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IN THE LOOP

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

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Celebrating the 2025/26 Academic Year and Looking ahead to Summer Possibilities

As we move into the summer months, I want to recognize the persistence that has carried us through this academic year as well as the strength of our community. Now, the upcoming summer can offer a space for rest and renewed curiosity. Whether you are continuing your research, teaching, writing, or taking time to recharge, I hope the break reconnects you with your hobbies, friends, and loved ones. I look forward to welcoming everyone back in the fall with renewed energy and purpose and a fantastic 2026 incoming cohort! Join me in celebrating our 2025-26 graduates! **Ryan Camire, Anila Duro, Alexis Howard, Yaneth Lombana, Monica Thompson, and Ashleigh Washington!** We were honored to celebrate you at our “End of Year Celebration” and the [GC Commencement Ceremony at Lincoln Center](#).
-Barbra Teater Executive Officer PhD in Social Welfare



End of Year Celebration!

FEATURING:

- Message from Executive Officer
- Call for Student Funding
- Student Achievements
- End of Year Celebration Photos
- Commencement Photos
- The Virtual Town Square
- 2026-2027 DGSG Representatives
- Guest Post: We Carried Each Other
- Student Spotlight: Julie Glickman
- Incoming Cohort of 2026

Call for Student Funding

We are pleased to announce a call for funding for all registered students. The funding can help support your presentation at an academic conference taking place this Summer or Fall 2026, or can be used to support you in your completion of data collection and/or data analysis (e.g., transcription costs; services of an editor). If you are interested in applying for funding, please complete the application form at:

Call for Funding

Deadline is June 26, 2026.

Student Achievements: April & May



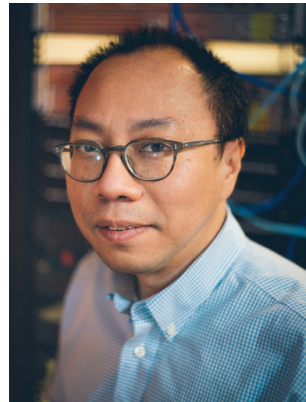
Vanessa Clarke gave the following conference presentation:

Clarke, V. (2026, May 8). The Politics of Pores: Skincare, Power, and Community [Conference Spark Session]. *6th Annual Ecological Justice and Social Work Symposium*, Adelphi University School of Social Work and the Institute of Social Work & Ecological Justice (ISWEJ), Virtual, NY, United States.

Weldon Lam was awarded the Three-Year Graduate Center Fellowship in Demography for 2026–2029 through the CUNY Institute for Demographic Research (CIDR). He plans to use the fellowship to further develop research, policy and practice at the intersection of demography, social welfare, and Asian American populations.

Weldon had two proposals accepted the Council on Social Work Education's Annual Program Meeting (CSWE APM) in Georgia in October 2026:

1. "Resilience: Remaining True to ADEI Values During Times of Turmoil," ACARDA, Advancing Critical Anti-Racism Dialogues for Action, includes Hye-Kyung Kang, Tiffany D. Baffour, Isabel S. Lee, Shetal Vohra-Gupta, Janice Wharwood, and Monica Leisey.
2. "Beyond the Category: Demography and Critical Discourse in Panethnic Clinical Resources for Asian American Trauma."



Mordechai Levovitz was featured in CUNY's The Thought Project Podcast. Listen here: <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/news/helping-lgbtq-jews-find-support-orthodox-and-hasidic-communities>

Alumni Highlight: Dr. Melva Miller

Melva Miller (PhD 2025) was recently inducted into the Hunter College Alumni Association Hall of Fame as part of the 2026 class of distinguished alumni. She shared these words with us:

"As a proud graduate of Hunter's School of Social Work, this recognition feels deeply personal because it reflects not only my professional journey, but also the values that have guided my work from the very beginning – community, equity, public service, and creating real pathways for people and neighborhoods too often left out of opportunity."



Student Achievements: April & May



Jordan Margolis and **Patrick (Paddy) Schelle's** abstract, "Beyond the Numbers: Getting to the Stakeholder Voices of Crisis Response - Past, Present, and Future," has been accepted for presentation at LEPH2026, the 8th International Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health: Vulnerability, Policing and Public Health.

Victoria Murray's essay "Parent/Student/Teacher: Relational Pedagogy and Navigating Multiple Roles" was published as part of the Teaching and Learning Center at CUNY Graduate Center's collection on Parenting and Pedagogy. The collection offers reflections, ideas, and considerations for the topic of teaching, learning, and parenting.

Riley, K. (2026). Showing Up, Slowing Down, Letting Go, Reflections on Parenting and Pedagogy. Teaching and Learning Center, CUNY Graduate Center.
<https://cuny.manifoldapp.org/projects/parenting-and-pedagogy>



Haein Son, Dr. Esther Son (The Graduate Center, City University of New York), and Dr. Nari Yoo (The University of Michigan) had their proposal "Implementation of Telemental Health Interventions for Asian Americans: A Scoping Review" accepted for presentation at the Council on Social Work Education's 72nd Annual Conference on October 22-25, 2026, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Council on Social Work Education's 2026 Fellows Forum

Haein Son (CSWE Minority Fellowship Program and Doctoral Student Policy Fellowship Fellow) and **Weldon Lam** (CSWE Minority Fellowship Program Fellow) participated in the 2026 Council on Social Work Education Fellows Forum on May 18-19 in Alexandria, Virginia and Washington, DC. They joined CSWE fellows from across the country in Capitol Hill advocacy for the social work profession, social work education, CSWE, social welfare research and continued funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Services Administration (SAMHSA). Haein met with the office of U.S. Senator Andy Kim of New Jersey, and Weldon met with the offices of U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and U.S. Representative Greg Landsman of Ohio.

Read more about the CSWE Fellows Forum and view more pictures [here](#).



Student Achievements: April & May



Shola Thompson has been selected to present at the 2026 American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting & Expo in San Antonio, Texas. Her oral presentation, "What Nearly 1,000 Community Feedback Surveys Reveal About Behavioral Health Needs and the Power of Choice in Community-Based Training," was accepted within the Mental Health Program and will be featured in the session Community Support and Prevention Initiatives on November 3, 2026.

Ian G. Williams accepted a role with The Graduate Center Digital Fellows team for the 2026-2027 academic year.

Ian also participated in a membership retreat for the digital governance research organization Metagov in April, the 6th Annual Digital IDEAS Summer Institute at The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and was invited to participate in the 10th EMES International Training School at Louvain-la-Neuve by UCLouvain and ULiège (Belgium). Ian was also admitted to the Summer 2026 cohort of the Open Knowledge Fellowship at the Mina Rees Library and will assist with The GC Teaching and Learning Center's Summer 2026 Critical AI Literacy Institute as part of the CUNY AI Lab team.



2026 PhD Program in Social Welfare Dissertation Showcase & GC Commencement



On May 20th, the PhD Program in Social Welfare held a year-end celebration at The Graduate Center, featuring dinner and presentations by our newest graduates... and new program sweatshirts! Thanks to Michael Clements, our MC, and congratulations to our graduates. [Check out the year in review slideshow here.](#)



Congratulations, Class of 2026!



We Didn't Just Finish—We Carried Each Other There

Now that nearly all of us have completed our PhDs—with one final cohort member on track to finish this year—we've been reflecting on what it actually took to get here. Not just intellectually, but emotionally, logistically, and, at times, spiritually.

The short answer? Each other.

From the very beginning, we were a tight cohort. Before classes even started, we gathered at a backyard BBQ hosted by one of our classmates. At the time, it felt casual. In hindsight, it was the beginning of the support system that carried us through.

Early on, some of us experienced moments that made us question whether we belonged in the program at all.

Instead of letting those moments isolate us, we pulled each other closer—comparing notes, checking in, and making sure no one sat in uncertainty alone.



We studied together, stressed together, and survived the legendary first exam together. As the program continued, so did the support: navigating coursework, difficult classroom dynamics, professor feedback, qualifying exams, and eventually the dissertation phase—where “it depends” somehow becomes a complete academic answer.

We supported each other through proposal development, IRB approvals, research design, writing, rewriting, committee navigation, and defense prep. We shared drafts, decoded feedback, and demystified the process for whoever came next.

And all of this happened while life continued in full: milestone birthdays, marriages and divorces, children, health scares, career changes, and everything in between. We didn't pause life for the PhD; we learned how to hold both at once. What's equally meaningful is that the relationships extended beyond the program itself. We still gather regularly, travel together, and remain connected even with those who stepped away from the program before finishing.

The relationships held.

Now, as we prepare to celebrate our final cohort member crossing the finish line, we know her completion is part of the same collective story.

Because while the degree may be awarded individually, the persistence required to earn it was anything but.

We didn't just finish.

We carried each other there.

Alexis, Claire, Crystal, Erica, Jocelyn, Khudodod, Melva, Robert, Sofia, Stephen, (Trevor)

Student Spotlight: Julie Glickman

Let's Have a Conversation with Julie!

Why did you apply to the PhD in Social Welfare? At the time I applied to the PhD program in Social Welfare, I had been working public education for about 14 years. I had worked both in New York City public school and schools in Nassau County on Long Island. While working in one Nassau County district, my children were enrolled in schools in a district 10 miles away that received approximately half the funding of the district in which I was working. I became curious about how public schools were funded. In addition, I noticed that the district in which I was working had significantly more support staff than the district my children attended. The impact of vastly different funding amounts leads to disparities in the services schools can provide to children and their families. I wanted to work towards more equitable funding in public education.

What has been your favorite course so far as a student? Why? In my second year I enrolled in a course that was cross listed in Women's Studies and English called 'Mad Women'. We read novels which featured women who were angry, insane, or both, alongside critical theory. We engaged in thought-provoking discussions about literature, history, feminism, and rage. met on Fridays and the professor and the other students. It were all wonderful and engaged. We had fantastic conversations.

What do you want to do after you graduate? I am planning to pursue a career in academia. I enjoy research, teaching, and mentoring. I genuinely hope that my research can contribute to policy change.

What leadership and/or employment positions do you hold within CUNY? I currently teach as an adjunct instructor at Silberman School of Social Work. I teach in both the policy department and in the practicum department. I have also served as a social work supervisor for students placed in agencies without SIFI-certified social workers on staff. I have come to really enjoy my role as a mentor to new social workers. I hope that I can continue to serve as a mentor throughout my career.

What's something that people would be surprised to know about you? You might be surprised to learn that I was on the tv show Romper Room as a child. My grandmother put my name on a list when I was born, and my mother got the call during a snowstorm in the mid-80s. She had to drive me out to New Jersey every day for a week to film the show.

What is the focus of your research? My current research aims to understand the experiences of women who are becoming mothers after the death of their own mothers. I want to understand how women develop parenting skills and philosophies. How do they build supportive communities for themselves? Who do they look to for guidance and support? What are the structural supports they wish existed? My research examines transitioning to motherhood within the sociopolitical context of American Capitalism, where childcare is frequently purchased, and there are no paid leave policies that apply to all workers. When thinking about starting a family, many women expect to have the support of their mother, but when they don't, how are those gaps filled? My mother died when my older daughter was 2 years old, and there's not a single day that goes by that I didn't wish I could ask her questions, listen to her stories, or just watch her with my children. The grief I live with is heavy because it isn't just about my own personal loss, but about the loss of my history, my family history, and the loss of the future we could have had with her. I think about this every day. Grief and parenting are two topics that can be difficult to discuss, and as a result can be very isolating. I want to bring these conversations into the light.

What are you currently reading, watching, or listening to? I'm on a bit of a romantasy/fantasy kick right now and last night I started Children of Blood and Bone by Tomi Adeyemi. I like to have the audiobook and a hard copy so that I can read while I'm home, and listen while I'm on the go. I also just finished The Change by Kirsten Miller and The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife by Anna Johnston. I love reading fiction and while I did have to skip some months, am proud to say that I mostly kept up with my book club during the 3 years I was completing my course work.



Welcome to the PhD in Social Welfare Incoming Cohort of 2026



Omotoyosi Idris is an educator, nonprofit leader, and public service professional. Her academic background spans Nigeria and the U.S., with a Bachelor's and Master's in Political Science, a Professional Diploma in Education, and a Master of Public Service. She has dedicated her career to advancing social development across education, health, gender, sustainable, and community development. She is the founder and project director of Hale and Hearty Foundation for Children and Community Health, a Nigeria-based nonprofit advancing school health and bridging children's health and educational outcomes. Her research lies at the intersection of health and education, focusing on children's well-being and academic outcomes. She is particularly interested in school-based health policy, social determinants of health, and the implementation and evaluation of evidence-based interventions that expand access to school-based services



Yann Phesans (he/they) is a French-born psychotherapist, educator, and writer who lived in London for 15 years. They hold a BSc in Counseling, an MSc in Gender and Sexuality Studies, and a post-master's certificate in trauma-informed clinical practice from NYU. Yann is the founder of Beyond Labels Therapy, a practice centering LGBTQIA+ clients navigating trauma, shame, and belonging. Their clinical work is grounded in relational and integrative approaches, including EMDR, with close attention to how language and identity shape lived experience within marginalized communities. Alongside their practice, Yann writes on queer life and the politics of shame, drawing on autoethnography and critical social theory. They look forward to joining The CUNY Graduate Center, where they hope to contribute to socially engaged scholarship that brings clinical perspectives into dialogue with welfare systems and bureaucratic structures.

Welcome to the PhD in Social Welfare Incoming Cohort of 2026



Connie Jones-Hairston, MS, MPA, MSW, serves as the Youth Court Program Director at the White Plains Youth Bureau, where she has spent the past decade empowering young people through restorative justice. Under her leadership, the nationally recognized, award-winning program featured on the NBC Today Show has become a model in Westchester County and beyond. With over 25 years of experience in the legal and law enforcement field, including service with the U.S. Department of Justice, Connie brings both expertise and compassion to her work. Connie's research will focus on how social welfare systems impact mental health outcomes for children and families in historically marginalized communities. She proudly serves on the Board of Directors of the UNA-USA Westchester Chapter as the Program Co-Chair in which she brings awareness to human rights. At her core, Connie believes every young person deserves a second chance. Outside of her work, she enjoys mentoring, traveling, and giving back to her community.



Sharon D. Mosley earned a Bachelor's in Biology with a minor in Political Science from Pace University, an MPH in Health Policy and Management from Hunter College, and an MSW from Fordham University. Currently an LMSW at the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), Sharon has extensive experience in community-based healthcare and mental health programming. Her current work and research interests focus on trauma-informed interventions for youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) and Serious Mental Illness (SMI) transitioning to adulthood. Driven to remove barriers to equitable access, she emphasizes culturally sensitive program evaluation and resource development for marginalized young adults and their caregivers. Outside of her clinical and academic pursuits, Sharon is a marathoner and traveler dedicated to advocating for those navigating complex institutional systems, specializing in the intersection of public health, social work, and disability advocacy.

Welcome to the PhD in Social Welfare Incoming Cohort of 2026



Necola Eason, LMSW is a very proud Bronx Native. She earned her BSW from Buffalo State University and her MSW from SUNY Stony Brook university in 2000. She has worked with domestic violence victims and survivors for over 25 years providing both trauma informed care and pproach. After 18 years of service, Ms. Eason decided to end her tenure at HELP USA and join the nation's largest domestic violence service provider, Urban Resource Institute, as a Senior Director. Ms. Eason and her team manages several domestic violence residential settings throughout NYC. In addition to her service to domestic violence families, Ms. Eason has taught as an adjunct professor at NYU and Alliance University. She is currently an adjunct lecturer at Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College and has provided an enrich and rewarding internship to BSW and MSW students since 2004.



Jibbi Bah is a Gambian-American researcher and policy analyst joining the PhD program from Banjul, The Gambia, where he works as a Delivery Analyst at the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery under the Office of the President. He holds a B.A. in Government and International Politics from George Mason University and an M.Sc. in International Social and Public Policy from the London School of Economics. His research focuses on welfare service delivery in lower-income countries, with particular interest in how fiscal and institutional constraints shape what social policy can actually do on the ground in Sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to his current role, he worked in humanitarian reporting in Türkiye and industrial policy research in Rwanda. Outside of work, he follows football with more dedication than is probably healthy, both as a spectator and a player.



Matthew Blake is a lifelong student, educator, and social worker interested in the intersection of policy, pedagogy, and poetry. His lived experience inhabiting marginalized identities and navigating inequitable systems has made him a staunch advocate for the voiceless. These experiences have also informed his professional trajectory as a high school English teacher, adjunct instructor, DEI practitioner, clinical social worker, and a policy researcher for the federal government. He believes that through critical examination of our social literacies we can amount change and redress systemic injustices and heal the body politic. In his spare time he's an avid baker, member of several book clubs, and performs slam poetry.