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Tidings from the Director

A Democratic Crisis Rooted in Mass Delusion

BY MAX O. STEPHENSON, JR.

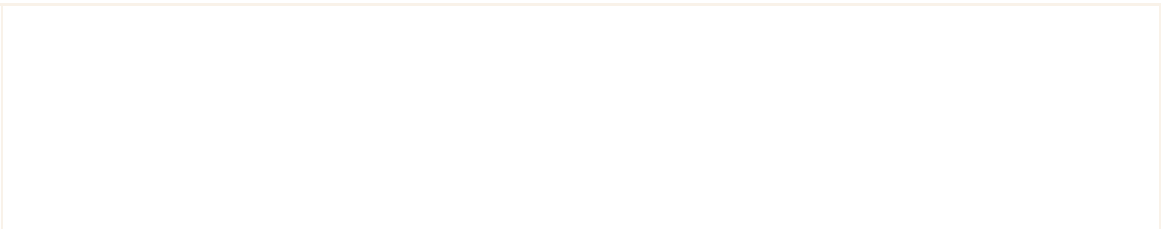
Director, Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance

A number of ongoing news stories illustrate the depth and character of our nation’s governance crisis. These accounts point to the larger looming trends in policy and politics within which the Institute now conducts its research efforts. Because these developments are so signally important and their possible consequences so profound, I would be remiss not to comment on and explore them briefly here.

The recent release of a memorandum written by John Eastman, a lawyer and advisor to then President Donald Trump by *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, has made clear that neither the ex-president, nor those who followed his call to mount an invasion of the United States Capitol on January 6 worked without a playbook.[1] Eastman’s text laid out a scheme aimed squarely at overturning a legitimate election to install Trump for a second term. That it failed, although narrowly, and that it was predicated on faulty reasoning and an even more egregious understanding of the Constitution, changes nothing concerning its central and abiding significance. The January 6 assault on our nation’s assembled lawmakers sought explicitly to instate Trump for a second term against the expressed will of the nation’s citizens as revealed by a free and fair election. That mob action was, by definition, an effort to establish authoritarian rule.

[READ MORE](#)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS





Dr. Jake Keyel, Planning, Governance and Globalization PhD alumnus (2019) and current Collegiate Professor in the Calhoun Center for Higher Education Innovation in the Virginia Tech Honors College, has published a new article, “Community-Based Education Practices in Resettlement: Insights from the Blacksburg Refugee Partnership.” The essay appears in *Migration Letters*, September 2021, 18(5), pp. 551-561. 2021 and DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v18i5.910>.

VTIPG Director **Max Stephenson** served as Chair of Jake’s doctoral advisory committee. During his PhD program, Dr. Keyel was also engaged with Community Voices, now Community Change Collaborative, and co-founded the graduate student journal, *Community Change*.

Congratulations Jake!



Mary Beth Dunkenberger, Associate Director for VTIPG, has been appointed with six others by Governor Northam to the **Virginia Data Advisory Commission**. The Virginia Data Commission plays a critical role in Virginia’s data governance framework by assisting the Office of Data Governance and Analytics to set, plan, and prioritize data sharing performance goals for the Commonwealth, review agency accomplishments, and achieve desired performance goals and objectives.

Congratulations, Mary Beth!



ASPECT PhD program alumnus **Dr. Marc Thomas** has published a book based on his dissertation, entitled *Participatory Democracy: The Case of Parish Development Committees in Jamaica*. You may find [details here](#). Marc completed his doctorate in 2015 and Max Stephenson Jr. served as his advisor following the sudden death of his initial committee chair, Dr. Craig Brians.

Congratulations, Marc!

PROJECT UPDATES

VTIPG Continues its Partnership with TAP



Total Action for Progress (TAP) has extended its agreement with VTIPG to institute trauma-informed systems and oversee the follow-up period of its RESTORE (Re-Employment, Support, and Training for the Opioid Related

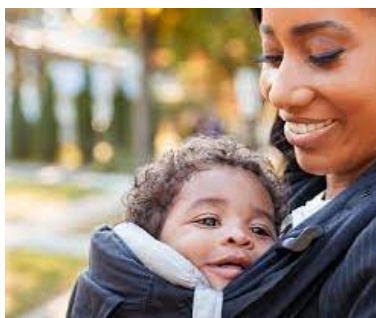
Epidemic) program, which supports women who have been directly and indirectly affected by substance use to attain workforce skills and secure employment in careers such as healthcare.

Researchers Conduct a Virginia Eviction Reduction Pilot (VERP) Needs Assessment for the City of Roanoke

VTIPG faculty members **Dr. David Moore** and **Lara Nagle** have partnered with **Mel Jones**, Associate Director of the Virginia Tech Center for Housing Research (VCHR) to conduct an assessment of the rental housing and evictions landscape in Roanoke City. The study will help inform an impact grant proposal for the Virginia Eviction Reduction Pilot (VERP) program funded by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).



Collaborative SwiftStart Program Comes to a Successful Close



After five years of operation, VTIPG's partnership with the SwiftStart program has come to a successful conclusion. Funded by the Department of Labor, the SwiftStart program was launched in 2016 as a partnership between VTIPG led by **David Moore**, Total Action for Progress (TAP), New River Community Action (NRCA), and regional workforce systems, to provide job training coupled with childcare to help low-income parents enter careers in healthcare, information technology, and manufacturing.

The program exceeded all of its performance goals. Over its course, SwiftStart served 469 participants (134% of initial goal), aided 373 participants to enter training (122% of initial goal), nurtured 316 participants through completion of their training (130% of initial goal), saw 232 participants achieve one or more credentials (127% of initial goal) and assisted 240 participants to enter new or improved employment (160% of initial goal).

As impressive as these performance achievement metrics are, they still fail to capture the full extent of the life-changing influence that SwiftStart had on families by helping parents move from subsistence jobs to professional careers with a future. TAP has embraced SwiftStart's two-generation model to serve both parents and their children, and is restructuring programming across its agency to employ a Whole Family approach. SwiftStart's community partnerships, which were strong from the outset, have blossomed and expanded in new directions. While it is sad to see SwiftStart as a program come to an end, the program's partners have uniformly suggested they are gratified for having taken the journey.

Safe Surfin' Market Scan and Strategic Planning Process

Mary Beth Dunkenberger, Lara Nagle, Liz Allen, Laura York, Aparajita Sengupta and Rabita Reshmeen Bane have completed the first phase of a market scan for **Safe Surfin'**, a cyber safety



educational organization based in Floyd, VA. The findings from that analysis will inform the organization's strategic planning process, currently facilitated by Tractus Strategic Partners, led by **Kimberly Carlson** and **Charity Boyette**. VTIPG is conducting this work with support from the Integrated Security Education and Research Center (ISERC) of the Integrated Security Destination Area (ISDA), in partnership with **Drs. Jin-Hee Cho and Lifu Huang** (Computer Science), and **Dr. Kee Jeong Kim** (Human Development and Family Science).

Connection to Care (C2C) Program Distributes Fourth Round of Backpacks



Connection to Care (C2C) is a grant-funded program through the Office of National Drug Control Policy: Combating Opioid Overdose Through Community-Level Intervention. The C2C project works to connect individuals at high risk of drug overdose to access relevant harm reduction and treatment services. Primary interventions include peer recovery specialist services through community partners including

the HOPE Initiative and the Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition, and the distribution of backpacks stocked with essential items and information concerning how to obtain available services. Other organizational partners involved include the Council for Community Services, Rescue Mission of Roanoke, Inc., Blue Ridge Behavioral Healthcare, and the Carilion Clinic Emergency Department.

The backpacks have been provided to individuals who are housing insecure and at risk of overdose. During the last 18 months, the project team has disseminated approximately 1,000 backpacks, 550 drawstring backpacks, and 300 boxes of Narcan to community partners to distribute to individuals in need.

Recovery Housing Strategic Task Group Finalizes Report for Roanoke Valley Collective Response



In association with VTIPG's Connection to Care (C2C) project, a team of faculty including **Mary Beth Dunkenberger, Lara Nagle, Laura York, and Mel Jones**, graduate research assistants **Lacy Watson and Joong Won Kim**, and co-chair **Niles Comer**, HealingInc LLC, have compiled a report containing recommendations for increasing the capacity for housing

those recovering from addiction in the Roanoke Valley. Through engagement over the summer with approximately 25 stakeholders in the Recovery Housing Strategic Task Group of the Roanoke Valley Collective Response to the Opioid Crisis (RVCR), the team has prioritized recovery housing needs including short- and long-term housing options for individuals and families with and without co-occurring disorders, as well as specific recommendations for increasing wrap around supports. The report also includes findings from a literature review, case study research of similar housing models, an inventory of existing recovery housing in the Roanoke Valley, and a preliminary needs assessment of housing gaps for this vulnerable population. The team has shared its findings with local government

stakeholders in an effort to coordinate the need for recovery housing with strategic development of affordable housing in the Roanoke Valley over the next several years.

Connection to Care (C2C) Pilot Project with the HOPE Initiative and Salem EMS

Due in part to the partnerships developed during the Connection to Care (C2C) project hosted by VTIPG, a pilot initiative has launched between the HOPE Initiative in Roanoke and Salem EMS to connect individuals experiencing substance use-related emergency incidents to longer-term treatment and supports more quickly. The pilot is named Responders for Recovery and has established a formal referral process between Salem EMS providers and peer

recovery specialists at the HOPE Initiative/Bradley Free Clinic when individuals provide their consent. Several individuals have received treatment since its launch in April 2021. The pilot is based on a similar program in Richmond called First Responders for Recovery, to develop more avenues in the recovery ecosystem for individuals to learn about treatment options. Local stakeholders are currently exploring whether it can be expanded to other localities in the Roanoke Valley. **Mary Beth Dunkenberger** and **Lara Nagle** of VTIPG have provided ongoing technical assistance for this pilot.



Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Project Updates

IPG's Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Evaluation Team, led by IPG's Associate Director, **Mary Beth Dunkenberger** and IPG Research Associate, **Liz Allen**, wrapped up final reporting on a 2018 CCBHC grant for New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS) and presented outcomes and results to NRVCS' grant advisory committee.



The Team continues to provide ongoing CCBHC program evaluation and data management support to New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS) and Mount Rogers Community Services (MRCS) on their newly awarded CCBHC grants. Each agency received 2-year SAMHSA CCBHC Expansion Grants in May 2020, with grants running through April 2024. The purpose of the grants is to provide funding for expansion of mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) services to the uninsured and underserved populations.

To date, Liz and her data team have processed and analyzed data on over 6,000 National Outcome Measure Surveys (NOMS) gathered from 3,000 individuals receiving mental health and SUD services at NRVCS' Blacksburg and Radford clinics. Liz has also provided grant compliancy oversight, reporting and outcomes analysis to MRCS and NRVCS.

Liz is supported by lead data team member **Laura York**, who recently completed her MPH and has joined IPG as a research associate; returning data team member **Rabita Banee** (PhD student in Public Administration and Public Affairs); and newcomers **Aparajita Sengupta** (PhD student, SPIA) and **Leslie Toney** (PhD student, Sociology). A larger team, including **Lara Nagle** and **David Moore**, is also providing support for technical assistance projects for MRCS, including the implementation of a consumer satisfaction survey, partnerships analysis, and community health needs assessment.

CONFERENCES, EVENTS, AND PRINT

The Dialogue on Race: A Community's Self-Help Initiative to Combat Racism



The eighth annual *Dialogue on Race (DOR)* Summer Summit convened Saturday, August 28th at an outdoor recreational facility in Blacksburg. More than 150 community members gathered to mark DOR's progress in combating racial injustice issues first articulated some 10 years ago by members of

the African American community in Montgomery County. The original organizing conference outlined the initiative's aims, "Racial problems persist in Montgomery County. While many African Americans in the community are aware of these issues, they are not often discussed in the wider community. To bring these problems to light and begin to address them, we propose a dialogue on black-white race relations in the County. How, we have been asking ourselves, can we confront the many issues and concerns facing African Americans and peoples of color? Some issues are outright obvious— like racial profiling with which we are all too familiar. Some are less obvious. All are destructive and persistent. We have researched nationally and regionally for an approach to taking action. The best answer we have found is local."

[READ MORE](#)

***Maré from the Inside* Exhibit and Book Launch**

The *Maré from the Inside* Exhibit and Book Launch

was held on September 27, 2021 at Newman Library, featuring the voices of multiple collaborators involved with the production of the exhibit and edited book.

Maré from the Inside's 30 family portraits, 26 street photographs, 4 interviews with select photographed families, and 3 documentary films offer rarely captured views into the lives of residents in Complexo da Maré, a group of 16 contiguous favelas (informal, working-class neighborhoods) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The exhibit and accompanying book demonstrate the diversity and creativity of the citizens of Maré while exposing the social, cultural, economic, and political barriers favela residents confront in their everyday lives.



Speakers included: **Henrique Gomes** (cultural producer), **Antonello Veneri** (photojournalist), **Max O. Stephenson Jr.** (Virginia Tech), **Desiree Poets** (Virginia Tech), **Andreza Jorge** (Virginia Tech), **Diego de Jesus Santos** (UT Austin, documentary filmmaker), **Nicholas Barnes** (University of St. Andrews), and **Stephanie Savell** (Brown University). The event was presented in two languages, English and Portuguese, like the exhibit and book, and illuminated the reality of brutal militarization in the Maré favelas. The exhibit's photographs portray an often jarring juxtaposition of events and images, such as the celebration of the FIFA World Cup taking place in Rio even as military tanks and heavily armed soldiers occupied the favela. Drawing on personal experiences as well as research, panel members sought to capture the lives of the residents of Maré during the authoritarian regime of Jair Bolsonaro.

A virtual version of the exhibit can be accessed here:

<https://exhibits.lib.vt.edu/mare-from-the-inside>

The Book can be obtained as an open access volume (PDF) in English and Portuguese via Virginia Tech Publishing here:

<https://publishing.vt.edu/site/books/e/10.21061/mare/>

The Exhibit may also still be viewed daily in person at Newman Library during normal operating hours.

Community Change Journal Call for Submissions is Open



The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated myriad ways that transmission occurs. The transmission of the coronavirus and efforts to mitigate it, of course, have been primary focuses in numerous sectors of society. Beyond this, however, the transmission of

(mis/dis)information, political ideas and action, resources, and stories, among other things, have been central features of life in the COVID-19 era.

Community Change's fourth issue seeks submissions that speak to the what, why, and how of transmission in community change. Suggested topics include but are not limited to:

- Modes of communication (e.g., social media, film, print, music, diplomacy, financial assistance). In what ways does a medium of communication help to reduce, sustain or expand social inequalities? Who are the gatekeepers of these communication channels and what influence have they exercised in shaping the message that mobilizes the community to change?
- Content of communication. What messages successfully shift the attitudes and behavior of a community, and why?
- How information transmissions uncover latent forms of socioeconomic inequality.
- How real, imagined, and digital spaces/communities respond, adapt, and challenge racism, class inequality, political polarization, sexism, homophobia, and the power of the neoliberal project in the COVID-19 era.
- Reflections on issues like (mis/dis)information, censorship, sensationalism, bias, and corporate influence, among others, are encouraged.

Submissions may take the form of scholarly articles, book reviews, and multimedia. Book reviews are encouraged for the following publications in particular:

Hungry Translations: Relearning the World through Radical Vulnerability by Richa Nagar (2019)

Surging Democracy: Notes on Hannah Arendt's Political Thought by Adriana Cavarero (2021)

Antiblackness by Moon-Kie Jung and João H. Costa Vargas (2021)

Key Dates:

Call for submissions open - August 23, 2021

CCJ will publish this issue on a rolling basis.

Rolling Deadlines:

October 31, 2021

November 30, 2021

January 31, 2022

February 28, 2022

Final Submission Deadline - March 31, 2022

More **information about Submission requirements can be found here.**

Community Change Collaborative Speaker Series & Podcast

The **Community Change Collaborative** and its University partners have jumped into the Fall 2021 semester with several events!



Professor Richa Nagar, of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies), presented a virtual methodology workshop at Virginia Tech

on September 14, 2021. Professor Nagar's multi-lingual and multi-genre work blends scholarship, creative writing, theatre, and activism to build alliances with people's struggles and to engage questions of ethics, responsibility, and social justice. Richa has published eight books and dozens of essays, articles, plays, and poems in English and Hindi, building often on her close work with the **Sangtin Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan**, a movement of farmers and laborers in India's Sitapur District, since its founding, and she has co-created a multi-sited community theatre project called Parakh and the online journal, **AGITATE! Unsettling Knowledges**. This event was organized by **Dr. Desiree Poets** (PSCI/ASPECT), in collaboration with the Community Change Collaborative and with the generous support of the New Faculty Mentoring Grant.

~

In a recent episode of Trustees Without Borders podcast series, Community Change Collaborative member **Joong Won Kim** interviewed **Emiliano Olmedo Altamirano**. Emiliano was a member of the Fulbright Argentina team that arrived in early August for a six-week program at Virginia Tech coordinated by the **Language and Culture Institute (LCI)**. During the podcast, Emiliano discussed his interest in community gardening, including his rooftop garden created out of necessity due to land restrictions. Altamirano grows fresh vegetables as a part of his efforts to live sustainably. He shared his views on the cultural differences between Argentina and the United States during the interview while also elaborating on his experience at Virginia Tech in relation to his academic interests in sustainable urban and agricultural development. Those interested may **listen to the podcast here**.

An archive of "Trustees Without Borders" podcast interviews conducted by CCC members and hosted by Andy Morikawa, VTIPG Senior Fellow, can be **found on Soundcloud**.

~

CCC will host upcoming **virtual Faculty Forums** with the following Virginia Tech faculty who all share an interest in the foundations and dynamics of democratic social change:

Dr. Andrea N. Baldwin, October 29 @ 3 p.m.

Dr. Anthony Kwame Harrison, TBD in November

Dr. LaDale Winling, December 3 @ 2 p.m.

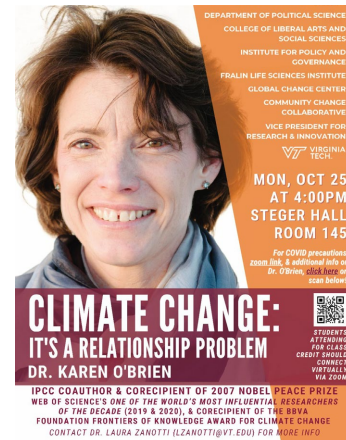
CCC Faculty Forums are open to all students, faculty and community members. They provide a venue to learn about the community change work of Virginia Tech faculty and to engage in discussion of this work. For more information and to join the discussion, please contact Joong

Won Kim, jkimsy@vt.edu.

Upcoming Conferences & Events

Climate Change: It's a Relationship Problem

A **hybrid lecture by Dr. Karen O'Brien** will be held Monday, October 25, 2021 at 4:00pm Steger Hall Auditorium, Room 145 and via Zoom (in-person attendance is limited to the first 70 participants who arrive). Dr. Karen O'Brien is a professor in the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo. She is an internationally recognized expert on climate change and society, focusing on themes such as climate change impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation including how climate change interacts with globalization processes and the implications for human security. She is interested in how transdisciplinary and integral approaches to global change research can contribute to a better understanding of how societies both create and respond to change, and particularly the role of beliefs, values and worldview in transformations to sustainability.



Dr. O'Brien was named by Web of Science as one of the world's most influential researchers of the past decade in 2019 and 2020. In 2019 she received a Research Excellence Award from the AAG Human Dimensions Specialty Group. In 2021 she was co-recipient of the BBVA Foundations Frontiers of Knowledge Award for Climate Change. She is also a co-author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports and corecipient of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

During her time on campus, Dr. O'Brien will participate in roundtable discussions and a CCC podcast interview in addition to giving the public lecture. Dr. O'Brien's visit to Virginia Tech is co-sponsored by the Department of Political Science, College of Liberal Arts & Human Sciences, VTIPG, Global Change Center, Fralin Life Sciences Institute, Community Change Collaborative, and The Vice President for Research & Innovation.

Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association's 2021 Annual Conference: Innovation in Planning! Presentation on Recovery Housing

Mary Beth Dunkenberger, VTIPG, **Mel Jones**, Virginia Tech Center for Housing Research, **Niles Comer**, HealingInc, LLC, and **Lara Nagle**, VTIPG, will present "Facilitating the Creation of More, and More Diverse,



Recovery Housing Options in the Roanoke Valley and Beyond” at the 2021 APA Conference, Virginia Chapter, Roanoke, VA, October 20-22, 2021. The presentation will feature their work with the Roanoke Valley Collective Response Recovery Housing Task Group.

COMMENTARIES & ESSAYS

SOUNDINGS

A commentary series authored by VTIPG Director Max Stephenson.

October 18: **Imagination, Individual Will, Difference and Democratic Politics**

October 4: **"A Triumph of Techniques Over Purpose"***

September 20: **Taking Stock and Giving Thanks After Nearly 12 Years**

September 9: **Practicing Cruelty in the Quest for Power**

August 23: **Pondering an Apology for Social and Political Madness**

August 9: **"The Canny and Careful Reconstruction of Barbarism"***

July 26: **A Looming American Choice: Self-Determination as Freedom or Tyranny?**

July 12: **Charting the Shadows of Feigned Outrage**

The RE: REFLECTIONS & EXPLORATIONS Series Ends

The Institute has now ended its *RE: Reflections and Explorations* essay series, created to provide interested graduate students an outlet for developing publishable short articles concerning their research. Across its 8-year history, the series featured 175 original graduate student essays concerning policy and governance concerns on a plethora of topics from multiple disciplinary perspectives. VTIPG Director **Max Stephenson Jr.** and Senior Research Associate **Lyusyena Kirakosyan** edited a share of those articles for publication in two separate volumes in 2015 and 2017, respectively. The two editors are now editing a final volume based on the series to be published in 2022. Special thanks to all of those who participated in what became a vital and long-lived experiment to acquaint interested graduate students with the academic writing process.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Elham Morshedzadeh is the Director of the Health Design and Policy Lab and Assistant Professor in the **Industrial Design Program at Virginia Tech**. Her research focuses on healthcare design, usability research, and community-centered participatory research and design. Utilizing the principle of community-centered design in her research and user experience evaluation has helped her to better understand user behaviors and needs, leading to the design of better products. She's been involved in multiple research and design projects with a community engagement and public health focus.

Dr. Morshedzadeh is the lead investigator on research that focuses on improving pediatric health by increasing the feasibility and effectiveness of telemedical encounters through designing an interactive training system. This research was awarded funding from the **National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences of the National Institutes of Health**. In addition, she has been collaborating with **VTIPG** (Mary Beth Dunkenberger, Associate Director and Lara Nagle, Research Associate) to design products and spaces that improve the quality of life of people with substance use disorder (SUD), which may assist them on their path to recovery. The team is currently working with community partners to test and improve a C2C backpack tailored for those with SUDs who are housing insecure for the **"Connection to Care (C2C), Combating Opioid Overdose through Community-level Intervention"** project, awarded by the University of Baltimore.

Recently, with the support of VTIPG and the College of Architecture and Urban Studies (CAUS), as well as with her colleagues in industrial design and public health, Dr. Morshedzadeh has launched the new Health Design and Policy Lab (HDPLab), which will facilitate research and design for projects related to healthcare, public health, and community well-being. Involving collaborators from Virginia Tech, Carilion Clinic, the VTC School of Medicine, the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, and many community-based organizations, the HDPLab will create a central, structured hub where researchers and community partners can come together to discuss, imagine and create products and services

to address health-related challenges. Currently, HDPLab is exploring the development of adaptable family living spaces and products that meet the unique needs of families in recovery from SUD using a community-centered design approach.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Leslie Robertson Toney is a third-year PhD student in the Sociology program with a concentration in Women's and Gender Studies. Her current work focuses on understanding the lived experiences of young women and girls in the Caribbean, sexual agency, the political economy of gender, and issues of health inequality as they pertain to women and adolescents. She utilizes Black, transnational, and decolonial feminist frameworks in her scholarship to analyze systems and social behavior in the English-speaking Caribbean.

Leslie's professional background is in mental health. She worked for many years as a bilingual therapist in community mental health in Northern Virginia. She has served as a lecturer and clinical supervisor internationally for postgraduates in clinical psychology, conducting psychological assessments in children's court, consulting and training in psychosocial services for youth living with HIV in Trinidad and Tobago, and as a technical officer for mental health and substance abuse in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Her practice, teaching and research experiences have focused on access to healthcare for individuals in marginalized communities. In 2015, she won a grant for a community-based mental health project she designed to train non-mental health professionals in mental health

screening and low intensity counseling interventions. The program included a mental health and arts program for children and youth in an under-resourced community in Trinidad.

Leslie is currently serving as a Graduate Research Assistant working on the National Outcomes Measurement System (NOMS) data team at VTIPG. Her other responsibilities include work on the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Sustainability Project and Mount Rogers Community Services (MRCS) Community Health Needs Assessment. She is also currently preparing a two-day training workshop for the staff of the Total Action for Progress (TAP) This Valley Works program.

Leslie has spent more than a decade as a photographer documenting Black culture, festivals and rituals; most notably, Trinidad & Tobago carnival and African spiritual traditions, for which her work has been published and exhibited. Her first student juried exhibit at Virginia Tech, entitled "Syncretism, Picon and Mas: A Two-Faced Resistance," will take place from October 26 to December 18 at **Perspective Gallery**.

Institute for Policy and Governance

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