campus while attending FSU.

Mrs. LaMont: *Assistant V.P. Wynder, tell us a little about what it was like to be a student at FSU.*

Assistant V.P. Wynder: *"Issues" is a gentle word for many of the situations I observed. While I was a student at FSU, there were incidents involving the Ku Klux Klan, which had a historical reputation for being active in the area. Members wearing hoods were seen in connection with one or more fraternities, and as a student, I witnessed the group recruiting on Main Street. Though students haven't reported recent activity from the group, there are still many local areas that are not welcoming to minority students.*

Mrs. LaMont: *In your role as Assistant V.P., where do students report*



Assistant V.P. Robin Wynder

Assistant V.P. Wynder: *All of these types of experiences and perceptions feed into a phenomenon called “black fatigue” that results from continually facing dismissive, demeaning, hostile environments and individuals. Imagine being away from your home environment where you know the lay of the land. You’re alone, without family or other trusted support systems while growing into adulthood while pursuing a path that will hopefully lead to a better life. It can be debilitating. That’s why organizations such as the Black Student Alliance, the historically black Greek organizations, and the NAACP exist and are critical on PWI (predominately white institution) campuses. These affinity groups can provide a place of familiarity, safety in numbers, a reflection of self, etc. Within these organizations, the members will be believed when they tell their stories because they resonate with and have been experienced by the other members. To be heard and believed is essential to our mental and emotional health. It’s also why offices such as the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion exist. This office started out over 50 years ago as the “Integration and Minority Affairs Office” intended to offer support to black students, monitor and assess their adjustment to the university, and provide resources supporting their successful tenure at the university. Over decades, the office’s title and mission have shifted to reflect the campus’s changes and students’ needs. Today this office is positioned to continue to offer that support to all of the students on campus through advising, advocacy, and education provided to students, faculty, and staff.*

Assistant V.P. Wynder: *One of the vehicles through which we provide this support is by co-chairing the University Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), bringing together faculty, staff, and students from across the campus to examine and address policies, procedures, beliefs, and behaviors that result in racial inequities on campus. We are also here to listen, assist, and support as needed. We help students connect with other students, campus resources, faculty and staff, and even local resources and community members through organizations like the Black Student Alliance, the Latin American Student Organization (LASO), SPECTRUM (LGBTQIA), NAACP (National Advancement for Colored People), and NCNW (National Council for Negro Women), to name a few.*

Assistant V.P. Wynder: *FSU is a campus affiliate of the National Coalition Building Institute, Inc., an international organization formed to fight the oppression of all kinds. Through this organization, two-three hundred faculty, staff, students, and community members have become trained leaders in diversity, equity, and inclusion. These leaders*

CONTACTS

Boyce C. Williams, Ph.D.
Dean
bcwilliams@frostburg.edu
301.687.4759

Kim Rotruck, Ed.D.
Associate Dean
krotruck@frostburg.edu
301.687.4216

Natalia Buta, Ph.D.
Department Chair, Kinesiology
& Recreation
nbuta@frostburg.edu
301.687.4458

Sally Stephenson, Ed.D.
Department Chair, Educational
Professions
sstepphenson@frostburg.edu
301.687.4448

Mrs. Whitney LaMont, Editor
Executive Administrative
Assistant
wllamont@frostburg.edu
301.687.4759

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
101 BRADDOCK ROAD
FROSTBURG, MD 21532-2303

PHONE: 301.687.4759
FAX: 301.687.3191
EMAIL: wllamont@frostburg.edu

www.frostburg.edu/colleges/coe

Submit news to Whitney LaMont
for the next issue.

facilitate campus-wide workshops, campus conversations, mediation, workshops for departments and organizations, classroom presentations and interventions, etc. The Office for DEI has books and films (movie, documentaries and trainings) that are available as resources and well as bringing other speakers, programs, and workshops to campus to address DEI issues. This is often done in collaboration with and/or support of academic departments and student organizations. Recent efforts such as that of the FSU English Department creating an action plan to address their new approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion by reaching out to black alumni and students and the office are good examples of how others can participate in the push towards racial justice. We encourage you to utilize the office as a resource as you begin or continue to address areas for improvement within your department. Although we have an Office for DEI, it is the responsibility of every university community member to ensure that FSU is a safe, welcoming campus for all of its members.

Mrs. LaMont: *If students, faculty, or staff want to be involved with the work of your office, how may they contact you?*

Assistant V.P. Wynder: *They are welcome to contact me through campus email at rwynnder@frostburg.edu. Students can also contact the Office of Student Affairs at 301.687.4312 or studentconduct@frostburg.edu for additional resources and support.*

They Can't Breathe. Say Their Names.

David McAtee, George Perry Floyd, Dreajson "Sean" Reed, Michael Brent Charles Ramos, Breonna Taylor, Manuel "Mannie" Elijah Ellis, Rayshard Brooks, Carlos Carson, Tony McDade, John Elliot Neville, Daniel Prude, Elijah McClain, Sterling Lapree Higgins, Javier Ambler, Atatiana Koquice Jefferson, Emantic "EJ" Fitzgerald Bradford Jr., Charles "Chop" Roundtree Jr., Chinedu Okobi, Botham Shem Jean, Antwon Rose Jr., Saheed Vassell, Stephon Alonzo Clark, Aaron Bailey, Charleena Chavon Lyles, Fetus of Charleena Chavon Lyles (14-15 weeks), Jordan Edwards, Chad Robertson, Aaron Bailey, Deborah Danner, Alfred Olango, Terence Crutcher, Terrence LeDell Sterling, Korryn Gaines, Joseph Curtis Mann, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Bettie "Betty Boo" Jones, Quintonio LeGrier, Corey Lamar Jones, Jamar O'Neal Clark, Jeremy "Bam Bam" McDole, India Kager, Samuel Vincent DuBose, Sandra Bland, Brendon K. Glenn, Freddie Carlos Gray Jr., Walter Lamar Scott, Eric Courtney Harris, Phillip Gregory White, Mya Shawatza Hall, Meagan Hockaday, Tony Terrell Robinson, Jr., Janisha Fonville, Natasha McKenna, Jerame C. Reid, Romain Brisbon, Tamir Rice, Tyree Woodson, Akai Kareem Gurley, Tanisha N. Anderson, Dante Parker, Ezell Ford, Michael Brown Jr., John Crawford III, Eric Garner, Dontre Hamilton, Victor White III, Gabriella Monique Nevarez, Yvette Smith, McKenzie J. Cochran, Jordan Baker, Andy Lopez, Miriam Iris Carey, Barrington "BJ" Williams, Jonathan Ferrell, Carlos Alcis, Larry Eugene Jackson Jr., Kyam Livingston, Clinton R. Allen, Kimani "KiKi" Gray, Kayla Moore, Jamaal Moore Sr., Johnnie Kamahi Warren, Shelly Marie Frey, Darnisha Diana Harris, Timothy Russell, Malissa Williams, Noel Palanco, Reynaldo Cuevas, Chavis Carter, Alesia Thomas, Shantel Davis, Sharmel T. Edwards, Tamon Robinson, Ervin Lee Jefferson, III, Kendrec McDade, Reikia Boyd, Shereese Francis, Jersey K. Green, Wendell James Allen, Nehemiah Lazar Dillard, Dant'e Lamar Price, Raymond Luther Allen Jr., Manual Levi Loggins Jr., Ramarley Graham, Kenneth Chamberlain Sr., Alonzo Ashley Jr., Kenneth Harding Jr., Derek Williams, Raheim Brown, Jr., Reginald Doucet, Derrick Jones, Danroy "DJ" Henry Jr., Aiyana Mo'Nay Stanley-Jones, Steven Eugene Washington, Aaron Campbell, Kiwane Carrington, Victor Steen, Shem Walker, Oscar Grant III, Tarika Wilson, DeAunta Terrel Farrow, Sean Bell, Kathryn Johnston, Ronald Curtis Madison, James B. Brissette Jr., Henry "Ace" Glover, Timothy Stansbury, Jr., Ousmane Zongo, Alberta Spruill, Kendra Sarie James, Orlando Barlow, Timothy DeWayne Thomas Jr., Ronald Beasley, Earl Murray, Patrick Moses Dorismond, Prince Carmen Jones Jr., Malcolm Ferguson, LaTanya Haggerty, Margaret LaVerne Mitchell, Amadou Diallo, Tyisha Shene Miller, Dannette Daniels, Frankie Ann Perkins, Nicholas Heyward Jr., Mary Mitchell, Yvonne Smallwood, Eleanor Bumpers, Michael Jerome Stewart, Eula Mae Love, Arthur Miller Jr., Randolph Evans, Rita

Lloyd, Henry Dumas