

Social Workers Must Dismantle Systems of Oppression and Look Inside the Profession in Critical Self-Analysis

By Rebekah Gewirtz, NASW-MA; Valerie Arendt, NASW-NC; Danielle Smith, NASW Ohio

Like our nation, the history of social work is complicated. As a predominately white profession founded with the goal of helping, lifting up, and advocating for oppressed groups of people and fighting injustice in society, social work itself has not been free of oppression or injustice. While the national conversation remains focused on ending police brutality, racism thrives in many of our institutions. As a profession that works within oppressive systems, including the criminal-legal system, health care, child welfare, schools, and more, we must acknowledge the historical role social work has played in service to systems of oppression, while calling upon our ethical duty to dismantle said systems and advocate for racial justice and lasting social change.

Racism and white supremacy are ingrained within society's institutions and systems and permeates social work ideology and practice. Since its inception, the child welfare system has regulated and punished Black, Brown, and Indigenous families. Medical racism, which has origins in slavery and eugenics, has led to modern day health disparities and inequities in health care access and treatment. The oppressive collateral consequences resulting from mass incarceration, the War on Drugs, and the school-to-prison pipeline have exacerbated economic inequalities in Black and Brown neighborhoods. Social workers have had roles in all of these harmful systems, and this history cannot be ignored.

The mission of social work is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic needs of all people, with particular attention to those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. We cannot pursue this mission and live out our core professional values without advocating to reform, dismantle, or even abolish the racist and oppressive systems we work within and beside. As astute listeners and agents of social change, social workers must work to elevate Black and Brown voices in the communities we serve. Lasting social change comes from letting communities of color determine what

they need to thrive as we collectively work towards liberation.

Anti-racist social work has a major role to play in creating a non-racist society. Social workers across our state and nation have an ethical duty to dismantle racism, both personally and professionally, and to demonstrate what it means to be anti-racist. In order to help all members of our communities thrive, we must confront racism at the individual, agency, and institutional levels. This work must be "inclusive of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation."

As your professional association, NASW-NC understands we must work to liberate the clients and communities you serve from the very structures that hold them back. By using [Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's six corrective areas](https://bit.ly/33eswqd) (bit.ly/33eswqd) (criminal justice, education, economics, health, the environment, and politics), we will strategically select policies for our 2021-2022 Legislative Agenda that work to advance racial justice.

You can join NASW-NC in advocating for anti-racist policies and meaningful social change by joining NASW NC's Equity and Inclusion Workgroup by emailing varendt.naswnc@socialworkers.org and/or the NASW-NC Legislative Committee by emailing kcastillo.naswnc@socialworkers.org, watching for opportunities to inform the upcoming legislative agenda-setting process, and by signing up for timely legislative advocacy opportunities through the [NASW-NC Advocacy Action Center](https://bit.ly/2Zamul7) (bit.ly/2Zamul7).

By looking back and using the NASW Code of Ethics as a guidepost, social workers can dismantle systems of oppression, take action against white supremacy culture, and be leaders in the movement for racial justice. ●

SOCIAL WORKERS *Cannot* BE SILENT

 **N A S W**
National Association of Social Workers
NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

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Finding Our Way Through These Challenging Times



What a time to be a social worker! This is Jason Scianno, the newly appointed President of NASW-NC's Board of Directors. These last few weeks I have spent time easing my 12-year-old son's concerns, assuring him that we will get through this, explaining that everyone needs to take action. We need to go vote, assist others in getting there while taking safety precautions such as mask wearing, washing hands, and physical distancing. It is more important now than ever to be kind to everyone you see, expand your empathy for others, and really take time to listen and to understand other people's situations.

Amidst the uncertainty that surrounds us during this time, NASW-NC continues to be a guiding light. I am so proud to be part of an organization that has been able to pivot live events to virtual so that no one misses out on valuable professional development and diligently relays critical information to us about resources and other vital information needed to work through these challenging times. I want to send a special word of thanks to the staff at NASW-NC: Valerie, Kay, Kristen, Hope, Seth, Mary, and Allison for your incredible commitment to the profession of social work and the members of NASW-NC. We are very lucky to have you, and you are appreciated. I also want to thank Carolyn Craddock for her unwavering commitment, leadership, and service to NASW-NC. Thanks to the NASW-NC Board of Directors; I am grateful to move forward on this journey together.

Voting is always important, but right now, if we are to make any headway on the pandemic of COVID-19 or the systemic racist policies that are impeding the prospects of inclusivity, we need to get people to the polls! This year we need to take an active role in helping our fellow community members by offering [rides](https://bit.ly/2X7CgOV) (bit.ly/2X7CgOV) to those in need or ensuring people who feel unsafe in the voting booth have access to [absentee ballots](https://bit.ly/3gc8odc) (bit.ly/3gc8odc). Most importantly, we need to become informed about policies and candidates and help educate others.

The issues of racial injustice and inequity have been exacerbated during these times. COVID-19 has pulled back the veil of inequality of services and accessibility to things like internet, education, policing, fairness and many others. These inequalities have fueled the [Black Lives Matter Movement](https://bit.ly/3gown7L) (bit.ly/3gown7L) and criminal justice reform. NASW-NC has put together a great [resource page](https://bit.ly/3fbLJuT) (bit.ly/3fbLJuT) to help guide people in finding ways in which they can better educate themselves and to take action. With the loss of civil rights icons John Lewis and others, we all need to continue efforts he and others have championed.

We are all living through a crisis and are experiencing various stages of grief and loss that needs to be acknowledged. Some are walking around in complete denial of what is going on. Others are angry - angry about their lack of freedom, loss of jobs, family members, or friends. There are those trying to bargain their way to normalcy while others find themselves falling into depression. All of these stages are part of the grieving process, but most importantly, we need to come to an acceptance of the situation. Right now, there is a new normal and we need to look ahead to how we will adjust and pivot our lives to maneuver during this time. As we all grapple with our own personal challenges, we also need to help others because collectively we can change and move forward in solidarity.

Please feel free to reach out to me anytime about suggestions, concerns or just to say hi (selfie videos encouraged) at: jasonscianno@mac.com. Together, we will come through this season of our lives as better human beings. ●





Valerie Arendt, MSW, MPP

Executive Director

Social Work With a Racial Equity Lens

“Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.” – Congressman John Lewis

If you haven't had the chance to read the [NASW-NC Statement and Call to Action Against Racism and Race-Based Violence](#) (bit.ly/3gBAbI0) published on June 1, 2020, I will summarize here: We chose social work instead of another helping profession because of our professional value of social justice. Racial justice should be, HAS to be, at the heart of social work practice. Racism is America's defining social problem. By not acknowledging and addressing this, social workers are ignoring their ethical obligation. We cannot sit idly by as acts of racism, hatred, violence, and murder are repeatedly targeted toward black and brown people in our society. Social workers cannot be silent.

As the primary source of expertise on social work values and ethics in North Carolina, NASW-NC wishes to uplift and support the systemic solutions proposed by the broad-based Movement for Black Lives. The Black Lives Matter movement focuses on issues concerning racial injustice, police brutality, criminal justice reform, Black immigration, economic injustice, LGBTQIA+ and human rights, environmental injustice, access to healthcare, access to quality education, and voting rights and suppression. These are ALL already social work issues and social work needs to do a better job of advocating for these issues with a racial equity lens.

Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted how one fares in life. When we use the term, we use racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them. Using a racial equity lens is a critical thinking approach to undoing institutional and structural racism, which evaluates burdens, benefits, and outcomes to underserved communities.

NASW North Carolina recognizes that institutional racism is not a problem isolated within police departments and that social workers also have a responsibility to address such oppression as it manifests in the behavioral health, broader social service sector and in ourselves. Professional social workers work in all these systems which means social work can do more to impact these systems than any other profession. Individual ethical social workers who work in these systems have and will continue to speak up. NASW as your professional association is your ally and can multiple your advocacy strength and seek long lasting significant policy changes.

I call on all social workers, particularly white social workers, to be in continual assessment of our own racial bias and the manifestations of institutional racism within our agencies and the systems we work throughout.

We know broader systemic change within the profession is not possible unless individual social workers, and we as a collective profession, do the work to confront, examine, and unlearn the racism we perpetuate. The NASW-NC Board of Directors, member volunteer leaders and staff are 100% committed to this work and we warmly welcome you to stand with us.

I welcome your voice at the NASW-NC Equity and Inclusion Workgroup as we plan to create long-term spaces for learning and action within our great association. Please email me at varendt.naswnc@socialworkers.org for more information. Please find useful Anti-Racism resources here: www.naswnc.org/page/AntiRacism ●

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NASW Mission

Founded in 1955, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with more than 120,000 members. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain standards for the profession, and to advance sound social policies. NASW also contributes to the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its work and advocacy.



NASW-NC Members Appointed to Governor's Task Force

By Seth Maid, MSW
NASW-NC Director of Membership and
Communication

The National Association of Social Workers North Carolina (NASW-NC) is thrilled to have successfully recommended **Dr. Sonyia Richardson, MSW, LCSW** to serve on Governor Roy Cooper's Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental and Health Equity Task Force! The Task Force, established by the Governor's Executive Order 143, will address the social, environmental, economic, and health disparities in communities of color that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Richardson currently works as an Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina – Charlotte's School of Social Work, where her main focus of research is the intersection of urban education in social work, as well as suicide-related behaviors amongst racially diverse individuals. She has also owned a mental health agency, Another Level Counseling and Consultation, for 13 years, mostly providing outpatient counseling services.

Dr. Richardson's journey to the field of social work was inspired in part by her grandmother. "I was drawn to social work because my grandmother practiced in that area, and then she was unable to carry out her legacy because of illness." Once she was in the field herself, Dr. Richardson felt a connection both to social work's core values and its Code of Ethics. "Those really help to distinguish us as a profession. They are a roadmap for me as I'm engaged in areas of my everyday work.

In particular, social work's commitment to social justice and focus on the dignity and worth of the person drives much of Dr. Richardson's work. "They afford me the opportunity to speak in spaces and maybe call out some things that perhaps people in other professions aren't as comfortable doing. These two core values are my core principles. It just

aligns with who I am as a person."

These qualities made her an ideal candidate for the Governor's Task Force. Though the selection is still new, she is excited to begin the Task Force's work. "My hope is that we are able to come up with some strategies that will actually transform the system, that will disrupt the system that is broken and help to transform and create something that will work. Let's look at how we can

disrupt or dismantle the system and create something that will produce more equitable results for diverse populations across the state."



An appointee to the education subcommittee, Dr. Richardson sees ample opportunity to connect her research with the goals of the Task Force. "I'm really hoping to bring my perspective into these discussions; to really talk social justice and dignity and worth of each person and be able to introduce the social work lens into this space." She would like to focus on K-12 education and creating safe learning spaces for children from marginalized communities. "It's really important that they are affirmed in these spaces, that they are not excluded from these spaces due to disparate outcomes of suspensions or expulsions, that they have

Richardson Continued on 8

By Quinny Sanchez Lopez, MSW
NASW-NC Member

Quinny Sanchez Lopez has been appointed to Governor Roy Cooper's Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental and Health Equity Task Force! Quinny is a recent graduate from the UNC Chapel Hill School of Social Work, where she specialized in system-level interventions. She is a mission-driven relationship-builder dedicated to improving the lives of North Carolina's residents. Her aim is to foster partnerships and collaborations to increase access to health services for those who have historically been underserved. Throughout her professional career, Quinny has supported Black and Latinx communities in NC through a variety of capacities including literacy advancement, racial equity work, and advocacy. This past school year she coordinated stakeholders across the state in an effort to promote Specialty Mental Health Probation, a partnership between the UNC School of Social Work and the North Carolina Department of Public Safety.

Along with general membership on the task force, Quinny will also serve on the education subcommittee. This subcommittee will emphasize health and financial literacy as

well as academia. She is eager to support the task force and to weave in her social work skills and education throughout the process. Quinny is heavily influenced by systems theory and is indebted to her social work professors at UNC for preparing her to identify and analyze frameworks used in the construction of policies and interventions.



"Social workers have a knack for understanding the perspective of others. This enables us to communicate in a way so that they are able to understand our values, those of social justice, self-determination, and the innate dignity and worth of all people. I'm looking forward to exercising this skill on the systems that our state is built upon to interject for the sake of equity." ●

Welcome New Members!

NASW-NC would like to welcome the following new members who joined during the months of May, June, and July! Thank you for choosing to support your profession and advocate for social work values by joining NASW.

Coastal District (A)

Michele Cannon
Roberta Caton
Samantha Cisneros
Jharnell Cofield
Skylar Coley
Lauren Collins
Sarah Franklin
Shaquana Graham
Olivia Harvell
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Wendy Maddox
Charmeen Penn
Brandy-Paula Pjanic
Joanne Riven
Passion Smith
Jasmine Smith
Jasmine Spruill
Rebecca Walsh
Tiara Watford
Shelly Weeks

Central District (B)

Zumrad Ahmedjanova
Mariana Aldridge
Gabrielle Asmus
DeLonna Brown
Clayton Cantil
Crystal Carroll
Martha Carter
Harmony Chavis
Ciara Coleman
Kaitlyn Corey
Natalie Curtis
Lori Cyrus
Nontuthuko Dladla
Elizabeth Elder

Harper Ellis
Colleen Emmett
Debra Fincham
Allison Fisher
Gabby Fitzsimmons
Twanya Headen
Megan Holmes
Kathryn Lane
LaJeana Leftenant
Helga LeMaster
Paige Linton
Marquita Manneh
Charita McCollers
Jennifer McLean
Yolanda McLemore
Katherine Milberger
Casey Miller
Ida Mills
Jeffery Neer
Pamela Nieves
Felix Pittman
Charice Putnam
Jane Roberts
Courtney Sanders
Lakisha Shearin
Rosalyn Smith
Julie Spittler
Mary Triplett
Elana Turner
Tamara Vanie
Shae Whiteman
Sarah Winnick
Carly Woolard

Piedmont District (C)

Seannee Alexander
Kylee Barry

Elayna Boswell
Sydney Cromer
Meredith Daye
Yarneccia Dyson
Jordan Harrold
Claudia Hooker
Cicely Jones
Bernette Jones
Leslie Juarez
Yohmina Kasey
NKrumah Lewis
Asante' McCoy
Zay McCullough
Brooks McKinney
Caroline Oxford
Shafik Powell
Aura Rosado
Madeline Schug
Ricquita Tarpley-Carter
Gwendolyn White
Treasure Williams
Allison Workman

South Piedmont District (D)

Holly Blanchard
Kimberly Caldwell
Shaquesha Campbell
Alexandria Chambers
Angela Clay
Debrah Conn Clark
Sarah Cooper
Carrie Cronk
Hannah Cumby
Myra Davis-Bellinger
Amber Gillespie
Sarah Grant
Teceim Guerrero
Yuqi Guo

Schnavia Hatcher
Mackenzie Leach
Andreana Lucas
Jenny Mathys
Jillian McDowell
John Moss
Emily Peterson
Tasha Pile
Cadi Putnam
Rashin Richardson
Carrie Ross
Sylvia Sekle
Sarah Teel
Matthew Weisner
Nakeisha Whitfield

South Central District (F)

Shashonda Alford
Laura Allen
Rebekah Ashlock
Megan Best
Jourdan Brickey
David Burgess
Winona Coveney
Gillian Davis
Tonetta Everett
Mary Gerideau
Michele Girard
Dawn Glaspie
Benjamin Grossnickle
Mikaela Harmeling
Olivia Hess
Aaron Kirkley
Amarilia Martinez-Cordova
Morgan Mason
Connor McCaffrey
Delaney Menoher
Brittany Moore
Silvia Noftz
Laura O'Connor
Hannah Parham
Alyssa Piedrahita
Shelise Pilot
Ariana Ponce
Maggie Rains
Kayla Reese
Jennifer Self
Crystal Slater
Sarah Smith
Robert Solock
Amber Taylor
Jeremy Tidd
Anna Webster

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TO REGISTER, VISIT:
ssw.unc.edu/admissions/masters/information

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Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020, 5:30–7:30 p.m., EST
Virtual Session

Thursday, Nov. 5, 2020, 1–3:00 p.m., EST
Virtual Session

TO REGISTER, CONTACT:
Brenda Vawter
bvawter@email.unc.edu

ADVANCING EQUITY

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**Ravita T. Omabu Okafor,
MSW, LCSW**
NASW-NC Ethics Committee Chair

Do you agree with parents telling children (minor and adult) that we have no right to drive while intoxicated, no right to remove a weapon from a law enforcement officer's person, and no right to block traffic and jump on someone else's car? What about parents telling children (minor and adult) that those with authority, in any capacity, bear privileged responsibility to safeguard basic, inalienable rights of ALL people, to avoid abusing their power, and to intervene when they witness others in power abusing their power? I do.

Recent events have captured our attention and forced us to decide whether we react or respond. While a reaction involves an impassioned, impulsive act, a response engages the brain to carefully think about a situation, identify options, and anticipate outcomes. Which example do we want to teach and model for the next generation? Which option will help them develop emotional and social maturity? Which option will protect peace in schools, neighborhoods, communities, and our nation? Which option will allow resources to go towards building vs. repairing? Which option promotes social work's core values regarding service, justice, social issues, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence? I hope we decide to maintain our character and ethical sensibilities consistently in our private conduct, professional ethics, and public speech. Notice the difference between responding and ignoring. I expect responding to lead us towards efforts that create change. Change oftentimes requires many conversations, ideas, attempts, adjustments, and evaluations to accomplish goals.

According to the First Amendment:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. [emphasis added]

Furthermore, according to Martin Luther King:

Violence is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding: it seeks to annihilate rather than convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends up defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers. (Swan, 2016)

Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change. ... What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

Regarding Standard 6.04, Social and Political Action, the NASW Code of Ethics (2017) states:

(c) Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity

Ethical Options in Social Unrest: A Call for Truth and Wisdom

within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.

(d) Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability.

Past events have transpired. Significant, unprecedented changes towards greater protections of inalienable rights have already begun to take place. As we press for greater systemic change, let us unite in solidarity around truth, justice, community safety, and real progress that conforms with the tenets of the Declaration of Independence, "...that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." (National Archives, 2020)

Through the Institute for Civility in Government, Dahnke & Spath (2020) teach that differences in ideology are not insurmountable; dialogue trumps discord; and treating adversaries as enemies is not an acceptable way to conduct politics in the United States. They also promote disagreeing

Ethics Continued on Page 11



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North Carolina Student Members Receive NASW Foundation Awards

Verne LaMarr Lyons Scholarships are Awarded to MSW Students Working with African American Communities
Consuelo W. Gosnell Memorial Scholarships are Awarded to MSW Students Working with Latinx Communities



Mervin Brandy

Verne LaMarr Lyons
Memorial Scholarship

North Carolina
A&T State University
and
UNC Greensboro

During his first year at the JMSW program, Mervin was instrumental in developing the social workers in the library initiative; a partnership with the joint MSW and the county library to have social workers in the library assist with vulnerable populations in need.

As a Black queer cis-gender male, Mervin has worked in HIV prevention and community health education targeting LGBTQ communities for the last eight years. Mervin is committed to reducing the stigma associated with accessing mental health services, specifically therapy, within the African American & Black community. ●



Aaron Quick

Verne LaMarr Lyons
Memorial Scholarship

North Carolina
State University

Aaron is a proud alumnus of Central State University, a Historically Black University in Ohio, where he graduated with honors and earned his Bachelor of Social Work degree in just three years.

His long-term goal is to develop a nationwide team of LGBT+ identifying social workers and counselors who will work with LGBT+ youth of color to help these youth become comfortable with their identities. Aaron also wants to help inform families who have adolescents who identify as LGBT+ find ways they can better show support and encouragement to their family members. ●



Teresa Rivera

Consuelo W. Gosnell
Memorial Scholarship

UNC Chapel Hill

Teresa aims to serve marginalized individuals by increasing access to mental health services. She will become a LCSW and is passionate about working with refugees and immigrants with a particular focus on domestic violence victims and survivors.

Teresa facilitated the Domestic Violence Task Force - Latinx Subcommittee in Orange County, NC with the intention to provide a space for stakeholders to convene, develop and implement strategies to bridge gaps in services and resources.

Teresa is a Peruvian immigrant and a first-generation college and graduate student. Her passion for social work was shaped by her personal experiences witnessing domestic violence as a child. Her family was able to thrive by receiving therapy from social workers. ●

Richardson continued from Page 4

their social and emotional needs met, and that they're not deprived from quality education because of stereotypes about their ability to learn."

She is also hoping to work with the Task Force to keep expanded access to telehealth. "As a practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had a huge increase in underserved communities accessing counseling services, now that they can access them from home. My hope is that moving forward, particularly for communities of color, that they will continue to have access to telehealth services and that it doesn't go back to a model that increases stigma for accessing services."

Beyond her work on the Task Force, Dr. Richardson believes

that all social workers have a responsibility to discuss issues of inequality and oppression with both colleagues and clients. "We have to start educating and empowering clients; not judging them on whatever views that they may have, but making sure that we are progressing the call for social justice every opportunity that we get." She also acknowledges the need for collective momentum, and the role that NASW can play in that. "NASW is a way for social workers to have a platform to advocate for and take a stand on these issues and to have a collective voice." And in order to better represent that collective voice while serving on the Task Force, Dr. Richardson is open to hearing feedback, perspectives, and suggestions from social workers across the state. She can be reached at sonyiarichardson@gmail.com. ●



Kay Castillo, BSW

Director of Advocacy, Policy & Legislation
Registered Lobbyist

North Carolina Legislative Short Session Update

In the last newsletter, we detailed the very short, special legislative session focused on COVID-19 relief held in early May 2020. In a bipartisan manner, legislators introduced and passed two pieces of legislation detailing funding from the federal government and policies to help support the state through the COVID-19 pandemic. One such policy extended the deadline for social workers and others to connect to the state's [Health Information Exchange Authority](https://bit.ly/3od9pKY) (bit.ly/3od9pKY). Details on this and other legislation that was signed into law can be found on our [website](https://bit.ly/39I7gdp) (bit.ly/39I7gdp).

Legislators came back into session for their regularly scheduled short session on May 18. This legislative session was marked with more tension as some legislators fought with the Governor in an attempt to reopen bars, skating rinks, bowling alleys, and more businesses that have been closed as a result of the pandemic. Governor Cooper vetoed multiple bills and the House and Senate were unable to overturn his vetoes. The legislative session ended on Saturday, July 11. Legislators are now on break until September 2, 2020. When they come back in September, that session will be limited to COVID-19 relief and other state funding measures. Governor Cooper can call legislators back before September 2 if money is provided by the federal government before.

Major legislation addressed during this session

Below is a list of bills that NASW-NC followed this legislation session. It is not an exhaustive list. To see every bill we advocated for or against (including election and COVID-19 relief changes), visit our [website](https://bit.ly/39I7gdp) (bit.ly/39I7gdp) for our final legislative update:

SB 808 Medicaid Funding Act: This bill will restart the state's Medicaid Transformation efforts. The bill requires the state to implement Medicaid Transformation by July 1, 2021 and prepaid health plans would have contracts for four years instead of three years. The House removed a Senate provision that would have required the Department of Health and Human Services to pay the prepaid health plans participating in Medicaid \$4 million per month if they did not restart by July 1, 2021. The bill allocates \$50 million for behavioral health care as a result of COVID-19, allocates \$20 million for early childhood initiatives, and \$75 million to expand contact tracing and testing efforts for COVID-19. **Governor Cooper signed this bill into law on July 2.**

SB 562 The Second Chance Act: This bill makes changes to expunction laws, making it easier to expunge most misdemeanors that happen after December 1, 2019. It does not apply to violent crimes, crimes that result in registration as a sex offender, or impaired driving. Additionally, the bill expunges certain records of minors. The bill passed both the House and the Senate unanimously and was **signed into law on June 25.**

HB 511 North Carolina First Step Act: This bill allows for judicial discretion in sentencing for drug trafficking offenses. The bill passed both the House and Senate unanimously and was **signed into law on Friday, June 26.**

SB 476 School Based Mental Health: This bill directs the State Board of Education to adopt a school-based mental health policy that applies to K-12 schools. The policy

must address youth mental health; suicide prevention; substance misuse; sexual abuse prevention; sex trafficking prevention; and teenage dating violence. The policy must include training for any staff who works with students in the school system and include a model suicide risk referral protocol. This bill went through committees during the 2019 legislative session. Legislators wanted more time to work on the bill, so it was assigned to a conference committee and worked on by a few legislators. The bill was **signed into law on June 8.**

What's next?

Even though the legislative session is over for now, there is still much work to be done! The current public health pandemic continues and major changes will come to schools, healthcare, our economy, and our mental health. NASW-NC remains at the table for all of these conversations.

Additionally, we are working on major race equity plans for our state. We will be providing comments to the Governor's Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice. This task force is focused on providing changes in three areas: Law Enforcement Hiring and Training; Law Enforcement Practices and Accountability; Criminal Justice Practices and Accountability. If you have suggestions or ideas, please contact me at kcastillo.naswnc@socialworkers.org! We have also provided names of social workers to serve on the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force to focus on economic stability, health disparities, and environmental justice in North Carolina. We are thrilled that two social workers were appointed (see page 4 of this newsletter!) and will work with the task force to address disparities in health care.

NASW-NC will continue to advocate with lawmakers and Department leadership to ensure telehealth measures continue, voting information is distributed, people continue to fill out the Census, and social workers remain at the table for important conversations related to racial equity, health disparities, and more. Thank you for supporting all of our efforts! ●

For up-to-date information on what is happening at the legislature, check your weekly EnewSWire that comes to your inbox on Tuesdays! Further, visit our website and check out Updates for Members at the bottom of the homepage and [sign up for North Carolina advocacy updates](https://bit.ly/2Zamul7) (bit.ly/2Zamul7)!

Save the Date

North Carolina Social Work Advocacy Day

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Hosted virtually by



Stories From the Frontlines: Public Health Social Work During COVID-19

By TJ Stiers, LCSW
NASW-NC Member
Asheville Local Program Unit Vice Chair

I walk into the building with my mask on and my temperature is taken. I enter my office and hear the early morning sounds of nurses scurrying back and forth as they set up for the testing site which will happen today in our building and tomorrow in a high school gym. The nurses are busier now more than ever before, and every job they do seems critical in nature. They run the local hotline, they do most of the testing for our county, and they house the “war room” where all the big decisions are made about our local community’s response to COVID 19. They are focused, diligent, and ready for this moment.

At the testing site where they will soon test 500 people in six hours, the nurses don gowns and two sets of gloves to protect themselves. They blare fun music to put themselves and the patients at ease and joke that they are going to dance the COVID away. They work quickly and efficiently, and I am proud to be part of this team. Underneath the veneer of stability and strength, they are exhausted, overwhelmed, and terrified of bringing this disease home to their families.

What is my job as a public health social worker during this pandemic? What is my role? How can I help? Normally, I am focused on my patients, but these months I find myself worrying more about the staff who are working seven days a week to support our community. I turn my energy to them. I send them encouraging poems, jokes, and silly YouTube videos. I spend my time listening to them, encouraging them, and hearing their stories. They share their fears with me, their want for a better world with good health insurance, and healthcare for all.

In my spare time, I focus on my patients. The woman who works at the laundromat whose hours are not cut because everyone still needs to wash their clothes. The woman who is laid off from her job cleaning hotel rooms. The construction worker who is battling alcoholism but grateful to still have work. This pandemic brings out his fears and



NASW-NC member TJ Stiers (left) and a coworker from the Henderson County Health Department.

makes him want to drink more. The worker at the packing plant whose job it is to pack the vegetables that I will buy at the grocery store. She’s terrified to go to work but yet desperately needs the money this job provides. All of these workers are essential and all of them are doing work that is equally as important as mine. I thank them for their service, and listen to their stories. They have a need to be seen, to be heard, and I am here to be the one who listens and sees and validates.

This is my role as a public health social worker. I am the eyes and ears of a community. I bear witness to the pain, the struggle, the worth of each and every person from the nurses in the clinic to the packing plant worker. My job feels more pastoral than counseling, more listening than speaking, and more being than doing. Good attention is a commodity the world does not always recognize as important, but yet it is in great demand and it is what I bring to the altar. I laugh and cry with my people as we process what is going on around us. Herein lies the gift of being a social worker in a pandemic. My spirit is buoyed by the earnestness and goodness of everyone around me. We are each members of Team Human, stronger when we are together even when we are seemingly apart. ●

Two North Carolina Universities Named CSWE Grantees

Excerpted from Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Press Release (bit.ly/3ftxPEm)

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) announced the grantees for the fourth cycle of its [Policy Practice in Field Education Initiative](#). This initiative enables schools of social work to create integrative models that heighten the policy skill set of undergraduate- and graduate-level social work students, regardless of specialization.

Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville State University’s Housing and Homelessness Community Engagement Project

MSW and BSW students will be exposed to the challenges of affordable housing and the increasing homeless population in the Fayetteville/Cumberland County area. Students will participate in a town hall meeting with state advocacy organizations such as NC-NASW and North

Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness. Students will also participate in a panel discussion with local stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the relationship of policy to practice and the impact it has on the provider of services as well as the consumer. Additionally, students will have an opportunity to attend the North Carolina Advocacy Day to engage with state lawmakers.

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Social Work/Library Policy Practice Initiative

Students will work in specialized field placements, two library sites and two jail sites, where they will enhance their clinical experience by using aggregated data collected and analyzed to create policy recommendations to policymakers and stakeholders. Students will also participate in policy teach-ins to further strengthen their understanding of policy implications. ●



Voting is Social Work: 2020 Election Information

By Allison O'Connor, MSW Student
NASW-NC Board of Directors

COVID-19 has impacted nearly every aspect of our lives today. Voting is no different. 2020 voting will undoubtedly hold some challenges in assuring that everyone has access to vote. Here are some tips to help you navigate the polls and be a resource to others.

Mark Your Calendar for Early Voting!

One-Stop Early Voting for the 2020 General Election in North Carolina begins October 15 and ends October 31. Two major perks of voting early are same-day registration and the ability to vote at any [voting site](https://bit.ly/3gnCoTG) (bit.ly/3gnCoTG) within your county. Just be sure to have a valid ID with you if you are planning on doing same-day registration! Check out NASW-NC's [Voting Guide](https://bit.ly/2XcOV3o) (bit.ly/2XcOV3o) to see valid ID options for same-day registration.

What's Going on with Voter ID?

Because of an NC Court of Appeals decision, voters are NOT required to show a valid ID in order to vote in the 2020 General Election. The one exception is with same-day registration.

Request Your Absentee Ballot Now!

Any North Carolina voter can vote by mail this election cycle! All you need to do is follow these steps. First, fill out this [Absentee Ballot Request Form](https://bit.ly/2DkWfm7) (bit.ly/2DkWfm7). Second, either mail, email, or fax your Request Form to your county's [Board of Elections](https://bit.ly/3oefW84) (bit.ly/3oefW84). You can check whether your application was received and accepted

Ethics continued from Page 7

without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one's preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same. Let us apply these principles.

What kind of inheritance will we leave for future generations? The year 2020 is not the last time Americans will face a public health emergency or crisis of injustice. What will happen to our people, businesses, healthcare system, schools, colleges, vacation destinations, communities, and country if we resort to violence, aggressive talk, and a cancel culture mentality with each incident? Civility requires idea exchange, listening, sharing, and mobilizing resources. Let us respond vs. react, display emotional maturity and intellectual ability, and create unity that protects, develops, and strengthens us all. My hope is for everyone to go home safely and peacefully every day. Let us live what we teach.

George Floyd's brother, Terrance Floyd, has urged people to research political candidates and vote for change. Regarding other activity, he has said:

"He was about peace, he was about unity," Terrance said of George. "But the thing's that's transpiring now, yeah they may call it unity, but it's destructive unity. That's not what my brother was about. (Pennsylvania Real-Time News, 2020)

So let's do this another way. Let's stop thinking that our voice don't matter and vote.

If I'm not over here wilin' out, if I'm not over here blowing up stuff, if I'm not over here messing up my community, then what are you all doing?" he asked, his voice growing louder. "What are you all doing? You all doing nothing!

through [NC Voter Search](https://bit.ly/2EDvaeE) (bit.ly/2EDvaeE) by entering your name and then clicking the 'ABSENTEE REQUEST' tab. Third, look for your ballot in the mail or via email. Lastly, fill out your ballot in the presence of one witness and have that witness sign in the correct space. You can then return your ballot either in-person or by mail to your county's Board of Elections. Just please be sure you leave plenty of time for your ballot to arrive by 5pm on Election Day, which is **Tuesday, November 3, 2020**.

Volunteer Your Time

More than ever, poll workers are needed to help manage the voting process AND the new social distancing protocols. Give some of your time by signing up to be a poll worker. Bilingual and tech-savvy volunteers are highly sought after! The Fair Elections Center and Development Seed created workelections.com to simplify the process of becoming a poll worker.

NASW-NC Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE)

As social workers, we must know which candidates will uphold the values of the Social Work profession while in office. The NASW-NC PACE Committee aims to provide this information. The Committee works diligently during the months prior to elections to seek out candidates that value social workers, fight for policies to confirm equity, and embrace diversity. Each candidate that NASW-NC PACE endorses has gone through a series of questions to help the committee understand the candidates' top priorities. By mid-August, you will be able to check out the candidates endorsed by the committee by going to the [NASW-NC PACE page](https://bit.ly/2P9ExVt) (bit.ly/2P9ExVt). ●

Because that's not going to bring my brother back at all.
(NBC News, 2020)

If you are a member of NASW-NC and need ethical consultation, please email naswncethics@gmail.com or call 919-828-9650 or 800-280-6207/extension 300 to access NASW-NC's Chapter Ethics Committee's consultation service. We are a committee of volunteers; accordingly, email inquiries help us serve you more efficiently. This service is free **only** to NASW-NC members with questions about cases in which they have direct involvement.

United, we stand. Divided, we fall. ●

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Anti-Racist Social Work: Transformative Change to Promote Climate Justice and Racial Equity

By Meredith C.F. Powers, PhD, MSW
Harmony Chavis, BSW

The Chinese philosopher, Confucius once said, “the beginning of wisdom is to call things by their proper name.” In the context of the ongoing global climate crisis, and the recent global health pandemic due to COVID-19, we often speak of “risk factors” that put people at greater risk for harm and even death, but these should more specifically be called “factors of oppression.”¹ When we name these factors of oppression, we recognize and validate their existence, and do not let the realities be relegated to mere buzzwords or euphemisms. Oppression is a constant reality of unrelenting, daily life struggle for equity and inclusion for many people, such as those who are Black, Brown, Indigenous, Trans, Immigrant, Gay, Jewish, and Muslim folk. Oppression isn’t transient, it has been intentionally ingrained into every sphere and system of our lives by an array of “ism’s” based on white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and reinforced by neo-liberalism and capitalism.² Our work as social workers must disrupt these systems in order to truly transform the world. We are called to work that is anti-racist³; such work is the only way to create sustainable, structural changes that promote climate justice and racial equity.

In the context of the climate crisis, many of these factors of oppression are specific to environmental racism. Environmental injustice is understood to be the unfair burden from the environmental crisis and environmental degradation, as well as the unequal access to the benefits of the environment. These injustices are often based on racial inequity and other factors of oppression.⁴ For example, injustices in the residential separation between white people and people of color (POC) is environmental racism as many neighborhood environments for POC create health disparities, leading to greater disease and health problems for POC.⁵ Environmental racism increases the risk of developing asthma, and studies have shown that Non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanic Blacks are historically more likely than their white counterparts to need to seek treatment for asthma.⁶ Additionally, several research studies have demonstrated the connection between air pollution and premature death. A 2016 study concluded that individuals who received Medicaid benefits, in areas that were predominantly Black were at higher risk for premature death due to air pollution particles called PM2.5, that causes smog.⁷

Around the world and here in NC, social workers are doing anti-racist work as they create community and structural changes and redress the harm of ongoing, daily oppression from environmental racism. For example, UNC Charlotte social work professor, Dr. Sonyia Richardson, has recently been appointed by the Governor to serve on the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental and Health Equity Task Force. This task force was established due to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color, and will specifically be working to “identify best practices to create economic stability, eliminate health disparities, and achieve environmental justice in North Carolina.”⁸ Additionally, one of the authors of this article, Harmony Chavis, BSW, serves as a fellow for the Southeast Climate & Energy Network (SCEN). The work of the SCEN is to serve as a hub for climate organizations to come together, leverage their collective skill sets, and act as a structural support system for capacity building efforts. For a global example: in India, social workers are working on a climate justice project for solar lamps for

IFSW
Climate Justice Program



students enduring factors of oppression.⁹ These lamps are made locally by a women's entrepreneurial business, and the project provides multiple benefits. It not only provides solar light for students to be able to study in the evenings when it is dark, thus enhancing educational outcomes, but also promotes health and well-being through the use of solar powered light versus dangerous, toxic, and expensive kerosene lamps. For more examples of social workers, from around the world, transforming the world by addressing climate justice and racial equity, or on ways you can become involved, see the IFSW Climate Justice Program.¹⁰ ●

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NASW-NC Expands Equity and Inclusion Workgroup

By Kat Reach, MSW
NASW-NC Board of Directors

Earlier this year, we chose to change the name of the NASW-NC Diversity Work Group the Board of Directors formed in 2018 to "Equity and Inclusion," because engaging diversity is not enough. Our work is to identify the systems and processes that have been created throughout the years to maintain the dominant white culture within our profession and our society.

When our Equity and Inclusion work group held our first Zoom conversation, "Social Work Response to Racism in America" on June 2nd, we quickly realized that this was something that was long overdue, and that social workers in North Carolina wanted more opportunities to collaborate with folks in our profession who are also developing their anti-racist approach both personally and professionally. As a team, we have decided to narrow these conversations down to address institutional racism within multiple practice areas, including public schools, medical social work, clinical social work, and academia, among others. Our hope is to continue to host regular conversations like these as a sustained effort to foster the insight and creativity within social workers to create meaningful and measurable change.

The North Carolina chapter recognizes that simply being a social worker does not mean that someone is actively anti-racist or has done the work to equip themselves to identify inequities within their work. Many of those in the work group



reflected that topics like white supremacy, equity, and racism were not centered in our training and education as social workers. In response, we hope to expand these conversations within our local schools of social work to ensure that future cohorts have the tools, knowledge, and experience to address racist and inequitable systems as they enter the field.

We have been adding to our online list of [anti-racism resources](https://bit.ly/3gioCgg) (bit.ly/3gioCgg) to include those related to implicit bias, fighting white supremacy, addressing racism in the workplace, and facilitating conversations about race and equity. We welcome any feedback or additional resources that may be helpful to our membership.

NASW-NC is committed to doing things differently, to creating authentic and lasting change, and to being held accountable for where we fall short. We pledge to continuously develop our anti-racist lens and embed equity and inclusion into every aspect of our goals, activities, and strategic planning. We want your criticism, we want your feedback, but we absolutely need your voice.

As we have seen in the past, too often the momentum dies down, priorities shift, and life goes back to how it was. One of the unexpected consequences of this pandemic is that it has exposed how our culture has been set up to reinforce power structures that have been in place for centuries to benefit those with wealth, power, and privilege, and now we are charged with doing something to address it. This is work that requires each of us to actively step into it; to not participate is to not only stand idly by, but continue to perpetuate these systems. This movement needs you! ●

NASW-NC Welcomes Field Organizer for 2020 Election Cycle

By Jodi Rhoden, BSW
NASW-NC PACE Field Organizer

The National Association of Social Workers-Political Action for Candidate Election (NASW-PACE) helps elect candidates to public office who support legislation and policies consistent with the goals of the social work profession and those served by the social work profession, promotes NASW legislative policies through political action and/or through support of candidates, and promotes political education and full participation among members of the social work profession.

To promote the election of NASW-PACE endorsed candidates, NASW-PACE will deploy field organizers in states where there are competitive Senate, House, or Presidential elections. North Carolina is one of the five states chosen to host a Field Organizer who will mobilize social workers to volunteer and to vote for endorsed candidates who will promote future policy and legislative victories. NASW-NC is excited to welcome Jodi Rhoden to our small team to serve as the PACE Field Organizer until November 2020.

I'm delighted to be joining the NASW-NC team as the North Carolina PACE Field Organizer. At this moment, when the social work profession is at the forefront of the



ongoing movements for social justice as well as the current pandemic response, it is crucial that our collective voice is amplified in this year's elections, and beyond. As a social worker, an entrepreneur, a parent, and a long-time resident of Asheville, North Carolina, I'm honored to engage in organizing in alignment with social work ethics and values, and am grateful for the opportunity to help promote the voices and values of social workers across our state.

I received my BSW from the University of Georgia in 1999, and began my social work career working with survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. In the 20 years since, I have worked in the community garden, urban agriculture and food security movements, and from 2006-2016 I started, grew, and sold a bakery, Short Street Cakes, which led me to help other social entrepreneurs pursue their dreams. I have also worked in the nonprofit marketing and advocacy field, most recently serving as the Director of Marketing and Communications for YWCA Asheville, where I participated in a robust Get Out the Vote effort, lobbied Congress for VAWA funding, and worked on other policy advocacy campaigns.

In May of this year I continued my social work journey by embarking on MSW studies at East Tennessee State University. I am honored to be a part of this valuable profession, and I am thankful for the opportunity to maximize the impact that social workers in North Carolina will have on the 2020 election and beyond. ●



NASW-NC Board of Directors Meetings

By Valerie Arendt, MSW, MPP
NASW-NC Executive Director

The NASW-NC Board of Directors held its annual board retreat virtually on August 1, 2020. We welcomed Jason Scianno as his first meeting as Board President and we welcomed four new board members who began their term on July 1, 2020:

- Undergraduate Student Representative – Jonathan Conover
- Graduate Student Representative – Allison O'Connor
- Western District Representative – Beth Vogler
- Member at Large – Amanda Bright-Somers

At length, the board discussed NASW-NC's commitment to racial justice and moving forward as an association with equity and inclusion efforts. NASW-NC will be developing new goals and objectives as it relates to anti-racism efforts.

A very special thank you to the NASW-NC members who

completed their service on the Board of Directors:

Carolyn Craddock who served the board for six years and as the President for the last two years. Thank you for your leadership, wisdom and commitment to the social work profession and to NASW-NC.

Amanda Flory who served on the board for the last four years as the Coastal District Representative and as a Member at Large. Thank you for your presence and dedication to the social workers of North Carolina!

The NASW-NC Board of Directors will meet virtually until further notice on the following dates:

September 19, 2020

December 5, 2020

January 23, 2021

March 27, 2021

May 22, 2021

Chapter board meetings are open to the members of NASW North Carolina. NASW-NC members wishing to attend should contact Chapter Executive Director Valerie Arendt at varendt.naswnc@socialworkers.org. ●

2020-21 NASW-NC Board of Directors



First Row: Derrik Anderson, NASW-NC Executive Director Valerie Arendt, Kate Culhane, Kat Reach, Jason Scianno

Second Row: Leslie Cloninger, Rosalie Calarco, Allison O'Connor, James Pearce, Beth Vogler

Third Row: Margalita Hooper-Vinson, Rachel Waltz, Debra Rhodes, Jacqueline Henry, Deborah Moore

Fourth Row: Jonathan Conover, Kenya Miles, Natasha Scott
Not Pictured: Carla MacKenzie, Amanda Bright-Somers





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NASW-NC Conferences

October 3, 2020
LCSW Exam Prep Session
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November 16-17, 2020
Fall Conference
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March 19, 2021
Ethics Conference
Format To Be Determined

May 10-12, 2021
Clinical Social Work Institute
Format To Be Determined

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November 16-17, 2020

2020 NASW-NC ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

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