



## The Official Newsletter of the NASW-NYC Chapter

Editor: Angelique I. Rodriguez, Manager, Community Engagement & Volunteer Initiatives

### REMARKS FROM THE NASW-NYC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DR. CLAIRE GREEN-FORDE SPRING/SUMMER 2022



*"Instead of inheriting a broken system,  
we have the power to change it."* –  
Attributed to Yara Shahidi

Greetings!

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2022 edition of NASW-NYC's newsletter, Currents. On behalf of myself and the NASW-NYC team, we sincerely thank you for being the incredible leaders and social workers you are. We are nothing without your ongoing support and partnership; we thank you for all that you do to make NYC and beyond a more just and equitable place.

The pandemic and ensuing social, political, and health implications are changing the way we understand and navigate our world and profession. We are COVID-exhausted and I, perhaps like you, have grown weary of everything seemingly discussing COVID-19, especially in the face of so many injustices that also need our attention. The reality of our lives suggests that we have undoubtedly and

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### Take a Look At What's In This Issue

*At the Crossroads: Social Work in 2022*

- Words from Erica P. Sandoval, NASW-NYC Board President
- *Immigrant Rights, Immigrant Justice: Social Work, Democracy and the Ethics of Immigration* - Dr. Eric Levine
- *YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE - Voting is Social Work: The National Social Work Voter Mobilization Campaign* - Dr. Mimi Abramovitz

**AND SO MUCH MORE!!!!**

#### A NOTE FROM THE CHAPTER:

*The views, opinions, and experiences expressed by contributors to CURRENTS do not necessarily reflect those of NASW-NYC. At the chapter, and in the spirit of equity, justice, and inclusion which are the foundation of the NASW Code of Ethics, we create spaces to engage and understand discourse from a wide perspective. While we affirm the first amendment protected right of freedom of speech and expression, NASW-NYC will not intentionally publish articles with derogatory or hate-based language*

## REMARKS FROM THE NASW-NYC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DR. CLAIRE GREEN-FORDE CONT...

and forever been changed by the profound impact of COVID-19; we must adapt with wisdom through the lessons learned, if we are to thrive-forward. We are still in a pandemic, and while there are signs of hopeful ease with cases going down (at the time of this writing), we are well aware that there is always the next variant on the horizon, and the waning of our hyper-vigilance and easing of social restrictions, could thwart efforts to close this chapter in history.

For the past two years, NASW-NYC has been keen to discuss the intersection of both social injustice/structural racism and COVID-19. Both locally and across the country, NASW and the larger social work community, has seen an increase in the demand for social workers and other mental health practitioners, to address the exponentially larger mental health and social wellness crisis. As more legislatures and companies have borne witness to the mental and social health needs of individuals and communities, (which our profession has been sounding the alarm about for years), we have witnessed society as a whole, take more interest. Society can no longer ignore the significance of mental health and how intersectional identities and structural racism play a key role in both quality of care and access, while juxtaposed against the harsh truth of which communities and individuals receive funding and support.

There are calls across NYC and the country, to increase the number of social workers in schools, community violence and

trauma response, organizations, government, healthcare, and policy to name a few. As we have noticed the call to increase social workers, we also witness that our profession is at a crossroads, and must determine if it will adapt or instead rest on what was, instead of what must be. Moreover, we must be honest enough to recognize that the title of social worker, is not necessarily the same as the professional practice and ethical obligations of social work. Not every individual who is titled social worker, believes in the same things, or upholds the tenets of the profession. NASW-NYC, like many chapters across the country, receives communication from social workers who oppose our social justice priorities, the focus on racial and social justice, immigration reform, LGBTQ+ rights, support of reproductive justice rights, protecting voter rights, and our willingness to engage in discussion and work across political affiliations. These priorities, and the call to uplift those who are marginalized and oppressed through advocating against racial and social injustice, are the core of our profession and intimately connect to the NASW Code of Ethics and social work identity.

The social work profession is indeed at a crossroads and if we are to work towards justice and equity for all, we must decide now, how much we value social work and how necessary the practice of social work is for the future. Are we as individuals and practitioners going to continue to largely remain silent or rest solely on organizations like NASW to stand up and fight the attacks alone without our support? In NYC and around the country (and world), there have been an increasing number of direct attacks to reproductive justice and freedom, attacks of voters rights and outward efforts to engage voter suppression, open conflicts and crimes against humanity in NYC and abroad, and we have seen the increasing attacks and attempts to censor social work education and limit discussions and training in

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## REMARKS FROM THE NASW-NYC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DR. CLAIRE GREEN-FORDE CONT...

social work schools around social injustice and structural violence.-- is THIS to be our new normal?

While the full impact of COVID-19 as well as the backlash of bringing to focus social and racial injustice in America is evolving, and remains unknown, what is clear is that as a profession, the time is right, indeed, it is NOW, that we make our presence felt. Too often, social workers have believed the myth that as individuals and as a profession, we are powerless. Alice Walker once said "the most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any". I've often wondered why social workers seemingly advocate for everyone but themselves and while I have no concrete proof, I've thought, perhaps this is because our profession is largely made up of women identified individuals? Perhaps this is tied to the social constructs that tell women identified individuals that they must be silent and play nice? Or perhaps, as individuals, we are so concerned we will upset the status quo, risk personal freedom or privileges, or 'make waves' that we are willing to give up our power and hide ourselves to the point of being invisible. No matter the cause, we cannot remain silent any longer. The very existence of the social work profession depends on you, on me, on us, rising up and adapting to the times.

As I shared with you in my last CURRENTS communication in the fall of 2021, "we must look beyond what was in our lives and what we've always done... we must push past our comfort, our training, our policies and practices, if we are to adapt to the new reality and rise to the challenges and opportunities presented to us".

The time is Right for YOU as a social worker, for the collective social work body, to rise up and

change the course of history to align with the goal of justice and equality, which is still yet to be. The time is right for the profession to take a more prominent position in society and to demand the due respect and honor that this profession deserves. The time is right for social workers to take a seat at the table or as Shirley Chisholm said, "if they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." Moreover, I offer that if social workers aren't given a seat at the table, it's time we build the seat, the table, and the room they go in. It's time we stop waiting in the background to be invited in, and once we build the spaces we want to experience, it's necessary that we invite everyone in. No longer should we accept that as a profession, social workers should be highly trained and underpaid, yet in high demand. No longer should we accept that Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) consistently be 'disproportionally' and negatively impacted by disparate treatment in healthcare, criminal justice, housing, education, and employment. No longer should we accept that certain communities receive lesser quality and trained providers because insurance, which is tied to socio-economic and employment status, dictate quality of care. No longer should we sit back in our communities and accept political corruption. No longer should we accept 'powerful entities', suppressing voter rights, LGBTQ+ rights, immigration rights, and reproductive rights. No longer should we accept the myth that we have no power as we continue to grapple with the devastating impact to our communities and clients as funding for social services, education, and healthcare are slashed, while millions of dollars are given to build state of the art facilities in communities where residents remain displaced and impoverished. Social workers have the ability to shift the narrative of society, to respond to the needs of the time, to rise in leadership across all sectors of business, and to keep pressing on to reach the ideals of our profession.

NASW-NYC family, future social workers, and allies, I propose one final thought as I urge you to take hold of your capacity to be agents of change in NYC and beyond. While it may seem disconnected,

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## REMARKS FROM THE NASW-NYC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DR. CLAIRE GREEN-FORDE CONT..

it's directly related to our call and necessary to address as we adapt to the new normal and face the realities of limited support. NASW-NYC is often asked by members and not-yet members alike, "what's the point of membership? You didn't do this... I wanted you to do that and you didn't take up my cause..." The truth is, as a membership organization, NASW-NYC relies on membership dollars and participation to exist. Additionally, beyond the sheer volume of requests and human capacity limitations with a team of four, NASW-NYC is not a regulatory body and is not legally authorized as a membership association, to be involved in many of the individual asks and requests of the social work community. What the association does do, that benefits you every day, is advocate broadly for the social work profession and the communities social workers serve. As individuals have pulled back support, the chapter and efforts have been impacted and despite this, we continue efforts to advocate for all social workers, who benefit from our efforts, regardless of membership status. In NYC alone, there are close to 24,000 registered (licensed) social workers and yet, less than 17% of registered social workers in NYC are members.

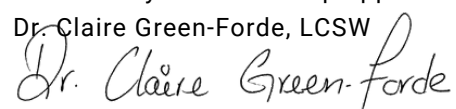
NASW-NYC has been addressing and advocating for social workers and the communities we serve for years and we need your help to continue. The Chapter simply cannot exist or survive without your partnership. As a chapter, we have tackled issues of reimbursement rates and lack of transparency for pay scale among insurance companies; we have successfully advocated for LCSWs to be part of the workman's

compensation panels in New York; we have been successful in efforts to allow LCSWs in New York to bill Medicaid; we have continued our advocacy efforts to try to protect the scope of practice for social workers; we have advocated for the expansion of tele-health and equal pay for in person and virtual sessions; we've helped to ban conversion therapy; we've tackled police reform and transparency; we've helped to support and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights; we've advocated for social workers to be placed in every school; we've advocated to raise the age for criminal responsibility in New York and continue to advocate against attempts to roll back bail reform and other measures. Additionally, we continue to advocate for better wages for social workers and better working conditions with appropriate supervision. NASW-NYC urges you to support our advocacy efforts on your behalf, get involved, sponsor students to be members, sponsor new professionals, volunteer, lend your expertise and push our profession forward, As Mother Teresa once said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples".

I urge you to reflect on the NASW Code of Ethics and fully embrace the values and foundations of our profession as you press on. I urge you to join NASW-NYC so that together, we can continue the work of advocacy, justice, and equity for social workers and marginalized communities. I know many of us are exhausted with the needs and the demands of our time, energy, talents, and the overwhelming pain in society. It's OKAY if we too, are not okay at times. Healers need to be healed and helped too. We are stronger together and as the African proverb says, "If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far, go together". NASW-NYC, the time is right for social workers to go together.

In solidarity and with deep appreciation,

Dr. Claire Green-Forde, LCSW



# REMARKS FROM THE NASW-NYC BOARD PRESIDENT

**Erica P. Sandoval, LCSW**  
**NASW-NYC Board President**



Long before the word “pandemic” became a part of our daily vocabulary, I knew social work needed a new normal.

As an immigrant Latina who’s been in the profession for over a decade, I knew that for all of social work’s strengths, the field also has glaring deficits. I experienced them firsthand as someone who was passed over for promotions in favor of white colleagues, had my ideas routinely dismissed, and have felt the frequent sting of micro-aggressions. In social work school, I was never assigned books written by or centering Latinx people. I’m routinely the first Latinx social worker – or even social worker of color – my clients have ever worked with. It’s lonely, infuriating, and exhausting to constantly be aware of race and not have the same be true of white colleagues and professors who overwhelmingly make up the profession.

I found solace with other social workers of color. They validated my experiences with racism in the workplace and shared similar slights. They understood how race was layered into everything we did. We could finish each other’s sentences about the lack of cultural humility in the field. So, when I became the NASW NYC chapter president, I set out to professionalize these exchanges. That’s how the NASW-NYC BOLD talks emerged.

An acronym for Building, Organizing, & Leading in Diversity, NASW-NYC BOLD has been a space for social workers to have frank conversations about identity and systemic oppression. We’ve had discussions on topics like gun violence, COVID-19 vaccinations, and the 2020 election. We’ve embraced the intersectionality of these issues and helped each other find the language to talk about them. To incentivize this often-uncomfortable work, many NASW-NYC BOLD Talks had BOLD CE’s which

offer continuing education credits. Pia Raymond, LMSW has been an incredible presenter and educator, and with her at the helm of the NASW-NYC BOLD CE workshops, it has been amazing to see this grow.

During my tenure, NASW-NYC has also opened up the Psychotherapy and Wellness Practitioner Group to all credentials. Originally only for private practitioners, the group now also consists of mental health providers who work in schools, hospitals, and mental health clinics. We made the change so that social workers regardless of their training and licensing can be mentored and nurtured by others. With the mission of empowering social workers through training, awareness-building, and community, emerging and seasoned social workers come together for support, education, and information. The group has become a larger, more diverse community.

I’m proud that these NASW-NYC events and trainings overwhelmingly feature social workers of color. Giving Black and Brown social workers these platforms buck the idea that our voices are only valuable when we’re discussing “racial” issues. Whether the topic is corporate social work, foster parenting, student loan debt, or something else, our chapter is intentional about centering social workers across the diverse spectrum because we know that identity affects how we interact with every issue.

This consciousness has led to another “new normal” in social work: self-care. In fact, social workers are now duty-bound to self-care thanks

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## REMARKS FROM THE NASW-NYC BOARD PRESIDENT CONTINUED...

to our updated code of ethics. Alongside other tenacious leaders, I fought for this change at the delegate assembly in 2021. I'm proud that we're not holding only supervisors accountable for the self-care of their social workers but entire organizations. Now, the NASW Code of Ethics reads, "Professional self-care is paramount for competent and ethical social work practice. Professional demands, challenging workplace climates, and exposure to trauma warrant that social workers maintain personal and professional health, safety, and integrity. Social work organizations, agencies, and educational institutions are encouraged to promote organizational policies, practices, and materials to support social workers' self-care."

Finally, the onus is on our employers to create work environments and cultures that enable and value self-care. And it's more important than ever as social workers spend every day of the pandemic helping clients and communities navigate daily trauma.

We've been in COVID-19 wards, helping families say goodbye to loved ones and hospital staff deal with burnout. We've had back-to-back-to-back zoom meetings with students and clients as they cope with isolation. We're leading community organizations that are stocking free fridges, helping people apply for public benefits, addressing street violence, substance use, IPV, and finding shelter.

As the pandemic seemingly ebbs, we cannot let the world forget how essential social workers are. We've long been filling in the gaps created by an insufficient welfare state and systemic oppression, and the world relied on those skills and experiences to address the worst of the pandemic. Already, social workers are the largest sector of mental health providers in the country, providing more than 60% of treatment.

The new normal must center social workers and the value we add to every dimension of life.

But that new normal will fall short if we don't also center cultural humility. While the number of

social workers is projected to grow by 12% over the next decade, we must ensure that growth breaks current patterns. Now, only 14% of social workers in this country are Latinx, and Black social workers make up just 22% of the field. Asian Americans make up only 5% of social workers. For the future of social work to be able to serve all communities and fight injustice, we must be a profession that makes our work accessible and intentionally cultivates talent from all backgrounds. We must prioritize authentic diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts that uplift colleagues of color and make room for a new generation that looks far different from today's field.

As much work as there is left to do, I'm proud to know I leave things better than when I began my time as NASW NYC president. We are a more diverse board and have a diversity of committee leaders represented. Our Political Action for Candidate Election arm is chaired by Luisa Lopez, MSW, and Jessica Hardial, LCSW is the chair of the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Collective. Not only are these chairs Latina, but they are also social justice warriors who always lead with the best intentions. NASW-NYC BOLD is being seamlessly led by all of us, as the adaptive leadership framework model was implanted through our work with Dr. Linda Lausell Bryant's support. I owe a debt of gratitude to my partners on the Executive Committee, Kenton Kirby, LCSW, Manoj Pardasani, PhD, LCSW, ACSW, Edith Chaparro, PhD, LCSW-R, Eric Levine, DSW, LMSW, and of course President-Elect Emilio Tavarez, MSW. We navigated the tides during a pandemic and virtual world.

As I hand this work off and pass the baton to Emilio, I know that you are all in great hands. Emilio has a keen view of the needs of communities and will become a fierce advocate for the field as he leads with a lens through policy and community organizing.

Palante, mi gente, forward we go.

In Solidarity,  
Erica Sandoval, LCSW



## A NOTE FROM THE NASW-NYC TEAM TO OUR VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

On behalf of the NASW-NYC team, we sincerely thank **outgoing President of the Board of Directors, Erica P. Sandoval, LCSW**, for the steadfast leadership and dedication shown in her tenure over the past 2 years. As a chapter, we've seen many ups and downs and faced many challenges and unknowns as we navigated one of the most challenging times in modern history. Thank you for your leadership, dedication, care for our volunteers and the social work community during such a strenuous time. We are both grateful and proud of the personal and professional accomplishments you've made in the time you've served with NASW-NYC; thank you for the legacy you've build upon!

We also extend our deepest thanks to the **Executive Committee, Board of Directors, Committee Chairs, and Committee members** for your time, service, and support of the chapter. Volunteers are a vital part of NASW, and we appreciate your insights, wisdoms, and the gift of your time.

Lastly, and certainly not least, we extend a warm welcome to **incoming President of the Board of Directors, Emilio Tavarez, MSW** and our incoming BOD members; we look forward to continuing to build on the legacy of NASW-NYC with you!

With deep gratitude,  
Dr. Claire Green- Forde, Executive Director

Linda Lee, MSW, Director of Education

Angelique I. Rodriguez, Manager, Community Engagement & Volunteer Initiatives

Kalliope (Kelly) Moskos, Executive Assistant/Coordinator of Chapter Relations

**CODE OF ETHICS**  
OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

**STATEMENTS**  
FROM **NASW-NYC**



THE TIME IS RIGHT  
FOR SOCIAL WORK

**DONATE TO**  
**NASW**  
National Association of Social Workers  
**NEW YORK CITY CHAPTER**

# NYC SOCIAL WORK STUDENT VOICES:

## A NASW-NYC CARES MEMBER AMBASSADOR ON BEING A STUDENT OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE COVID-19 ERA

Jeanette Minson

*Columbia University - School of Social Work*

*Class of 2023*

*2021-2022 NASW-NYC CARES Member*

*Ambassador*

As I consider the ways the pandemic and ensuing social, political, and health implications have impacted my experiences as a graduate social work student, the word that repeatedly flashes in my mind is determination. As a result of the pandemic, our world has experienced so much tragedy and loss. We have lost control, our daily lives, and sense of normalcy. We have lost jobs and financial stability. We have lost homes and sources of food. Most importantly, we have lost our loved ones, friends, and colleagues. While we have experienced these horrific losses associated with COVID-19, we have had time to ponder our life goals and reassess our future to move forward.

For me personally, through the losses in my own life as a result of the pandemic, I have become more determined. I have been passionate about service throughout my life, and after seeing the devastation from COVID-19, I realized it was time for me to make a greater difference in the lives of others. I had wrestled for years with going into social work and made the decision to go back to graduate school. After seeing the detrimental effects of the pandemic and social, political, and health implications, I was determined to advocate for human rights, social justice, and dignity and worth of all. Change is necessary, and I was determined that I could support this through becoming a social worker.

As I am pursuing my graduate studies at Columbia School of Social Work this past year, I



have been determined to utilize the knowledge and skills I am acquiring in classes, interactions with others, and in my field placement to learn, grow, and reflect to become an effective and caring social worker to serve humanity. I quickly have learned that our profession is not only on the front line in responding to the needs of people following the devastation of the pandemic, but I realized the challenges our profession faces by the overall lack of resources available, specifically the lack of equity in accessibility to those resources. As a student, I have come to more fully understand the overwhelming need for social workers which has greatly increased as a result of the pandemic and the social, political, and health implications caused by it. As graduate students, we have served in field placements in housing for the elderly, immigration, hospitals and other health care facilities, suicide hot lines, schools, mental health practices, and other nonprofits to name a few. The need for social workers goes on and on.

As I have been reflecting as a student on the vast need for social workers in so many areas as a further result from COVID-19, I have become very concerned about the necessity for all people to have access to quality mental health care. In story after story and discussion after discussion in my classes and with colleagues, the need for mental health care calls me to be determined to serve in this area. COVID-19 has left its mark on mental health, and this will continue. As social work students, we have learned the necessity of self-care. This, too, alerts me further to the need for avenues of self-care for all people. With there

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## NYC SOCIAL WORK STUDENT VOICES:

### A NASW-NYC CARES MEMBER AMBASSADOR ON BEING A STUDENT OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE COVID-19 ERA CONTINUED...

being so many uncertainties regarding the effects and future effects of COVID-19, our society's mental health is at risk.

We must be determined to put into place mechanisms and policies prioritizing quality and accessible mental health care to help our country and our world, especially following the devastation from COVID-19. There are those who are grieving over the unexpected deaths of their loved ones. They never had the chance to say goodbye and process their grief and are left with loneliness and isolation. Think about those who lost their financial livelihood, their housing, and are still trying to recover. Families are struggling to have basic survival needs met. The uncertainty of not knowing day-to-day whether basic necessities will be financially available causes much stress and anxiety. There are also those who continue to suffer the physical and psychological health effects as a result of having COVID-19, inaccessibility to quality health care, and being unable to work. Our frontline health care professionals are suffering from the aftermath of the pandemic with PTSD. They have worked tirelessly to save lives while being confronted with death on a daily basis and with the unfortunate lack of control to save people. There are our children and their teachers whose entire educations were thrown in disarray and lives are forever changed. Those in our communities who have been marginalized by inequity and racism, which became further compounded during COVID-19, are in need of equitable access to quality mental health services. Unfortunately, these are the communities that often suffer most from inadequate mental health care and poor if any health care insurance. These are but a few

examples of the need for quality and accessible mental health care in our country. In thinking about all the mental health needs that have increased due to COVID-19, I have become determined to focus on mental health advocacy as a social worker.

While mental health needs have been greatly impacted by COVID-19, our country also faces many other challenges politically, socially, and economically as result of the pandemic. We are at a crossroads, and as a country, we must put in place systems to serve and meet the needs of all people equitably. Although the future may seem daunting, I am determined to make a difference. As a graduate student in social work, I not only see the determination within myself to contribute to helping support our society to move forward, I see the determination daily in my social work student colleagues.

Through this determination to make a difference, I am optimistic. In addition to my own optimism, I see the enduring optimism of the other social work students that we will make a difference. Within our program at the Columbia School of Social Work, we openly discuss and reflect upon how each of us will foster the NASW Code of Ethics in our roles as future social workers. I am optimistic seeing the commitment of our future social workers to the NASW principles in their areas of interest as social workers. I, as well, as my social work student colleagues are committed to advocate for the dignity and worth of every person, challenge social injustices and racism, serve people in need, and address social problems.

Moreover, I was recently asked how I could still be optimistic in the midst of the aftermath of COVID-19. I immediately responded that while I realize the horrific devastation we all have suffered, I am determined to focus on the generous and selfless acts of kindness from people who have brought communities together during the pandemic and afterward. Although we have lost so much with the pandemic and ongoing uncertainty, I see resiliency in people helping push forward to the future. Within our social work

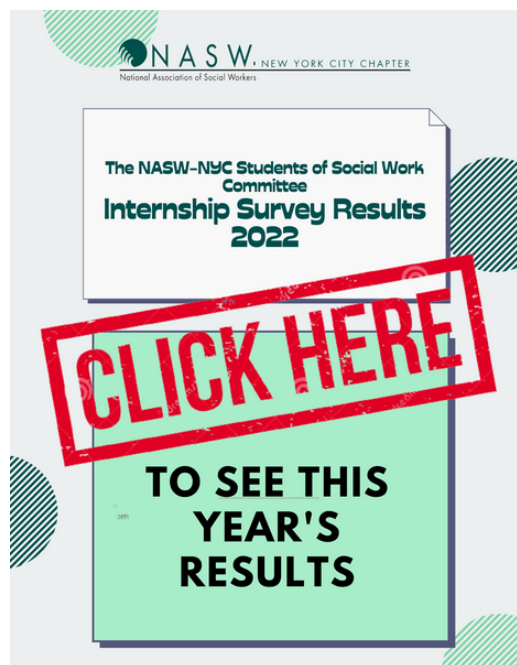
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## NYC SOCIAL WORK STUDENT VOICES:

### A NASW-NYC CARES MEMBER AMBASSADOR ON BEING A STUDENT OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE COVID-19 ERA CONTINUED...

profession, I also see a community who optimistically pursues this field as we genuinely want to serve society. This keeps me optimistic for our future. I am optimistic that our profession now and in the future will continue to serve others and advocate for social justice. Regardless of what emphasis area within social work each of us chooses to embark upon when we finish our social work graduate programs, I am optimistic we will serve as leaders and advocates in various capacities. As social workers, we can do great things together.

## RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES:



## NASW-NYC HIGHLIGHTS: NASW-NYC CARES MENTORS

In 2021, the NASW-NYC launched the pilot round of NASW-NYC CARES Mentors, a member-exclusive freeform peer mentoring program. The program aims to connect NYC social workers in professional and reciprocal relationships that provide leadership and development opportunities to support their personal growth and the growth of the social work profession.

The NASW-NYC Chapter would like to extend our gratitude to this round's participants who offered their time, energy, and feedback to help continue shaping this much-needed program.



**Claudia Chika, LMSW**

I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in the pilot round of NASW-NYC CARES Mentors Program. I had such an amazing mentee that was so driven to do good in the world! I hope our time together was as inspiring to her as it was to me. I highly recommend participating in the program if you can.



**Sheila Colon, BCD, LCSW**

It [the NASW-NYC CARES Mentors Program] is really about passing my experience on to someone who's new in the field. I think it's been gratifying for the both of us.



**Leslie Garcia, LCSW**

It was an honor to be chosen as a mentor for the inaugural round of the NASW-NYC CARES Mentors Program. I was partnered with a mentee who is smart, dedicated, and motivated. This opportunity reminded me how valuable it is to give back to our profession while supporting and encouraging new social workers who are ready to make an impact.



**Jessie Gonzalez, MA, LMSW**

Thank you to the NASW-NYC for developing such an important outlet for social work students to connect with current practicing social workers. Being able to connect with my mentee throughout the semester, was an excellent way to support someone who is preparing to enter this very important field of practice.



**Yamit Alpern Kol, LMSW**

I was thrilled to have this opportunity to invest in the social work workforce. It also gave me an opportunity to get to know someone who works with a similar population but in a different sector, which was a growth experience for me too.



**Michelle Jervis, LCSW**

This has been a wonderful experience for me. What's most interesting is that I run my own mentoring program for youth but have never formerly mentored. My mentor and I have so much in common and were comfortable from the moment we met. I must say NASW-NYC Cares was spot on when they matched us.

## **NASW-NYC HIGHLIGHTS: NASW-NYC CARES MENTORS CONTINUED....**



**Deborah Unger, LCSW**

As a mentor I provided my mentee with information necessary for her to take the steps to apply for her LCSW. In addition, I sometimes checked in with her by text in between sessions to motivate her to stay on track with tasks we discussed. This was a valuable experience & I offered my mentee to reach out if she has additional questions about the application process, or becoming an LCSW.

### **Additional Mentors:**

**Nancy Brennan, LMSW  
Roberta Ferdschneider, LMSW  
Elisabeth Salner, MPH, LCSW  
Vanessa Smith, LCSW  
Elaine Suben, LCSW-R**

### **A Special Thank You to the Mentees:**

**Dessie Allison  
Leonor Cordova, LMSW  
Ariel Goltche  
Hayley Goodrich  
Ariel Hayat, LMSW  
Sebastian Lopez Calvo, LMSW  
Monica Pendagrast  
Stephanie Reid  
Auressa Simmons  
Melody Story  
Samantha Wilkinson, LMSW  
Junette Williams, LMSW**





# YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE

## VOTING IS SOCIAL WORK: THE NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK VOTER MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN

Mimi Abramovitz, DSW

*Bertha Capen Reynolds Professor, Silberman School of Social Work, Hunter College & The CUNY Graduate Center; Co-Leader, National Social Work Voter Mobilization Campaign*

Social workers treat and provide services to individuals and communities to improve their well being. When well-being requires income, we help families apply for public assistance, Unemployment Insurance or Social Security benefits. When well-being requires adequate housing, we help homeless people find a place to live. Living in a country that lacks universal health care, we help clients secure health insurance. We also work hard to let the people we serve understand that the source of their problems goes beyond an individual's bad decision, bad luck, or unfortunate circumstances to the structural inequities that, in turn, undermine the health, mental health, and well-being of all of us. When asked by a client or a community what they can do to improve their life circumstances, we offer treatment, services, trainings, or advice about coalition building. Rarely do we point out that these problems reflect political decisions and that clients can call their elected officials to get answers.

We can do more! Why not ask clients if they have registered to vote? Why not include this question when we first take a client's or a community's history. Why not include non-partisan voter registration materials among the many forms placed in an agency or community center's waiting room? Integrating nonpartisan voter activities into service delivery can increase the political participation and the power of historically disenfranchised individuals and groups.



And it works! We know that (1) social service agencies have raised voter turnout among traditionally marginalized populations; (2) where staff discussed voting with clients, the clients' voting rate exceeded national averages; (3) voting is associated with higher levels of health and mental health, stronger social connections, better employment outcomes, and a greater sense of individual efficacy; (4) communities with high voter turnout receive more attention, quicker responses, and added resources from legislators than low-turnout communities; and (5) that voter registration is legal, non-partisan, and professional.

Imagine if all 700,000 social workers in the US each registered 3 people to vote... and they registered three more... and so on. No need to imagine! Social workers already participate in political activities in higher numbers and vote at higher rates than other professions. We do so for many reasons. It is the right thing to do. It is in our professional DNA. Our professional organizations endorse voter registration and the data show that voter engagement bring benefits to individuals, communities, and to the profession. It also strengthens social work's social justice mission.

We also do it because we can. We are in the right place! Our location at the intersection between the individual and society positions us well for this work. Our field work departments and agencies have access to many of the 12 million clients that, according to Angelo McClain, CEO of NASW, social workers serve every day, only 22 %

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# YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE CONTINUED...

of whom vote.

Voting is the most basic right in our democracy. But it was not easy to get there. It took the historic civil rights movement--many marches, sit-ins, jail time, and lives lost--to convince Congress to pass the 1965 Voting Rights Act--100 years after the end of the Civil War. Today, many democratic institutions, especially voting rights, are again under attack marked by widespread voter suppression, election subversion, and gerrymandering. In *How Democracies Die*, two political scientists identify four warning signs of democracies in trouble. They conclude Democracy does not necessarily end with a bang, a violent military revolution, or by a coup. Rather, it ends with a whimper: The slow, steady weakening of critical democratic institutions (i.e., the vote, elections, the press, the courts, the media, etc.).

Social workers have always understood that voting is the most basic right in our democracy.

Since its founding in 1955, the NASW has promoted open access to the ballot box. In 1983, two professors Richard Cloward, a social worker, and Frances Fox Piven, a sociologist, launched The Human SERVE campaign that increased voter registration among public and nonprofit agency clients. In 1993 this widely supported effort paid off. The resulting National Voter Registration Act, better known as the "Motor Voter Bill" enabled motor vehicle bureaus but also public and non-profit social service agencies to help clients register to vote. Despite these new voter registration opportunities, during the last 30 years, the above-noted threats to the vote and to democracy have actively eroded the hard-won franchise, especially among marginalized groups. Since a small number of votes decide many elections outcomes the effort to lower voter turnout has a large impact. If mobilized, the same small number of voters can influence election results to reflect their own interests.

## Voting is Social Work

In 2016 social workers organized the non-partisan National Social Work Voter Mobilization Campaign to bring social work practitioners and educators together under the banner: Voting IS Social Work. Supported by the profession's political action mandates, it set out to register agency clients, to mainstream voter engagement in social work education and practice and to protect democracy. By spring 2018, our largely volunteer campaign had won [endorsements](#) and participation from the major national social work organizations, many state NASW Chapters, social work schools and social service agencies. By the November 2018 mid-term election, we reached many social workers across the country; raised awareness about the importance of registration and voting; challenged myths suggesting that voter registration with clients and constituents, was unprofessional, illegal, or partisan; connected voting to social, work values, practice, and education; and advanced civic participation among social workers.

In March 2022 ,Voting is Social Work (VISW) launched the [Power of Three](#) non-partisan voter registration campaign. On its [ALL-NEW website](#) you can take the [Power of 3 Pledge](#), activate your networks, and register 3 people to vote. You will also find a package of tools including [palm card/QR code](#) and [screen savers](#) linked to Turbo vote, the useful [Why Vote ToolKit](#), and many other [voter mobilization resources](#) that social workers can use to support clients, staff. and communities to vote. Be part of history. Be part of the solution. Join the National Social Work Voter Mobilization Campaign, Take the Power of 3 Pledge and register 3 people to vote.

**For further information and to join the email list go to [VISW website](#)**

**For questions contact:**

**Email Mimi Abramovitz [iabramov@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:iabramov@hunter.cuny.edu)**

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## **NASW-NYC HIGHLIGHT:** **DR. NANCY GALLINA** **DEAN OF TOURO COLLEGE: GRADUATE** **SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Touro President Dr. Alan Kadish announced in April 2022 that Dr. Nancy Gallina has been named dean of the Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW) of Touro University.**

**Gallina's leadership follows that of Founding Dean, Dr. Steven Huberman, who announced in the Spring 2021 that he was stepping down after 15 years. Dr. Gallina's appointment follows a national search for a new dean begun in summer 2021. She has led the GSSW as interim dean since July 2020.**

\*\*\*\*

A founding member of the Touro College-GSSW faculty, Dr. Gallina has served as an assistant professor, associate dean, chief academic integrity officer, chair of practice sequence, and director of the MSW program during her almost two decades with the College.

"I look forward to recruiting and training our next generation of social workers. There is so much healing needed in our world, and now more than ever social workers are in demand," she said. "With the repercussions from the global pandemic, and the socio political strife our country has been enduring, we are only beginning to identify the many ways social work can be of help."

Dr. Gallina holds an LCSW and Ph.D. from Adelphi University, where her research focused on the disparity between social work's professed values and the practical demands of the profession. Dr. Gallina was also a member of the inaugural cohort of the Touro College Academy of Leadership and Management (TCALM). She has since returned to TCALM as a facilitator and guest speaker. Prior to joining Touro, Dr. Gallina helped found Nassau County's Homeless Intervention Program, where she directed a collaborative effort between



New York's Department of Social Services and Nassau County's Office of Housing and Intergovernmental Affairs to deliver services to Nassau County's homeless population. Before her government work, Dr. Gallina was the director of Mineola's Family and Children's Association, under whose auspices she managed a temporary shelter and safe house for runaway and homeless youth, a family mediation clinic, and the Nassau Family Court and Child Center.

Dr. Gallina runs a private clinical practice specializing in couples and grief counseling and treating childhood disorders such as ADHD, ODD, and autism. In her free time, she serves as a clinical consultant to Bikers Against Child Abuse (BACA), a community intervention program about which she authored a six-year longitudinal study on the efficacy of the program.

**The NASW-NYC  
Chapter congratulates  
Dr. Gallina on her  
appointment and looks  
forward to  
collaborating and  
working together.**

## IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, IMMIGRANT JUSTICE: SOCIAL WORK, DEMOCRACY AND THE ETHICS OF IMMIGRATION

*Dr. Eric Levine [1]*

The social work community has long been devoted to the issue of immigration in both policy and practice. Here in NYC, the NASW Chapter established an Immigration and Global Social Work Committee in 2017 to pursue justice for immigrant communities and to present a consistent, strong social work voice based on our unique values and commitments. In this essay, my objective is to briefly trace the trajectory of immigration in the United States, point out its racist underpinnings, identify underlying ethical imperatives and conclude with an overview of NASW's work [2]. In many ways, my goal is to address the question of why we engage in the immigration issue. As social workers, we know we support the rights of immigrants. But what is the basis, or grounding for this commitment and concern?

While the issue of immigration is a critical public policy consideration for our country, it can be a quite personal one as well. Most of us are descendants of or are immigrants ourselves, though for many, ancestors came in chains and not with tickets on an ocean steamer. But we all have unique migration stories that shape our thinking and action. My own family came from Poland and present-day Belarus, arriving in the late 1800's. I can only imagine what they thought when they saw that great lady in the harbor. No one in the family had jobs, marketable skills or knew English. Technically, one could argue that my relatives were undocumented since documentation as we know it today was not required. Still, my relatives were not naturalized as citizens until decades later. Moreover, my wife is from Canada and our daughter is adopted from China. So, I take this immigration "thing" rather seriously. Had timing, public opinion



and legislation been different, who knows if my extended family or my wife and daughter would ever have made it to these shores.

My family has been fortunate and relatively privileged – we were white and escaped certain forms of discrimination and prejudice, but not all, and made it into the working class, a path sadly inaccessible to all too many Americans and immigrants, particularly those of BIPOC backgrounds. My family arrived here just in time, before prejudiced public leaders tried to either limit or entirely close the doors on immigration and before the Holocaust ravaged the towns where my family hails from. Less than a century ago, Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis were marked as security threats, as perverse as that sounds, denied entry, and sent back to Europe where they were brutally murdered. And one cannot help but visualize that government raids today on workplaces, schools, public spaces or homes, often leading to deportation, bear a frightening similarity to the roundups of Jews and other targeted groups in pre-WWII Germany.

What's the point? Immigrant Americans commonly draw their heritage from extended families fleeing persecution, violence, poverty or environmental disaster, but eager to seek opportunity, make their mark and build meaningful lives for their loved ones. My grandparents and parents were just like the Dreamers of today – children brought or born here of unauthorized immigrants! Back when my family first came to these shores, they were fleeing pogroms, oppression and poverty from ghetto slums just

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## IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, IMMIGRANT JUSTICE: SOCIAL WORK, DEMOCRACY AND THE ETHICS OF IMMIGRATION CONTINUED ...

like today's immigrants, refugees and asylees.

But today, the frightening reality is that immigration policy has been terrorizing our immigrant neighbors. Immigrant families have been in desperation mode, going deeper and deeper into the shadows, fearful of deportation, whether they are authorized or unauthorized immigrants. The previous Trump administration had sought to block refugees from many countries from entering these shores, especially those of "color," even those who had completed the already strict vetting process. It is deeply worrisome that there are echoes of yesteryear permeating our public air space today, appealing to the basest of fears and instincts. Back in the early teens and twenties of the past century, leaders commonly sought to prevent many immigrants from coming here, sounding phrases such as politically suspect, too crude, too poor, too unskilled, too uneducated, too uncultured, too dirty, too diseased, too dark, too dangerous, too criminal. Sound familiar?[3]

In fact, race and racism are embedded in the history of immigration worldwide. The American immigration system reflects racist beginnings and ends, reproducing discrimination and inequality in practice. In truth, the country's track record belies America's self-perception of welcoming immigrants, an uneven history at that. Furthermore, the current relentless and multi-pronged attack on immigrants represents only the tip of the iceberg: it portends a wider, sustained assault on democracy, social justice, civil and human rights.[4]

Moreover, there are compelling practical, religious, economic, humanitarian and moral arguments to reject these attacks on immigrants. It is time to shut down the overheated rhetoric about the threat of immigration as replacement or invasion, and we must stop exaggerating the danger of criminal elements. Overwhelmingly, immigrants are law abiding, tax paying, gainfully

employed, respectful and productive members of society, hugely grateful to be in the U.S. where they hope to live in freedom and dignity.[5]

We are witnessing a massive global refugee crisis, and consequently we are seeing the highest levels of displacement on record. Even prior to the war in Ukraine, at least 82.4 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes. Among them are 26.4 million refugees, half of whom are under the age of 18. There are millions of stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and lack access to basic rights such as education, health care, employment and freedom of movement. Political and economic conditions in these countries are horrific and people are literally fleeing for their lives.[6]

### Immigration and Structural Racism in the American Experience

Welcoming the immigrant is acclaimed as a basic American value, albeit one that is often inflated. Paradoxically, even with this mixed record, America has offered a haven of freedom and safety to the persecuted. But we also know too well the devastating consequences of turning people away. Historically, the U.S. had been a global resettlement leader. But the prior administration drastically reduced the maximum number of refugees that could enter the country, imposing new security vetting procedures on refugees before admission, which greatly lengthened waiting times and left many refugees in dangerous situations for prolonged periods. Despite overwhelming evidence of the value of immigrants to our country, the previous administration adopted dozens of policies and procedures that slowed, or even stopped legal immigration, without any Congressional action (note: no person should ever be stigmatized as being "illegal," but extended discussion about terms like illegal, undocumented, irregular or unauthorized is for another time). Humanitarian benefits were eliminated or curtailed, permanently damaging our nation's reputation as a haven for the persecuted. Anti-**illegal** immigration policies

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## IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, IMMIGRANT JUSTICE: SOCIAL WORK, DEMOCRACY AND THE ETHICS OF IMMIGRATION CONTINUED ...

morphed into full-blown **anti-immigration** policies. While the prior administration was vocal about cracking down on illegal immigration, they were also increasing enforcement for stricter immigration rules and increasingly denying visa applications for **legal** immigration.[7]

American immigration history has been marked by pervasive prejudice and racism. Historically, nearly all immigrant groups were seen as effectively non-white and not desirable. Even most European immigrants were deemed undesirable at one point or another, though some eventually were conferred “white” status.[8] The U.S. has exhibited an ebb and flow of acceptance and denial of immigrants. Despite advances made in fits and starts, the U.S. is prone to nativism and white supremacy and the immigration system is another American institution characterized by systemic racism. People of color and immigrants from eastern and southern Europe have historically been deemed less than human, and less admissible than white Anglo-Saxon Americans.[9] To wit, the U.S. trafficked in slaves, committed genocide of indigenous people, drove Mexicans off their land, drove out Chinese immigrants, told the Irish not to come, rounded up and interned Japanese citizens and stopped Jews in the harbor fleeing Nazi genocide in WWII. [10]

Sadly, for decades, nativist and white nationalist campaigns have worked to convince the public that immigrants are criminals or take away jobs and drain resources from social programs. For example, Senator Ellison DuRant Smith, speaking in support of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 (also known as the Johnson-Reed Act), said, “I think we now have sufficient population in our country for us to shut the door and to breed up a pure, unadulterated American citizenship.”[11] Upon signing the Johnson-Reed Act, President Calvin Coolidge commented, “America must remain American.”[12] The 1924 Immigration Restriction

Act was the last in a decade’s long series of racist Congressional efforts to limit immigration of “undesirables” to the United States, to encourage immigration of “desired” North European Aryan “racial stock.” And public officials commonly cited the “findings” of that pseudo-science, eugenics, to lobby against immigration. By deceptive data and reasoning Congress heard what it wanted to hear, “that new immigrants were polluting America’s bloodline with ““feeble-mindedness, insanity, criminality, and dependency.” Even more damning, Nazi Germany justified its own racist policies and ultimate genocide on the basis of American eugenics! [13]

This is not the occasion to recount the entire history of American immigration policy, but as immigration surged through the early twentieth century, policy was transformed into formal legal restrictions. According to studies by the American Immigration Council, “arrival limits were first employed against Asians in the late nineteenth century and then in the early twentieth century against all countries except those, like England, most closely linked to the United States. That shutting of the door, largely completed by the end of the 1920s, had implications for immigrants in general and for refugees in particular. The unwillingness to aid Jewish refugees in the 1930s, even when their fate under the Nazis was well-recognized, remains an especially shocking episode in a nation built on the notion of providing refuge for religious liberty. The St. Louis sailing off the east coast of North America in 1939, with its largely Jewish passengers denied the opportunity to land, remains a searing image of America’s refusal of refugees—a denial based on a tightening knot of religious, ethnic, and racial intolerance.”[14]

And we do not need to go so far back to trace American anti-immigrant attitudes. A sampling of public statements by former President Trump provides sufficient evidence:

- “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best,” he said. “They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re

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## IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, IMMIGRANT JUSTICE: SOCIAL WORK, DEMOCRACY AND THE ETHICS OF IMMIGRATION CONTINUED ...

- "...They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." [15]
- "Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?" the president asked, according to those in the meeting. [16]
- "Why do we need more Haitians?" Trump added. "Take them out." [17]
- "Some people call it an 'invasion,'" he said. "It's like an invasion. They have violently overrun the Mexican border." [18]
- "We have people coming into the country or trying to come in, we're stopping a lot of them, but we're taking people out of the country. You wouldn't believe how bad these people are... These aren't people. These are animals." [19]

The American immigration system is built on scaffolding established in 1952.[20] The last major legislative update occurred in 1990. Consequently, the system is profoundly misaligned with current demographic realities and other factors shaping migration. This misalignment is the principal cause for "illegal" immigration, with the unauthorized population estimated at 11 million people. The system is also responsible for a mounting backlog in legal immigration streams, with some applicants in the green card queue scheduled to wait an impossible 223 years for employment-based visas. These are some of the consequences of the failure by Congress and past administrations to update immigration laws to match current realities.[21]

President Biden inherited a beleaguered, if not broken, immigration system, beset by delays, cuts, restrictions, and a variety of barriers to access for noncitizens in the U.S. and abroad. The prior administration implemented hundreds of mainly procedural changes to immigration policy. Some changes have relatively minimal impact, others are sweeping in nature, with cascading effects limiting

the ability of many noncitizens to obtain or maintain immigration status. Trump created bureaucratic barriers to reduce overall approval rates and increase time required to navigate specific applications and petitions, thereby limiting the entry of specific categories of individuals based on claims of public health during the pandemic. That administration enacted executive actions targeting specific populations based on country of origin. All of these changes created often overlapping and duplicative barriers to accessing lawful mechanisms to come to the U.S. with the dramatic impact on immigration that will take years to identify and reverse.[22]

The jury is still out on the Biden administration. It certainly has communicated a far more positive view of immigrants and immigration and there has been progress on a number of fronts. Much effort has been dedicated to undoing the actions of the last administration, particularly around family detention, family reunification, protection of Dreamers, reduction in immigration arrests, reversal of the public charge rule, elimination of country travel bans, elimination of administrative barriers and increased processing fees, as well as a commitment to regional development. Yet, many promises remain unfulfilled, especially around immigration reform in legislation like Build Back Better and the budget reconciliation. The promise to create a safe and orderly process for seeking asylum at the border remains unfulfilled, immigration detention has expanded, and separated families have not been made whole. Deportations have continued, Temporary Protected Status needs to be expanded, Title 42 needs to be eliminated (and as of this writing, the Biden administration announced the intention to cease using it), and refugee and asylum numbers need to be dramatically increased, not just for Ukrainians but for countries of "color," such as Cameroon, Mauritania, Haiti and others. Ironically, the U.S. needs immigrants, due to declining population growth and an aging demographic. Immigration will become increasingly important for sustaining the growth of the labor force.[23]

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## IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, IMMIGRANT JUSTICE: SOCIAL WORK, DEMOCRACY AND THE ETHICS OF IMMIGRATION CONTINUED ...

### The Ethics of Immigration

It is against this backdrop that we find ourselves as caring social workers devoted to social justice and anti-racist practice. There are compelling democratic principles, humanitarian and moral arguments to reject anti-immigrant attacks and instead commit to defending and supporting immigrants, regardless of their supposed legal status. To uncover the moral grounding for such work, I draw from the literature on the ethics of immigration, starting with the fundamental premise that human rights in general indicate what people are morally entitled to. Therefore:

- People matter regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or place of birth
- It is a fundamental human right to move, to be free to immigrate
- The human right to move is a basic liberty like freedom to associate, speak, work, worship and marry
- The freedom to move is a fundamental moral principle of freedom and equality; people should not be restricted to place or prevented from moving because of luck or accident of birthplace
- The freedom to immigrate leads to a duty of others to respect that freedom (even while acknowledging that countries may have the discretion over who they allow to enter, itself a topic that receives robust debate in the literature)[24]

Furthermore, we have duties to not unjustly inflict harm or violence, or to exploit, dominate, or oppress, and have a positive obligation to promote justice, help those in need, and enhance and preserve freedom and dignity.[25] We have a universal humanitarian obligation to all human

beings[26] and an obligation to protect the human rights of all people in our nation's territory, regardless of legal status.[27] Finally, we have a prima facie obligation to provide assistance to refugees.[28]

### NASW and Immigration

The NASW Code of Ethics also makes a strong case for action.[29] As social workers know, the Code is based on six core values, followed by ethical principles and standards. For example, under the value of service, we find the ethical principle: social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems. Under the value of social justice, we read that social workers challenge social injustice. Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups. Finally, the value of the dignity and worth of the person implores us to respect these inherent characteristics of people, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients' socially responsible self-determination. So, although these are quite general statements, within the profession we have a strong moral foundation to advocate for immigrant rights, services and care.

The NASW-NYC Chapter Committee on Immigration and Global Social Work provides thought leadership and represents the unique moral voice of the profession. It endeavors to change the narrative around immigration in the public view and the main strategies have been to inform, educate, motivate and mobilize our community; and to collaborate with a number of advocacy coalitions, social work organizations, schools of social work, among others. The Committee's mission sets these goals:

- To sustain welcoming communities that embrace our immigrant neighbors, particularly those of BIPOC backgrounds; to demonstrate support and compassion for immigrants and immigrant communities regardless of status; and to advocate for human rights, justice and

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## IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, IMMIGRANT JUSTICE: SOCIAL WORK, DEMOCRACY AND THE ETHICS OF IMMIGRATION CONTINUED ...

equity on behalf of immigrants and immigrant communities, reflecting our commitment to the protection and expansion of civil and human rights for all; to educate the NASW community through ongoing training, education and dissemination of best practices.

The short list of the Committee's priorities includes:

- Establish a pathway to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants and pass pending legislation for DACA recipients, farmworkers, essential workers and others
- Reverse the public charge rule
- Ensure humane care for unaccompanied children at the border and end family separation
- End human rights violations in detention centers and close private detention centers
- End the Migrant Protection Protocols and end use of Title 42
- Extend Temporary Protected Status and stop deportations
- Raise refugee and asylum thresholds, especially for BIPOC immigrants
- Work with NYC and NYS legislators and others to protect immigrants

The Committee issues policy statements and action alerts, promotes petitions, letter writing, twitter and phone campaigns to elected officials, meets with legislators, works with national advocacy coalitions and presents educational webinars. We have also worked with National NASW to create an advisory committee on immigration, with representatives from border and interior chapters: NYC, Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Washington State and Florida. The agenda is to coordinate strategy and actions, issue joint statements and engage in coalition building.

### Social Work, Democratic Values and Immigration

Earlier in this essay, I linked immigration to the health and wellbeing of our nation. The future of the unique American experiment in democracy is not a given. Ensuring democracy requires sustained, hard work. Ominously, from the left to the right on the political spectrum, concerns have been raised about the prospects for our democracy. Simply put, social workers have an enormous stake in this issue. As a profession devoted to social justice; anti-racism; self-determination; liberty/freedom; equality; and empowerment of individuals, groups and communities, the erosion of democracy should be cause for major concern and action. NASW shoulders an important role to sound a powerful moral voice about the nature and direction of our society. NASW must continue to be forcefully and vocally committed to creating and building an inclusive democracy, one that fights prejudice, racism, intolerance, and injustice, and promotes civic commitment and engagement, equality, citizenship and equal rights. Critically, NASW must continue to advocate on behalf of justice for our immigrant friends, families, neighbors and communities, regardless of their supposed "legal" status.

The 18th century German moral philosopher, Immanuel Kant, wrote in 1795 that the moral obligation of "hospitality" means the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when she arrives in the land of another.[30] While it may not entail the right to be a permanent visitor, one may refuse to receive her only when this can be done without causing her destruction (in my estimation, the notion of destruction should be understood as broadly as possible, encompassing all manner of harm). As long as she peacefully occupies her place, one may not treat her with hostility. Moreover, Kant noted that hospitality is not a question of philanthropy but of right. Political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906 – 1975) herself was stateless and a refugee for many years, arriving in the U.S. after fleeing Europe in 1941. She did not become a citizen until 1950. Her experience

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## IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, IMMIGRANT JUSTICE: SOCIAL WORK, DEMOCRACY AND THE ETHICS OF IMMIGRATION CONTINUED ...

as a Jewish refugee is recounted in her moving essay, *We Refugees* and in later writings. She discussed an oft quoted (and often misinterpreted) concept of “the right to have rights.” Based on the genocide and expulsions of the 20th century, she had grave doubts about whether there were any means to actually guarantee and deliver those rights, to protect the very people who had been rendered unprotected by losing their national membership.[31] Indeed, Lea Ypi, Albanian born British philosopher writes in her recently published memoir, “Free:”

The West had spent decades criticizing the East for its closed borders, funding campaigns to demand freedom of movement, condemning the immorality of states committed to restricting the right to exit. Our exiles used to be received as heroes. Now they were treated like criminals.

Perhaps freedom of movement had never really mattered...But what value does the right to exit have if there is no right to enter? Were borders and walls only reprehensible when they served to keep people in, as opposed to keeping them out?[32]

As we have now witnessed, the plight of refugees has dramatically worsened with no solution to the crisis on the horizon. Still, it is imperative that we change the prevailing narratives about immigration and respond to the plight of refugees and immigrants in the U.S. and world-wide as well, with benevolence, compassion and action. Lives are at stake and future generations will judge us on how we welcome and care for the “new Americans” among us. “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” can’t be an empty phrase on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. The soul and spirit of our nation, indeed, the moral quality of our society and the future of our democracy hang in the balance.

## RESOURCE LIST

[1] For Identification Purposes Only. Dr. Eric Levine is Director, Social Work Alumni Engagement, Continuing Education & Financial Resource Development for the Touro University Graduate School of Social Work in New York City. As a faculty member, he teaches courses on Social Work Ethics, Macro Practice and Social Welfare Policy. Eric is an active member of the NASW-NYC Chapter and serves as 2nd Vice President, member of the Executive Committee, the Board, the BOLD and Continuing Education committees and is a Chapter Delegate to the NASW National Delegate Assembly. He co-chairs the Chapter’s Committee on Immigration and Global Social Work and has initiated a number of grassroots immigration projects in his home community. He also serves on the Board of Copy Editors for the *International Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics* and is the Managing Editor, *Annual Review: Judaism, Humanities and Social Sciences*.

[2] There is a significant body of literature on social work and immigration, notably the work of Elaine Congress: Congress, E., Takooshian, H., and Appgar, A. (2020), *Behavioral Science in the Global Area: Addressing Timely Issues at the United Nations and Beyond*, Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, Inc.; Congress, E. (2017), “Immigrants and Refugees in Cities: Issues, Challenges, and Interventions for Social Workers,” *Urban Social Work* 1 (1), 20-35; and Chang-Muy, F. and Congress, E. eds. (2015), *Social work with immigrants and refugees: Legal issues, clinical skills, and advocacy* (2nd ed.) New York: Springer Publishing Company. In addition, the important work and publications of NASW on immigration can be accessed through these links: <https://www.socialworkers.org/Advocacy/Policy-Issues/2021-Blueprint-of-Federal-Social-Policy-Priorities/Reform-Immigration-Policy>, <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/1000-Experts/Media-Toolkits/Child-Migrant-Protection-Toolkit> and [https://www.socialworkers.org/News/1000-Experts/Media-Toolkits/Child-Migrant-Protection-Toolkit#tab\\_item-2](https://www.socialworkers.org/News/1000-Experts/Media-Toolkits/Child-Migrant-Protection-Toolkit#tab_item-2). Finally, I thank the members of the Immigration and Global Social Work Committee for their incredible dedication to the cause and the insights that I have gained from them.

[3] This essay draws extensively from the many online reports, fact sheets and publications from the American Immigration Council (AIC), the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), Immigration Hub/Amigos and the Leadership Council on Human and Civil Rights, among many others.

[4] See the extremely important book by Elizabeth F. Cohen (2020), *Illegal: How America’s Lawless Immigration Regime Threatens Us All*, New York: Basic Books. See especially her conclusion chapter. The many works of Seyla Benhabib are particularly vital, such as Benhabib, S. (2004), *The Rights of Others*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; Benhabib, S. (2011), *Dignity in Diversity*, Cambridge, UK: Polity; and Benhabib, S. (2018), *Exile, Statelessness, and Migration*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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# LONG-TERM CARE PLANNING IS CRUCIAL: 3 KEY FACTS SOCIAL WORKERS CAN USE TO HELP START A CONVERSATION

Cynthia Kuster,  
Director of Institutional Relations;  
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Social workers play a key role in many of their clients' lives. The people who need social workers most are those who are less likely to have access to the information and services that are out there to serve them. Social workers help their clients to navigate the opportunities and pitfalls they may encounter in their lives, not least among them, the confusing world of health care.

One of the pitfalls that many aging people do not see coming is the cost of long-term care. It is certainly the greatest financial risk that most seniors will face, and often they don't realize the danger until very late in the game. And make no mistake: the risk is huge.

The costs of long-term care have completely wiped out the life savings of untold thousands of seniors. One telling example is that about eight out of every ten residents of New York's nursing homes are on Medicaid. Many of them had savings, but didn't realize they could and should plan ahead to protect themselves. Instead, they used all their savings paying for care, and ended up with little or nothing for themselves or their families.

Social workers who assist seniors or disabled persons when they need care are in an optimal position to alert them that they may be in a highly vulnerable financial position. They can inform the people who are facing ruinous health care costs that they can and should protect themselves and their assets by doing long-term care planning.



Social workers, you can make a huge difference in lives of people in this situation by starting a conversation about the critical need to plan. A social worker could ask a client who is aging whether they have done long-term care planning. If the client says, "What is that?," the social worker can explain. Long-term care planning is the process of creating a plan to protect yourself financially in case you need long-term care; this plan often includes accessing government assistance that is available to pay for your care.

Here are three key facts a social worker can use to start the discussion, and help clients understand that good options are available to them:

1. You DON'T have to "spend down" all your money in order to be able to access Medicaid.
2. You DO have to take certain steps in order to protect your assets and become eligible for Medicaid.
3. Your income will not make you ineligible for Medicaid, but there are legal steps you may need to take to protect your income, once you are on Medicaid.

What lulls many people into a false sense of security is that they just assume that Medicare will pay for their long-term care as well as their medical care. Every person who is even close to 60, or older, needs to understand: Medicare does not pay for long-term care.

Many people, when faced with the idea that they may need long term care, make the following plan: "I hope it doesn't happen to me." Unfortunately, more often than not this is not a workable plan, because the odds are not in their favor. According to the U.S. Department of Health, 70% of the population will need long-term care at some point, and 40% will need nursing home care.

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# LONG-TERM CARE PLANNING IS CRUCIAL: 3 KEY FACTS SOCIAL WORKERS CAN USE TO HELP START A CONVERSATION CONTINUED...

Often, we see clients who were living within their means until they developed a long-term care need. Perhaps they fell and broke a hip, and had surgery and spent time in a rehab facility (which Medicare does pay for, up to 100 days). When they were discharged to return home, it was evident that they could no longer live independently and needed assistance with activities of daily living.

A home aide who comes several hours a day could cost \$40,000 per year. And typically over time more care is needed. Suddenly, the person is spending money like it's gushing out of a firehose, with no end in sight. The nest egg they worked their whole lives to create is in grave peril.

Fortunately, when people are beginning to have long-term care needs, they are likely to encounter a social worker who can help guide them in a direction that will get them the help they need without depleting all their money. Usually the discharge planner in a hospital is a social worker. The rehab facility will also have social workers who assess and assist the patient and their family in organizing a safe discharge.

That is a key moment when a social worker can focus not only on the client's physical needs, but how they will be able to pay for that care. Starting the conversation about long-term care planning, and encouraging a client to talk to a qualified Elder Law attorney about how to do that, can be as big a benefit to the client as helping them arrange for the care they will need.

Elder Law is a particular practice area, and attorneys who focus on other practice areas (even trusts and estates) typically don't have the experience or knowledge needed to advise clients about long-term care and Medicaid. The rules and regulations around Medicaid are constantly changing, and clients facing

long-term care issues need an attorney who focuses in this area.

The legal system surrounding Medicaid has twists and turns, but a good Elder Law attorney can explain in a clear and simple way what a client needs to do in order to achieve eligibility, and why they need to do it. We have extensive conversations with our clients to make sure they understand the process, so they can be confident that their results will be cost-effective and in line with their goals. Each client's situation is unique, so a good Elder Law attorney will design an individualized plan to optimize the results for each client.

The Medicaid program has been in flux in New York for the past several years. The budget that was just passed under Governor Kathy Hochul makes significant changes to New York's Medicaid system. Also, some of the changes that were passed under the 2020 pandemic budget are beginning to take effect, although numerous of them are still under review. Many unknowns still exist, but what is known is that the changes will make the program more restrictive. Acting sooner rather than later is definitely in a client's best interests.

The people who benefit the most from long-term care planning are those who are not wealthy, but who have 'some' assets. Maybe they own a home they bought for \$50,000 that is now worth \$400,000. Perhaps they have a retirement account, and have some money in savings. For these people, taking steps to protect their assets can be life-changing. It can make the difference between being able to access health care while maintaining their lifestyle, or losing everything they have saved, paying for health care.

One final thought: People of color and immigrants as a whole have fewer assets and lower incomes. An increased focus on assisting these communities to protect what they have against the ruinous costs of health care is overdue. The Elder Law community, working with the social work community, can contribute to a more just society by paying greater attention to helping those who have been traditionally underserved. This is one small but important step toward reducing inequality and creating a healthier, more equitable society.

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# RE-IMAGINING OUTREACH PROGRAMS TO REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG OLDER ADULTS

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Mariner, MSW (Heights and Hills, NY,  
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## **Social isolation causes: Economic; Mobility; Health**

Several people were laid off or had significant pay decreases during the pandemic. A lot of these individuals were already economically disadvantaged because they were in low wage positions. Older adults who worked in retail and the hospitality industry were disproportionately affected by the decreased or lost income. As a result, some of these individuals no longer had access to safe, affordable housing. While some were able to find temporary support at homeless shelters, others were left living on the street and in subway stations. It is important to note that older adults with increased risk factors for mental health disorders and substance abuse, often experienced a worsening of their symptoms because of the stress of homelessness.

Chronic health issues such as diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are often prevalent among older adults. These older adults were more likely to have worse complications if they got the COVID-19 virus. Family and friends became overly cautious and limited their in-person visits as part of their attempt to protect their loved ones by preventing exposure to the virus. As these visits became fewer, the social isolation increased and often led to intense loneliness and fear.

Reduced mobility presents a challenge when trying to access resources in areas which do not have ADA



accommodations. For older adults, these issues become worse without the income to afford at-home care or assistance with travel. The reduced ability to move around safely and independently can result in worsening physical health and social isolation.

## **Social isolation effects: Depression; Anxiety**

It is well documented that social isolation increases the risk for severe mental health issues. Two key indicators of poor mental health are depression and anxiety which can occur independently but are often comorbidities due to the loneliness brought on by social isolation. Older adults with depression and anxiety may develop a sense of shame about their condition. This shame can prevent them from discussing their feelings with family and friends, and from seeking mental health therapy from trained professionals. Consequently, their mental health continues to deteriorate, and they become even more socially isolated.

## **Efforts to reduce social isolation: Telehealth; Community centers; Wearable devices**

Social workers can lead the effort to focus more resources on re-imagining our interpersonal interactions. While chronic health issues and limited mobility may continue to prevent some older adults from participating in in-person events, we must strive to ensure their access with tele-health outreach. Large spaces such as houses of worship and community centers which can accommodate socially distant groups, can be used for regularly scheduled recreational and informational sessions focused on the needs of older adults.

Telehealth access can have a major impact on reducing the physical and mental effects of social isolation. We can also advocate for the use of

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# REIMAGINING OUTREACH PROGRAMS TO REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG OLDER ADULTS CONTINUED...

wearable devices such as 'Fitbits' to keep older adults connected to a community while engaged in physical activities such as low-impact walking if they are alone. Community centers can also provide access to cultural and recreational events with the use of virtual reality devices.

## **Future: Funding; Identify at-risk groups/individuals**

Social workers are necessary and essential advocates for the culturally competent and socially responsible tools required to reduce social isolation in older adults. We must actively engage in lobbying grassroots organization and local politicians to fund access to low-cost, high-speed internet and user-friendly tablets. Additionally, we must strongly recommend and support measures to identify individuals at high risk for social isolation. As Social Workers, we are in a unique position to provide evidence-based support to include social determinants of health when evaluating older adults. By funding and implementing preventive measures, we significantly reduce the economic and personal cost of treating or trying to rehabilitate older adults who suffer the consequences of social isolation.

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**Jennifer Zelnick, MSW, Sc.D**  
Professor & Social Welfare Policy  
Sequence Chair  
Touro College Graduate School of  
Social Work



**DAY TWO: CLOSING SPEAKER**

**Petros Levounis, MD, MA**  
Professor and Chair of Psychiatry,  
Rutgers New Jersey Medical School  
President-Elect, American  
Psychiatric Association



**Linda Lausell Bryant, Ph.D, MSW**  
Clinical Associate Professor; Director,  
DSW Program and Adaptive Leadership  
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**DAY TWO: KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**



**Phil Coltoff, MSW,**  
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The program will be divided into three semesters.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD:** We will discuss pregnancy, early infancy, toddlerhood, the pre-school child and consider issues including attachment, developmental milestones and delays associated with weaning, sleep, separation.

**THE SCHOOL AGE CHILD:** This section will include topics such as social adaptation, opposition, depression, hyperactivity, identity and gender issues, adoption and divorce.

**ADOLESCENCE:** Areas of focus will be identity, socialization, drug and alcohol use, suicidality, school adjustment and separation/ individuation.

*Deadline for Applications is August 31,2022*  
*Offered in NYC and by Zoom, Wednesday nights 7-9pm.*

Please visit our website at [PPSC.org](http://PPSC.org) for more details about the program. You may also contact Susan Sherman, D.S.W. at [drshermSusan@aol.com](mailto:drshermSusan@aol.com) or Ruth Wyatt, LCSW, MA at [ruthwyattlcsW@gmail.com](mailto:ruthwyattlcsW@gmail.com) with any questions

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