

# GRADUATE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



## FALL & WINTER 2017

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# Message from the Dean

## Dear Students, Alumni, Colleagues, and Friends,

Welcome to the Fall/Winter 2017-18 issue of the Graduate School's Newsletter.

Once again, we are excited to highlight many of the activities of our students, faculty, and programs. In this issue, you'll learn of groundbreaking research for Alzheimer's treatment forged by the partnership of GSN's Behavioral Neural Science program and several community groups in Newark. More and more, our students and their work are being recognized for their originality and diversity. We are the only campus nationally to have two students awarded Imagine America fellowships. Research from several of our dissertation fellows is also highlighted, covering topics from environmental, criminal justice, to accounting. Our Jazz History and Research Master's program, the only in the country, celebrates 20 successful years.

This past fall has seen a time when graduate students and higher education have had to weather several challenges. Over the past several months we've seen political debate about many of the populations that we count as critical members of our community. Discussion around the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) Act, has given rise to numerous questions about how to let our students know that we are committed to all of their success, regardless of how or from where they come to the Graduate School-Newark.

We continue to welcome new resources, new support and new outreach. We are thrilled with the opening of the new Life Sciences Center a

\$59 million, state-of-the-art, five-story science complex benefitting our highly-regarded Chemistry, Psychology, Biology, Environmental Geography and Environmental Sciences programs. The Graduate School-Newark is pleased to announce our newly revised website for easier navigation, mobility and information. We have many great stories to tell and will be providing more of these in the near future.

Coming up this Spring, we will once again host the popular Research Week, the week of April 16, where graduate and undergraduate students will present posters, new faculty will be introduced and tours of STEM labs for Newark Public High School students are provided. This spring we will be launching a new Newark public school partnership - so stay tuned.

Please join us for Rutgers Day, Saturday April 28th, a day of fun and festivities for the whole family and be on the look-out for news about our Alumni evening affair set for April 26th. This year the PhD and MFA Hooding Ceremony will take place May 10th followed by RU-N Commencement on May 14th.

We wish you the best for the start of a new year in 2018 and look forward to a productive spring term.

Sincerely,  
Kyle Farmbry, J.D., Ph.D.  
Dean of The Graduate School - Newark

# Fighting Alzheimers in African-American Communities

## *The African-American Brain Health Initiative - Integrating Research with Community Engagement*

The close relationship between Rutgers University and Newark's African-American communities is providing unique insights into Alzheimer's disease and benefiting those at the highest risk for developing it.

Mark Gluck, a Professor of Neuroscience, at the Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience, part of the Graduate School-Newark, said African-Americans are twice as likely as white Americans to get the disease.

"The good news is that it is probably not destiny," Gluck told a gathering of community members in Newark last year. "In Africa, the rates of Alzheimer's are no greater than they are here. So, it's something specific to the African-American community here in the United States. The good news is that this health disparity is most likely due to modifiable lifestyle, diet and behavioral factors."

Gluck explained that researchers know that a sedentary lifestyle, an inadequate diet and poor sleep habits interact with genetics to determine who will get Alzheimer's, a form of dementia responsible for memory loss and poor decision-making. But it's not clear which factor is the most important and how they are interrelated, he said.

Professor Gluck works with two postdoctoral scholars, Ashlee Shaw and Neha Sinha, as well as several graduate students from multiple departments across Rutgers, and many undergraduates (including several who grew up in Newark) to conduct research on aging and Alzheimer's disease in Newark's African-American communities. Their work is part of the African-American Brain Health Initiative: A University-Community Partnership (AABHI), which Gluck co-directs (since 2006) with Assistant Chancellor Diane Hill ([www.brainhealth.rutgers.edu](http://www.brainhealth.rutgers.edu)). Hill provides a critical link to the local community organizations, and their leaders, from which the research participants are recruited.

"We want to build, here in Newark, a nationally-renowned federally-funded center of excellence for the study of brain health, aging and Alzheimer's disease in African-Americans," Gluck said at a community meeting in which African-American leaders mingled with the researchers.



Zumba Class, St James AME Church, Newark, NJ

One of the project's two studies is just now entering its second year. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is providing \$1 million over five years for the research team to determine whether twice-weekly dance-based exercise classes can improve brain function and memory and, ultimately, reduce risk for Alzheimer's disease in African-Americans who are ages 55 and older.

The university is offering 20 weeks of free classes at senior centers and churches to see if regular attendance will improve brain health. The mental skills of willing participants are assessed before and after the five months and their brains are scanned. Participants are free to continue to take classes after the research phase is over.

So far, the team has found evidence of improved learning from trial and error for participants who are regularly taking the exercise classes. This type of learning is controlled by the striatum, the part of the brain that rapidly degenerates when a person has Parkinson's disease, which is another form of dementia. The team's hypothesis is that the brain improves because of the need to learn new dance routines in every class, explained postdoctoral fellow, Ashlee Shaw, who oversees the exercise research.

A second study, funded by the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Aging, is examining the brain health of African-Americans ages 65 and older over five years. For this study, Rutgers is partnering with the University of California at Irvine and its Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, one of 33 National Centers of Excellence in Alzheimer's Research.



Neha Sinha, AABHI Post-Doctoral Fellow

The Rutgers longitudinal study has already enrolled 130 women and 17 men, and the goal is to add 120 more residents each year. The researchers want to increase the participation of men, and are hoping to enroll at least one man for every two women in the coming year. To expand recruitment of older African-American men, the AABHI sponsors a variety of outreach programs in the community including working with local church men's ministries, community barbers, and organizing an annual classic car show and men's brain health fair.

At a recent meeting in the Gluck laboratory, members of the team spoke excitedly about the impact they are having in the community.

The dance-based exercise classes are necessary because many barriers to

better health exist for older adults in urban areas, said Shaw, whose step-grandfather suffered from Alzheimer's. She cites deteriorating sidewalks and the perception of unsafe neighborhoods, which make it difficult for residents to walk as a form of exercise. She said those with lower incomes often work more than one job, or engage in shift-work, which can make it difficult to establish a regular exercise routine.

"We find that our participants are well educated about the risks of Alzheimer's and want to reduce that risk, but we need to remove obstacles to make it easier for them to do that," she said.

"The reason for holding the classes in senior centers and churches is because they are easy to access, and welcoming to the community at large. The gym can be very intimidating if you're not used to

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*Those who go through the exercise classes, their brains are rewiring to become more like a younger person's brain”*



Ashlee Shaw, AABHI Post-Doctoral Fellow

going all the time, and it can also be expensive, which is another barrier to regular exercise.”

Gluck told the team how the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a \$414 million increase in Alzheimer’s and dementia research in the federal budget for fiscal year 2018. Shaw thinks the increased spending will save money in the long-term.

“The money that’s being allocated for the Alzheimer’s program is a fraction of what they would spend on those with the disease,” she said.

Neha Sinha, another postdoctoral scholar who oversees the brain imaging component of the research, said the brain scans are already producing interesting results. She said that researchers have found that the medial temporal lobe, which is the earliest known location in the brain affected by Alzheimer’s, shows a hyper-synchronization within its sub-regions. This possibly reflects reduced network flexibility, implying that the neural pathways are so heavily connected that they cannot accommodate any new information, she said.

“Those who go through the exercise classes, their brains are rewiring to become more like a younger person’s brain,” said Gluck who practices what he preaches by biking, sea kayaking and skiing regularly.

Diane Hill, Assistant Chancellor for University-Community partnerships, said her role is to build the relationships with the community. Hill, whose mother had Alzheimer’s, is excited about the impact the university is having. She feels that a lot is at stake.

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*I would hate for them to come up with a cure for Alzheimer’s and it doesn’t work for African-Americans because we weren’t part of the research”*

Diane Hill, Assistant Chancellor for University Community Partnerships.

“I would hate for them to come up with a cure for Alzheimer’s and it doesn’t work for African-Americans because we weren’t part of the research,” she said.



L-R: Dr. Mark Gluck, Professor, AABHI Director, Dr. Diane Hill, Asst. Chancellor, OUCP

# Chipping Away at the Ivory Tower:

Two GSN students win national fellowships for public engagement



Naomi Extra

“Sometimes people in the ivory tower want to go in to communities, get what they need to hear, go back, write a book, and be gone,” says Naomi Extra. She’s a fourth year doctoral student in American Studies who is committed to conducting her research in a different way: “I think it’s really important that community members are not just research subjects.”

In her dissertation, Extra is tracing the history of sex-positive black feminism through the writing of three marginalized queer black feminists from the 60s, 70s, and 80s. But her practice as a scholar doesn’t stop there. She also collaborates with everyday people whose personal trailblazing efforts have gone unrecognized. Extra does this through the Queer Newark Oral History Project — a community-driven initiative to preserve Newark’s LGBTQ history.

“I’ve made connections there with people who I still talk to very regularly, some of whom I would consider myself close to,” she says. Not only has she built lasting relationships, she’s strived to be of benefit to them by joining in solidarity at rallies and protests, by taking part in celebrations, and by sitting side by side on panels.

It is this commitment to changing the traditional model of academic scholarship that recently landed Extra a PAGE Fellowship from Imagining America — a national consortium devoted to publicly engaged scholarship in the arts, humanities, and design. For one year, fellows promote the practice around the country through conferences, working groups, lectures, and networking.

Extra gives credit to the American Studies program and faculty for encouraging the principle of a mutually beneficial relationship between academics and communities as a foundation for research. “I saw that through example,” she says.

“

A lot of times people in the Ivory Tower want to go in to communities, get what they need to hear, go back, write a book, and be gone”

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“It’s about the ways that people have agency, and are able to carve space within their own worlds to document and uplift their communities.”

This vision of reciprocity is also at the heart of the Graduate School Newark and of RU-N, where the strategic plan includes a commitment to publicly engaged scholarship. The goal being to fulfill higher education’s civic purpose of addressing contemporary issues with an eye to the public good, but also to break past the university’s walls and exchange knowledge with the surrounding communities.

Extra says that this approach lends itself to greater impacts. Her work on intersectional feminism, combined with the relationship with Newark’s LGBTQ community is strengthening the usefulness of her research. “It’s a way of getting at a fuller sense of our humanity,” she says.

This year, RU-N is the only university in the country to have more than one student selected for the PAGE fellowship. Lauren O’Brien, second year American Studies doctoral student, also won a PAGE Fellowship.

O’Brien is a public historian whose research focuses on racial identity, passing, and how African-Americans are sustaining and memorializing their culture and history within their own communities and outside of formal spaces like museums.

Her research interest was shaped by her experience this past summer during a USAID Fellowship in South Africa. While examining the history of a Cape Town community’s Carnival celebrations, she was struck by the way their songs, stories, and performances function as an alternative living archive.

“For me it’s trying to help see what is being missed with formal institutions,” says O’Brien. The twenty-five year old has experience working in cultural community spaces, such as the Grammy Museum in LA, and the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago.

She laments that people of color are often kept from the knowledge available in public institutions because the spaces are not reflective of their stories, or because the only staff who are people of color work in low level positions but not in curatorial or management roles. “These spaces can be very isolating so they don’t want to go there, or they don’t see it as a space for them.”

This is why O’Brien is now approaching the work of preservation and

memorialization of black American’s histories from a different angle: by showing that it’s already happening, and has been happening for centuries, in their own private lives.

“That’s a place where there is power in the people, where it’s not all about the all-knowing historian who got a PhD,” she says. “It’s about the ways that people have agency, and are able to carve space within their own worlds to document and uplift their communities.”

As PAGE Fellows, both O’Brien and Extra will spend the next year contributing to the literature on Publicly Engaged Scholarship. To date, they’ve written blog posts on the Imagining America website that situate their research within the public engagement model, which you can read <http://imaginingamerica.org/>.



Lauren O'Brien

# Meet the 2017 Dissertation Fellows

Each year, partnering with graduate program directors, GSN selects doctoral candidates to receive dissertation fellowships, entailing \$20,000 to support each candidate as they complete their writing and research during the academic year.

We interviewed five of this year's fellows, whose combined research impact ranges from understanding the spread of invasive species, to accounting for prosecutors involved in exonerations, to shedding light on how the Gay Liberation and Black Panther movements influenced each other. Take a look at the critical contribution 2017 fellows are making to criminal justice, science, and the humanities.

## Getting Ahead of Invasive Shrubs

Biology doctoral candidate Anthony Cullen grew up hiking New Jersey's Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. This past year, he trekked through forests and parks all over the northeast, studying how invasive shrubs spread their seeds. His findings could help land managers develop strategies to combat the proliferation of what is potentially the next dominant invasive species.

Linden viburnum and Siebold's viburnum are woody understory shrubs, brought over from east Asia as decorative plants in the mid-1800s. About 30 years ago they were identified as a problem, displacing native plants. Cullen is analyzing the two species' seed dispersal strategies: Siebold's viburnum has fewer seeds, but they're larger and disperse during fall migration, so there's a higher chance a bird could carry them over a great distance; whereas linden viburnum has more seeds, but they aren't as nutritious, so birds are less likely to eat them. Cullen hopes his data will give other scientists a baseline to help further understand how other invasive plants spread.



Anthony Cullen

## When Prosecutors Exonerate

Media coverage of post-conviction exonerations often depicts the innocent person standing outside the courthouse accompanied by their defense attorney. What's unseen by the public but can nonetheless have a critical impact on people's lives is the aide of prosecutors in overturning convictions.

Criminal Justice doctoral candidate Elizabeth Webster spent seven years working at the Innocence Project, hearing from lawyers on staff what a difference a prosecutor's cooperation could make in getting someone exonerated. She returned to grad school and embarked on researching what motivates prosecutors to pursue exoneration. She's looking at factors that make prosecutors most and least likely to assist, and also conducting qualitative interviews with prosecutors to understand the why of helping.

Conviction Integrity Units, where prosecutors re-examine convictions that may have been botched, are an increasingly common reform in district attorneys' offices. Webster's research examines their efficacy: Are they an empty campaign platform, or are they truly helping?

"If we're going to be excited about these [reform] developments, we need to follow up and see if they're working," Webster said.



Elizabeth Webster

## Fail Up

If at first you don't succeed, try, try to think about a time you failed in order to boost your persistence.

As an undergraduate psychological researcher, Brynne DiMenichi studied motivation, and found that subjects who wrote and reflected on failure before performing a sustained-attention task were more persistent in their efforts than those who wrote about success or a control group who did not write about anything. The results were stark and surprising: People who reflected on failure were better able to sustain their attention.

DiMenichi's dissertation continues the project, now she's collecting the physiological evidence to back her early findings and better understand how reflecting on failure affects brain state. Her dissertation comprises five related studies with about 500 participants. The results could have clinical applications -- for anxiety treatment, for instance. And there may be classroom implications as well: Much attention is paid to the importance of nurturing positive self-image, but making space for self-reflection on failure might also improve students' education outcomes.



Brynne DiMenichi

## Success Factors for Campus Latinas

When Latinas are the research subject, education studies most often highlight the negative -- enrollment and retention rates that fall behind white and Asian students. A plethora of failure stories reinforce stereotypes of Latinas as poor students. Global Urban Systems doctoral candidate Jennifer Bucalo aims to correct this distorted one-sided lens by instead focusing on success: What factors help Latinas achieve on campus?

Bucalo has surveyed 105 third- and fourth-year Latina collegians across the nation, and is presently working on collecting data from another 105 who enrolled previously but did not graduate (she's hesitant to use the term "drop out" since many subjects plan to return when circumstances allow). Bucalo's literature review indicates strong cultural connections before and during college can increase success. However, her research and personal experience working with fellow Latinas in the classroom also indicate that some supposed deficits require reconsideration: Bucalo has heard from many Latina students that family obligations (caring for older or younger relatives) impede education. As soon as a student takes a break from school, her scholarship money evaporates. Perhaps universities should rework policies to accommodate the work of caretaking. As a society, do we really want to frame caring for others as a deficit?



Jennifer Bucalo

## Gay Liberation, Black Power -- Together

When the Black Panther Party organized the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in 1970, they invited Radicalesbians, Third World Gay Revolution, and The Gay Liberation Front. This was just one among many gestures of solidarity exchanged between the Black Panther and Gay Liberation movements in the 1960s and 70s, according to American Studies doctoral candidate Andrew Lester who is combing through recently-digitized archives from San Francisco's GLBT Historical Society and many years of The Black Panther newsletters, among other archival sources, to pinpoint the intersections and cross-pollinations of the two movements.

In mainstream media, the Black Panther Party is often depicted as macho and brazenly opposed to federal government, whereas Gay Liberation is represented as white, middle-class, and hewing closer to establishment. Both representations are reductive and inaccurate. Lester is shedding light on instances where activists from both groups worked together and how they influenced each other's ideas.



Andrew Lester

# Celebrating 20 years of the Jazz History & Research Program



The M.A. in Jazz History and Research program is one-of-a-kind - the only jazz history and research program in the country. While other jazz programs focus on the performance aspects of jazz; this program, specializes in jazz history and research. What makes it even more special is that it's complemented by the Institute of Jazz Studies (IJS), recognized as the world's leading jazz archives.

The program was founded in 1997 by program director Dr. Lewis Porter, a jazz pianist, jazz scholar, educator, and author of several jazz books, including an award-winning biography of John Coltrane.

"I saw that there were many programs for jazz performers but no program for people interested in jazz history and research," says Porter. "At the same time, I was very disappointed with the level of publications about jazz, many of which did not demonstrate much knowledge of historical research methods or of musical analysis. So, my goal was to train musically literate people to go out into the world and research, teach, and write about jazz."

Despite the program's emphasis on the historiography and musicology of jazz, it continues to be accessible and adaptable to its students – musicians and non-musicians, those with or without a degree in music, those interested in writing about and teaching jazz, or those who just simply want learn about the history of jazz.

"I came into the program wanting to learn and understand the history of the music," says Leslie Haynes, a student of the program and the daughter of legendary jazz drummer and group leader, Roy Haynes. Her thesis focuses on the first 45 years of her father's life and his career in jazz. "Jazz has always been a part of my life and being immersed in the study of jazz has been great for me." She credits the program for "awakening my desire to perform again" and for "motivating me to develop my craft".

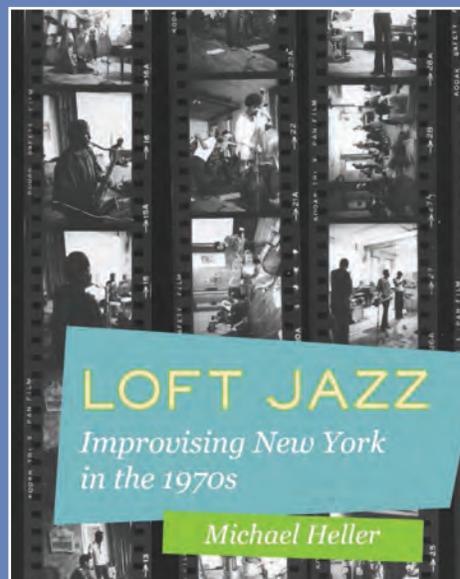
Another student, Michael Li, describes the program as a "boutique program designed for people for whom jazz has had a holding power". Li came into the program wanting to learn about jazz from both a musical and historical perspective. The program's unique specialization has made this possible. "This is the only graduate program in the world that does that. Prof. Lewis Porter and Prof. Henry Martin belong to one of the first generation of academics who specialized in jazz. Lewis is the world expert on Lester Young and John Coltrane, while Henry is one of the first jazz theorists and a world expert on Charlie Parker. "Porter reflects that over the past 20 years: "There has been a major increase in scholarly writings about jazz, not only by musicians but by knowledgeable people in other disciplines such as English, history, and even theology. I certainly believe that our own graduates and their accomplishments and writings have had something to do with this success."

"To study with historians like Lewis Porter and Henry Martin and take courses about Miles Davis and John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus, in addition to Porter's essential Jazz Historiography course, these were opportunities I couldn't find in any other jazz program," says alumni, Ricky Riccardi, the Director of Research Collections for the Louis Armstrong House Museum and author of *What a Wonderful World: The Magic of Louis Armstrong's Later Years*.

The program boasts many such notable alumni that includes: legendary Newark and Paris-based jazz organist Rhoda Scott, well-known jazz singer Melba Joyce, famous trombonist who works with Wynton Marsalis at Jazz at Lincoln Center, Vincent Gardner, and many others.



Director Lewis Porter, piano; Michael Li, MA student



Michael Heller, PhD, Jazz MA '05

*The Institute of Jazz Studies is the largest and most comprehensive library and archive of jazz and jazz-related materials in the world.*



Leslie Haynes, MA student



Lewis Porter, Program Director, publications

Porter says having the world's largest jazz library is a huge advantage to the students. Staff and students alike, recognize the essential role that the Institute of Jazz Studies (IJS) plays in supporting students within this program.

"To have that incredible resource just minutes away for two full years was an incredible experience for a budding jazz historian," says Riccardi.

"The IJS supports students in the Jazz History and Research program (and all RU students) by providing access to its rich collections of sound recordings, books, periodicals, and archival materials under our care," said Adriana Cuervo, Assistant Director at the Institute of Jazz Studies. "We are also fortunate to have expert jazz scholars among our faculty archivists and librarians who can answer questions and assist the students in their research."

The IJS was established by historian and jazz lover Marshall Stearns in 1952. In 1966, the IJS became part of Rutgers in Newark. In 1994, it relocated to its current location on the fourth floor of John Cotton Dana Library, 185 University Ave., Newark.



Diana Henriques

## Award Winning Journalist Visits GSN

"I saw him the way the world saw him – admired and respected." That was Diana Henriques's opinion of Bernie Madoff when she covered Wall Street for The New York Times in the 1980s and '90s. Henriques is the author of *The Wizard of Lies: Bernie Madoff and the Death of Trust*, which was recently turned into a hit HBO movie starring Robert DeNiro as the title character; she co-stars, portraying herself.

"The Timeless Lessons of Wall Street's Scandals" was the title of Henriques' talk presented at Rutgers University-Newark in November. The event was sponsored by the Graduate School-Newark, the Institute for Ethical Leadership and the Center for Corporate Law and Governance.

The psychology of trust, and how Madoff was able to perpetrate and perpetuate one of the biggest scams of all time was the focus of her talk. In one revealing story, Henriques related that while interviewing the infamous Ponzi-schemer in prison, Madoff repeatedly complimented her journalistic skill. "It felt great," she said. "And I already knew he was a liar and a fraud."

Madoff possessed uncanny skill in winning trust and admiration, and a carefully constructed strategy to deceive investigators, she noted. He never made an investment opportunity sound so good as to raise questions, and never pressured people to act immediately. Returns were safe and consistent, never sky-high.

She reminded the audience of the worst consequences of Madoff's lies – two of his investors committed suicide, as did his son Mark. Madoff's other son Andrew died when his cancer recurred, which he blamed on the stress of his father's ordeal. Henriques urged the crowd to be vigilant and not "waive the rules" of trust in their own lives.

As for the psychology of Bernie Madoff himself, Henriques postulated that his father's failure in business, which embarrassed their family when Bernie was a child, explains his "pathological inability to admit failure." Even after conviction, Madoff insisted he could have kept the scam going longer, but he had grown tired of it.

Drawing together the many angles of dishonesty in her narrative, Henriques concluded her speech by warning, "In a world full of lies, the most dangerous ones are those we tell ourselves."

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