

# the utopian

## ART WORKS

Art and community in Mart, Texas

## A SOCIAL WORK PRECURSOR

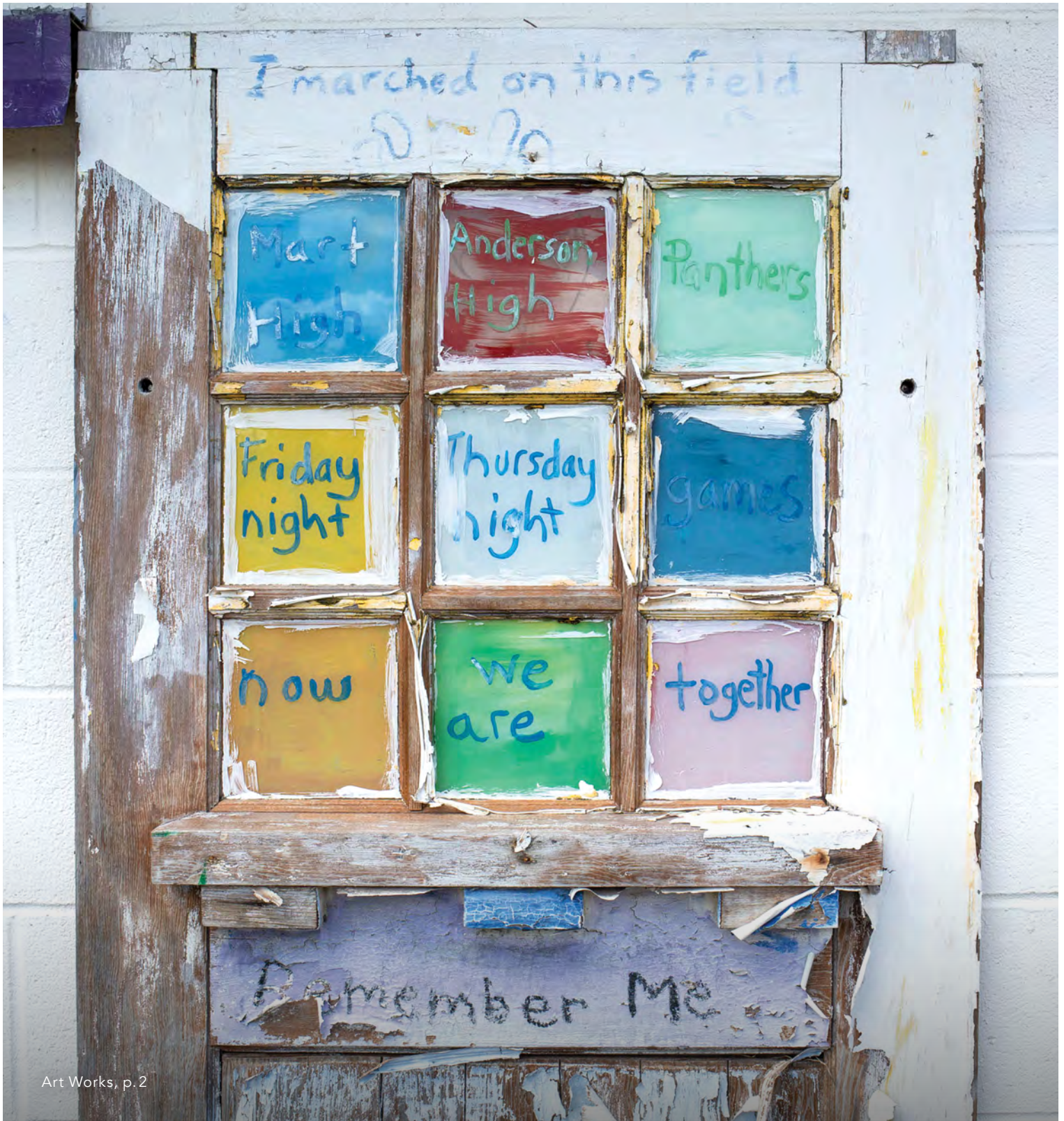
Thelma Mitchell Elliott, MSSW '54

## RENACER IN OAXACA

Partnerships for maternal health

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN | STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

FALL 2018





# FROM THE DEAN

"IN A SENSE, MY PARENTS WERE LUCKY THAT THEIR INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE WAS DISMISSED AS SOMETHING 'PUERTO RICANS DO.' DURING OUR COUNTRY'S PAINFUL PERIOD OF LEGALLY ENFORCED RACIAL SEGREGATION, OTHERS WERE NOT SO LUCKY."

It was my father's aspiration to forge a future for his children that led to his enlistment in the U.S. Army. In 1956, after the Korean War, his assignment took us from a small town in Puerto Rico to a new home in Richmond, Virginia. My father was a dark-skinned biracial Puerto Rican (white father, black mother), and my mother was white. Their interracial marriage was rather typical in the island, and I didn't think much of it.

Years later I understood that their marriage was rather remarkable in the mainland. I asked my mother one day about their arrival in Virginia, a state where "miscegenation" was actually a felony. She replied matter-of-factly, "Oh, as soon as people heard your father and me speaking Spanish, they brushed it off. To them we were foreigners, and they thought that's what 'they' do."

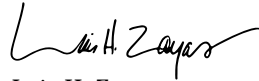
In a sense, my parents were lucky that their interracial marriage was dismissed as something "Puerto Ricans do." During our country's painful period of legally enforced racial segregation, others were not so lucky.

Many fought, in many ways, for the end of legalized segregation. I have shared in other communications that our building used to house a junior high school that led desegregation in Austin. This issue brings you the story of Thelma Mitchell Elliott, a graduate from our program and one of the Precursors, the first generation of black students that desegregated the university in the early 1950s.

Despite the Civil Rights Act of 1964, segregation and discrimination against people of color and vulnerable populations persist — we see it in police shootings of African American men; detention and separation of asylum-seeking families; the consequences of eating, barbecuing or doing ordinary things "while black."

Social workers fight against these acts daily with our profession's variegated skills and tools. Sometimes, as you will read in this issue, this fight involves using art and creativity to recover forgotten histories and build community. Other times, it involves crossing disciplinary and geographic borders to create positive change.

I am proud that our faculty, students and alumni bring every skill to bear on making our world a more just one.



Luis H. Zayas

*Dean and Robert Lee Sutherland Chair in Mental Health and Social Policy*



## FROM YOU (ON "ALWAYS ON DUTY")

@nursingjobshers

"Love stories like this!"

@phallv

"Good informative article."

@Aggie\_GR

"That's awesome and a great reminder that Texas' two largest research universities, TAMU and UT Austin, are jointly committed to supporting our veterans and their families!"

@Galagator89

"One of the many reasons I am proud to be part of the @UTSocialWork. The professors continue to teach the importance of research, how it can lead to creating interventions that can help individuals and the world. Thanks for sharing."



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the **utopian**

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# ARTWORKS

BY ANDREA CAMPETELLA  
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MART FFA  
CONCESSIONS

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Marysana Khan

THERE IS LIFE BEYOND

TOGETHERNESS

How Paula Gerstenblatt used art  
as a tool for community building and  
change in Mart, Texas



**The Nancy Nail Memorial Library is in a well-kept, one-story building off the main street of Mart, a small, rural Texas town 18 miles east of Waco. A newcomer can easily find the library among overgrown lots, handsome but dilapidated commercial brick buildings, and houses that have seen better days. Next to the library, a Lone Star flag waves in the breeze.**

**There is something about making art that dislodges the power differential and disarms people to open up and share stories.**



A lovingly assembled exhibit of photos and memorabilia along the walls of the library's reading room offers clues about what happened to Mart. The town started as a turn-of-the-century, small, western settlement, grew into a thriving regional commercial center with the arrival of the railroads, and started declining as rail service diminished in the 1930s to completely stop in the late 1960s.

When Paula Gerstenblatt (PhD '13) first visited the library in 2008, however, she read something else about Mart's history in the exhibit.

"There were fifteen display cases. And there was not one black face. Not one," she recalled. At the time, a third of Mart residents, Gerstenblatt's in-laws among them, were black.

Her visit to the library sparked a three-year, art-based community project that incorporated African Americans into the display, stirred civic action among Mart residents, brought university students and international artists to the town, triggered multiple initiatives and programs, and eventually became part of Gerstenblatt's dissertation.

"I need to be out there making stuff happen, looking at things from a social justice perspective, and organizing people and building capacity," Gerstenblatt said. "That's my way."

## Recovering Mart's Black History

Gerstenblatt had first visited the library looking for memorabilia of Anderson High School, the all-black school her husband had attended during the era of segregation.

"When they desegregated, Anderson High became a middle school for everybody," Gerstenblatt explained. "The building was sold and the mementos, the trophies, the records, everything from the black school was lost. People thought some things were in the library archives, but then we found out that everything had been trashed — literally put into the trash," she said shaking her head, still in disbelief.

People's memories of the era, however, were still alive. Gerstenblatt secured funding from Humanities Texas and assistance from Baylor University to train community members to collect oral histories from Mart's black residents. This effort also unearthed mementos and photographs that were added

to the library's exhibit in two display cases fully dedicated to Mart's black community and unveiled in a public ceremony in June 2009.

By then Gerstenblatt was a doctoral student in social work at The University of Texas at Austin, and her mind was bubbling with ideas of how to continue the work in Mart.

## Making Art, Making Community

Multicolored pieces of glass shine on the walls of a storefront that stands out on Mart's main intersection. The storefront's mosaic is one of three public murals that came out of the Mart Community Project, an all-encompassing label for the variegated initiatives that Gerstenblatt spearheaded in the town.

For the public murals, Gerstenblatt secured funding and arranged for Senegal-based artists Muhsana Ali and Amadou Kan Sy to visit Mart during three summers. They led community members in the construction of the murals, which are made with pieces of broken tiles, cut mirror, objects, and an under-glass painting technique traditionally found in Senegal.

"The Senegalese mosaic technique is very participatory: people bring their objects and they also paint glass tiles and all of that is put in the mural. The whole mosaic is about rebuilding memory, identity, and facing a difficult past," Gerstenblatt said. Herself an artist, she deeply believes in the power of art-making to bring people together.

"There is something about making art that dislodges the power differential and disarms people to open up and share stories," she explained. "They go into a space that they are not always in — intellectually and emotionally — when they are in their comfort zone. It's labor intensive and often difficult, but it is a transformative experience."

As a doctoral student at UT Austin, Gerstenblatt was also able to make good use of university resources for the Mart Community Project. Between 2010 and 2013, approximately 130 students spent time in the town and worked on projects ranging from art camps to support groups to collaborating with the city council to



tackle infrastructure challenges such as the lack of public transportation.

Emily Hackett (MSSW '12) was one of those students. She ran a support group for Mart High School students during a semester in 2011.

"The community gave us a room in an abandoned building. We cleaned it up, bought dollar-store stuff, put a rug down, got all the cockroaches out... and the kids showed up and it was amazing," Hackett said. "If nothing else, they had the experience of sharing and trusting and feeling connected to other people. Hopefully they will be able to do that in their communities in their future."

The Mart project also gave university students a hands-on, powerful lesson about community work.

"Students quickly learned how messy community work is: it's all about relationship building and it takes time," Gerstenblatt said. "One time we had to completely change something we had on the books for two months because when we got to Mart we found out there was a Christmas stroll on the main street. And you just do it. You have to have the skills to deal with organized chaos. You also have to learn to step back and understand that it's not 'your' program, it's the community's."

## Chambless Field

A casual visitor to Mart would very quickly learn about the Mart Panthers — a large purple and gold sign at the town's entrance lists the state championships the team has won as does a mural of a fierce-looking panther off the main street and another large sign in front of the town's high school — but may miss an overgrown lot behind



**LEFT** Amadou Kan Sy and Muhsana Ali working on one of the murals **TOP** Mural detail, Chambless field concession stand **ABOVE** Library exhibit detail







**ABOVE** Paula Gerstenblatt working on an installation mirror wall at Chambless Field.

The Mart Community Project was funded by grants from the National Endowment of the Arts, the Mildred Delaney Foundation, and Humanities Texas. Former Mart resident James Davis funded (and still funds) the summer program.

the library and the squat, colorful building that sits on one of its sides.

As Gerstenblatt soon discovered, the overgrown lot holds much of the town's heart and symbolizes both segregation and integration. The lot, named after coach Harry Chambless, was the town's football field from the 1930s until 2007. During segregation, the all-white football team from Mart High School played on prime Friday nights and the all-black team from Anderson High School was relegated to Thursday nights. The first integrated football team was formed only in 1969.

Quan Cosby (BSW '09), who was a Panther star in the late 1990s and later had a successful career in college and professional football, said that football has the power of unifying his hometown across racial divisions.

"Football is a very big deal in Mart. If you have seen [the TV show] Friday Night Lights, that's what the town is like. Everyone, including the cops, go to the games. You don't really worry about divisions at game night, you are focused on... Mart," Cosby said.

**Art is really powerful. You can continuously write, record and experience history.**

When Chambless field was retired in 1997, it became just another unused space in town. Gerstenblatt repurposed it as a space for art camps, outdoor movie screenings, and other initiatives of the Mart Community Project. In the summer of 2011, Muhsana Ali and Amadou Kan Sy came back and led the community in the creation

of the mosaic mural that still covers the walls of the field's former concession stand.

"Art is really powerful. You can continuously write, record and experience history," Gerstenblatt said. "I did an installation wall at Chambless field. I wrote people's feelings about the field on a mirror. I remember a black man in his eighties who said that when they went on the field on Thursday nights, it felt like the universe was theirs. People brought their sayings, their artifacts, their pictures for the mosaics."

## A Life of Its Own

Anyone visiting the Nancy Nail Memorial Library today sees that two of the display cases highlight African-American Mart residents and institutions. Their stories are not yet integrated with the dominant white narrative, but at least are visible.

Newcomers may not notice what some locals see as signs of revitalization: a few handsome, historic buildings turned into antique shops, new faces in the city council, a federal grant to rebuild the water plant, a quarterly town-wide clean-up.

"The Mart Community Project has taken on a whole life of its own," said Gerstenblatt, who left Texas after graduating in 2013 and is now an assistant professor at the University of Southern Maine. "I think its biggest success is that we wrote ourselves out of the story. Not all relationships are supposed to last forever, and we build capacity because it was a relational project, hoping that those networks would coalesce."

Mart resident Carolyn Potts still appreciates the bout of energy that the Mart Community Project brought to what she affectionately calls "our sleepy little town."

"When I met Paula I was not doing anything. I was not putting any effort into the community," Potts said in a recent phone conversation. "The project gave us the vision that we can make a change. And we have been doing it, slowly. I also learned that you don't do it by yourself, you try to engage others and show them that together we can change things."

Asked about her favorite memory of the Mart Community Project at its height, she has to think only for a few seconds: outdoor movie screenings at Chambless field that even attracted residents from nearby towns.

"Movies were free, and the popcorn and drinks were free, and people from Groesbeck and Riesel came over," Potts recalled. "We had a showing of Beauty and the Beast, and all the girls came dressed in their Belle outfits. And then we had a showing of Frozen, and everyone was singing the songs! I am sitting there looking around and seeing all these parents and kids singing, and I just thought, this is pretty awesome." ■





# ON MIGRANT CHILDREN



When **AMY THOMPSON** was an undergrad in international studies, her Spanish professor assigned a news article from the Texas-Mexico border on the detention of migrant children in U.S. federal prisons.

After reading that many unaccompanied children were detained indefinitely alongside criminal adults, she realized that her work in children's advocacy would be back home in Texas, and not abroad. Amy is now a doctoral student at the Steve Hicks School of Social Work. For her dissertation, she recently conducted field work in Mexico, where she interviewed children recently deported from the United States.

## WHY DO YOU FOCUS ON MEXICAN CHILDREN?

Unaccompanied children from Mexico are uniquely vulnerable at the U.S. border because they are immediately returned to the nearest port of entry. Unlike children from, for instance, Central American countries such as Guatemala or El Salvador, children from Mexico are not screened to determine whether they have a credible fear of return, and they have no access to immigration courts or protective services. On the Mexican side of the border, they end up in shelters that are frequented by cartels looking for new recruits or targets.

The vast majority of unaccompanied children from Mexico are returned in this manner. The assumption is that they are not seeking asylum and not in need of protection. However, with the increase of violence related to organized crime across Mexico, especially along the border where the kids are returned to, this assumption endangers children.

## WHAT CAN SOCIAL WORKERS DO ABOUT THIS?

Social workers can seek out opportunities to work across borders — both geographic and disciplinary.

Because of increased security on the U.S.-Mexico border and decreased investment in social services, social workers on both sides of the border are stretched very thin and have limited information about each other's systems, which differ greatly in structure and capacity. When a child is returned to Mexico, a network of knowledgeable professionals on both sides is essential for any hope of providing continuous care for that child.

One opportunity to build cross-border collaborations is the annual **Binational Conference for Social Work between Mexico and the United States**. The next one, hosted by the School of Social Work and Human Development at the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, will take

place in Monterrey, Mexico on November 29-30 (learn more at [tiny.cc/binational-conference](http://tiny.cc/binational-conference)).

Social workers can also seek transdisciplinary partnerships with immigration attorneys, who can provide access to the relatively few children from Mexico who make it into detention facilities across the United States. Social workers may serve as subject-matter experts in immigration cases that consider the child's vulnerabilities or as service providers for child clients in need of assessment or counseling. Detained children from all over the world, actually, can benefit from social-work services and from social work's leadership on standards of care for children in the custody of immigration enforcement.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES IN SERVING OR ADVOCATING FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN?

For me, the greatest challenge is having patience in the face of sympathy fatigue and societal indifference to the plight of unaccompanied children. I understand that secondary stress can be an issue for some colleagues. In both cases, I think the answer is having a sustainable approach to self-care.

Despite, or perhaps in the face of, increased reference to migrant children in political debates, I do not anticipate any top-down reforms in the near future. It will be up to individual social workers and professional networks to advance practice from the ground up and advocate for increasing the application of child welfare norms to the treatment of all children in the custody of immigration agencies.





## ANA HERNANDEZ

**RESEARCH QUESTION:** How does legal status shape the identity of undocumented college students in the United States, and how do they assert their human rights through activism?

**METHODS:** Interviews with Central Texas undocumented college students and allies

**MAIN FINDINGS:** "Through their activism, participants found community, gained confidence in their ability to organize and make change, and eventually redefined their identity as undocumented youth in a positive way. But I also found that activism — particularly the use of their personal narratives in public before they were ready — could have a negative impact on participants' emotional well-being."

**WHY THIS TOPIC?** "I have been involved in organizing with undocumented college-student activists for years and wanted to do research that supported their efforts to increase rights for the undocumented community."



## MORAVIA DE LA O

**RESEARCH QUESTION:** The militarization of the drug war has led to increased numbers of disappeared people in Mexico. How do these disappearances impact the lives of activist mothers — mothers involved in grassroots organizing to find their disappeared sons and daughters?

**METHODS:** Interviews with activist mothers in Mexico City

**MAIN FINDINGS:** "Activist mothers are motivated by their love for their children and the hope that one day they will find them, or their bodies. Many experience isolation from their extended family for reasons including fear, lack of understanding, and stigma. The collectives made up of other relatives of disappeared people become their new chosen family."

**WHY THIS TOPIC?** "For the past eight years I have been engaged in hands-on work in Mexico. I find the resiliency and tenacity of activist mothers very inspiring, as they continue to demand justice despite being criminalized and threatened. My hope is to become a mental-health specialist to serve the needs of this population, joining in the rich tradition of psychosocial accompaniment for victims of human rights abuses in Latin America."



## LYNN PANEPINTO



**RESEARCH QUESTION:** What are the services available to children who experience sexual abuse in Lima, Peru?

**METHODS:** Interviews with service providers and caregivers in Lima

**MAIN FINDINGS:** "I was able to map the landscape of services in Lima, but more interestingly I learned how sociocultural factors shape the way in which service providers understand child sexual abuse and deliver services. Providers and clients often come from different race, class and ethnic backgrounds (they may speak different languages as well) and this makes it difficult to deliver services that give clients a sense of healing and justice."

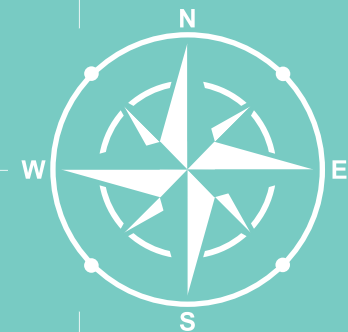
**WHY THIS TOPIC?** "I have worked in the field of sexual violence in the United States for several years, and I wanted to learn how other countries and cultures address this issue. I chose Lima because I had previously lived there while studying, volunteering, and working with organizations that serve children and families. Because I already had a network in the city, I was able to research a topic that interests me and may be useful to service providers."

PERU



# SOCIAL WORK *without* BORDERS


In 2015, the Steve Hicks School of Social Work established a dual master's program with the Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies. Through the three-year program, students acquire clinical skills, develop cultural and linguistic competency suited to diverse Latino and Latin American populations, conduct research and write a thesis. Students in the program's first cohort are graduating in 2018 and have completed research projects that span from Austin to Lima.











◀ In September 1966, the Parents Club of the Booker T. Washington Terrace public housing organized a cleanup day.

# a social work PRECURSOR

## Thelma Mitchell Elliott, desegregation at UT Austin, and the War on Poverty in Texas

In May of 1966, residents of Hergotz Lane in South East Austin celebrated the installation of a water spigot in their neighborhood. It was just a single, public spigot, but it meant that they no longer had to travel 10 miles to the nearest drinking water supply.

In early June, “a task force of three men and a fogging machine,” as the Austin Statesman put it, descended on Montopolis to wage war on mosquitoes. Later that month, after a hard battle for access to public transportation, Montopolis families were able to board a bus that connected them to Austin bus lines.

And in September, the newly minted Parents Club of the Booker T. Washington Terrace public housing organized a cleanup day. Parents and children cut down the high grass in the complex’s playground and removed trash, bottles and rocks.

By Andrea Campetella / Photos Courtesy Austin History Center



**[THELMA ELLIOTT] WAS AMONG THE PRECURSORS, THE FIRST GENERATION OF BLACK STUDENTS WHO DESEGREGATED THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN IN THE 1950s.**

This flurry of activity in mostly Mexican and African-American areas of Austin owed much to the late Thelma Mitchell Elliott (MSSW '54). Elliott was the leader of ENABLE, one of the many programs through which the Lyndon B. Johnson administration waged the War on Poverty across the nation. Under Elliott's leadership, ENABLE empowered diverse communities in Austin to tackle everything from living conditions to neighborhood safety and infrastructure.

But even before Elliott was publicly recognized for this important work, she did something else that, at the time, went unrecorded. She was among the Precursors, the first generation of black students who desegregated The University of Texas at Austin in the 1950s.

### Integration at UT Austin

As told in *As We Saw It. The History of Integration at The University of Texas at Austin*, the struggle to desegregate the university started only two years after it was founded, when in 1885 an African-American man (unnamed in the records) applied for admission. He was rejected on the basis that "admittance of negroes" was "not of standard practice."

The turning point was after World War II. In 1946, with the support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Heman Marion Sweatt applied to the law school and was

denied access on the basis of his race. The case (*Sweatt v. Painter*) went all the way to the Supreme Court, which in 1950 ruled in Sweatt's favor. Amidst much media attention and demonstrations in favor and against desegregation, Sweatt started law school in the fall semester of that year.

That same fall, the university's newly minted graduate program in social work opened its doors to students. In its two first years, the program admitted the late Gus Swain — who in 1953 became the first African-American male graduate — and then Elliott, who in 1954 became the first African-American female graduate.

In a speech Swain gave in 1982 he described going to campus with the threat of violence, at a time when buildings off the main drag were plastered with sayings like "Nigger go home." But he also recalled that the school of social work felt like an "oasis" and a safe place during this time.

Anita Swain, who was married to Gus Swain when he was in school, said in a phone conversation that "the school of social work was pretty liberal as far as race relations." She also remembered her late husband as a fighter for equality.

"He would not tolerate racial discrimination. He was a crusader. He was in the right field, always trying to make things better and help people move on. When we lived in Washington [after Swain graduated], we were marching every Saturday!" she recalled. I just kept my



Photo AR-2007-017-045, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library



boots ready because whether it was cold, or snowy or wet, we were going to march!”

The Swains knew Elliott as a neighbor and family friend. Anita Swain remembered her husband giving Elliott information about the newly opened social work program and encouraging her to apply.

At the time, Elliott was married to O. H. Houston, then a business manager at Sam Houston College. They had a young daughter, Ora Houston, who is now Austin’s Council Member for District 1. She still lives in the house in East Austin where she grew up.

At least as remembered by Ora Houston, Elliott was not the marching type. But she was a multifaceted community leader for whom the graduate social work program was a great match.

“She was president of the PTA; she was very involved in the community; she was very involved in the church... and she had a very deep sense of social justice,” Houston said.

## Project ENABLE and Beyond

After receiving her Master of Science in Social Work in 1954, Elliott worked as a probation officer for the Travis County Juvenile Court until 1966, when she was tapped to lead project ENABLE.

ENABLE stood for Education and Neighborhood Action for Better Living Environment. It was sponsored by Child and Family Services and received funding through the new Office of Economic Opportunity, the federal agency responsible for administering most of the War on Poverty programs.

In Austin, ENABLE started by reaching out to mothers of children enrolled in Head Start — another War on Poverty program.

“ENABLE is meant to give them [the mothers] a sense of self, purpose, confidence and power, something that will grow, a

motivation, and the tools to get something done for a better life,” Elliott explained in a *Statesman* article of May 19, 1966.

ENABLE soon expanded into “neighborhood group problem-solving” initiatives that engaged community members to tackle everything from unsanitary living conditions in rental units to neighborhood safety and infrastructure.

Barely a year after it was launched, ENABLE Austin was considered one of the most successful of 60 such projects that existed across the nation. Because of the program’s positive impact in communities such as Montopolis, in October 1966 Elliott was asked to address a national conference of Head Start teachers.

In true social work fashion, Elliott chose to emphasize self-awareness and strength-based perspectives during her address. As reported in the *Statesman*, she told Head Start teachers to be aware of their own insensitivities and blind spots when working with families, and make efforts to involve and empower parents.

“We in ENABLE are also committed to involving the parents in the education of their children. We encourage parents to use their native talents and constitutional rights to make decisions affecting them, their children, and the neighborhood where they live,” Elliott told the teachers.

## ENABLE IS MEANT TO GIVE [MOTHERS] A MOTIVATION, AND THE TOOLS TO GET SOMETHING DONE FOR A BETTER LIFE.

In late 1966, Elliott left ENABLE to join the Texas Office of Economic Opportunity, where she was tasked with developing resource materials, ideas and techniques to be used in community projects across the state.

As the War on Poverty and its accompanying federal funding dwindled down in the context of escalation of the Vietnam War, Elliott continued her career in social services. She first joined the Austin/Travis County public health system and then the Texas Department of Human Services, from which she eventually retired. She died on July 21, 1998.

“I tell people all the time that I have my mother’s sense of social justice,” daughter Ora Houston said. “She was not a rebel, she was not out there marching on the streets. But on her own quiet way, she made important changes.” ■

### OPPOSITE PAGE

Elliott at the Booker T. Washington Terrace public housing.

LEFT Elliott (second from right, in green dress) with ENABLE team members.

BOTTOM Hergotz Lane residents using the public water spigot.



# DESEGREGATION

*at The University of  
Texas at Austin*



**1883**

University opens its doors.



**1885**

First record of African American applicant (unnamed) denied admission.



**1938**

George L. Allen is able to register for a class but then his registration is canceled.



**1946**

Heman Sweatt is denied admission to the law school. Case (Sweatt v. Painter) goes to the Supreme Court.



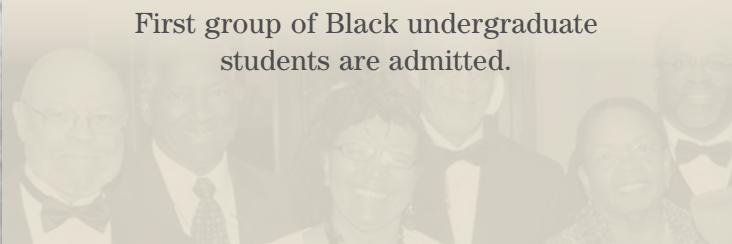
**1950**

Supreme Court rules in Sweatt's favor. UT becomes the first institution of higher education in the South required by law to admit African Americans to its graduate programs.



**1956**

First group of Black undergraduate students are admitted.





## First-ever social worker to receive Harrington fellowship

NYU Silver School assistant professor Lailea Noel is the first-ever social worker to be awarded a Donald D. Harrington Faculty Fellowship by The University of Texas at Austin. This fellowship is awarded annually to as many as five early career faculty members, who take a leave from their home institutes and serve as visiting members of the UT Austin faculty for the duration of the fellowship. Noel will join the Steve Hicks School of Social Work and the LIVEStrong Cancer Institutes, where she will continue to pursue community-based participatory research on reducing barriers to cancer treatment.

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## Most downloaded

“Solution-Focused Brief Therapy: A systematic review and meta-summary of process research,” published in the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, is one of the journal’s most downloaded recent papers: 2,596 downloads in 2017. Authors of the article are professor Cynthia Franklin and Anao Zhang (PhD ’18).





## RESEARCH THAT CHANGES LIVES

### Best practices to help young Texans succeed

Research shows that only 29 percent of Texans under the age of 6 have had a developmental screening and that the majority (58 percent) of 3- and 4-year-olds in the state are not involved in early education, which improves school readiness and reduces the negative impacts of poverty. Social work researchers at the Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health are helping address this need through Texas LAUNCH, the state version of a nation-wide program. Researchers are collaborating with agencies in three communities — Fort Worth, San Antonio, and a small tribal community close to El Paso called Ysleta del Sur Pueblo — to screen young children early and implement best practices to improve their developmental, social and emotional health. Learn more at [tiny.cc/texas-launch](http://tiny.cc/texas-launch).



### Best teaching

Adjunct assistant professor Sarah McCafferty received the 2018 Steve Hicks School of Social Work Lecturer Teaching Excellence Award. Sarah has been a lecturer since 2009, and has taught field seminars, the capstone course, and classes on social justice, organizations and communities, and group and family intervention among other topics. Congratulations to Sarah!



### Helping asylum seekers

Dora Gonzalez likes to keep busy. She is a dual-degree graduate student in social work and Latin American studies, and a board member of the nonprofit *Justice For Our Neighbors*, which provides free immigration legal services and education. This past June, Gonzalez traveled to McAllen and Brownsville in the Rio Grande Valley to deliver supplies and monetary donations to asylum seekers.



### Queer youth, religiosity and suicide

Religious beliefs are supposed to protect people from suicidal thoughts and behaviors. However, in a recent study professor Susan De Luca and colleagues have found that the opposite may be happening for young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or are unsure of their sexual orientation. Results from the study, which drew from surveys by over 21,000 college students between the ages of 18 and 30 from across the United States, were published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

See coverage on the Huffington Post here: [tiny.cc/queer-youth](http://tiny.cc/queer-youth)

### Texas drug trends

Methamphetamine remains the major drug threat in Texas, according to Jane Maxwell's latest statewide report. All indicators of drug use, such as poison control calls and deaths, show that methamphetamine is a larger problem than heroin. Heroin in Texas is either black-tar heroin or powdered brown heroin. To prevent an overdose, fentanyl test strips should be used to determine if the package contains fentanyl. In Texas, of the top 25 items seized and identified in Texas laboratories reporting to the National Forensic Laboratory Information System, heroin ranks No. 4 and fentanyl ranks No. 21. See the report here: [tiny.cc/texas-drug-trends](http://tiny.cc/texas-drug-trends)



## Dedicated mentorship

Our faculty really go the extra mile for students... even if it's a mile skydiving down! Doctoral student David Snowden, who is also an active duty captain in the Air Force, had a singular request in his dissertation proposal: he asked the members of his committee to skydive with him after his dissertation defense. The time for truth came last April. Professors Kirk von Sternberg and Diana DiNitto (in the picture) bravely jumped with David. Professor Mary Velasquez stayed with the ground crew to make sure everyone was safe.



## NASW spotlight

A recent NASW News article on interdisciplinary training in social work featured Cossy Hough. Hough highlighted initiatives such as simulations and clinics in which UT Austin social work students collaborate with students in medicine, nursing, pharmacy and law. She said that these initiatives boost social work students' confidence in their abilities and skills and prepare them for the workplace, where they will interact with other professions.

## Dual degree with business

We have launched a new dual-degree program with the McCombs School of Business. Graduates of this program will combine skills in core business functional areas such as accounting, marketing, and statistics; and social work skills in administration and policy.

Students can apply for admission for the fall 2019 semester.



## Student day at the Legislature

Approximately a hundred Steve Hicks School of Social Work students joined Social Work Student Day at the Legislature on March 26. They delivered public speeches about everything from gun reform to helping homeless veterans. Afterwards they visited with state legislators to advocate for causes they are passionate about.



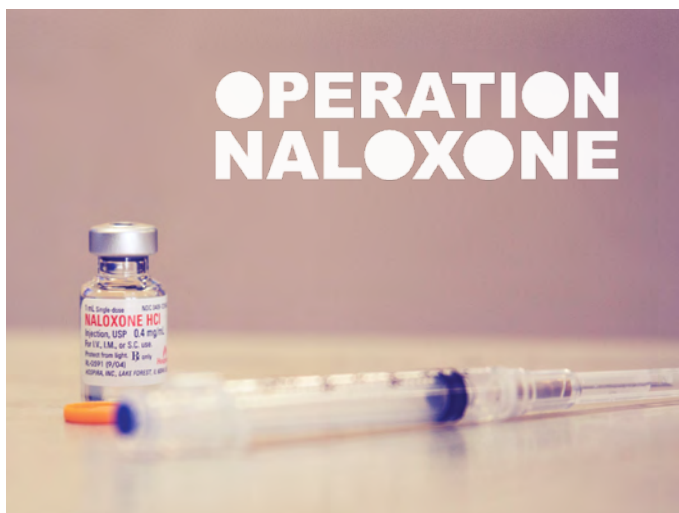
## We are in the top 5!

Our Master of Science in Social Work program is ranked No. 5 (No. 3 among public schools) in the nation according to the 2019 edition of U.S. News and World Report. In the previous edition of the report, the program was ranked No. 7.



## Courageous service

Operation Naloxone is the recipient of the 2018 American Society of Health-System Pharmacists Award for Courageous Service. Operation Naloxone is a partnership among the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, the College of Pharmacy and the Texas Overdose Naloxone Initiative. The award is in recognition of its efforts to obtain and distribute the life-saving overdose response drug Naloxone to people affected by Hurricane Harvey. Social work professor Lori Holleran-Steiker is Operation Naloxone's co-director.

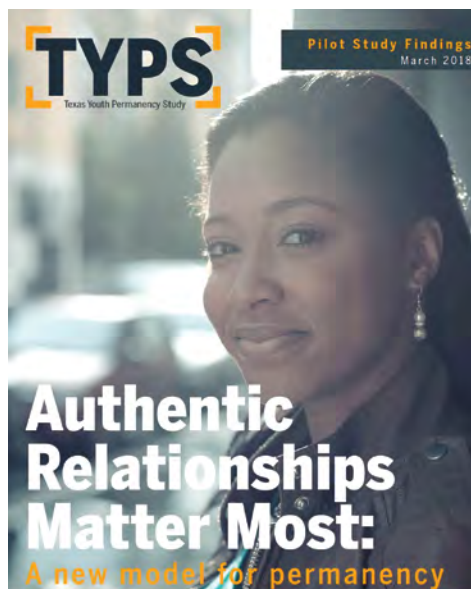


## TIME cover story

Dean Zayas provided the main academic voice for the cover story of TIME magazine's March 19 issue. The story, *Ripped Apart. The Cost of American's Immigration Crackdown* focuses on how immigration policy under the Trump administration is splitting families apart.

## Reframing hope

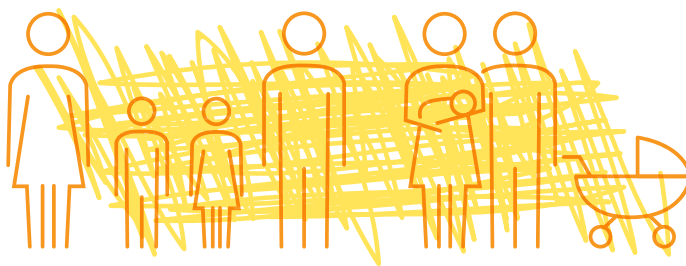
Telling patients that they have only months to live can be distressing for the healthcare provider, the patient and the patient's family. But in a recently published article of Palliative and Supportive Care, Jennifer Currin-McCulloch and Barbara Jones suggest that, when framed in the proper context, hope can thrive in conversations about a patient's terminal prognosis. Patients can set goals for themselves that are short-term, realistic and attainable, all of which can prompt them to gain a sense of certainty about their illness, control and hope as they prepare for the future.



## Relationships matter

For decades, the child welfare system has worked on the assumption that legal permanency (through adoption, reunification or kinship care) was enough to ensure that children in foster care have a successful transition to adulthood. A new study by Upbring and the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing calls into question this assumption and suggests that, regardless of the permanency outcome, authentic relationships are key to feeling normal, which is essential to the well being of all youth. The study is the first to compare youth who aged out of care to youth who are adopted or reunified with family.

Read the report: [tiny.cc/permanency](http://tiny.cc/permanency)



## Family Minds

Family Minds is a new brief and practical psycho-educational intervention for foster parents that is based on attachment theory and is designed to help parents understand the emotional needs that form the basis of their child's behavior. In a recent study, Tina Adkins and colleagues found preliminary evidence that Family Minds helps increase reflective functioning (mentalization) and reduce parenting stress among foster parents. Results were published in the Journal of Child and Family Studies. Learn more at [familyminds.org](http://familyminds.org).





## Uniting communities in recovery

In organizing the 2018 Austin's NEDA (National Eating Disorders Association) Walk, master's student Niki DuBois's goal was to create a community for people recovering from eating disorders and substance-use disorders.

"As someone who struggled with both disorders, I went so many years switching from one to the other because there wasn't a facility that would help me deal with both," DuBois said. "The goal of this walk was to have substance abuse treatment centers visible and available, and bring people together so we can turn to each other for support."

## Looking for CEUs?

**OCTOBER 19**

Fairbanks lecture with Marco Posadas

**NOVEMBER 1-2**

Central Texas Grief and Loss Conference, with keynote presentation by Phyllis S. Kominsky

**NOVEMBER 30**

Clinical ecotherapy with Amy Sugano

**ONLINE 24/7**

Self-paced seminars available anytime

*More events and info at [socialwork.utexas.edu/ceu](http://socialwork.utexas.edu/ceu) or call 512-471-2886*



## Older adults and marijuana

Does marijuana use affect healthcare use among older adults? The answer is yes, according to a recent study by Namkee Choi, Nathan Marti and Diana DiNitto focusing on individuals 50 years of

age and older. Results from the study show that marijuana users had higher rates of injuries and Emergency Department visits despite being younger than non-users and having similar number of chronic medical conditions.

The study was based on a national epidemiological survey and published in *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*.

## Support for military and veteran families

In a joint effort with colleagues in Dell Medical School's Department of Psychiatry, social work professor Elisa Borah is leading the new Military & Veteran Family Program. Through this program, university researchers and community members collaborate to develop and test interventions for service members, veterans, and their caregivers and families. The program also partners with experts to train health-care

professionals and graduate students in evidence-based treatments for military-connected individuals.

Learn more at [sites.utexas.edu/mvfp](http://sites.utexas.edu/mvfp).







# RENACER IN OAXACA

Building partnerships across borders  
for better maternal health

On a warm 2017 summer day in Oaxaca, Mexico, Daniela Bermea huddled around an easel of drafting paper with almost a dozen indigenous or Afro-Mexican women. With markers in hand, they brainstormed a long list of title options for the collective photo project created during a three-month seminar called “Community intervention in favor of maternal health.” Eventually, the women narrowed the experience down to one word: *renacer*, the Spanish word for rebirth.

“They chose that word because it represents the social change that the women are trying to bring about in their communities,” said Bermea, a master’s student at the Steve Hicks School of Social Work. “The second piece was that it reflects the need to repaint maternal health beyond raising awareness.”

The seminar was one result of the fruitful partnerships that the Steve Hicks School of Social Work has built with various agencies in Oaxaca, where students can get involved

in projects that allow them to gain social work and bilingual skills while making meaningful contributions to the community.

“We will not initiate international placements unless we believe we can sustain a mutually beneficial relationship,” said Tanya Voss, who is assistant dean for field education at the Steve Hicks School of Social Work. “We don’t want to be guilty of academic tourism or exploiting agencies.”

The seminar that Bermea facilitated was in collaboration with the Mexican research



**“NOW THEY  
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center CIESAS-Pacífico Sur and GESMujer, a Oaxacan NGO focusing on gender issues. The goal was to work with local women as they explored maternal health issues in each of their communities through participatory methods such as interviews and photovoice.

“Every single one of their experiences and their communities were different,” Bermea said. “Some [participants] focused on adolescent health, some focused on midwives in the community, while others focused on teen pregnancy and a lack of contraceptives. It really varied, and through their community assessment they identified what they wanted to work on.”

Social work master’s student Monique Vasquez also participated in the seminar. She said she learned a lot about maternal health in Mexico thanks to the research the women conducted in their communities.

“It really woke me up to the disparities that exist in maternal health, particularly among indigenous women in Mexico, similarly to black and Latina women here in the United States,” she said.

One of Vasquez’s goals during her time in Oaxaca was to develop grant-writing skills. She took notes on the women’s findings and used them to draft a grant proposal for GESMujer, which the NGO later used to develop an application for funding.

Meanwhile, Bermea helped to facilitate sessions, conduct focus groups, and train the women in how to use cameras for the photovoice component. Participants then returned to their respective communities to photograph people, places or objects related to their chosen topics in maternal health care.

Bermea found that photovoice specifically allowed women to articulate cultural norms that posed challenges to maternal health.

She remembered one participant who interviewed a husband who said he worried his wife would get involved with another man if she was using contraceptives. Another told the group, “I just recognize that we’re not in charge of our own bodies here. The man is. They hit us and treat us like we’re just sexual objects.”

“We had one participant tell us that in her community, a man became a man when he got a woman pregnant,” Bermea said. “And for a girl to become a woman, she had to become a mother.”

Through photovoice, women were able to engage in a dialogue about gender equality that empowered them to seek positive change in their personal relationships as well as their communities, Bermea said.

Bermea added that the seminar guided participants on how to use their specific interests and skills to develop activities in their respective communities. For example, one woman created an



action plan for using the theater skills of students at the local school to educate their community about gender issues and access to contraception.

“The seminar was full of capacity-building, training and education that might have been inaccessible in any other way,” Bermea said. “Through this process, they learned how to do a community assessment, mapping, conduct interviews, and how to formulate an action plan. Now they have all these tangible skills for any job they’re interested in pursuing or for continuing this work.”

For Bermea, the collaborative nature of the experience was groundbreaking because academic institutions, community members, health providers and NGOs “met in a middle ground.”

“This is how we should be addressing health issues,” she said. “We’re all having a conversation at the same table, which allows us to identify the deepest roots of health disparities and the actions we can take using the resources that are available to us.” ■

**LEFT** From the photovoice project:

Healing hands.

**RIGHT TOP**

From the photovoice project: A midwife showing medicinal herbs in her garden.

**RIGHT BOTTOM**

A seminar participant interviewing a community member about contraception.

**BY LYNDA GONZALEZ**

**PHOTOS COURTESY DANIELA BERMEA**





What's new? Share your personal or professional news with us: [utopian@utlists.utexas.edu](mailto:utopian@utlists.utexas.edu)

**'52** Dieter Gaupp, MSSW '52, is active in Denton's City Coalition. He brings a holistic perspective to the discussion and helps everybody get from big ideas to reality. He wrote, "I have been pleased that the chair will turn to me and ask if I have questions, probably because I have a different approach. I think that frequently social workers are the only ones who maintain a holistic approach, knowing how the pieces fit together."

**'82** Jeanette Smiecinski (nee Pierce), BSW '82, switched fields from social work to accounting to be able to have better earnings. She uses her social work and counseling skills as a volunteer with Boy Scouts of America and an Episcopal church group for young adults. She enjoys volunteering as a mentor for young individuals with ADHD and Spectrum Disorder. She feels that as a volunteer, she is already doing what she wants to do as she reaches retirement. Jeanette loved her experience at UT Austin and feels that she gained much personal growth.

**'88** Michael Burke, MSSW '88, is living in Indianapolis. He is working as a behavioral health consultant in a primary care setting. He enjoys the work and feels he reaches people who would not otherwise seek mental health counseling.

**'89** Cathleen Caballero (nee Brady), MSSW '89, recently completed

training and certification to become a parent-child interaction certified therapist. She is looking forward to becoming a field instructor in the near future.

**'90** Dawn Nelson, MSSW '90, has recently moved her private practice location to Rockwall, Texas, where she provides counseling services to adults and children. In addition, she is a board-approved supervisor and is faculty for Texas A&M-Commerce.

**'93** Judge Stuti Trehan Patel, BSW '93, and her husband Hiren Raman Patel are proud to announce that their son Dhilan Patel has fulfilled his destiny to become a Longhorn! He graduated with honors in May 2018 from Elkins High School (Missouri City, Texas) and will be attending McCombs School of Business in the Fall. Judge Patel and her husband are excited to have Dhilan continue the Trehan/Patel family's Longhorn legacy!

**'95** Rachel Fusco, MSSW '95, is an associate professor at the University of Georgia's School of Social Work. She is also chair in health and wellness at the Georgia Athletic Association. Rachel received her doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. Her current research focuses on supporting mothers with opioid-use disorder to increase treatment adherence so that they can engage in safe and loving parenting.

**'97** Lacey Sloan, PhD '97, MSSW '92, has just returned from Mogadishu, Somalia where she is serving as a UNICEF consultant. She is facilitating the development of certificate, diploma and bachelor's in social work programs

for six universities. All together, the universities will admit 240 students on full scholarships funded by UNICEF. Social workers are seen as critical players to support the redevelopment of Somalia and the safety and security of women and girls.

**'98** Michael Kevin Lucas, MSSW '98, is deputy director of the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Association. Michael received his Juris Doctor from the University of California, Berkeley in 2005.

**'00** Jennifer Carter Dochler, BSW '00, has been teaching both online and face-to-face at the University of Missouri's School of Social Work since 2008. She teaches "Contemporary Issues in Domestic Violence," which was originally created at UT Austin by Fran Danis. After Danis left the University of Missouri, Jennifer started teaching the course and has converted it to part of the online program. She has worked at the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence for more than 15 years in multiple staff roles and currently is Public Policy Director. Prior to that, she worked for NASW-MO as their political-action campaign organizer.

**'01** Carol (Carrie) Martin Jankowski, MSSW '01, is a field education coordinator at the University of Oklahoma Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work.

**'04** Ashley de Jong, MSSW '04, is a grassroots organizer for the Beto for Texas U.S. Senate campaign in the SW Austin headquarters. You can contact her at [ashdejong3@gmail.com](mailto:ashdejong3@gmail.com).

**'05** Mia Sneed, MSSW '05, relocated back to her hometown and has joined Nashville State Community College as the compliance and diversity officer in May of this year.

**'06** Shamyia Tareen, MSSW '06, teaches a one-credit class about student success for incoming freshman at Montgomery College (a community college in Montgomery County, Md.) through the Counseling and Advising department. Shamyia also has a

private practice in Silver Spring, Md. where she works with young adults using CBT and mindfulness techniques. She is working on her certification in mind body medicine with the Center for Mind Body Medicine in Washington, D.C.

**'07** Christopher Quaglin, MSSW '07, took a position after graduating as the full time/on-call mental health therapist at Gary Job Corps in San Marcos, Texas. At Job Corps, there are 1200+ students from ages 16 to 27 getting a new start on life. Christopher was known as Mr. Q, and feels honored to have helped many young people work through everything from life questions and goals to developing self knowledge and coping skills for managing major and minor mental illnesses. He is proud to have witnessed so many examples of resilience, courage and strength in these students. Christopher is now opening a private practice office in Austin and is excited to be of assistance to young people here. His motto is, "There is no need to feel stuck or suffer any longer. Let's get started!" He can be found at [www.itoaustin.com](http://www.itoaustin.com).

**'08** Laurel (Klein) Freedman, MSSW '08, BSW '04, is working on patient advocacy and provider education in the field of medical cannabis.

**'09** Derek Kerl, MSSW '09, works at Community Care at the David Powell Health Center in Austin. He manages a team of behavioral-health clinicians and medical social workers, supervises (UT Austin!) interns, and provides clinical supervision to LMSWs who are working toward an LCSW license. The clinic provides medical and behavioral health care to over 2600 HIV-positive individuals who live in Austin and the surrounding areas.

**'10** Colette Nies, MSSW '10, is in the Doctor of Ministry program in Land, Food and Faith Formation at Memphis Theological Seminary. She owns an oil and gas services LLC (Colette Von Hanna Energy), is a chaplain, and operates the health and spirituality website [www.juiceartist.com](http://www.juiceartist.com).

**'11** Jessica Boston, MSSW '11, accepted a position as director of policy and advocacy with Deeds Not Words, a nonprofit led by Wendy Davis that

## IN MEMORIAM

James (Jim) Williams  
MSSW '75

Faculty  
Deena Mersky  
MSSW '75

stands for workplace equality, access to reproductive health, an end to campus sexual assault, and justice for women everywhere.

Alexandra DeHoff, MSSW '11, has transitioned to private practice after working at a psychiatric hospital for nearly six years. She now has an 11-month-old baby girl at home and spends most of her time with her. She wrote, "While my baby girl is my primary joy, I also enjoy continuing my social work career through my therapy practice with Colors of Austin Counseling. One day at a time!"

**'12** Isaac Akapnitis, MSSW '12, was offered a faculty associate position with the ASU School of Social Work this past July. He will be teaching LGBTQ issues online as part of ASU's LGBTQ Studies Certificate. Isaac is looking forward to working with students in social work and other disciplines this semester, and teaching topics near and dear to his heart.

Gerald (Jerry) Cochran, PhD '12, started a new position this past July with the University of Utah School of Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Epidemiology. He is an associate professor and director of research of PARCKA (Program for Addiction Research, Clinical Care, Knowledge, and Advocacy). He lives on a street named Longhorn Drive and of course the postal abbreviation on the zip code is UT. He writes, "The address is not a joke, just serendipity—hook 'em horns!"

Jeremy Goldbach, PhD '12, MSSW '08, is director of the Center for LGBT Health Equity and an associate professor of social work at the University of Southern California Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. Goldbach's research focuses on the negative health effects of discrimination in the LGBTQ population and developing effective interventions to address these negative health outcomes.

Jorge Renaud, MSSW '12, has joined the Prison Policy Initiative as senior policy analyst. This new role marks a return to policy work after three years of community organizing, most recently at Grassroots Leadership in Austin. Jorge is an accomplished writer: While incarcerated, he wrote as a contributing columnist for *Hispanic Link Weekly Report*, published poetry and essays, and authored a book, *Behind the Walls*:

*A Guide for Families and Friends of Texas Prison Inmates.*

**'13** Emmie Knox, MSSW '13, and her husband Louis LeSassier opened Assisting Hands Home Care in Austin almost two years ago. They are thoroughly enjoying serving seniors in the community. They also have a baby on the way!

Linda Rangel, MSSW '13, has moved to Boston, where she started a social work position with the Department of Children and Families. She is already bracing for the winter!

Codi Tranel, MSSW '13, has joined Packed with Purpose, a specialty gift company that handpicks products for their gift boxes from purveyors who transform individuals and communities in positive ways.

Caroline Turner, MSSW '13, moved to Denver, Colorado in early August. She started a new job as community development manager with Trumpet Behavioral Health (TBH), a national provider of applied behavioral analysis to support individuals with autism. They are currently in eight states and growing rapidly across the country, including just starting in Austin. Caroline is thrilled to join a talented team and help spread TBH values nationwide.

Brady L. Varga, MSSW '13, is a social worker at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Scottish Rite.

**'14** Elizabeth Adkins, MSSW '14, BSW '13, is working at the Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. She and the Texas Children's Social Work Team were very busy after Hurricane Harvey devastated the city with catastrophic flooding in August of 2017. She wrote a blog post about this experience and to share tips and resources for natural disaster preparation: [tiny.cc/adkins-blog](http://tiny.cc/adkins-blog)

**'15** Valencia Campbell, BSW '15, graduated from law school and is studying for the bar.

Arnold Cantu, MSSW '15, has moved out of Texas for the first time in his life! He grew up in South Texas in the Rio Grande Valley, moved to Austin in 2013 for graduate school, and worked at a local public charter school afterwards. This past spring his significant other, Dara, wrapped up medical school and matched at the University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH) for an Internal

Medicine residency program. Arnold tagged along, and he and Dara moved to Albuquerque over Memorial Day weekend. Arnold has also recently passed his clinical exam and is now eagerly working on transferring it to New Mexico in order to become a licensed clinical social worker in the Land of Enchantment!

Rituparna Roy, MSSW '15, has been working at the University of Oregon as the assistant director of sexual violence prevention and education. Over this past year she had the honor of being the keynote speaker for Take Back The Night, International Student Career Awards Night, and the Department of Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Commencement Ceremony. She also co-led trainings and presentations on trauma-informed approaches to advocate for queer, trans/gender diverse students at the 2017 and 2018 Annual NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education Conference. Though she misses the Austin sun and breakfast tacos daily, she is happy to be in an environment that supports her values of justice and sustainability. She wants more UT Austin alumni (arguably the most awesome social workers) to move to the Pacific Northwest. Feel free to reach out to her as a connection. Hook 'Em!

Heidi Tso, BSW '15, will be attending the University of Houston's Graduate School of Social Work to obtain her Master of Social Work in their advanced standing clinical program. She starts this fall.

**'16** Aftyn Behn, MSSW '16, has been hired as one of six solo statewide political organizers in Tennessee for the Indivisible Project, a nationwide movement of thousands of volunteer-led local groups that engage in progressive advocacy and electoral work at the local, state and national level.

**'18** Kerrie Judice, MSSW '18, finished her master's this past summer and has been working for Senator Kirk Watson as a policy analyst since late July.

Chloe Adeline Picot-Jacobs, MSSW '18, is an infant/early childhood therapist at the Austin Child Guidance Center, where she completed her first field placement.

## BRIAN JAKLICH

2018 Charles I. Wright Distinguished Alum, MSSW '88



**Current position:** Social work facilitator for the Harlandale School District in San Antonio. I supervise district social workers and serve as a liaison with community partners. I also support students dealing with homelessness by helping them access resources through the McKinney-Vento federal program.

**A memory from field:** I worked at a crisis counseling center with a girl who had run away from home after dealing with abuse. She had dropped out of high school and started doing drugs. The work was intense but ultimately she was able to get herself back on track. She returned to school, stopped drugs, and eventually enrolled in college. After this experience, I remember thinking that social work actually works! You provide support and resources to people, and they gain the skills to help themselves. It doesn't matter where you come from or what you're going through — you can still be successful.

**Most used practice skill:** My counseling skills. I especially use cognitive-behavioral skills, as I help people identify their thought patterns and how they can change them. Additionally, I also help people connect to resources.

**Advice for social work students:** Self-awareness and self-care are the keys to our profession. We have the skills to help others, but we also have to make sure that we take care of ourselves, our families and our friends. It is easy to get consumed in this work!

**Three things you can't live without:** My family, my daily run and my two labs, Pebbles and Annie.



# Finding Oneself Through HIP HOP

BY HYDEEN K. BEVERLY

**“In search of Hip Hop...you gotta find yourself” is a mantra that guides the way I live my life.**

In fact, these nine words are tattooed on my right forearm, and they are a daily reminder that this life is a journey and a continuous search to understanding my purpose. In this mantra, I can replace “Hip Hop” with Truth, Knowledge, Wisdom, Understanding and God. Hip hop is the voice that encourages me to reach farther than my eyes can see. With hip hop, I can travel through portals that turn my dreams and visions into realities.

For some, hip hop is a means to financial gain, popularity and lyrical prowess. Not for me. I grew up in different Philadelphia’s housing projects and neighborhoods in a familial and communal environment where drugs and violence were at arm’s reach, and where hip hop culture was ever present. However, I was officially introduced to hip-hop artists that really resonated with me during the most difficult time in my life.

I was in third grade when my maternal grandmother died. Her death was devastating for me. But before she died, she made a decision that changed my life course trajectory. She enrolled me in Girard College, a private, urban boarding school in Philadelphia. While there, I became a member of a village that wanted the best for me. I was surrounded by people who cared for me and believed that there was more to my life than what was available outside my front door, down the street, and around the corner of my block.

One of my teachers at Girard introduced me to hip-hop artists who spoke about education, self-knowledge, community

empowerment, and developing a sense of pride in my identity as a young Black boy. Listening to hip hop music motivated me to learn more about Black history, art and literature. Artists I listened to referenced books such as *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. They encouraged me to read authors like Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Ernest Hemingway and Sam Greenlee. Hip hop was not only about music. It was about finding the courage to explore my truth and not just simply accept what was being taught and preached. As I got older, I found the courage to express myself through hip hop and spoken word. Presently, hip hop is my therapy. It gives me the space to express my true self; it’s cathartic.

There is an emerging trend of using hip hop as a tool to promote self-development and as an intervention to help people treat their trauma. As part of my research in the doctoral program, I use hip hop to inform practice interventions for social workers, educators, and other mental health providers who work with urban youth. I use a first-person, arts-based performance to dialogue with the audience and help them understand how hip-hop lyrics relate to the experiences of the youth they serve.

In *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*, author Ann Arnett Ferguson writes that a student told her that she “would learn nothing about his peers and himself if [she] did not listen to their music.” I can tell you that through hip hop, you will hear my story, and from my story you will learn about me.

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**HYDEEN K. BEVERLY** is a student in the doctoral program at the Steve Hicks School of Social Work.



## Educating future leaders

*James W. and Carla S. Vick Endowed Scholarship in Social Work*

Jim and Carla Vick are passionate about UT Austin programs focusing on social policy and responsibility. Moreover, through her job as an elementary school teacher, Carla is well aware of the need for social services that support children and families. For both reasons, the Vicks were very excited when they learned about the Steve Hicks School of Social Work.

“It was easy to make the decision of establishing this endowment,” they said. “The school’s mission aligns with our goal of supporting the education of the future leaders of our communities, corporations and country. We want to help pay for the education of talented individuals who can support the growing challenges that our society faces today and in the future.”



## Educating leaders to fight poverty

*The Honorable Elliott Naishtat Endowed Presidential Fellowship in Social Work*

As a young VISTA volunteer, Elliott Naishtat (MSSW '72) learned to combat poverty through grassroots organizing. When he joined the UT Austin graduate program in social work, his field placement revealed another arena for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations: the Texas Legislature. As a member of the Texas House of Representatives (1991–2017), Elliott was an unrelenting advocate for health and human services.

Elliott hopes this endowment will help deserving students majoring in areas such as social policy and community organizing pay for their education. His advice to these students? “Never forget that the Declaration of Purpose of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which authorized the creation of President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, was ‘to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this nation.’ There is still a lot of work to be done.”

## Giving back to social work

*Camille D. Miller Endowed Scholarship in Social Work*

Anna Camille Dvorsky Miller (MSSW '72) chose social work to become an interpersonal counselor but discovered policy. “Professor Anne Wilkins recognized a special ability in me to see the big picture and challenged me to use this gift to make a difference in peoples’ lives,” Miller said. She is eternally grateful to professors Wilkins, Williams, Lauderdale, Hess, Austin, Shuttlesworth, Laughlin and Herbert.

Miller was only able to attend college by working and by the assistance of scholarships. “This endowment is my way of giving back to the school to make it possible for students who are in situations similar to mine in my student days to overcome financial barriers and accomplish their dreams,” she said.



## Helping students achieve their dreams

*Andrew and Stacey Cernicky Endowed Scholarship in Social Work*

Neither Andrew nor Stacey Cernicky attended UT Austin but they understand the positive impact that high-quality college education can make in our communities. They also know that the Steve Hicks School of Social Work is uniquely qualified to make a difference in Texas, in our nation, and beyond. They hope that this endowment will help social work students achieve their dreams and become community leaders committed to make this world a better place for everyone. Their advice to these students is “learn and expand your viewpoint, embrace different cultures, build strong relationships with your peers, challenge professors with your thoughts and ideas, and be the social worker you would want to have if you needed one yourself.”







## Supporting students in their internships

*Mary and Brian Mulvaney Endowed Scholarship in Social Work*

Brian and Mary Mulvaney are thankful for the scholarships that allowed them to attend UT Austin and be proud Longhorns for life. As a member of the social work clinical faculty, Mary (MSSW '80) knows first-hand about students' need for financial assistance while they are completing their required internships. The Mulvaney's established this endowment to meet this need.

"Internships are incredible opportunities for professional and personal growth because students experience different social-work roles and responsibilities, from direct client interactions to advocacy and group work," Mary said. "We want to help students as they go through this experience. My hope is that students who pursue a career in social work will be as happy with that choice as I have been."

## Why I Give

Catherine Mullan (MSSW '05) was working as a hospital social worker after graduating. She decided that she wanted a nursing degree, too. "I am a better nurse because I was a social worker first, and I always tell people this when they ask me," she said.

Mullan is now a day hospital program therapist at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago. She works with inner city populations in an intensive outpatient program, delivering therapy for individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder who have been in combat or are survivors of military sexual trauma.

She still remembers the excitement and energy she felt during her time in the master's program by simply sharing the classroom with people who were so committed to the social-work field. She also remembers her face hurting from smiling so much at graduation and how fortunate she felt that her field instructor came all the way from Houston to see her walk across the stage.

"I am grateful for my experience at the Steve Hicks School of Social Work. I give to show my appreciation for the investment everyone at the school made in me," Mullan said.



## Steve Hicks Matching Gift Challenge

Steve Hicks likes to say that the real secret of being a philanthropist is that you receive much more than what you give. Because he wants others to share in the joy of giving to social work, he has issued a \$5 million matching challenge to create endowed scholarships. The rules are as follows:

- Give or pledge \$50,000 or more (to be completed within 5 years).
- Steve Hicks will match the amount.
- Your name — or that of a family member, friend or organization — will be linked forever to scholarly excellence at The University of Texas at Austin.

To participate in the challenge, visit [sites.utexas.edu/steve-hicks-challenge](https://sites.utexas.edu/steve-hicks-challenge) or call 512-475-6840.



# THE UTOPIA SOCIETY

## Recognizing Gifts Made in Fiscal Year 2018

The Utopia society is comprised of alumni and friends who provided monetary contributions to the Steve Hicks School of Social Work to assist in providing excellent educational programs for our students. Listed herein are those who made personal contributions of \$100 or more between September 1, 2017 and August 31, 2018. Many others contributed their valuable time and talents to enhance the educational experiences of our students. We deeply appreciate the generosity of all of our supporters!

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