

SMITH COLLEGE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL WORK

# InDepth

SPRING 2022

**RADICAL  
LOVE  
UNLIMITED**

**IN THIS ISSUE**

A LIFE FORCE

BURNOUT

PANDEMIC YOUTH





"Along the Cappawonganick  
(Mill River)", a sculpture by  
Maya Lin graces the lobby of the  
newly-renovated Neilson Library.

PHOTO BY JIM GIPE



## SMITH COLLEGE

# School for Social Work

*InDepth* is published by the Smith College School for Social Work. Its goal is to connect our school community, celebrate recent accomplishments and capture the research and scholarship at the School for Social Work.

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The elm that had to be removed during construction of Neilson Library lives on as eight unique pieces of furniture including this raw edge table designed by Maya Lin and built by local woodworker Sam French.

SMITH COLLEGE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL WORK

# InDepth

SPRING 2022

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Portrait Series



MARIANNE R.M. YOSHIOKA, M.S.W., MBA, PH.D., LCSW

# Spheres of Gratitude



My gratitude stems from the gifts of brilliance that so many students, adjunct and resident faculty, prior deans and community members have given to this School.

As I write this, I am feeling gratitude. The past years have been difficult not only because of the pandemic but because change is hard and we have been active in our change process. My gratitude stems from the gifts of brilliance that so many students, adjunct and resident faculty, prior deans and community members have given to this School. Our journey at this moment is made possible because of how all of you have shaped the School with your ideas, thinking, demands and energy.

We are months away from our first on-campus summer in two years. I am excited for our students to have the full in-person experience. They will be the first social work students to use the new Neilson Library. I am eager for classes to be back in Seelye, for walks together to the dining hall and meetings in the Scales living room. I am grateful to all of you for the creativity and perseverance, deep learning and teaching these past years.

We will be rolling out new racial justice accountability processes designed by our Anti-Racism Planning Group. This multi-constituent group, facilitated by Janae Peters, M.S.W. '15, and Professor JaLisa Williams has focused their work on three areas: to create an in-class accountability process when difficult moments arise, to expand the Sotomayor Fellow program and to create campus-wide rituals for truth, healing and community building.

I am grateful that we have been able to make changes because of the folks on the ARPG and because of students and faculty

who have come before, made demands and given generously of their wisdom urging change on campus.

I am grateful to have known and learned from former Dean Ann Hartman. In this issue, we celebrate her legacy and the important and transformative part she played in SSW's history. She was a powerful, positive force in expanding our curriculum to include family work, which at the time was considered innovative. She created the conditions from which the School's anti-racism commitment sprung. I first knew of Ann when I was a M.S.W. student at University of Michigan in 1985. When I arrived at Smith, I met with THE Dean Hartman, a little starstruck and a little nervous but her warmth, humor, intelligence and gentleness had me enthralled. She helped so many women to understand what a woman's power and leadership could look like. She helped so many lesbians to understand what it could look like to be out in our public life and stand in our truth.

Finally, I am grateful to all of you for all that you do to provide excellence in mental health care. We wanted to capture for our own understanding the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and the themes of burnout we are all experiencing. This magazine is an important way for us to reflect on our collective journey and contributions through the pandemic. Thank you for your continued work to support the communities you inhabit. I know I am not the only one grateful for you. ♦



# SSWorks

## News from Lilly Hall

IN THIS SECTION  
SCHOOL NEWS  
FACULTY NOTES

The Skyline Terrace at the new Neilson Library offers unparalleled views of campus and a sunny spot to study.

PHOTO BY JEFF BAKER



BY SIMONE STEMPER

# An Unexpected Start

Beginning an M.S.W. during a pandemic



Alison Espinosa-Setchko never thought her journey as an M.S.W. student would begin in the middle of a pandemic. It changed the experience fundamentally and an already rigorous program became more difficult as students adjusted to lockdown, online courses and connecting with classmates and professors remotely. In a program whose foundation is clinical social work through a relational lens, the impact is substantial. In her two years at SSW, she has yet to set foot on Smith's campus.

Espinosa-Setchko's class entered in June of 2020 during a truly historic and remarkable moment. The week online classes began, an unparalleled wave of protests spread throughout the U.S. and across the world in response to systemic racism and police brutality.

Based in Oakland, CA, Espinosa-Setchko said, "I wanted to be out protesting all the time but we were in class all day and I was also working. Then lockdown merged with one of the

“

I feel like I trauma-bonded with my classmates through the intensity of the summer, but I cannot express enough how grateful I am for the lasting relationships I built.

—ALISON ESPINOSA-SETCHKO

worst wildfire seasons California has seen. It was horrendous. It was a heartbreaking disconnect to be inside studying, not outside fighting. In part, I feel like I trauma-bonded with my classmates through the intensity of the summer, but I cannot express enough how grateful I am for the lasting relationships I built.”

Despite these challenges, Espinosa-Setchko received a Career Development Grant from the American Association of University Women (AAUW) for the 2021–2022 year, one of the world’s oldest supporters of graduate women’s education.

Before SSW, her career focused on restorative justice, abolition and building structures outside of the carceral system where healing can happen. Previously a program manager at The Ahimsa Collective, she facilitated trauma healing groups for incarcerated men and survivors of violence and Victim-Offender Dialogues (VODs)—healing and accountability processes between survivors of violence and those responsible. While they take months of preparation, it’s some of the most powerful work she’s taken part in.

“I chose Smith SSW to continue strengthening my skillset and capacity to facilitate this work further.” She noted her appreciation for the funding from the AAUW grant and funding from SSW, which made it possible for her to attend grad school.

On top of working multiple jobs and keeping up with her classes, Espinosa-Setchko grapples with social work’s connection to mass incarceration and policing. She aims to be abolitionist in her work, challenging social work’s complicity with the carceral system. She identifies with and is deeply connected to communities that have been harmed by those in social work, which has been at the forefront of her consciousness throughout her studies. She pointed out that M.S.W. programs are largely inaccessible to members of the marginalized communities that the field of social work aims to serve and that this needs to be challenged.

“Do we represent those we’re serving? This is a challenge the field of social work and Smith SSW should be facing.”

Espinosa-Setchko expressed her gratitude to the SSW friends she met online, including her BIPOC friends from Council and friends in the Bay Area. These connections have been vital during remote learning and she is looking forward to growing these relationships this summer in person. ♦

## BACK IN COMMUNITY

### Returning to campus after two virtual years



When the world went remote in March 2020, those early, chaotic days of the coronavirus pandemic, the Smith College School for Social Work was no exception.

“We all thought we would be back in three weeks,” recalls Irene Rodríguez-M., associate dean of graduate enrollment and student services, a pervasive belief at the time that was quickly disproven.

Two years later, the School—and its students—have become adept at navigating unstable circumstances, from shifting class times to account for time zones to net-working in digital spaces. But this summer, faculty and staff are planning for the most drastic pivot yet: classes are finally returning to in-person study.

“It’s a big combo of nerves and joy,” says Dean Marianne Yoshioka. “I’ve missed so much seeing people on campus. We haven’t been together in this way for a few years.”

There will be masking and as many outside activities as possible. There will be uncertainty, no doubt, around how quickly conditions can shift. But it will all be weathered together. And, says Yoshioka, that togetherness is a crucial part of the SSW experience.

“Building community remotely was difficult,” she says. “Everyone was holding so much uncertainty and anxiety, so even if you created structures, folks might not be able to participate in the way we imagined or in the way they wanted to, because people were trying to preserve energy or get off their screens.”

Yoshioka wonders if longtime School traditions, like Senior Skit Night or the annual pre-graduation breakfast, will re-emerge after a two-year pause in institutional knowledge. But either way, she expresses optimism that the Smith spirit will endure.

“I have a lot of faith in this community and the creativity of our students,” she says. “That really is the beauty of this community: something new may spring forward. It’s a chance to create and intentionally re-create.”

Some of that institutional reimagining is happening already deliberately. In 2020, after BIPOC students and faculty spoke out about shortcomings in the School’s quarter-century-old anti-racism commitment, the working groups formed in response drafted five Core Principles to guide the institution’s decolonizing and racial justice work going forward. Faculty and administrators are using the return to campus as a chance to establish new norms that integrate and enliven the five Core Principles into the School’s DNA, from syllabus development and classroom environment to work life and operations.

“We want to pay real attention to the principles and how to consider these principles actionable and not just window dressing,” says Megan Harding, associate dean of academic affairs. “How do we commit to them, and how do we change our processes so that they actually do guide us?”

According to Rodríguez-M., students and faculty have been discussing the principles remotely, and she is excited about ideas brainstormed with faculty around concrete, in-person implementation this summer.

“I’m really impressed with the ways the principles have been integrated in everyday sorts of conversations,” she says. “It’ll be exciting to see what happens when we’re in community.”—Kira Goldenberg



# Fareeda Abo-Rass

Breaking cultural barriers and stigmas

Fareeda Abo-Rass, M.S.W., Ph.D., joined SSW as a research fellow in January 2022 under the mentorship of Professor and Director of the Ph.D. Program, Ora Nakash. Abo-Rass was awarded the prestigious Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship and the Council for Higher Education for Israel scholarship for outstanding postdoctoral female researchers. Abo-Rass's field of research focuses on the psychosocial aspects of mental health among the Arab minority in Israel. She has published several articles on health-related quality of life, illness representations, self-stigma and self-esteem among younger and older Arabs diagnosed with depression. At SSW, Abo-Rass intends to expand her research to Arab populations in the United States and worldwide.

"In the first stage, I am conducting a scoping review of all the research conducted in the field of mental health literacy among Arabs around the world to review existing knowledge and examine gaps in the area and investigate the conceptual, methodological and clinical aspects of mental health literacy among Arabs worldwide. The conclusions of this stage will help me plan the second stage of my research, including adapting the concept to Arab culture and developing a tailored questionnaire," said Abo-Rass.

Abo-Rass completed her Ph.D. at the Department of Community Mental Health at the University of Haifa in Israel. She went on to complete a postdoctoral fellowship in the Conflict Management and Resolution Program at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

"Being a Palestinian-Arab in Israel is not simple, but being a Palestinian-Arab Muslim woman with a hijab in Israel is a real challenge. Conducting research and pursuing an academic career in a different language, culture and identity is highly challenging,"



“

Conducting research and pursuing an academic career in a different language, culture and identity is highly challenging. Arab women in Israeli academia not only experience difficulty because of socio-political circumstances but also because of cultural expectations. —FAREEDA ABO-RASS, M.S.W., PH.D.



said Abo-Rass. “Arab women in Israeli academia not only experience difficulty because of socio-political circumstances but also because of cultural expectations to be almost exclusively responsible for traditional domestic tasks and raising children. To finish a Ph.D and attend SSW has a broad and deep significance in my case since it is literally breaking a ‘double’ glass ceiling.”

“I feel like I am bringing myself and other women one step closer to our right to pursue our careers and studies both in the context of Israeli academia (that is not inclusive enough of Arab women) and my Arab Palestinian society that does not encourage women to pursue their post-doctoral studies abroad.”

Abo-Rass said she has found “endless support and guidance” from Nakash.

“Smith College accepts me as I am, with my successes and original point of view as well as my difficulties, the issues that interest me, my dilemmas and challenges, my lack of knowledge about American culture and the personal emotional package that I bring with me,” she said.

Abo-Rass has always wanted to be a social worker and was inspired to pursue the field of mental health after her grandmother faced difficulties at the end of her life.

“I saw with my own eyes the society’s lack of knowledge, stigma and misconceptions about mental health and how it affected her treatment. It spurred me to continue specializing in this area, especially in knowledge, beliefs and perceptions regarding mental health and its relationship with health-related behaviors.”

Said Abo-Rass of her recent Fulbright award, “I did not stop receiving phone calls and emails for a long time. Many girls at the beginning of their academic path and many women and mothers called to ask about the way I did it and the difficulties and challenges, and how to deal with them. My parents were proud of me not for winning a scholarship, but for helping others break through and being a role model for many of our younger girls and women.”

Abo-Rass is a mom to two girls, Tulip (8 years old) and Yasmina (5 years old).

—Laura Noel

## SSW ranked among top 5 percent of social work graduate programs in U.S.

**#16**  
U.S. News  
& World  
Report  
2023

Smith College School for Social Work was ranked sixteenth in U.S. News & World Report’s 2023 Best Social Work Programs. The survey compared 298 M.S.W. programs in the United States. SSW tied with NYU, Rutgers University, Howard University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This ranking places SSW in the top 5 percent of social work schools.

“This achievement is the product of intentional effort on the part of our SSW community, both faculty and staff, to make this a reality and to consider what makes for great pedagogy,” said Dean Marianne Yoshioka. “I believe very deeply in our program and I could not be more proud of everything we have accomplished.”

Rankings are based “solely on the results of peer assessment surveys sent to deans, other administrators or faculty at accredited degree programs or schools in each discipline,” according to U.S. News and World Report. Only fully accredited programs in good standing are included in the rankings.

## SPOKEN WORD

“They have set a context where relationship to ourselves, to each other and to the [five core] principles are centered in service of creating the space to dream and envision how a truly accountable community that reflects our principles might operate.”



—MEGAN HARDING, M.S.W. '07, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, about Anti-Racism Planning Group leaders Janae Peters, M.S.W. '15, LMSW, and Professor JaLisa Williams, M.S.W., LMSW

# Faculty Notes

## Recent news and accomplishments

### Aha Moments in the Classroom

In September 2022, 20 years after coming to SSW as an M.S.W. student, Kenta Asakura will return as an associate professor with tenure. Since graduating in 2004, he has acquired extensive experience as a clinician in a variety of social work roles and settings. In 2015, he earned his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work—his dissertation was on the resilience of queer and trans\* youth—and for the past six years, he has been a professor at Carleton University School of Social Work in Ottawa, Canada.

An award-winning teacher at Carleton, Asakura developed courses on several topics, from how to develop a research proposal to how to approach clinical practice from a social justice perspective. Three years ago, he founded the SIM Social Work Research Lab, the first and only social work-specific, simulation-based research lab in North America, which researches simulation-based learning and investigates clinical practice competencies. Last year, he co-edited a *Clinical Social Work Journal* special issue dedicated to the subject with Marion Bogo, who pioneered simulation-based education in social work. Currently, Asakura is in Japan, where he grew up, as a visiting professor at the School of Human Welfare Studies at Kwansei Gakuin University.

Asakura's use of simulation in his classes has provoked uncomfortable but “fantastic” aha moments. In sessions with actors portraying clients, social work students with an abstract understanding of social inequity come face to face with individuals most affected by it, with the complex nature of those effects—and with the difference between saying the “right thing” and empathy. In a real-life session, that disconnect might mean a client never returns, Asakura noted, citing high

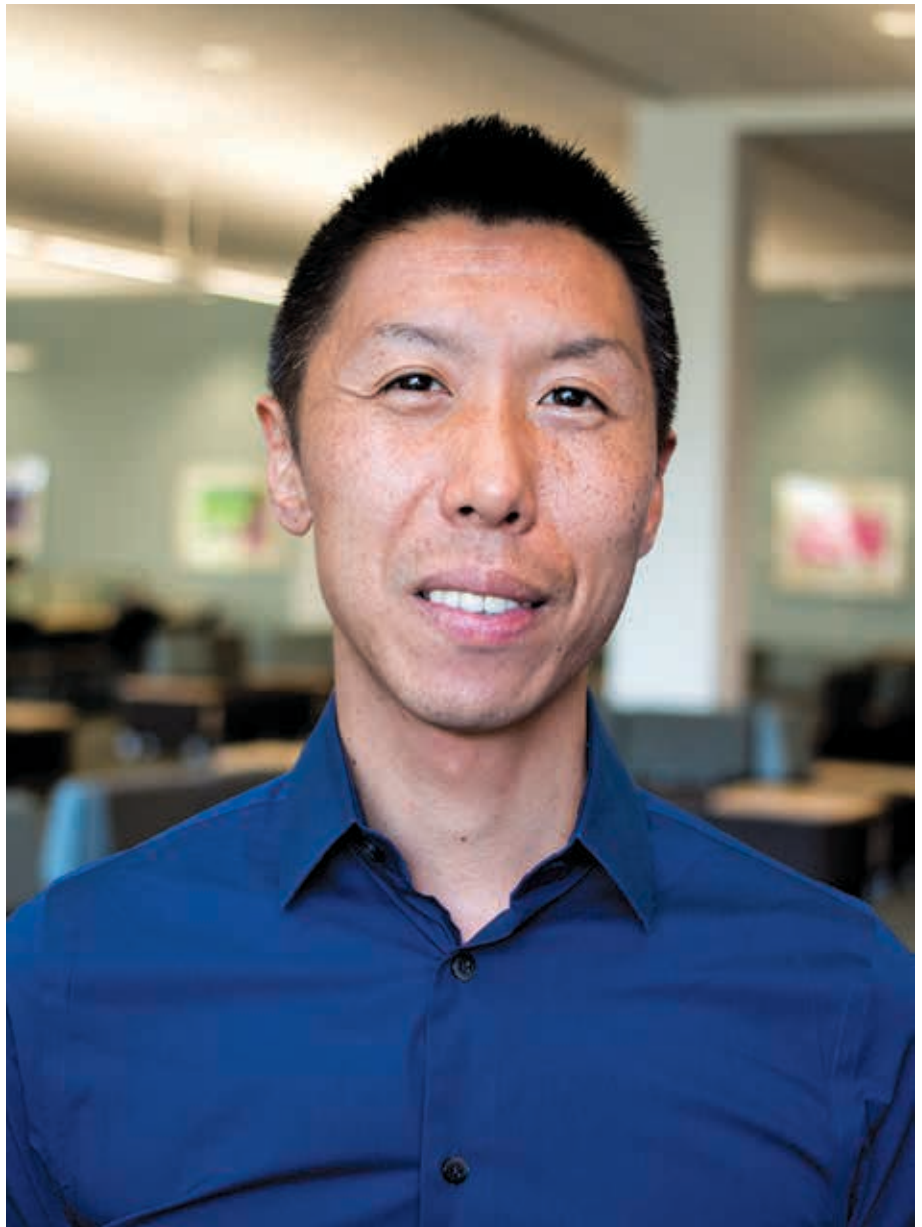
therapy dropout rates among marginalized people, and the therapist never knowing what went wrong.

When he starts at SSW, Asakura will chair the practice sequence, continue his simulation research and explore ways to incorporate the methodology into the curriculum.

“Being at Smith was a great, great experience. I was an OK student, a

late bloomer,” he recalled with a laugh. “Everyone was super smart, and I was intimidated, but it was transforming.”

A self-described “queer immigrant person of color,” early on at SSW, he had his own aha moment when he realized that those elements of his identity, which at times he had felt ashamed of, would be assets, not limitations, in pursuing his social





**/ MORE /**

For complete bios of our outstanding faculty visit [ssw.smith.edu/faculty](https://ssw.smith.edu/faculty)

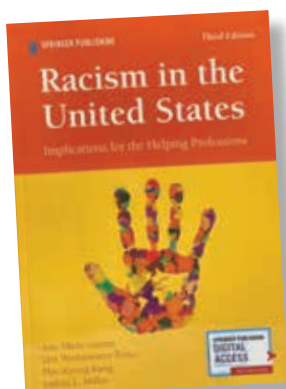


Asakura's use of simulation in his classes has provoked uncomfortable but "fantastic" aha moments. In sessions with actors portraying clients, social work students with an abstract understanding of social inequity come face to face with individuals most affected by it.

work career. SSW also nurtured the beliefs that have since guided his practice, teaching and research, that social work must promote social justice and social work education must be grounded in that principle, and that the therapeutic relationship has the power to change people's lives. On campus, he hopes to encourage those beliefs in SSW students.—*Faye Wolfe*

### New Edition of a Critical Text

The third edition of *Racism in the United States: Implications for the Helping Professions*, co-written by



Ann Marie Garran, M.S.W., Ph.D. '08, Lisa Werkmeister Rozas, M.A., M.S.W. '96, Ph.D. '03, former SSW Professor Hye-Kyung Kang, M.A., M.S.W., Ph.D. and Professor Joshua L. Miller, M.S.W., Ph.D. has been released. The third edition includes new authors and updated chapters.

First written by Miller and Garran in 2007 to support SSW courses on racism, the book was intended to be comprehensive, covering all facets of racism from the historical, theoretical, institutional, interpersonal and professional perspective.

Said Miller of the first edition, "Most books on racism only take on one of these topics; we tried to weave them together to show how racism is a comprehensive system of oppression both outside and inside of people, which seemed appropriate for a clinical social work program. We hoped to provide a curriculum for aspiring clinicians, community workers and social activists that would be meaningful whatever the racial identities of the practitioner."

Miller has been actively involved with anti-racism work for more than 40 years both at Smith College and



in his prior career and personal life. In addition to his anti-racism work, Miller has worked extensively in psychosocial capacity building and as part of that work has responded to, consulted on and written about many disasters in the United States and abroad.

Miller will retire in June 2022 after 30 years of service. We will honor his work more fully in the fall edition of *InDepth*.—*Laura Noel*

A

Remembering  
Ann Hartman,  
Dean Emerita

Life

Force

BY FAYE S. WOLFE







ANN HARTMAN, M.S.S. '54, Ph.D., has variously been described as a leading practitioner, major figure in the history of social work, pioneering U.S. social worker, researcher, educator and administrator and noted expert in family therapy and social work theory and practice. Her years at Smith SSW were an important period in a long, rich and distinguished career and brought lasting change to important areas of the School. Hartman died at her Northampton, Massachusetts, home on November 5, 2021 at age 95.

By the time Hartman came to Smith, she already had a national reputation in her field. She had created the “eco-map,” universally accepted as a key tool for engaging and working with families within family work. She’d published two books on adoption, authored numerous papers and, with Joan Laird, her life partner, co-authored the highly influential *Family-Centered Social Work Practice* and *The Handbook of Child Welfare*. As a professor at the University of Michigan from 1974 to 1986, Hartman had a profound impact. In addition to teaching, she co-founded the Ann Arbor Center for Family (with Laird and four others) and acted as faculty director of the National Child Welfare Training Center, among other accomplishments.

Previously, Hartman had been executive director of the Southeast Nassau Guidance Center for eight years. At age 40, she quit that “so nice, so comfortable” job, as she described

it, to earn her Ph.D. in social work at Columbia University.

“Her academic contributions might overshadow another very significant achievement,” said Irene Rodríguez-M., associate dean of graduate enrollment and student services. “She was able to move SSW up and out of being a predominantly white community.”

As dean of the School from 1986 to 1994, Hartman was instrumental in SSW’s committing to becoming an anti-racism institution. Making inclusivity her goal, she galvanized the School to up the enrollment and scholarship support of students of color and diversify staff and faculty; launched the Bertha Capen Reynolds Fellowship Program for Ph.D. candidates committed to anti-racism work and multiculturalism; and hired an admissions director specifically to recruit students of color.

Interviewed in the SSW Centennial film *Clinical Revolution*, Hartman



**Top:** Hartman stands with former NASW President Mark Battle and Marta Sotomayor, M.S.S. '60, Ph.D.

**Bottom:** Hartman smiles with Susan Donner, SSW professor emerita and former assistant dean during her retirement reception in 1996.



recalled, “When I took the job, there was one Black student, and I had a fit. I was desperate when I saw that because you cannot have a white school of social work. You can’t teach social work in this world in that context.”

The summer of 1987, Hartman convened the Minority Alumni Conference, an event Rodríguez-M. points to as being “at the roots of SSW’s anti-racism commitment.”

Susan Donner, SSW professor emerita, former assistant dean and co-chair of the Anti-Racism Task Force in 2005, described the conference as “a watershed moment in the School.” All SSW’s alumni of color were invited, and they came





from across the United States and Canada. Hartman made sure attendees could afford to come and that “they had time alone to talk freely,” said Donner. “She knew her presence [as an administrator] might be an encumbrance.”

Out of that three-day event came 33 proposals that started SSW on the road to changes in many areas of the institution.

“No one knew what an anti-racism institution would look like or how it would work,” said Donner. “But Ann wanted it to be one that was publicly accountable. Academics like to talk, but she wanted to go beyond talking. She put her foot on the pedal.”

Hartman also initiated the transformation of the curriculum to make it relevant to a broader base of students. She broadened its focus on individual



**Left:** Hartman and her beloved standard poodle Liza in her Smith SSW office. **Right:** Hartman welcomes new graduates during commencement in 1989.

psychoanalytic theory to include newer ideas, such as family therapy and post-modern theories as they related to social work.

Said SSW Professor Josh Miller, “Ann saw that the School had to change, that it was no longer in step with the profession. She was a major change agent and she was willing to take the heat that introducing change generates.”

In interviews that Miller conducted with her in 1998, Hartman recalled there were “rumblings” in the SSW community when she arrived. “They thought that I was going to change the School away from being psycho-dynamic.” But her goal was “to put the social back into social work. Our historic strength was person-in-situation, people in their environment, and that we simply had to maintain that.”

In a speech given to mark its 70th anniversary, Hartman asserted SSW’s “obligation to serve the powerless, at risk, the oppressed,





**Left:** Hartman on her first safari to Kenya in the early 1970s. **Right:** Left to right, Hartman's life partner Joan Laird, their son, Duncan Laird, M.S.W. '93, daughter-in-law, Meg Laird, M.S.W. '92 and Hartman pose for a family photo.



the disadvantaged; those populations that have been abandoned, neglected or excluded from the opportunities available in our society." She also stated a theme central to her thinking: "Every human event is psychosocial: has inner meaning but is also embedded in a context."

Knowing that "institutions have a life of their own," and "any change process is slow," as she told Miller in interviews published in *Reflections*, Hartman brought a unique set of skills and qualities to realizing her goals for SSW.

Donner cited her ability to persist: "Some days you would rather stay in your warm bed than face the world, but Ann never showed any anxiety. She wasn't foolish—she wouldn't jump into an empty pool—but she didn't let the 'what-ifs' stop her. She inspired confidence; she had vision."

Said Rodríguez-M., "She brought a breadth of life experience to her work. She understood power structures, how to strategize for change. She was unflappable."

When Hartman became dean, Rodríguez-M. had just started at SSW. "People said to me, 'Do you know who she is?' She was recognized and revered for her writing on families." As a young Hispanic woman in her "first serious job," Rodríguez-M. feared Hartman would be intimidating, but she quickly became a mentor

and a friend. "She was a commanding presence: a tall woman with a booming voice, a great laugh... She was a feminist, a professional, a wonderful storyteller."

"She was fair and supportive, conceptually strong, her values clear," said Miller. He noted she gave him solid professional advice at a critical point in his life. "I was lucky to have known her—she changed my career and my life."

Tempering Hartman's plain-spokenness was her great sense of humor. Donner said, "When I became associate dean, I knew I had to get more comfortable with conflict." So did Hartman: She and Laird gave Donner a stuffed armadillo. "It was funny, but I got the message. She gave me a gift."

And it helped that "she had the keys to the entire history of SSW, its early

leaders, the evolution of the School, the good, the bad and the ugly," according to SSW professor emerita Phebe Sessions, another good friend and longtime colleague.

Hartman's connection to SSW, Sessions noted, began in childhood: Her mother, Lois Hartman '37, was in the M.S.S. program. (Many years later, Hartman still remembered sneaking into her mother's dorm on a weekend visit.)

Two early SSW leaders, the social work pioneers Bertha Reynolds and Annette Garrett, were among the many she credited with having taught, mentored and inspired her. Hartman was quick to give credit, and her list was diverse. It included those she was closest to, such as Joan Laird and their son Duncan Laird, M.S.W. '93, iconic figures she had never met—Eleanor Roosevelt and Michel

**"Ann never showed any anxiety. She wasn't foolish—she wouldn't jump into an empty pool—but she didn't let the 'what-ifs' stop her. She inspired confidence; she had vision."**

—SUSAN DONNER



Foucault, to name two. And people in her field she came to know, such as Michael White, Murray Bowen, Carel Germain, Lynn Hoffman, Froma Walsh M.S.W. '70, the client who painted her a picture and the client's elderly Scottish father.

Sessions praised Hartman for her administrative expertise, intellectual prowess and her adventurous spirit. "She was attracted to what was interesting intellectually and clinically important. She thought that way naturally."

As one example, Sessions talked about Hartman's deep interest in narrative therapy: "Story was more than the accumulation of facts to Ann. She believed in exploring the range of stories available to people to help them align with ones that offered the most potential for growth. It was a humanistic approach, with a philosophical base."

Hartman's belief in exploring a range of stories came through in her still-cited "Many Ways of Knowing," which argued for qualitative research versus an exclusive emphasis on what could be quantified. It was just one of many editorials she wrote as editor of *Social Work*, from 1989 to 1994.

As for adventure, Hartman was the driving force behind Pyrenees hikes and snorkeling off the Great Barrier Reef with Sessions and Laird. But their greatest feat, said Sessions, was tackling New Zealand's rugged Milford Track, hiking 33 miles through mountains and rainforest and up and over MacKinnon Pass. Done, no less, when Hartman was in her seventies.

After retirement from SSW, Hartman taught at Fordham University, honed her watercolor skills, skied, babysat her grandchildren and read voraciously.

Laird and Hartman's life together intertwined the professional and academic as well as the personal. In remembering her partner of 56 years, Laird paints a vivid picture of Hartman's character, charisma and charm, mentioning her love of poodles, good cameras, the blue convertible with white walls she had when they met.

"She was a gourmet cook; she cooked every meal. She'd come



Hartman, son Duncan Laird and daughter-in-law, Meg Laird in 2018.

home and get busy in the kitchen without taking her coat off. On camping trips, Ann used to say she could set up camp, get a fire going, make a martini and grill a steak in an hour—and she could."

And there was the moment when Hartman came out as a lesbian at a national conference, when she delivered a talk about lesbian and gay families. "Afterward, there was a buzz all over the hotel. People came up and hugged us, and said thank you."

Hartman was a very private person, Laird said, who "never showed when she was sad or angry but had great empathy for others' suffering."

Donner believes that Hartman's being aware that she was a lesbian from an early age, when it was taboo and dangerous, made her a gifted leader. "That feeling of being on the margins was instructive and useful to her. She saw that it could be an advantage, not a disadvantage. It was a piece of her identity. As a leader, she appreciated multiple perspectives, not just a dominant one."

Rodríguez-M. summed up simply how many feel about her loss: "I loved Ann Hartman. She was a life force, and I miss her terribly." ♦

BURN-

OUT

Finding  
support in  
quarantine

BURN-

OUT

BY TYNAN POWER



A

s the second year of the pandemic drew to a close, it seemed like everyone was talking about burnout—and a growing crisis in mental healthcare. But what is burnout—and how are social workers working through it?

According to the World Health Organization it is an “occupational phenomenon” caused by chronic workplace stress that leaves sufferers exhausted, feeling negative, cynical or distanced from their work and less effective at their jobs. For social workers, many of the pandemic’s stressors have become familiar: adjusting to offering services via telehealth, Zoom fatigue, juggling shifting work and family responsibilities occupying the same physical space and working with clients unable to find space and time alone for therapy—or finding it only in their cars.

### **“WHEN I’M CRISPY, I KNOW I’VE HIT BURNOUT,”**

said Nancy Sheridan, M.S.W. ’88.

“My window of tolerance is smaller. I find less joy in things that usually bring me joy and I feel more tired.”

Samantha Mishne, M.S.W. ’99, found that she was working constantly.

“I worked because there wasn’t much else to do,” Mishne said. “I was really struggling. It was really tough, because I think a lot of my normal coping mechanisms are very social—and all of that changed.”

For many social workers, the shift to telehealth brought unforeseen challenges, from unstable home Wi-Fi to clients resistant to meeting online.

Sheridan found that many long-term clients made the change to telehealth relatively easily, but some populations—like teens and elders—found the new reality difficult.

“It was very hard for teenagers and most of my teens have wrapped up their work,” Sheridan said.

SSW graduate students had to be thoughtful in their work with young people during field placements at JASMYN, an organization that serves LGBTQ youth in Jacksonville, Florida. Telehealth facilitated their work, but brought its own challenges.

“They have to think about the implications of doing teletherapy with queer and trans young people who are at home, not in an office,” said Assistant Professor Hannah Karpman. “Do I know who’s in the background? Can the kids speak freely?”

Pandemic impacts on children and youth have had ramifications for therapists as well.

“Kids who otherwise might have some anxiety or depression are now coming to you and it’s high level—plus you don’t have well-resourced parents to work with,” said Karpman. “What I might try to help parents do in a normal circumstance, I can’t ask them to do while they’re working and home-schooling their kids and they can’t let the kids leave the house. Your toolbox as a therapist is much more limited.”

Mishne faced different—and daunting—challenges as the clinical director of a residential treatment center for youth.

“It was traumatizing,” said Mishne. “There was a lot of misinformation and we were essential workers. We couldn’t work from home. We couldn’t even get PPE initially. I had to tell my staff: not only do I need you to come in and work, but I don’t know if I’m going to be able to provide you with the protection you need.”

After letting the youth go home for Thanksgiving in 2020, Mishne’s facility had to scramble to create three units.

“We had to have a COVID-19 unit, we had to have a non-COVID-19 unit, and we had to offer housing to staff who didn’t want to go home to their own families after working on a COVID-19 unit.”

While the turnover rate has dropped, the inherent challenges of working in residential care keep Mishne’s facility understaffed and below capacity.

“We have space for more kids, but we don’t have staff to safely take more kids,” said Mishne. “We haven’t gotten any applications from therapists in seven months.”

Kurt Lebeck, M.S.W. ’20, a program implementation and management consultant, sees widespread burnout and increased turnover of clinicians, peer support workers and administrators.

“The added load of COVID-19 is exacerbating underlying problems,” said Lebeck.

“The workforce is getting decimated,” said Karpman, who studies behavioral healthcare workforce issues at the state level. “I was talking to a DCF worker whose unit, when fully staffed, has 42 case managers and they have 26 right now—and that is the highest they’ve had in a year.”

Sheridan has witnessed similar problems in New Hampshire.

“There’s a local mental health center where clinicians have 90 clients,” said Sheridan. “They’ve lost clinicians and they have had to stop taking new clients. In community mental health, that should never have to happen—but they can’t get anyone.”

Skyrocketing staff absences due to illness compound the problem.

“I recently learned a program director of an inpatient unit—a high level administrator—had just done the overnight shift because 30 percent of her workforce was out sick,” said Karpman.

Lebeck thinks systemic problems are disproportionately affecting people of color.

“The folks I see leaving are often people of color,” Lebeck observed. “These are people who are perfectly qualified. There’s no reason that they should be leaving more often than their white counterparts. It seems apparent that these folks are being treated poorly in systematic ways and it’s exacerbated by COVID-19—it’s enabled by telehealth and by having less interaction in the office. The relational piece of working with other people is so important that if you don’t allow for that within this new normal, you’re just going to see those numbers continue to rise.”

## THE RISE IN BURNOUT

is understandable, but social workers are fortunate to have tools to help them avoid—or come back from—burnout.



“I didn’t have a break between home and work, so I was working more than I had before,” said Sheridan. “So I consulted with my three peer consultation groups, which are a lifeline. One has been going since 1988, when I graduated from Smith. We all spent one session talking about self-care. I decided to take a week off every three months to prevent burnout.”

“If I learned anything in the pandemic, it’s that I have a great skill set, but I really had to practice these skills,” said Mishne. “I had to practice my emotional regulation skills to regulate my own anxiety.”

Because Mishne’s usual coping mechanisms were social, she also set up a weekly Zoom gathering for her M.S.W. ’99 cohort. They call it a “happy hour” because it’s held at 8:30 p.m., to allow parents time to put children to bed.

“My Smith Social Work Sunday ‘Happy Hour’ has been a life-saver during the pandemic,” said Mishne.

Lebeck and others in his M.S.W. ’20 cohort also created a virtual gathering to support one another. Their “Vicarious Trauma Processing and Consultation Group” has been meeting every month since graduation.

“I think of it as a prophylaxis to burnout,” said Lebeck. “Some of my colleagues who are in this group work in contexts where there’s a ton of stigmatizing language and attitudes about people with personality disorders and people with schizophrenia or psychosis,” Lebeck said. “If you don’t have people who are aligned with your values to talk to, it’s really hard to treat those people and not feel like you want to quit. You need people to be able to hold that with you.”

“We tend to get a lot of vicarious trauma, especially if we’re doing trauma work—and almost all of psychotherapy is trauma work,” said Lebeck. “You get exposed to a lot of people’s stuff that can be really hard to hold. Having people to share information with and talk about challenges—not just client stuff, but institutional stuff, as well—has been really important.”





While identifying burnout, taking time off, prioritizing self-care, and building systems of mutual support offer crucial help, long-term solutions must address the root problems.

In June 2021, Karpman talked about these problems with Dr. Wendy Dean, AB '87, and Dr. Simon Talbot, on the Moral Matters podcast. She described asking social workers to work in untenable—and sometimes unsafe—conditions a “moral injury.” While this has often been viewed as part of the job, as social workers are called to serve the needs of others who face their own untenable and unsafe conditions, Karpman points to a growing awareness that social workers and social work organizations have an ethical responsibility to work for policy and social change to improve those conditions, for clients and the therapists who serve them.

Some of those policy changes must include funding.

“If local and state government officials say that they support mental health and want people to get the help they need, they need to put that into action with funding,” said Sheridan.

Karpman is hopeful.

“We are seeing big funding packages come through for mental health care, so there’s a policy window in which we may see substantial changes.”

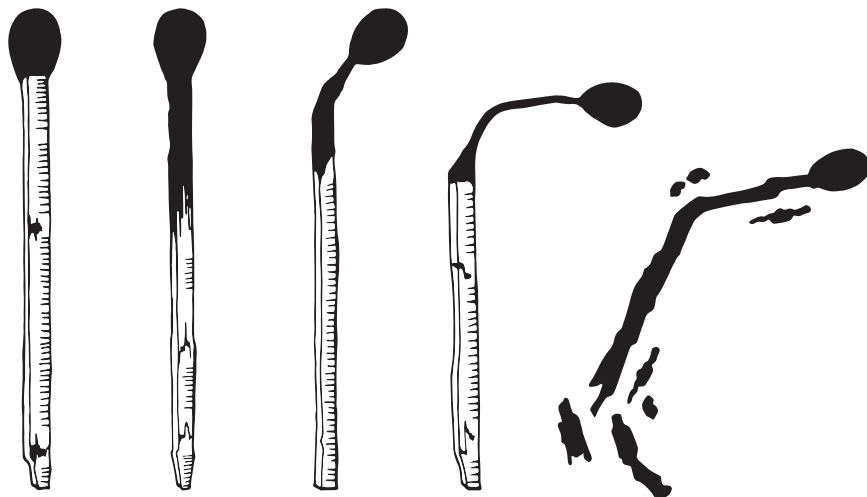
Moving forward, Sheridan sees remaining flexible—a value she credits SSW and Dean Emerita Ann Hartman with fostering in her—as a key to handling whatever lies ahead.

Karpman thinks this lesson of the pandemic was embraced at SSW and will have long range benefits.

“At SSW, the pandemic pushed us to be innovative and respond to these new realities,” said Karpman. “We’ve adjusted the curriculum and added content to field placement education. Our field office is so responsive right now. We have placements in places we’ve never had them before. We also opened a virtual telehealth clinic in 2021 so that we could accommodate students who wanted to be one hundred percent



# I CONSULTED WITH MY THREE PEER CONSULTATION GROUPS, WHICH ARE A LIFELINE. WE ALL SPENT ONE SESSION TALKING ABOUT SELF-CARE. I DECIDED TO TAKE A WEEK OFF EVERY THREE MONTHS TO PREVENT BURNOUT.



remote because they had health concerns. We had an online field lab last year, where the School basically provided free therapy so students could get clinical hours.”

“I think students who were educated at SSW during the pandemic are on the edge of that,”

Karpman added. “Those skills are going to be really, really useful.”

“I think we need to keep our knees bent and stay very curious about

how we do the work,” said Sheridan. “There are a number of us who said, ‘Oh, I’ll never do online therapy.’ And here we are. We just have to maintain curiosity and keep exploring other ways to do what we do.” ♦

Insets, left to right:  
Samantha Mishne, M.S.W. '99  
Kurt Lebeck, M.S.W. '20  
Nancy Sheridan, M.S.W. '88

# RADICAL LOVE UNLIMITED

Centering  
Black girls'  
experiences  
and histories

BY FAYE S. WOLFE

Assistant Professor Loren Cahill  
poses at the Colored Girls  
Museum in Philadelphia, PA.

PHOTO BY ZAMANI FEELINGS







**H**ow do you encourage a teenage Black girl's awareness of Black history and culture, including those aspects not always recognized as significant, such as the domestic arts of cooking, making a home, tending a garden, growing food? What are the characteristics of a safe space, a sacred space, for Black girls and Black women? How do you incorporate those characteristics into institutional spaces?

These are some of the questions Loren Cahill, an SSW assistant professor, has been exploring recently. In addition to doing research into social justice aspects of social work, she has been working with M.S.W. students, writing papers and acting as the first scholar-in-residence of The Colored Girls Museum (TCGM) in Philadelphia. In the latter capacity, she has been involved in producing research projects, lectures, courses and programs since 2021 and will continue into 2023. This coming summer, Cahill will be teaching the M.S.W. core course, Community and Agency Practice and her newly created elective, Love, Care and Community Praxis.

Cahill was awarded her Ph.D. in Critical Social/Personality Environmental Psychology from the City University of New York last year, after earning her bachelor's in Africana studies and education from Wellesley College and a master's degree in social work from the University of Michigan.

Her current investigations build on those she did for her dissertation, "The Space Love Maps: A Blackgirl Legend in Three Plots." (The one-word term Blackgirl refers to Dr. Robin Boylorn's concept of "the indivisibility of race

and gender in the marginalized lives and experiences of Black women.")

In summarizing her thesis, Cahill said, "The major argument for this dissertation is that radical love is a regular praxis through which Blackgirls create spaces that center themselves and their community." For her dissertation, she examined how the three "plots," all Philadelphia-based organizations, were working in different ways to create centering spaces for Black girls and Black people in general.

Our Mothers' Kitchens hosts community dinners and offers summer camps for Black teenage girls. Black Quantum Futurism creates community-based events, performances, exhibitions and publications focusing on "recovery, collection and preservation of communal memories, histories and stories," according to its website.

The third organization, TCGM, describes itself as "a memoir museum, which honors the stories, experiences and history of ordinary Colored Girls...a clearinghouse of multi-dimensional arty-facts, objects and

information about Colored Girls: equal parts research facility, exhibition space, gathering place and think tank."

Cahill's interest in healing spaces and organizations for African Americans dates back to her teenage years when she attended workshops led by Stefan Bradley, professor, scholar and author of such award-winning books as *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s*. Her advocacy for social justice has even deeper roots. Her grandfather, Clyde S. Cahill Jr., the first African American federal trial judge in St. Louis, was an important figure in her formative years. Among his anti-racist actions were filing a lawsuit that called on Missouri to implement the Supreme Court's ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education* and end school segregation in that state. He also took a groundbreaking stand on federal sentencing guidelines as being "directly responsible for incarcerating an entire generation of young Black American men for very long periods."

Recognizing the depth and breadth of Black history, Loren Cahill pursues research that goes back and forward in time. One of her recent projects was collecting oral histories from activists

Charles E. Cobb, Jr., and Alexander

S. Davis. Cobb has written books on racial issues, reported for NPR and *National Geographic*, run an African American bookstore and served as the field secretary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during

the civil rights era. Davis is

a poet, rapper, and healing justice organizer for HOLLA!, which works with New York City youth of color to foster their growth as grassroots community leaders.

In delving into the narratives of Cobb and Davis, men from different eras and generations, Cahill looked for parallels and contrasts between their experiences in two transformative movements, sought to consider their legacy and to learn, she said, "what sustains them and keeps them returning to their work." The results of her inquiry are contained in a





paper she has submitted for publication, “Black Dreams Matter: Exploring the Realm of the Black Radical Imaginary Through an Intergenerational Oral History.”

In June 2021, the journal *Visual Arts Research* published another paper by Cahill, “Radical Love Unlimited: A Biomythography,” in its special issue “Arts & Aesthetics of Black Girlhood.” She places a high value on art as a medium for social change, and she gravitates to nontraditional, creative approaches to presenting her ideas.

Last summer, for instance, she was a contributor to a coproduction of the arts journal *e-flux* and the Guggenheim Museum. The online project, *Survivance*, featured a collection of writings exploring the concept of “hyper-vitality, super-vigor” delineated by Native American writer Gerald Vizenor. Cahill’s essay “Love Space, or, How to Recognize Blackgirl Spatialities,” combined stills from her film *Loren’s Love Note Audio Collage* with text on both contemporary and timeless elements of Black culture, from Instagram Verzuz competitions to the importance of the porch/stoop as “a natural place for convening and healing.”

“Art allows me to be creative outside the canon,” she said. “Someone who’s not going to read my 300-page Ph.D. dissertation or my scholarly writings—the currency of academia—will attend an art exhibition. Art can make ideas accessible and available to a wider range of people; it provides an entry site. It’s a way of inviting people in.”

One such inviting project that Cahill is excited about is a series of exhibitions she is organizing. In its first iteration, “The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face” was hosted last year by the nonprofit organization Slought, on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania, in partnership with TCGM. “First Time” featured paintings by Black female artists of Black girls ages 10 to 18. TCGM hosts the exhibition, which takes its title from the famous Roberta Flack song this spring. She is in the process of arranging similar “First Time” exhibitions in other cities in the United States, Jamaica and South Africa. (Cahill was an exchange fellow at the University

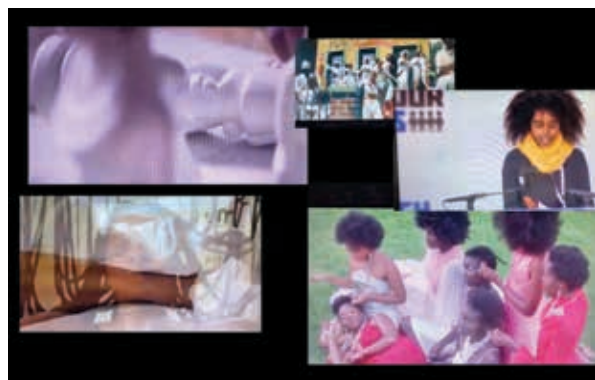
of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 2018.)

By bringing people face to face with these portraits, Cahill seeks to provoke serious reflection about prevalent and harmful misconceptions about Black girls. She cites a growing body of research that has documented inequities in their treatment by law enforcement, the justice system and schools. They are expected to act older than they are, to conform more rigidly to social standards and are punished much more harshly when they don’t comply than their white counterparts.

The show asks viewers what the challenges are that these young women face and what they risk when they assert their right to be fully themselves. Cahill hopes that teachers, social workers, doctors and police in particular may enter into dialogue with the images before them.

“First Time” is not only about how others see Black girls—but also about how they see themselves. Cahill hopes that the portraits, a form of monument to the “ordinary black girl,” will prompt meaningful responses from the young women who stand before them. Her own inquiries include probing what the sitters, or “muses,” as Cahill calls them and the artists experienced during the creative process. “I want to know from each artist, ‘When you looked at the girl, what did you see?’”

While her research manifests itself in diverse forms—papers, films, essays, art—it is always driven by strong



**Inset left:** Nile Livingston’s painting of Tyjanae Williams for the exhibition “The First Time, Ever I Saw Your Face” commissioned by The Colored Girls Museum and organized by Cahill. **Above:** A still image from Cahill’s film *Loren’s Love Note Audio Collage*.

intellectual curiosity and a heartfelt commitment to investigating a range of Black experiences. In doing so, she delineates the many forms that social justice can take and the pathways that social work can travel. As she sees it, her mission is not only to document “the deficits, the betrayals and the trauma” that have often been the focus of social work efforts, but also to emphasize the “resiliency of Black people, how they have created spaces that engender love, that allow them to be loved.”

“That is not to diminish the betrayals, the trauma,” she noted, “but they’re not the final word, and I want to show that. I want to show the knowledge, the strength, the beauty that Black people have accumulated and engendered.” ♦

**“Art allows me to be creative outside the canon. Someone who’s not going to read my 300-page Ph.D. dissertation or my scholarly writings—the currency of academia—will attend an art exhibition. Art can make ideas accessible and available to a wider range of people; it provides an entry site. It’s a way of inviting people in.”**

—LOREN CAHILL

Confronting  
the Pandemic  
of Youth  
Mental Health  
During COVID-19

BY  
MEGAN RUBINER ZINN

# HUMAN CONNECTION

FACING PAGE ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN STAUFFER





# IN

October of 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Children's Hospital

Association jointly released a statement declaring a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health, identifying “soaring rates of mental health challenges among children, adolescents and their families over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.”



Deep in the trenches, experiencing this youth mental health pandemic firsthand, are a great many Smith College School for Social Work alumni. In early 2022, I spoke with six of these alumni. There were many common threads in their stories: in what clients were feeling, the challenges of treating them, the most effective interventions and their hopes for positive outcomes. Above all, the mental health pandemic has brought these practitioners back to the foundations of social work: that isolation is deeply damaging, especially for young people, that outside forces have a significant impact on mental health and that human connection is an essential intervention.

Michael Spindler, M.S.W. '74, is a consultant with Never Give Up Youth Healing Center, a residential treatment provider in Nevada. Spindler's experiences have been a microcosm of the mental health pandemic. In 2021, he reviewed 397 referrals for admission to a program that normally discharges 60 to 65 children a year. “Over 85 percent of the youth on referral were experiencing one or more of the following symptoms: suicidal ideation, self-harming behavior, major depression, anxiety (including panic attacks) and a profound sense of hopelessness,” he said.

All of the alumni saw variations on these symptoms. Ann Wheeler, M.S.W. '14, a Boston-area preschool social worker who also sees children in private practice, noted that she's seen regression in young children, with behaviors they had grown out of resurfacing again. Rachel Hulstein-Lowe, M.S.W. '02, who also has a private practice near Boston, has seen changes in overall functioning among older kids: increased distress and less distress tolerance, strains in relationships, poor motivation and engagement and changes in sleeping and eating. Megan Harding, SSW's associate dean for academic affairs and a consultant with BRYT Network, which supports kids returning to school after extended absences, reported that school avoidance has spiked across the K-12 spectrum.

The challenges of treating children have grown exponentially as well. Just trying to meet the overwhelming need for mental health service and having to say no to so many in need has been a great source of stress.

Exacerbating the situation was how many families lost access to essential services when schools closed. For many, school provides meals, mental health support, special education services, before and after school care and technology access. Beth Wechsler, M.S.W. '72, a private practitioner



in Massachusetts, noted a particularly sobering fact: reports for abuse and neglect were down—not because abuse was down, but because mandated reporters weren’t seeing children.

While telehealth has been a lifesaver for clinicians and clients, it hasn’t worked well for those who see young children. It also hasn’t worked well for school social workers, who must be present and available to kids. According to Maria Al-Shamma, M.S.W. ’92, a school social worker in Southern California, many at-risk children weren’t showing up for virtual classes or engaging at all. “My job switched to just trying to find where they were,” she said. She made over three hundred home visits during the 2020–21 school year; in previous years it had been closer to fifty.

One of the more unique aspects of working with children during the pandemic has been the collective nature of the trauma. As Hulstein-Lowe observed, “I’m in it as much as all of the people I’m working with, so the collective trauma of this time is a real challenge.” Everyone in children’s lives is experiencing trauma, which compromises their ability to be objective and their ability to give kids energy and attention. Shared trauma can also make it more challenging to maintain boundaries. “Going through this at the same time as all my clients, I find myself wanting to reassure people in this way that isn’t necessarily clinically appropriate,” said Lauren Beaudoin-Colegrove, M.S.W. ’15, who has a private practice in Central Massachusetts.

Although the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented, the strategies to address them are not. In fact, the practitioners’ strategies have often been the most fundamental. It’s small things, Harding explained: how do we foster connection, how do we create predictability, how do we model moderation?

In many cases, the care begins with reminding clients that they are still in the midst of trauma. “I have been

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS IS AT THE CORE OF THE WORK THAT WE DO—SO WHEN THERE IS AN ISSUE, THEY KNOW THAT THERE’S SOMEBODY AVAILABLE TO THEM. —Maria Al-Shamma

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able to help people clinically, by really showing them how much they’re reacting to the pandemic. And that what feels like their personal, interpersonal problems are really being hijacked by the stress of the pandemic—to normalize it for people,” said Wechsler.

As a school social worker, relationships are key for Al-Shamma. “Building relationships with students is at the core of the work that we do—so when there is an issue, they know that there’s somebody available to them,” she said. “If they already know me and trust me—it sounds so simple—but in reality, that’s when I can help.”

Because it is so difficult to work with very young children through telehealth, practitioners like Beaudoin-Colegrove have needed to rely more on consultations and coaching with parents and schools, making sure they are on the same page and sharing strategies.

Spindler adds that providing structure is essential—“to create any semblance of routine and predictability in their lives that’s possible”—as is giving children a safe space to

express themselves. “It’s critical that we acknowledge and validate what children are feeling and listen to their expressions of sadness, anxiety and loss and affirm that their feelings are real and that they make sense,” Spindler said.

While no one would call the pandemic anything but a disaster, these practitioners have seen some distinct positives. The most obvious is telehealth: the pandemic demonstrated that telehealth is effective and insurance companies are now far more willing to cover it. Telehealth has also made it much easier for clients to get to appointments and for families to participate together. Wheeler noted that she does almost all of her parent consultations virtually now, and Beaudoin-Colegrove expects that even in the future, they’ll likely see two-thirds to three-quarters of their clients remotely.

While seeing clients in their personal space can be awkward, it also allows practitioners a different perspective. In seeing clients’ personal spaces, Beaudoin-Colegrove has found more insight into their lives, and observed that clients often seem

less guarded when they're at home rather than in an office.

The mental health community's response to the pandemic has made the practitioners very proud of their profession. "It just reaffirmed my love of the field of social work," Al-Shamma said, when she and her colleagues were able to pivot quickly to meet the students' needs. "We all just did that, without question."

As challenging as this period has been, these alumni know that what they have learned will serve them well in the future. "Our responsibility as professionals is to take this awful, awful mental health pandemic, and use it as a learning opportunity," Spindler said. "And frankly, embrace it intellectually so we understand it. If and when we have another pandemic or similar experience, we will have a more refined skill set in order to address it with children."

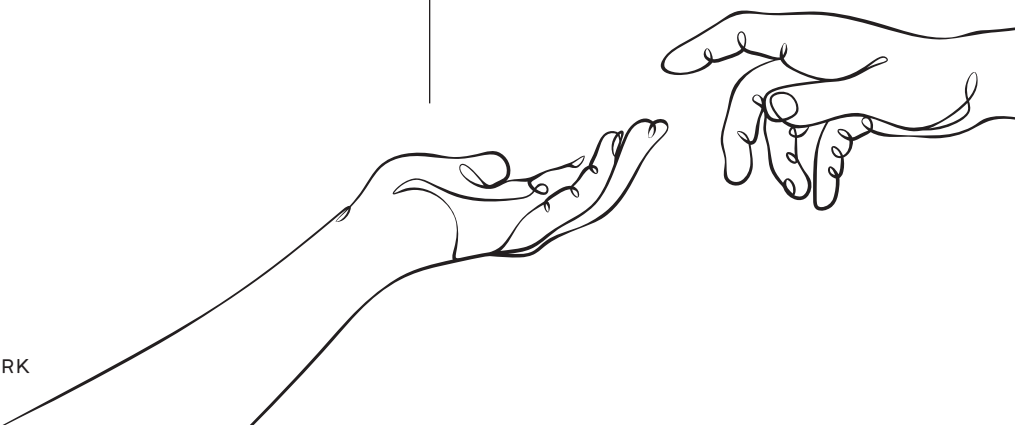
The pandemic has confirmed and expanded what practitioners know of trauma, especially how multi-layered it can be. It also demonstrated quite starkly how much mental health is impacted by outside factors. Wheeler noted that while we tend to locate mental health in the individual, "the pandemic has just been another reminder that people are created by or shaped by the society and framework that they live in."

In the first days of lockdown, we also saw that we can give far more to under-resourced schools and students. As Harding pointed out, when it was necessary, we were able to get computers, Wi-Fi, free meals and home visits for every child who needed them. Further, since schools have reopened, there has been increased will and funding to improve mental health support. "Those basic mental health supports that we've been trying to get into schools for years, I think there's a bit more of an open door," she said. "The mindset shift is the greatest gain."

What is most clear to each practitioner is that this is just the beginning; the mental health impact of the pandemic will reverberate for years.

THOSE BASIC MENTAL  
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THE MINDSET SHIFT IS  
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"There's this sentiment of catch up, catch up, our students lost time on learning. But what we're going to see the effects of for years to come isn't being six months behind in math—it's the mental health and social-emotional impact," Harding said. As Hulstein-Lowe very simply asserted, "I don't know what the ramifications are for kids, but I think it will be in my work as long as I am working." ♦





# Alumni News

IN THIS SECTION  
ALUMNI DESK  
ALUMNI LIVES  
ALUMNI PROFILE



Mark Davila Witkowski '05,  
with husband, Tom (left) and  
daughter, Alex.





DAWN M. FAUCHER  
Director of Development

# Engaging Continues

New ways and new faces, yet connecting doesn't stop



In a few weeks, SSW will bring our amazing students to campus. This will be *extraordinary* because this will be the first time on campus for *all three cohorts*.

As I sit writing this letter, I am struck by two things: first, that almost a year has gone by since writing the last *InDepth* letter; and second, that I am writing the letter, once again, from my home office.

The physical and emotional toll of this pandemic continues. No one has been unaffected. There is a hierarchy of grief and all of it is magnified by the added isolation created by the pandemic. So, when I sat down via Zoom to discuss this issue of *InDepth*, one, and only one, theme emerged: COVID-19. How has the pandemic impacted us as individuals and communities?

People talk about things returning to normal but nothing is normal. Everyone has experienced extraordinary change and loss. However, in spite of all of this, the School continues to attract, retain and educate amazing students who wish to join the ranks of our alumni in helping ease suffering and pain. In a few weeks, SSW will bring our amazing students to campus. This will be *extraordinary* because this will be the first time on campus for *all three cohorts*!

Other notable changes have been underway with regard to SSW alumni relations. At the end of 2021, I began my new role as the SSW Director of Development and in January we launched a search for a director of SSW alumni engagement. In my new role, I will continue to raise funds for SSW but under the umbrella of the Alumnae/i Relations & Development Department with the full breadth and depth of support of that department. This has already allowed me to dedicate my time to developing new SSW student scholarships and to provide better stewardship to all who so generously contribute to the School for Social Work.

While I have loved serving as the director of alumni relations and development for the last nine years, the time had come for me to hand off some of the duties.

We have grown so much. We have not only raised more funds to directly benefit our students, but we have also increased regional alumni participation in events, helped current students and recent graduates network with alumni—and, let's not forget that we celebrated the centennial of the School!

While many of you have stayed connected through participation in the robust offerings of SSW Professional Education, the School's social media and listservs, I know many of you have missed regional in-person gatherings and visits to campus in the two summers that have passed. I join you in looking forward to a new director of alumni engagement who will partner with the School's Alumni Leadership Council and other volunteers to build new programs that will support alum at various life and career stages. In the meantime, I encourage you to join the new national SSW Alumni Network Listserv that was created and is moderated by SSW alumni volunteers David Goodman, M.S.W. '77, Carol Fizer, '82 and Gretchen Pauley '00. If you haven't joined and would like to, please visit [ssw.smith.edu/alumlistserv](https://ssw.smith.edu/alumlistserv).

Looking forward, I hope for a world that is fair and just so that philanthropy is no longer needed. Until that time, I will work to raise the funds necessary to help make an SSW education accessible to all accepted students. I hope to build on the relationships forged over the past decade to inspire your continued support of Smith SSW. ♦

# Alumni Lives

Updates from far and near



Norma Miller '73, and grandson on the beach in Mexico where she lives part of the year.

**1973**

**Norma Miller** writes "I am living in Mexico for 8 months of the year, 4 months with my daughter and two grandsons, and the other 4 months on Vashon Island near Seattle.

Where and how are you? **Sharon Thompson, Kathy Miller, Judy Parker Smith, Judy Pack,** and others, please respond/reconnect: [swakasana@hotmail.com](mailto:swakasana@hotmail.com)."

■ **Lucille Spira** writes "I received a 2021 Grady Award for best edited

book: *Rage and Creativity: How Feminism Sparked Psychoanalysis* (IPBooks, 2020)."

**1976**

**Elliot Silverman** writes "Always looking to connect with SSW 76ers! Gettin' older. Only 4–6 more decades to get in touch with one another."

**1981**

**Karen Mason** writes "I moved back to West Virginia/south when my home burned down to the ground in CA. Insurance was not too helpful. But I miss that warm sun on my head so much. Miss y'all Smithies even more. Reach me at: [katedid22088@gmail.com](mailto:katedid22088@gmail.com)."

**1984**

**Terry Galen** writes "I have had the good fortune to be accepted in this year's Smith College Post Graduate Certificate in Palliative and End of Life Care program. It is fabulous! The only thing that would make it better would be if the spring session was on campus instead of Zoom. Seeing A '84 friends would also be fun."

**1985**

**Janet Strassman Perlmutter** writes "After 14 years developing and directing the counseling services department at MCPHS University (formerly Massachusetts College of Pharmacy) serving graduate and professional students, I retired from

that position in July 2021. During those years I built the campus counseling centers in both Worcester, MA, and Manchester, NH, and created and supervised a training program for M.S.W. students. I'm proud of the collaborative work our department did with various academic and student service departments to forward mental health awareness and access in these campus communities. It was hard to step away from that role, but also time. In 2021 I trained in Internal Family Systems (IFS) and Intimacy from the Inside Out (IFIO), an IFS-based couples approach. After giving myself a sabbatical of four months, I launched my private practice, Heartwork Counseling, specializing





## IN MEMORIAM

*This listing includes alums who were confirmed deceased between January 1 and December 31, 2021.*

### Class of 1944

Deborah Cantor Glasser

### Class of 1948

Isabel Schetlin McNeil

### Class of 1953

Cornelia Hamilton Lahey

### Class of 1954

Ann Hartman

### Class of 1957

Dorothy MacKay

### Class of 1958

Deborah Rudnick Menashi

### Class of 1960

Betty Cleckley

### Class of 1962

Judith Forsythe Powell

### Class of 1963

Susan Needles

### Class of 1964

Dori Nelson Schmauss

### Class of 1966

Linda Johnston Lieberman

### Class of 1968

Anna Pollock

### Class of 1969

Fay Mittleman

### Class of 1972

Michael Lieberman

### Class of 1974

Ellen Whitehead Kornegay  
Ricardo Martinez

### Class of 1976

David Joseph  
Patrick Hayes

### Class of 1988

Phyllis Fonseca

### Class of 1989

Ethan Dufault

### Class of 1991

Josephine LeBlanc  
Stephen Zeldow

### Class of 1992

Roberta Russell

### Class of 2009

Sheri Kurtz

To report the death of an alum, please email [smithierecords@smith.edu](mailto:smithierecords@smith.edu)

in couples work, transitions at mid-life and beyond, and burnout prevention and recovery. Currently working via telehealth, I look forward to a time when it will feel safe enough to see clients in person in Central Mass and Metrowest Boston. Keeping to a roughly half-time practice I am appreciating time to kayak, collage, dabble with watercolors, see more friends, take more walks, read more books and visit with our kids and grandkids, all of whom relocated to Portland, OR over the last two years. I am grateful to be managing these pandemic times from a lovely spot in Stow, MA, with my husband of 30 years."

### 1988

**Nancy Sheridan** writes "Last year I completed a two year process of becoming an EMDRIA Approved Consultant! I'm so grateful to have Dr. Debbie Korn as my mentor and am enjoying adding more consultees to my work experience. My spouse has retired and keeps the home fires burning and we enjoy hiking in the many beautiful places that our area of NH has to offer. **Amy Hadley** and I are good friends and keep in touch regularly and I've reconnected with **Lisa Master**! I'm grateful for my health, being able to work during the pandemic and helping clients with EMDR therapy—the most effective tool in my tool box."

### 1992

**Nicole Christina** writes "I'm happy to announce that my podcast, *Zestful Aging*, is now heard in 101 countries! I love talking to influencers who are all about contributing to the common good. I'm also scheduled to play tennis in the National Senior Games in Ft. Lauderdale this spring. Not expecting to win—just going to have fun!"

### 1996

**Melissa Grady** writes "I will be editor in chief of the *Clinical Social Work Journal* starting in June of 2022."

### 1997

**Monifa Robinson Groover** writes "As the founder and CEO of Within Your Reach Consulting Services LLC, I provide strategies for Christian C-Level Executives, helping them break through barriers in their personal and professional lives. After working with me clients are able to maximize their strengths and leverage their limitations to live the life they have always wanted. To learn more and sign up for a free consultation visit me online: [withinyourreach.life](http://withinyourreach.life)."

### 2005

**Mark Davila Witkowski** writes "Hi Folks. I've been in private practice since 2007. I have a lovely office in Cambridge, MA, that has mostly sat empty these past many months. I've missed it. After returning to the office in June 2020, I ended up back home once Omicron hit. I find that conducting treatment from a distance leaves a lot to be desired, both personally and clinically. I've also found that I'm a lot more flexible in how I can work than I would have predicted. And I'll grudgingly admit that remote treatment has some clinical benefits for some patients. For some highly traumatized folks, being liberated from being present with my body in a confined space has led to more rapid healing in some ways, than I have usually seen when working with such people in the consulting room. As you might imagine, in these cases, returning to the office carries with it more complexity and is itself a clinical concern, as we circle being able to meet in person once more. I am a scientific member of the Institutional Review Board at the Fenway Institute, the research arm of Fenway Health in Boston, MA. In 2021 I started supervising at the Psychotherapy Institute of Back Bay (PIBB)—a fellowship program co-founded by our classmate **Marina Kovarsky**, LICSW; and I also joined NASW's Private Practice Committee. As part of my service on the committee I'll be writing a couple of pieces in 2021. On the personal front, my husband Tom and I marked our 26 year together in 2021, our little girl Alex became a tween and we added a puppy to our brood (who is delightful when she is not torturing our beloved dog Ginger). We've been lucky to spend a fair amount of time in Provincetown, MA, throughout the pandemic. While always a privilege and luxury, it has been a lesson in how much a change of scenery alone can be restorative in this time of the pandemic. I miss being with my friends and chosen family. I miss being in the physical presence of my patients. I am thinking a lot about Freud's work, Mourning and Melancholia, as a way of thinking about all we've lost during the pandemic, the psychic task that is at hand and helping to understand the deep sense of fatigue that I feel and hear from all of those around me."

### 2011

**Kimberly Gillette** writes "Just hit 10 years as a clinical social worker and five in private practice. I left the school system in August 2020 for full-time private practice and have

been full since! In other news, my son is getting his Ph.D. in theoretical math from Notre Dame, my middle child graduated from Hampshire in May and my youngest is a sophomore at a college here in Maryland. Next month I'll be getting married in St. Lucia and look forward to celebrating with some other Smith M.S.W. friends at the wedding of **Amanda Slatius** in May!"



Kimberly Gillette '11, and husband, Brandon Roby.

### 2012

**Ileana Hahambis** writes "My husband and I welcomed our fraternal twin girls Penelope and Chloe in Spring 2021. It's exciting to see them grow and their personalities are beginning to come out. Penelope is very social. Chloe observes her surroundings before she engages with other people." ■ **Sarah Horn** writes "I started my own psychotherapy practice in October 2021! I'm practicing in an office space in Wellesley, MA. I specialize in working with LGBTQIA+ youth with a primary focus on gender identity."

### 2013

**Asher Pandjiris** writes "I recently collaborated with **Anastasia (Onyx) Fujii '12**, to create Kintsugi Therapist Collective. Kintsugi Therapist Collective (KTC) is a community of therapists dedicated to embodied and liberatory visions of care. KTC offers embodied care, support, wisdom and resources to trans and non-binary, BIPOC, chronically ill and disabled mental health providers. KTC began in deep conversations between longtime friends and colleagues, Anastasia (Onyx) Fujii and Asher Pandjiris; two chronically ill therapists struggling to achieve sustainability in private practice, while also caring for complicated





Anastasia (Onyx) Fujii '12, and Asher Pandjiris '13, creators of Kintsugi Therapist Collective.

bodies, raising children and facing ongoing experiences of trauma and oppression. We are currently accepting applications for our Embodied Private Practice Cohort. The Embodied Private Practice Cohort is a year-long mentorship offering for clinicians who are beginning or revising private practice with a focus on embodiment and sustainability. Combining reality-based, capacity-conscious clinical and business consultation and utilizing both individual and group processes, mentorship will focus on the ways that therapists can be nurtured by clinical practice, avoid burnout and commit to sustainability, self care and healing. This program will be focused on centering and valuing the unique experiences and challenges of therapists with lived experience of chronic illness, disability, mental illness, trauma and oppression; with expansive thinking about and active undoing of the harm caused by the well provider/unwell patient binary expectation in mental health and wellness fields. [kintsugitherapistcollective.com/about](http://kintsugitherapistcollective.com/about).”

## 2016

**Katherine Roubos** writes “This year we celebrated a handfasting ceremony which we adapted as a ritual to acknowledge blending our family including me, my fiancé,

Fetch Phoenix, my step kids Ella and Oliver (twin 7 yr olds!) and “Future Baby” who now has arrived earthside (on 1/16/22 at 9lbs!) and is now known as SkylarJay Phoenix Roubos. We are delighted with all these evolutions in our family! Professionally, I launched my private practice in Oakland in 2020 and started a peer consultation group for trans clinicians in 2021. As a member of the Radicle Root Collective I work as a consultant and facilitator of embodied organizational change focused on racial equity and racial healing. I am honored to be part of the first ever spiritual teacher and leadership training program through East Bay Meditation Center from 2021–2023. Sending care to everyone in these strange and challenging times! Feel free to reach out to connect.”

## 2020

**Charla Malamed** has two upcoming publications in press. The first is a response paper in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, entitled “A Safe Space to Play Dangerously: Contextualizing Gender Play in Therapy,” and the second, in *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, entitled “Does Your Institute Have An Anti-racism Commitment?": Interrogating Anti-racism Commitments in Psychoanalytic Institutes.”

# Obituary

*InDepth* runs obituaries that are submitted by family, friends or classmates. Please submit obituaries to [indepth@smith.edu](mailto:indepth@smith.edu) or to *InDepth*, Smith College School for Social Work, Northampton, MA 01063.

*InDepth* obituaries are 100-word notices for the alumni community and are not intended to repeat all of the information contained in newspaper obituaries.

## William “Bill” Steven Meyer

August 11, 2021

Bill received an M.S.W. from the University of Illinois then accepted a position at Duke Medical Center as the director of training for social work and an associate professor in the departments of psychiatry and OB/GYN. Bill held faculty appointments at numerous institutions including Smith SSW. His work focused on postpartum disorders and the history of psychiatry and the LGBT+ community. Bill received many awards including the Day Garrett Award, loved 1960s music, and played keyboard, saxophone and guitar. Bill is survived by family, cherished friends and chosen family from D.C. to Chicago to Brazil.



BY KIRA GOLDENBERG

# Life's Continuum

A death doula offers support to people approaching their final days



It's a time of love, a time of connection. Have they told everybody that they love them? Have they gotten the forgiveness from somebody that they feel they should have? Have they apologized to those they may have hurt? —GLENDON GEIKIE

When Glendon Geikie, M.S.W. '72, retired in 2012 after 40 years as a Massachusetts-based social worker, his daughter convinced him to move out to California. But rather than slip into a leisurely retirement in the beautifully temperate climate, Geikie decided he wasn't quite done performing acts of service for others.

That's how a career that already included agency social worker, therapist, soldier, obituary writer, administrator and nonprofit consultant came to include another role: death doula.

"I tried a couple things," he says. "And then somebody told me about hospice, and I became a hospice volunteer, and that really connected for me." When a friend introduced him to the adjacent concept of a death doula, he did a training and he has been immersed in the work ever since.

Just as better-known birth doulas support expectant parents through the pregnancy process, building birth plans and accompanying them through labor, death doulas, also called end-of-life doulas, help usher people through their final chapter.

Geikie's role involves working through the granular details that ensure people have their affairs in order by the time they pass away. He works to facilitate advanced care directives, burial plans, draft obituaries, legacy ideas, vigil plans and, after the person passes, he works with the family to perform comfort rituals, like washing the body.



Working with grief is essential to the whole process.

“It’s a time of love, a time of connection,” he adds. “Have they told everybody that they love them? Have they gotten the forgiveness from somebody that they feel they should have? Have they apologized to those they may have hurt?”

That is to say: he continues to draw from his clinical social work skills.

“My clinical skills have really come in handy in terms of helping people, because I’m used to sitting with people, and sometimes it’s all you can do: you sit there and you just hold space.” And he traces his mastery of those skills to his time at SSW.

“You get a grounding—you know something,” he says of his academic experience, adding that the School had a heavily psychoanalytic lens at the time. “You knew that theory. So you always had a base to start with. No matter what situation you were in, you had a basic understanding of human behavior.”

Like all other interpersonal work, Geikie’s newest profession has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

“I love Zoom, and I use it a lot,” he says, including for periodic “circle of remembrance” gatherings, which invite people who are grieving to remember their loved ones in a ritualized way meant to bring comfort through community.

“But it’s not the same,” he says. Earlier in the pandemic, he was working with a woman in an assisted living facility. “She always said, ‘I hope you’re going to be here to hold my hand when I pass.’ And I fully intended to do that, but COVID-19 came and they locked down the place. She died one night, and I wasn’t there.”

Geikie wrote a poem about that experience, and many others. He hopes that, one day, the compilation will outlast him.

“It’s a way to remember—for the person to not be forgotten,” he says. “Maybe it will be part of my legacy. ♦

## The Musician

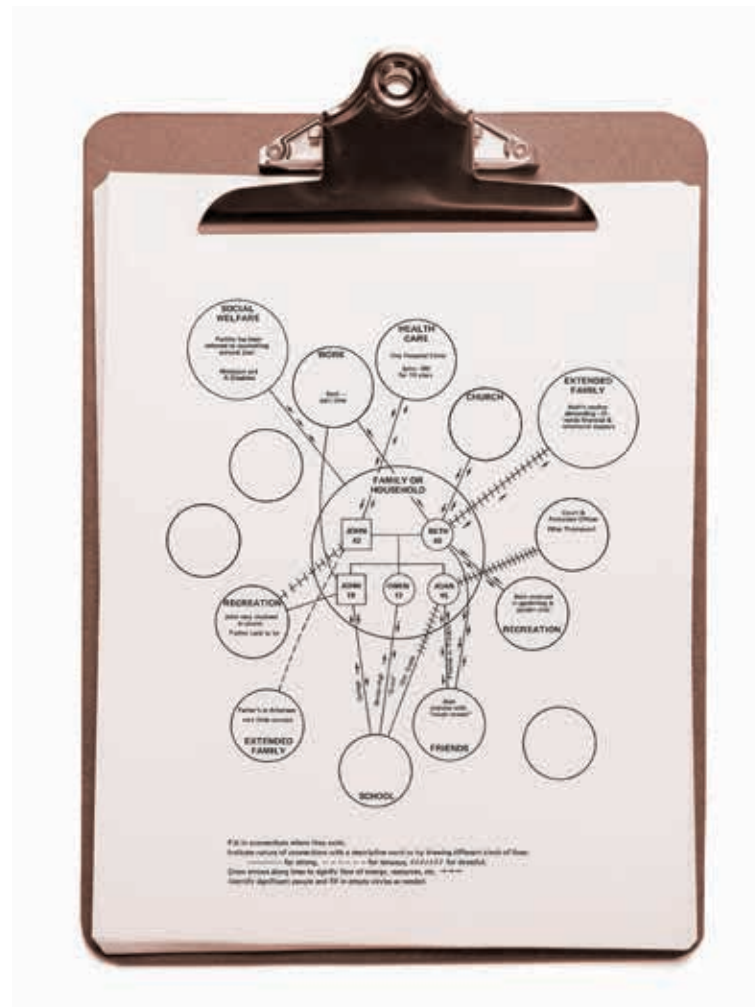
BY GLENDON GEIKIE

*the cancer in his head  
rapidly devours his brain  
our chats about his life and music  
soon turn to grunts and groans*

*his wife buzzes about the house  
sweeping, dusting, moving things around  
unable to protect the life she loves  
her feelings of powerlessness  
hidden by the activity*

*he once played a Gibson guitar  
wrote music and sang his own songs  
stiffened fingers and gasping breath  
now crush these treasures*

*in his final hours  
she holds his hand  
sings his songs  
her tears mingling with his*



## The Eco-Map Tool

One of Ann Hartman's many contributions to the social work profession is the eco-map (sometimes referred to as an ecogram), used to map social and family relationships. Said Hartman of her work, "The connections, the themes and the quality of the family's life seem to jump off the page and this leads to a more holistic and integrative perception."

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