Note from the Editors:

In the second edition of the Sociology Newsletter we are very excited to share with you who we are, and what we do, as a vibrant academic department at John Jay. This edition reveals the diverse interests of our faculty and students, as they engage their sociological imaginations in researching complex social issues.

In this issue you will meet some of the Sociology department faculty, adjuncts, administrative assistants, and students and read about their journeys and experiences at John Jay College. We hope that you find the Sociology Department Newsletter interesting and informative, and we welcome you to submit pieces for upcoming issues.

Also we have been fortunate to have two student editors helping us with this issue of the Newsletter. Special thanks to Ashley Baxter and Kelly Kondroski for their hard work!

Please send news, updates, and information to:
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Sociology Newsletter

In this issue:
- About SoJust
- Book Awards
- Meet Our Students
- Sociology Talks
- Town Hall Meeting
- Interview With The Newest Member Of The Sociology Department

And so much more…
Welcome from the Chair

Dear students:

Welcome back for the spring semester, and I hope your studies are going well! This is the spring edition of our (second) Department newsletter. As our faculty continue their work in organizing new events and enriching educational experiences for students, we are also currently looking forward to our move back to Haaren Hall, to our permanent site on the fifth floor. Hopefully our move will occur over Spring Break.

Last fall, with support from the Office for the Advancement of Research, we launched the Sociology Talks Series, with a number of speakers from around the country and the world who presented on various significant and timely topics in sociology and criminology. The talks were held during community hour, and refreshments and a light lunch were provided to all College attendees. Speakers covered a broad range of important subjects that are found in many of our classes including, immigration and immigration reform, race, inequality and mass incarceration, cybercrime, protest movements and collective action, and professional theft. We will continue the Sociology Talks Series this spring, so please see the impressive schedule of invited speakers and dates for their appearance in the newsletter.

I’m also happy to report that our website has been revamped with more information that is easily accessible. We are also in the midst of planning a year-end event to celebrate excellence in student research and adjunct teaching. The final arrangements are also being made to fund a new sociology scholarship in LGBT studies and activism, and more scholarships are being planned. A new Dept. advising handbook is now available on our website for instant access to many frequently asked questions and to help you navigate your studies with us. We also have a chapter of the national sociology honor society in the works.

We also held our first Student Town Hall last fall, and had a great turn out where our students gave faculty excellent feedback on various issues, many of which we have already begun to work on. We will have another
Student Town Hall this spring (and we will double the pizza order this time, and have more t-shirts!). We highly value student participation and want to hear your concerns as we continually strive to improve our learning environment and mechanisms for increased engagement and success.

Finally, and certainly not the least of importance, all of our student events and initiatives have been successfully accomplished due to the excellent efforts of our highly dedicated Department administrative staff, Theresa Rockett and Alisa Thomas. Their important work and contributions are highlighted in the current newsletter. Please feel free to stop by, say hello, and introduce yourselves to all of us whenever you find yourself in the Department!

Again, welcome back for the spring semester and I hope you enjoy reading about the Department of Sociology in this, our second newsletter. On behalf of the entire faculty, our best wishes for continued success in your studies, and to those of you who will soon graduate, congratulations!

The Important Role of our Adjunct Faculty; A Note of Collective Appreciation

By Henry Pontell, PhD

We are all highly indebted to the fine efforts of our dedicated adjunct faculty who teach the majority of classes not only in the Department, but also at the entire College. Many students may not be aware that the teacher in their classroom is not always a full-time professor who was hired on a tenure-track line. While our full-time faculty teach numerous classes (and are also required to conduct research and engage in institutional and professional service activities), there are simply not enough of us to cover all necessary classes; in fact, not even most of them. In this regard, adjunct faculty are really the unsung heroes of our Department, College, and of higher education today. They are not compensated at nearly the same rate as full time faculty, do not receive benefits, and many across the nation face severe financial hardships, yet they are an essential part of delivering the curriculum, and educating our students here and elsewhere (if you are interested in learning more, please watch the short documentary at: http://www.bravenewfilms.org/professorsinpovertyutm_campaign=prof_in_pov_ot1&utm_medium=email&utm_source=bravenew)

Over time, as budget environments and the character of higher education have changed, colleges and universities have relied even more heavily on adjuncts. Our Department’s adjunct faculty are almost exclusively local individuals with highly diverse backgrounds, and many have taught at John Jay for years. Most are sociologists by training, some already have PhDs or are PhD students, others are current and former practitioners, and many teach at other schools as well, but all of them have advanced degrees and expertise in their respective areas. We are greatly indebted to our adjuncts for their contributions to our educational mission. We could not offer our curriculum without them, the Department is committed to providing the best working conditions we can for them, and we are extremely pleased to have this opportunity to collectively and publicly recognize their dedication to teaching and to express our sincere appreciation for all they do for our students. The Sociology Department will recognize excellent teaching by our adjunct faculty with awards this spring.

Why I became a Sociologist

By Andrea Siegel, PhD

Academia seemed like it would support my doing what I love, without commercial pressure. While working part-time as a teacher and part-time at an art gallery, I applied to Masters programs to earn the teaching credential. I liked the CUNY Graduate Center Liberal Studies program because you could design your own degree. CUNY looked like an intellectual candy store; and it was affordable. I took courses in English, Sociology, History, and many other things. My academic brain worked well again, finally. I wanted to continue on to get a Doctorate, which would allow me to qualify for a “tenure-track” job that had much better benefits and security than the adjunct teaching I’d...
been doing. At the Graduate Center, I met with department chairmen and chairwomen of English, Psychology, Anthropology, History, and Sociology. I asked how my research interests could fit in: these include martial arts, fine art, popular culture, home, fashion, etc. The meetings reduced my list to two areas: studying Environmental Psychology would have meant following my passionate curiosity and would have been consistent with the way I’d lived my life for the first 38 years. But this time was different: Part of being true to myself involved a genuine desire for a steady living wage. David Chapin, the Environmental Psych program chair said there were few teaching jobs in the field.

Sociology was the second choice. Everyone, including David, said, “Go to Sociology.” When I met with the Sociology Department Chair, Phil Kasinitz, we discussed research I wanted to do on discount shopping in early 20th Century New York, specifically on Klein’s on the Square, a vast discount store that once had iconic status among New York’s immigrants. Phil told me that his father worked at Klein’s, and gave me his dad’s phone number. He said I should study Sociology. Then Phil sent me to talk to Stanley Aronowitz. Stanley said his mother worked at Klein’s and that I should study Sociology. Even though Stanley wouldn’t give me his mother’s phone number, he said that once you get the PhD, you can do what you want. So, I began studying Sociology.

I went into Sociology for the promise of steady money, and for the promise of freedom to pursue my intellectual interests. I wrote a 431 page doctoral dissertation about working in the arts; and was perhaps most fully a Sociologist the day I walked down the aisle at Alice Tully Hall to the stage to shake someone’s hand and be told congratulations, you have earned a PhD in Sociology. My allegiance has been eroding at a rapid rate ever since. I sought a modest tenure-track position, perhaps at Community College. When I entered Graduate School in 2002, the job market seemed relatively robust. The year I graduated, 2009, the Sociology job market imploded in the aftermath of the mortgage crisis meltdown.

We hear so much about tuition rising to levels that send students into financial catastrophe. But all that expensive college tuition does not go toward paying teachers well, or even paying most a living wage. Since graduating, I learned that here in the richest country in the world, 25 percent of college classes nationwide are taught by full-timers with job security, benefits, and a pension. There’s an enormous political engine trying to destroy that small relic of a once-widespread, dignified way of teaching. People like me teach the other 75 percent of college classes. We’re called “adjunct” labor. Most adjunct teachers do not get health insurance, benefits, job security or a pension. We are not paid a living wage. In fact, 31% of adjunct teachers live in poverty. That is higher than the poverty rates for any ethnic group to which my diverse group of adult college students belong.

CUNY does slightly better by its adjunct faculty than the national average: Only half of CUNY classes are taught by adjuncts. If you teach two CUNY classes, you get health insurance. When I tell students I earn about $16,000 a year teaching two classes a term, they say that must be on the low end of the salaries. I tell the truth: this is a high wage for an adjunct. It’s very hard to learn the names of your co-workers, when you, as I do, have four-hour daily commutes to two different jobs in two different states. Since I graduated, research has revealed that most academic jobs go to people who

Photo: Andrea Siegel
earn PhDs from about twenty elite universities. The Graduate Center, where I got my degree, is not one of them. I have submitted many full-time job applications, and been told that colleges receive about 400 applications for each job. I can’t compete with an Ivy League graduate, unless I find a college department that’s looking for someone like me, who has lived an interesting life and gets terrific teaching reviews. I’m not holding my breath.

I like the students. I continue to write and publish, but life as an adjunct is not what I expected when I went into the field. It’s a good thing I have a skill other than teaching Sociology, and another job that pays the bills. What kills me has nothing to do with that. I am a good researcher and writer. I wonder if the lack of time for my calling, lack of income, and lack of job security and benefits, cost me being a great researcher and writer, and making a great contribution. I am not talking about “me” here. We are three-quarters of the college teachers nationwide. Am I the only one who catches a whiff of hypocrisy in the practice of teaching students, they have bright prospects, if our own look this grim? America’s future depends on contributing to a knowledge-based economy; by radically cutting the funding for our educators, we Americans destroy that future.

Why I’ve become a Sociologist, perhaps, in sociological shorthand, I’ve gone too “micro” and too “macro” in the telling of the tale. I’ve dwelt too much on things that are both too personal and private, and also too dark and widespread. As you can see from my narrative, I’ve been interested in work and working my entire adult life. While I value viewing things through a sociological lens, I do not consider myself a Sociologist. I came to the discipline too late to fit myself into that box, and I value the lenses provided by all the academic disciplines. I’m a writer, a teacher, a thinker, and sometimes an artist. I’m an intellectual who is gravely concerned about our nation’s future.

The Glue

By Gail Garfield, PhD

Since arriving at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in March of 1988, Theresa Joan Rockett has been the only secretary in the Sociology Department. Through the years, she has been integral to the day-to-day operations and management of the department. As a stable presence for 28-years, faculty and students have come and gone, yet we continue to rely upon Theresa’s steadfast assistance. In many ways, she can be described as the glue that continues to hold the Sociology Department together, especially during periods of transition.

Theresa is a native New Yorker. She was born in the borough of Staten Island, but grew up in Jamaica, Queens, as the youngest of five sisters and one brother. After graduating from Hillcrest High School, Theresa wanted to work in the criminal justice system and decided to enroll in the Opportunities Industrialization Center, where she trained and received a legal

Sociology is offering two Study Abroad opportunities this summer!

John Jay College is offering ten Study Abroad opportunities this summer, three of which come from the Department of Sociology!
2. “Por La Justicia Social: Crime Victims in Comparative Context” in Castellón, Spain with Prof. Rosemary Barberet (SOC/CRJ 236: Victimology)
Visit www.jjay.cuny.edu/summer-programs for more information, including individual program info session dates. Students can also attend the Study Abroad Fair on March 8th, 12:00 - 3:00, in Hound Square, 1st floor landing of the New Building.

IMPORTANT:
The Sociology Department is returning to its renovated home in May 2016, on the 5th floor of Haaren Hall

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secretary certificate. That training would prove to be ideally suited for her new job at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Sociology Department.

During her tenure at the college, Theresa has participated in and witnessed many important changes in the Sociology Department, over her 28-years of employment. When she arrived, the Sociology Department was located on the 2nd floor of North Hall. Her clerical duties have remained fairly consistent over the years, as she has maintained office files, assisted with course scheduling, distributed correspondence to faculty, mentored work study students, and interfaced with other personnel in following up on college rules and procedures. And, over Theresa’s tenure in the Sociology Department, she has worked closely with department chairs, including David Goodard, Edward Shaughnessy, interim chair Patricia Nash, Barry Spunt, David Brotherton, to the current chair, Henry Pontell, in assisting them to bring their visions to the department.

Theresa Rockett, the glue that holds the Sociology Department together

Theresa is enormously proud of her long service in the Sociology Department and describes herself as “friendly, outgoing, and professional.” Amid a busy work schedule, she is determined to earn a college degree, and is currently taking sociology classes at John Jay. Acquiring a BA degree would be a major academic accomplishment for Theresa. But, above all else, she values the work she has done as a single mother in raising her daughter Ernisha, as her most important accomplishment. Theresa readily recalls the support she received from sociology faculty in this endeavor, and how Ernisha too became a valued member of Sociology Department, as a child attending elementary school across the street from John Jay.

Many afternoons, when the school day was over, Ernisha sat at the department conference room table completing her homework. When that work was done, Ernisha would often assist professors with Xeroxing, stapling and collating papers, for which she was rewarded in some way. Later, as a young adult, Ernisha would earn a BA Degree in Forensic Science from John Jay. Today, during the summer months, you can also catch sight of another one of Theresa’s “pride and joy” sitting at the Sociology Department conference room table, Bles’id, her beloved granddaughter.

Theresa is a valued member of the Sociology Department. Her only clear disappointment over the years, however, is the continued frustration that comes with having only received one pay increase in salary, for her 28-years of service at the college. Yet this ongoing disappointment has not deterred Theresa from “enjoying my work in the Sociology Department and having a good professional relationship with everyone there.”

An Interview with the Newest Member of the Sociology Department: Administrative Specialist Alisa Thomas

By Ashley Baxter, Student

Could you briefly describe your education background?
I attended Hostos Community college, CUNY and received A.A.S. (Associates in Applied Science Degree) in Office Technology, Administration & Medical Billing in 2002. I received B.A. (Bachelors of Arts Degree) from the College of New Rochelle in Communications in 2005. I am currently completing my M.S. (Masters of
What is the nature of your career and why did you choose this area of expertise?
The nature of my career is departmental administration and my expertise is two-fold; Educational Institutional Administration & Student Support Services.

Why did you choose John Jay College?
I started working for John Jay College September 1st 2015. I chose John Jay College because it is the next step in my professional journey after serving as an Administrator at the CUNY Community College level. John Jay's high profile reputation for teaching students how to advocate for justice along with being in the ideal historic location and the diversity of the campus was appealing to me.

What are some of the responsibilities of an Administrative Specialist in the Sociology Department?
As an Administrative Specialist in the Department of Sociology, I am responsible for performing a wide range of administrative and personal assistant duties including conducting research, preparing statistical reports and spreadsheets, preparing correspondence, reports, handling information requests, planning conferences and meetings, providing purchasing support, fulfilling employment administration requirements, processing faculty travel requests, on-line & in-person Student Academic Advisement and coordinating special campus events to name a few.

Do you enjoy working with John Jay students and professors and if yes, what are some of the reasons?
I generally enjoy working with students, especially when it comes to guiding young adults on their career paths. However, I’ve noticed that the John Jay College students are more self-directed than the average students I have encountered at my former job site, which is quite refreshing. I enjoy working with and learning from the faculty in the Department of Sociology. All are masters in their fields, easily approachable, in tuned to the needs of the John Jay College student population and are accommodating when students need their assistance.

What advice do you have for Sociology majors?
I would advise a Sociology Major to first thoroughly understand exactly what being a Sociologist entails. Find out the educational requirements involved, research the salaries connected with the field and most importantly do a self-assessment to figure out if this is the field for you. Go to the American Sociological Association. It is a great resource for students interested in Sociology.

About SoJust

By Kelly Kondroski, Student

There is an exciting new student club at John Jay College of Criminal Justice named the Social Justice Project (SoJust). It was created by Naomi Haber, a junior in CUNY BA program and Aisha Hakim, a senior majoring in Human Rights at John Jay. They created SoJust as a hands-on and highly active project to transform the ways that the John Jay community thinks about social justice on campus and how we think about social justice in the boarder society. Sociology professor Mike Rowan is faculty advisor, and SoJust meetings are not typical of other students’ clubs meetings on campus. Instead the hour that the club spends together is used for planning their events and discussing solutions that affect students such as tuition.
hikes, food banks, better Wi-Fi, and extended service hours for those students who are on campus during the evenings. And in the few months that it officially became an on-campus club, SoJust has already taken its vision of justice to the wider college community in New York City. In December, Naomi and Aisha participated on a panel at Columbia University titled, “Where Art Meets Justice.” This panel was composed of seven students, who discussed the issues of mass incarceration, social justice, and art. The panelists reflected on what their ideas of social justice, alternatives to mass incarceration, and the role of art in transforming lives.

I met with Naomi and Aisha to discuss the club and their purpose for creating it:

Interviewer: Why did you two start the Social Justice Project?

Naomi: Aisha and I have been close friends since my sophomore year, and we've always bonded over feminism, our religious past, ending white supremacy, and our critique of capitalism. After we took a sociology class together with Prof. Rowan, we realized that we have a lot of the same sociological questions and wanted answers. We wanted answers to the questions of what is justice? And, how do we define it? We came up with the idea of SoJust, and wanted to encourage students to start a club around issues of social justice.

At the time, I didn't know the difference between criminal and social justice, which is precisely why we needed a club. We learned quickly that the default way of thinking about justice and responding to crime at John Jay is by using the criminal justice system, such as law enforcement, the courts, and prison. We wanted to challenge that singular way of thinking about social justice.

Aisha: We started SoJust because we felt the need to address the causes of social disparities and injustices like: increasing poverty, social inequality, racism, sexism, rape culture, homophobia, police brutality, white-washing American history, colonization (also known as gentrification these days), homelessness, the Prison Industrial Complex and mass incarceration, Non-Profit Industrial Complex, global warming and environmental racism. We saw all these as forms of state violence.

Interviewer: What does the Social Justice Project stand for and/or strive to do?

Naomi: On a macro-level, our activist work and politics are guided by the vantage point of the working class

Sociology Department Advising

The Department offers several options to students who have questions about the criminology, sociology, or dispute resolution major or minor:
1. Department of Sociology Advising website. The website is home to major and minor worksheets that a student can fill out, and a Student Advising Guide with answers to most student questions: www.jjay.cuny.edu/student-advisement-0
2. They can email socadvising@jjay.cuny.edu with questions.
3. They can make an appointment with a faculty advisor using AdvisorTrac https://jjcadvisortrac.jjay.cuny.edu
struggle, where we examine the structural effects of the sociopolitical and economic systems as well as individual assumptions around criminality, identity, culture, politics, and human rights. On a micro-level, our efforts take on the form of community and campus organizing. We’re working on a campaign challenging various injustices at John Jay as we speak. We believe that students at John Jay ought to question what justice means and what it looks like, especially at a school that claims to be dedicated to “educating for justice.” It’s kind of odd that we don’t examine various definitions of justice on a collective scale throughout the college. I hope we can change that.

*Aisha*: In short, we’ve decided to tackle the root causes of capitalism/imperialism, white supremacy, and patriarchy. These are the root causes of ALL social problems around the globe. And with exposing the root causes, we hope to be able to address inequality and injustice as a whole, instead of picking at a million inequalities and injustices that manage to reproduce themselves somewhere down the road. Reforms are soooooo 1960s. It’s no wonder we’re fighting the same shit. We hope to bring about change in worker’s rights, food justice and free access to higher education - just to name a few.

*Interviewer*: What are your hopes for SoJust?

*N*: My vision for SoJust is to be the catalyst for cultural and institutional change at John Jay and throughout NYC. I know at John Jay there haven’t been student demonstrations since about 2005 and I hope we can bring that back. If we’re not constantly holding people in power accountable, how will we ever be able to see radical social change? The masses need to have power and we’re ready to regain the political participation necessary for the kind of change we imagine for a more just future. For me, justice means liberation for those who are violently oppressed. With the right knowledge we can absolutely get there. Now, let’s rise up.

*A*: The overall outcome is to empower students and community members with the knowledge and tools to hold authorities accountable and make our streets and communities safe from the police and other state actors that do us harm. We hope to not only envision a just world, but create that world together.

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Meet our students

**Ashley Baxter** is a first generation college student that was born and raised in Jamaica, but relocated to the United States to further her education. She earned her Associate of Arts in Criminal Justice from the Borough of Manhattan Community College in 2015 and transferred to John Jay College as a junior where she currently majors in Sociology and minors in English and Political Science. She decided to major in Sociology because of her abiding concern about political and socio-economic inequality in society. Her interest lies in studying the history, system, and institutions of the United States to deepen her understanding of inequality, particularly at the institutional level in order to help address it in the near future as an attorney and legal scholar. Sociology will allow her to achieve this goal because it looks beyond the individual to understand society. A degree in Sociology will also provide her with the analytical and research skills to be a well-rounded and efficient lawyer.
Why I became a Sociologist

By Maria R. Volpe, PhD

My career as a sociologist began in high school! In my senior year, two new courses were added to the curriculum: political science and sociology. Both were so different from anything I had studied until that point and both were by far the most interesting courses in the curriculum. As I thought about what I wanted to study in college, I gave serious thought to both political science and sociology since I really liked and excelled in both of them. However, sociology seemed so much more relevant in understanding the world, especially the very culturally diverse community that I grew up in. So, by the time I graduated from high school at 17 years old, I made a decision that would set the stage for my life's work! I would go to college to major in sociology. Yet, even though I always majored in sociology, as I look back, I still made many decisions along the way that got me to where I am now.

Once I began taking college courses, I found that I really liked my psychology and anthropology courses. After much thought, just like high school, I decided to continue with sociology. What seemed so special about sociology was not only that one learned to understand the world through a special lens, but that if a person was unsure about what profession one wanted to pursue, sociology allowed you to explore a wide range of specialties. Since I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do once I graduated, sociology was perfect. It was a discipline that allowed me to attempt to understand the world in so many different contexts. I could study, deconstruct, observe, and analyze all facets of social life. All I had to do was think of an area of interest and there was a way to find or carve out a specialty in Sociology. It was like a dream discipline!

As an undergraduate, I took a variety of sociology classes, but I was particularly interested in those that focused on crime and race and ethnic relations. I was very fortunate to have been selected as a research assistant to work with two faculty advisors who had been studying policing in African American communities and assimilation of Chinese Americans respectively. I also got to work with a research team studying chronic offenders at Clinton Correctional Facility, a maximum-security state prison for men located in Dannemora, NY.

I researched the attitudes of inmates toward parole and then the family background of the chronic offender. As part of the research team, I got to present at conferences sponsored by the State University of New York, the Forensic Clinic of McGill University (Montreal, Canada), and the NYS Department of Corrections. As I reflect back, this experience was one of those defining moments that helped to shape the next steps of my work as a sociologist.

By the time I was a college senior and started making plans about my future, I vacillated between joining the Peace Corps and going to graduate school. I knew it was impossible to be a sociologist with pursuing graduate work. When I was awarded an NIMH Fellowship in the Sociology of Criminal Law at NYU to study with Richard Quinney, I knew exactly what I was going to do. I entered the doctoral program in sociology right out of undergraduate school and continued my journey toward becoming a sociologist. During graduate school, I again took a wide range of courses, but when we had to choose concentrations, I selected the sociology of law, crime, and race and ethnic relations.

My interest in conflict resolution, the focus of my current research and academic work was an outgrowth of my doctoral dissertation research that examined on the transformation of localism as an organizing principle for lower criminal courts. While that research studied the uprooting of local criminal court systems that were close to the people, I also began researching the emergence of a new movement that sought to bring justice close to the people by training local citizens as mediators in local communities. The mediators would handle cases that would otherwise end up in the criminal courts. These new local programs were designed to be less expensive and
better than the traditional courts, much like the case being made by those transforming the traditional court structures I had been studying. I began to balance two court related movements, one that uprooted deep-rooted traditional local justice systems and a new movement that was rooting a new form of local justice. Needless to say, the latter added a whole new, cutting edge dimension to my doctoral research.

While in graduate school, I referred to myself as a sociologist or criminologist depending on the context, especially when I taught criminology classes. As I finished my dissertation and moved on in my studies, I was ready to become either a mainstream sociologist or criminologist. When I started working at John Jay, all of my interests converged: the long standing interests in sociology and criminology, and my more newly found interest in conflict resolution. With then Dean James Malone, I began a pilot academic program focusing on conflict resolution coursework for our students.

As widespread interest in conflict resolution studies grew over the years, with the assistance of nearly $2 million dollars of funding, I was uniquely positioned to be able to do exciting scholarly work, teaching and innovative program development. My research has focused on police use of mediation, barriers to minority participation in the dispute resolution field, the role of religion in reconciliation, and post-disaster dispute resolution. I have been able to publish extensively, participate in scholarly activities around the world, serve on editorial boards, and work with terrific colleagues and students. Specializing in conflict resolution has provided unique opportunities to apply one’s knowledge, so I have been able to conduct a wide range of training programs, mediate conflicts, and facilitate difficult conversations. Since 9/11, I have been managing a listserv for over 3,000 conflict resolvers from over 20 countries and running a monthly Roundtable Breakfast that attracts a wide range of scholars and conflict resolution experts every first Thursday of the month at 8 am.

As we often hear, if you really like what you do, you will never work a day in your life. I am very fortunate to have been introduced to a field of study very early in my life that has been truly enjoyable and rewarding. Since high school, sociology has been defining my career!
Jana Arsovska, winner of the 2015 Best Publication Prize for her book, Decoding Albanian Organized Crime, with Dwight C. Smith, Jr., who presented her the IASOC award. Her book also won the 2015 ASC International Division Award (below with Sanja Kutnjik Ivkovic)

Lucia Trimbur Book Talk (10-13-15) Come Out Swinging The Changing World of Boxing in Gleason's Gym (above, right)

Sociology Professor David Brotherton wins 2015 ASC Praxis Award!
Sociology Talks Series

Sociology Talks - Bryan Sykes on Race, the Carceral State, Mass Incarceration and Social Inequality in America (October 19, 2015)

Sociology Talks: Dwight C. Smith Jr. and Jana Arsovska (October 5, 2015)

Sociology Talks: Ruth Milkman Event Occupiers and Dreamers Insiders and Outsiders in a New Political Generation

Sociology Talks: Ruth Milkman, The President of the American Sociological Association and Alisa Thomas (October 8, 2015)
What’s in a name? John Jay, historical memory, and taking justice seriously

By Mike Rowan, PhD

In the United States we are utterly incapable of reflecting honestly on our history and the things that we do wrong. . . . We confuse pride and support for America with the notion that we can never apologize, never acknowledge our defects. And we are suffering because of it. . . . I firmly believe that until we tell the truth about [our] history, we will not recover, we will not move forward. The basic human-rights violations are too grave and too overwhelming to just evaporate. They create traces and shadows and cuts and injuries that we cannot ignore.

These are the words—brilliantly and beautifully spoken—of Bryan Stevenson.

Stevenson is the executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, one of our country’s leading civil rights organizations. Stevenson has rightfully earned a reputation as one of the very best litigators in the history of American law. He is unrivaled in his abilities as a capital defense attorney. And he has worked both within and beyond the legal system to advocate for America’s most disadvantaged populations. Stevenson is, without question, nothing short of an exemplar of justice.

It is thus certainly a very proud moment in the history of our college that Stevenson is about to receive the John Jay Medal for Justice. To say the very least, it is a medal much deserved.

And that could simply be that.

Or we could take this moment as an opportunity to seriously contemplate what it would mean to take Stevenson’s words to heart.

Doing the latter is what the Social Justice Project (“SoJust” for short) has been working very hard to do over the past several months.

Time will make abundantly clear all that SoJust is about. The short of it is that SoJust is a student organization dedicated to doing everything possible to truly realize our college’s undeniably worthy mission of “educating for justice,” as well as the task of working together to cultivate, among students and faculty alike, a culture of “fierce” advocacy for justice.

Much, much more on this in due time.

The question for the present moment is ‘what’s in a name?’

Taking our cue from Stevenson and others, the answer for SoJust and its growing list of supporters is quite a bit.

Right now, we are the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Is this a name to be proud of? Is it a name worthy of a college dedicated to educating for justice?

SoJust thinks not.

John Jay was, to be sure, a complicated historical figure. By the standards of our time and his, he was far from the worst of men. To his credit, he helped to found New York’s first manumission society and he spoke openly about the evils of slavery. Yet, by the standards of our time and his, he was certainly not the best of men either.

Even as Jay spoke out against slavery, he continued to own slaves. And while he eventually freed his slaves, he only did so after determining that they had sufficiently worked off their debts and proved themselves worthy of freedom.

To students of democracy and social justice, Jay is also perhaps best known for the quote: “The men who own the country ought to govern it.”

A college that is truly committed to justice can and should do better.

And we need not look to another time in history to find better. There can be no serious question that one of Jay’s contemporaries—Frederick Douglass—was as true and fearless a champion of justice in his time as anyone, perhaps as much so as any figure in American history, and surely more so than his white slave-owning contemporaries, after whom so many of our nation’s institutions are routinely named without anything remotely resembling the sort of introspection that Stevenson calls for.
If we are serious about educating for justice, if we are serious about being fierce advocates for justice, if we are serious about Black History, and if we are serious about Black Lives truly Mattering in our society, SoJust merely asks: Why not have a name that signifies all of these things?

Why not a Frederick Douglass College of Justice?

As Bryan Stevenson counsels, let’s come out from under the shadows. Let’s be honest with ourselves and each other. Let’s admit our faults. Let’s make amends where amends are clearly in order.

And let’s be proud of what’s deserving of pride. Let’s give ourselves the best possible chance to be our better selves.

Let’s not only educate for justice; let’s do justice. What’s in name? That’s a question not just for SoJust and those who seek to change the name of our institution. It’s a question for all of us who find ourselves a part of this same institution. Do we think the time for change has come? Or not?

John Jay vs. Frederick Douglass? Sojust and its supporters think—and will be actively pressing forward with the case—that the answer is quite clear.

Sociology is a fairly new major at John Jay, but it is also a growing major with 103 majors and 178 minors. New courses are added to the curriculum each semester as more and more students express interest in the field. Some of the concerns that some students expressed at the town hall were related to the availability of courses, the need for a joint BA/MA Criminology program, and more classes to address the militarization of the police and other social issues. Other students such as Anthony Sexton expressed concern about tuition increase. The department chair, major and minor coordinators, and professors assured students that they were doing everything in their power to address their concerns and encouraged them to visit their offices during office hours more frequently.

Professor David Green speaking at Town Hall Meeting

**CAMPUS EVENT: TOWN HALL MEETING**

By Ashley Baxter, Student

“From this town hall meeting we would like students to know that the sociology department is an inclusive department that cares about what students think. We hope to continue to improve our programs to better serve the needs and the interests of John Jay students,” said Sociology department chair Henry Pontell.

On Thursday, November 5, 2015, the Sociology Department had its first town hall meeting for the school year during community hour in room L.61 of the new building. The event provided students with the opportunity to share their experiences as sociology majors at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and to express their concerns and ask questions of the department chair, major and minor coordinators, and professors. The first 60 Sociology majors and minors to arrive at the town hall meeting received a free t-shirt and refreshments in the form of free pizza and soft drinks were served to all students who attended.
Why I became a Sociologist

By Amy Adamczyk, PhD

I took a very circuitous route to becoming a sociologist. I grew up in rural Wisconsin, four hours south of the Canadian border. My parents were part of the Back to the Land movement and settled there to start a dairy farm when my sister and I were little. As I was growing up, my mom taught me how to sew and at school I learned how to sketch. By the time I was a teenager I had settled on my career choice, which was to be a fashion designer. In part because of the cold Wisconsin winters, I wanted to attend art school somewhere warm. Hence, I first began college at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia.

This was a very expensive private college and during my first year it became clear that I would have difficulty paying tuition for the second year. I had heard about the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, which also seemed to be a more logical place to learn about the fashion industry. I submitted a portfolio, was accepted, and moved to NYC when I was 19. I entered their one-year associate’s degree program with the intention of completing both AAS and BA degrees. However, after graduating with my associate’s degree, I realized that with just that education and a fashion portfolio, I could get a job as an assistant designer. After working for a few years in the fashion industry I realized that I did not enjoy it nearly as much as I thought I would. I had some experiences that were similar to those portrayed in the movie, Devil Wears Prada.
At age 22 I decided to go back to school to finish my BA. At this point my parents had also temporarily moved away from Wisconsin to join the Peace Corp in Jamaica. I chose Hunter College, in part, because it is relatively inexpensive. During one of my first sociology courses, I fell in love with the discipline. My strong connection to sociology is likely related to my upbringing. I remember lying in bed as a kid listening to my parents talk with their friends about materialism, Marxism, communism, the Vietnam War, the draft, and so forth. Neither of my parents had gone to college, but the ideas I had heard them discussing were sociological, though, of course, they were not using sociology terms.

I started to inquire about how one becomes a sociologist, and was told by my professors to stay in school. Next, I enrolled in and then graduated from the University of Chicago’s Masters in Arts Program in the Social Sciences. The program was interdisciplinary and a good fit for my various interests within sociology. I then enrolled in the Sociology program at the Graduate Center, which is a part of the City University of New York. By then I was getting a better sense of the sub-disciplines within sociology that really excited me. I had become interested in the sociology of religion and the study of deviance. The Graduate Center had very few people doing work in these areas. I, therefore, applied again to graduate school and found myself in the Sociology Doctoral Program at Pennsylvania State University where there were more professors doing research that really excited me. I graduated with my doctorate in 2005.

After earning my Ph.D., I was able to secure a faculty position at Wayne State University, which is located in Detroit. I was quite happy living there. I had a wonderful (very inexpensive) apartment, good colleagues, and found people to be very friendly and nice. Nevertheless, I longed to be back in New York, which at this point I absolutely loved. A few years later I got a position in New York City at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Dr. Amy Adamczyk won the 2016 Faculty Scholarly Excellence Award. Her application was among the 20% selected for the award out of a number of high-quality submissions. Congratulations!

Student activism on campus
“Standing in Solidarity with Mizzou”

By Ashley Baxter

In November 2015, nationwide concerns over racial injustice on college campuses were brought to the forefront of public discourse, led by a University of Missouri student group called Concerned Student 1950. This group was formed after a series of racially charged episodes on the Missouri campus. There was a surge of support for the Missouri students and similar groups formed at other colleges across the country and are linked by social media.

On Wednesday, November 18, 2015, the John Jay Black Student Union in collaboration with Students for Justice in Palestine college club hosted a peaceful gathering in the New Building atrium during community hour to exercise their advocacy rights and to stand in solidarity with the students at the University of Missouri. John Jay students held signs and spoke in a demonstration of solidarity against social injustices such as institutional racism and talked about possible solutions to address similar issues that they were faced with on campus and in society at large.

Dr. Amy Adamczyk won the 2016 Faculty Scholarly Excellence Award. Her application was among the 20% selected for the award out of a number of high-quality submissions. Congratulations!
Sociology Student Awards 2016

Research Excellence Award
This award recognizes excellence in research by a student currently enrolled in a senior seminar course in the Sociology Department. This award is open to current seniors majoring in Criminology or Sociology. (A maximum of 3 awards will be given.) To apply, students must submit a statement (no more than 3 pages) that best exemplifies their interest in research. This could be based on a paper that has already been submitted for a previous course or for this semester’s senior seminar. (STUDENTS MAY BE NOMINATED BY THEIR PROFESSORS OR CAN APPLY DIRECTLY).

Jock Young Award
This award is for the best paper in critical criminology and/or social activism. The paper should demonstrate the principles of sociology and/or criminology for which Jock Young, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Criminology, was noted. This award is open to current juniors and seniors majoring in Criminology or Sociology. To apply, students must submit a statement (no more than 3 pages) that best exemplifies some of the principles of critical criminology and/or social activism. This could be based on a paper that has already been submitted for a previous course. (STUDENTS MAY BE NOMINATED BY THEIR PROFESSORS OR CAN APPLY DIRECTLY).

Student Service Award
This award recognizes a student who has contributed significantly to the mission of the Sociology Department. Nominations for the Service Award will be made by Sociology faculty and staff indicating the significant service contribution(s) made by the student. All Student Materials and Faculty Nominations are Due by April 18th, at 10am. Please send to Alisa Thomas (Althomas@jjay.cuny.edu)

All Award Recipients are expected to attend the May 18th, 2016 Ceremony from 6pm-8pm in room L. 61 in the New Building

Sociology Talks Spring 2016

Important dates

ALDO CIVICO
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY "HANGING OUT WITH TERRORISTS" WED., FEBRUARY 24TH 12:15PM - 1:30PM 9TH FLOOR NEW BUILDING CONFERENCE ROOM

KAREN GRAHAM
LECTURER IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES, NEWMAN UNIVERSITY, BIRMINGHAM, UK "DOES SCHOOL PREPARE MEN FOR PRISON? THE LIFE HISTORIES OF ELEVEN FORMER PRISONERS" TUES., MARCH 8TH 1:40PM - 2:55PM L.61

JEFFREY IAN ROSS
PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE, UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE "IN CONTROLLING CRIMES OF THE POWERFUL, WHICH ENTITY IS THE MOST POWERFUL AND WHY?" THURS., MARCH 31TH 1:40PM - 2:55PM L.61

DAVID GARLAND
ARTHUR T. VANDERBILT PROFESSOR OF LAW & PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY “AMERICA THE PUNITIVE? ON THE SOCIAL ROOTS OF MASS INCARCERATION AND ‘THE NEW JIM CROW” WED., APRIL 6TH 1:40PM - 2:55PM STUDENT DINING HALL EAST

JOHN HIPP
PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY, LAW AND SOCIETY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE “THE SPATIAL SCALE OF CRIME” THURS., APRIL 21ST 1:40PM - 2:55PM L.61

JODY MILLER
PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY “SEX WORK AND VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA: THE POLITICS AND PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR-SHIP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE” THURS., MAY 5TH 1:40PM - 2:55PM SOCIOLOGY CONFERENCE ROOM

REFRESHMENTS SERVED AT ALL EVENTS!

We gratefully acknowledge the Office for the Advancement of Research at John Jay College for Funding this Event