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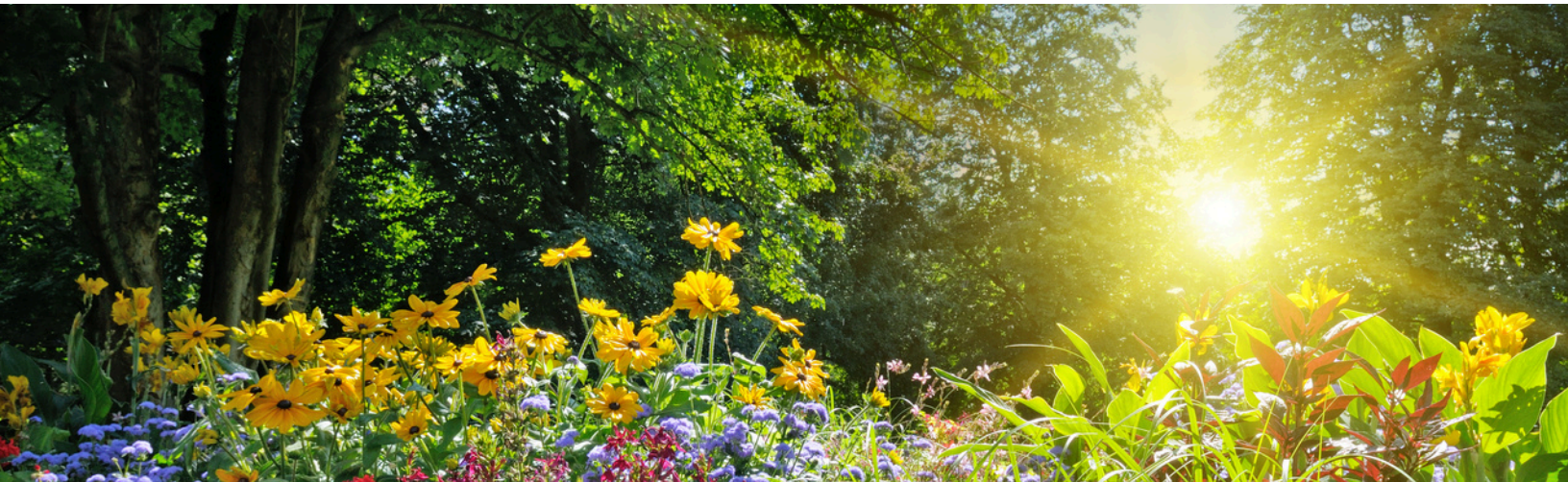
IN THE LOOP

PhD in Social Welfare, The Graduate School and University Center
City University of New York

@gcsocialwelfare



<https://socialwelfare.commons.gc.cuny.edu>



Social Welfare Springing Into Action

Welcome to the April issue of In the Loop! After a long and especially cold winter, spring offers a welcome sense of renewal. As we approach the end of the semester, I encourage you to refocus on the goals that brought you to the PhD Program in Social Welfare. Whether preparing for exams, advancing your dissertation, or collaborating on research, this is a time to move forward with purpose. Let's continue supporting one another and building scholarship that advances social justice.

Barbra Teater, Executive Officer

CSWE Minority Fellowship Program

The Council on Social Work Education's Minority Fellowship Program (CSWE MFP) is now accepting applications for its latest cohort.

An info session will be held on April 18th. [RSVP here](#). [Apply for the fellowship here](#) by May 11th.

FEATURING:

- Important Dates
- Student Achievements
- Graduate Center Achievement Portal
- The Virtual Town Square
- Student Spotlight: Bobbie L. Justin

IMPORTANT DATES

- Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) 2026 Abstracts Deadline
 - April 15
- GC Student Achievements Portal (2025 accomplishments)
 - April 18
- DGSC Elections
 - April 1-30
- ARNOVA 2026 Abstracts Deadline
 - April 30 (non-members); May 7 (members)
- CSWE MFP Application Deadline
 - May 11
- Graduate Center Digital Showcase
 - May 14; 6:30-8:30pm
- Social Welfare Dissertation Showcase
 - May 20; 6-8pm
- GC Commencement at Lincoln Center
 - June 2; 6pm

Student Achievements: February & March

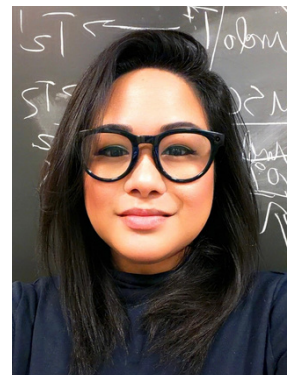


Cristian Cosey published an article in collaboration with faculty from Hunter College, CUNY SLU, and SUNY Buffalo. The study shows that precarious immigrant workers face structural financial exclusion, but worker cooperatives and their networks help improve financial capability through collective support, access to services, and shared financial systems. Using interviews with immigrant women in NYC co-ops, it finds that solidarity-based practices like group savings and mutual aid create stability beyond individual efforts. Overall, the paper argues that financial capability should be understood as a collective and institutional process, not just an individual one.

- Kim, S. M., Nam, Y., Birkenmaier, J., & Cosey, C. (2026). From financial exclusion to collective stability: Worker cooperatives and precarious immigrant workers' financial capability. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 60(1), e70039. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.70039>

Michelle Gomez completed a book review during the Winter intersession, which was published in the *Journal of Social Work*. Expressing gratitude to Dr. Teater for the opportunity.

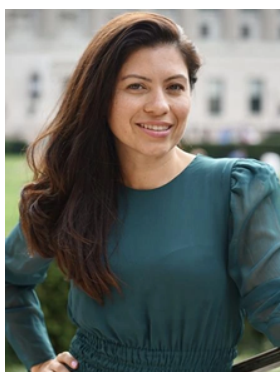
Gomez, M.-M. (2026). Book Review: Moral injury within the US child welfare system: A call for epistemic justice by Haight, Wendy, and Kingery, Linda. *Journal of Social Work*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/14680173261432763>



Katrina Hannan was awarded a 2026-2027 Graduate Center Dissertation Year Fellowship.

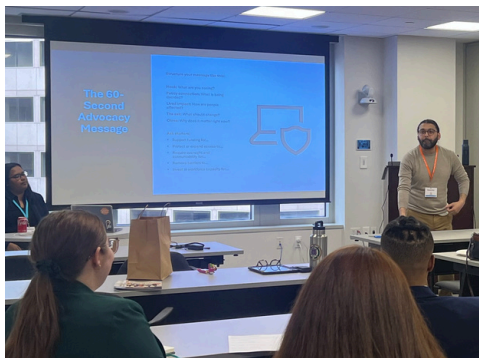
Weldon Lam moderated an afternoon panel at the Black, Race, and Ethnic Studies (BRES) Spring Research Symposium on March 6. Held at the CUNY Graduate Center, the event showcased multidisciplinary faculty scholarship.

Weldon also delivered the guest lecture “The Power of the Liberal Arts: A Path through Law, Technology, and Social Welfare” at Hostos Community College on March 19, 2026. Organized by the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Unit and Dr. Victor Torres-Velez, the "Paths to Decolonial Futures" panel explored how the liberal arts can contribute to futures grounded in social justice and freedom.



Yaneth Lombana successfully defended her dissertation on March 23, 2026.

Student Achievements: February & March



Ramón Ruiz facilitated two policy-focused conference workshops in March:

- Ruiz, R. (2026, March 26). *Policy-to-Practice: An LGBTQ+ Rights Action Lab*. [Workshop]. PRIDE Works Annual Conference. Purchase College, Purchase, NY.
- Ruiz, R. (2026, March 27). *Equity Through Civic Engagement: From Vote to Voice to Systems Change*. [Workshop]. Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP) Student Advocacy Day. The Spire, Washington, DC.

Haerin Son contributed the U.S. case analysis to the study "Current Status and Challenges of Policies for Mental Health Welfare Service Providers," published in February 2026 by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA)—Korea's leading government-funded research institute. His analysis focused on federal and New York State workforce policy efforts addressing the growing demand for mental health services.



As a fellow of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Doctoral Student Policy Fellowship (DSPF) 2025-2026, Haerin met with congressional staff from Rep. Grace Meng (NY-06) and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (NY) to advocate for strengthening the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. His policy recommendations emphasized three priorities: expanding community-based awareness campaigns, standardizing equity-focused data collection nationwide, and improving the visibility of language access at the point of contact.

Ian G. Williams published the following: a literature review on social work and artificial intelligence as part of a special issue on critical perspectives on technology and social work, and a reflection on participating in an invited workshop on AI literacy hosted by the Data & Society Research Institute:

- Massey, M, Williams, I.G., Polistina, G., and Breaux, E. (2026). Opportunities, Challenges, and Conspicuous Absences: An Integrative Review the Social Work Literature on Artificial Intelligence. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.11157/anzswj-vol38iss1id1308>
- Williams, I.G. (2026, February 20). Thoughts on Situating AI Literacy. *Tagging The Tower: The Digital Fellows Blog*. Blog post. <https://gcdi.commons.gc.cuny.edu/2026/02/20/thoughts-on-situating-ai-literacy/>



Ian was also invited to become a CUNY AI Lab Fellow for Spring 2026, an Open Knowledge Fellow in Summer 2026, and an Affiliate Member of the Social Work AI Network (SWAN).

Ian also organized the following presentation for NYC Open Data Week:

- Williams, I.G., Britton, S., Reyes, J., and Undag, E. (2026, March 24). *Forging Links Between Public Scholarship, Civic Tech, and Open Data: A Showcase of CUNY Public Scholarship Practice Space (PS2) Projects*. [Panel session] NYC Open Data Week 2026.

**Congratulations to our students whose work will be presented
at The 15th European Conference on Social Work Research!**



Katrina Hannan



Jordan Margolis



Victoria Murray



Kiani Oro



Patrick Schelle



Ian G. Williams

<https://socialwelfare.commons.gc.cuny.edu/student-conference-presentations/ecswr-2026/>

<https://www.ecswr2026.org/>

This March marked the 10th New York City Open Data Week, a festival celebrating the passage of NYC's Open Data Law - one of the strongest and most proactive in any city in the world. The law, championed by former Manhattan Borough President and current City Council Member Gale Brewer, sets for the responsibility of the city government to publish freely accessible data on all of its activities, through a publicly available medium: The NYC Open Data Portal.

I first started attending NYC Open Data Week events in 2023, when taking a class on interactive data visualization. Since then I've organized events highlighting student work at The Graduate Center that uses and relates to data about NYC. Some of this work has been sourced from NYC Open Data, some from others sources such as the US Census Bureau, and the NYC Civic Engagement Commission. Data are all around us, constantly in circulation.

Celebrating the many ways the people use and interact with data, the festival features far more than dashboards, websites, and civic tech apps. People work with and understand data, through sensory and embodied forms. The festival's opening keynote at The Graduate Center, with Rahul Bhargava of Northeastern University, was a perfect example, expressing his concept of community data through physicalization and embodiment activities. One involved soliciting audience members to taste three brownies, baked with salt levels corresponding to three air pollution levels: a sample below recommended thresholds, a moderate urban air quality day, and the day in 2023 when the air was yellow and NYC briefly had the worst air quality in the world due to wildfire smoke. I was one of the volunteers; the last brownie (about 80x the recommended level) was extremely salty. This was a far more tangible way to express this idea than a heat map or a bar chart. Bhargava shared many experiences and examples of expressing and using data, such as through art and music, with community groups and for organizing. It set the tone for a week of data exploration.

The festival also included an art show, Data Through Design, at BRIC, a Data Docs film festival at DCTV, a range of in-person and online talks, events at the NYC PIT Pop-Up, and the NYC School of Data, followed by the UnSchool of Data, at CUNY School of Law. I hosted an online talk with several colleagues who worked on public scholarship that used or generated open data, and had received funding from Public Scholarship Practice Space and/or Social Practice CUNY.

If you're curious, many events were recorded and will be posted on the festival's YouTube channel.



DGSC Elections

The Doctoral and Graduate Student Council elections for the 2026-2027 academic year run from April 1-30. All students are eligible to vote, so take a few minutes to make your voice heard, by visiting <https://eballot.app/dsc/>.

To login and vote:

Username: CUNY Employee ID (aka EMPLID)

Password: first initial + last initial + 4-digit year of birth (all lowercase)

Graduate Center Student Achievements Portal

The Student Achievement Portal is an initiative to track and celebrate the diverse achievements of Graduate Center students. This platform allows you to document accomplishments such as publications, public services, public-facing scholarships, digital projects, pedagogical innovations, and more. This data helps recognize your accomplishments beyond coursework, supports program development, and contributes to institutional decision-making. Log in to the Portal and keep your Achievement List up to date.

Achievements for the 2025 calendar year are due by April 17, 2026

Student Spotlight: Bobbie L. Justin



Why did you apply to the PhD in Social Welfare?

I applied to the PhD in Social Welfare because I wanted to move from frontline practice to systems-level change. After more than a decade in hospital-based medical social work and international community development, I saw how policy, institutional culture, and training shape the care people receive—especially older adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). I wanted the tools to study those systems rigorously and to help redesign them in ways that promote dignity, equity, and disability-inclusive care focusing on the hospital setting.

What has been your favorite course so far as a student? Why?

One of my favorite courses has been Current Challenges in Global Health. I really enjoyed this seminar because it pushed me to think beyond individual health issues and look at the bigger forces shaping health outcomes around the world. Each week we explored a different challenge, like urbanization, workforce shortages, antimicrobial resistance, financing, and public health emergencies, which made the course feel very current and relevant. What I appreciated most was that it did not look at global health in a one-size-fits-

all way. It really emphasized culture, diversity, ethics, and the social and political factors that influence health systems and people's lives. That resonated with me because my own work focuses on vulnerable populations, and this course helped me think more deeply about how policy, systems, and inequities affect care both locally and globally.

What do you want to do after you graduate?

After graduation, I hope to continue in academia while staying closely connected to practice and policy. I would love to contribute to work around aging and disability while also mentoring future scholars who are passionate about bridging research and frontline care.

What leadership or employment positions do you hold within CUNY?

Within CUNY, I currently teach Research Methods at the Silberman School of Social Work and also serve as a Field Advisor for social work students. I really value these roles because they give me the opportunity to support students both academically and professionally.

What are you currently reading, watching, or listening to?

*I am currently rereading *The Great Demographic Reversal* by Charles Goodhart, and watching *Traitors UK*.*

What's something that people would be surprised to know about you?

Something people might be surprised to know about me is that I served as the Chief Administrator and Vice President of an international NGO and helped establish two new medical clinics in Africa and the Middle East. Through that work, I saw up close many of the challenges facing global health today, from access to care and financing to workforce shortages and the impact of larger political and social systems. It really deepened my understanding of how important it is to build health initiatives that are community-based, culturally respectful, and responsive to local realities.

What's something we should ask you? What's your answer?

Question: What drives your commitment to this research?

Answer: My commitment is both professional and personal. As a hospital social worker and as a caregiver to a family member with an intellectual and developmental disability, I have seen firsthand how fragile care systems can be during times of crisis. That dual perspective motivates me to pursue research that does not remain theoretical, but instead translates into better training, better policy, and better care for families navigating complex systems.