

Carrying the Torch for Social Justice at UT

It's been an active year at the University of Tennessee.

As the new name of our newsletter indicates, our department played an integral role in many social justice movements this year. We've also had a very productive year in the Department of Sociology and have lots celebrate as we gear up for the fall semester. In May, we hosted an extraordinary conference on New Directions in Critical Criminology. Our own Lo Presser, professor and associate department head, received the College Senior Teaching Award, which recognizes excellence in teaching in the College of Arts and Sciences. Our undergraduate ranks continue to grow and, in the past five years, we've seen an increase in our majors of over thirty percent; a clear indication of our teaching excellence.

The new internship class provides terrific opportunities for our students to understand how their sociological expertise can contribute to the workplace; we are committed to offering this class every semester. We are also excited about our new faculty member, Christina Ergas, assistant professor of sociology, who will join us in the fall of 2017 after completing a post-doc position at Brown University.

These are just a few of our successes that show the transformative effect our faculty and students have on our department and the university as a whole. However, even while we celebrate our successes, we must acknowledge the troubling year we've had at the University of Tennessee. We believe the meddling of the state



Sarah D'Onofrio,
a doctoral student in sociology at UT, communicates what matters to her.

legislature and much of the subsequent legislation is bad for our campus environment. As a department that takes social justice seriously, we are appalled by our state representative's actions of stripping funding from the Office of Equity and Diversity. We also oppose the new guns on campus legislation.

I think it is important we recognize these attacks on the university and our capacity to act in our state's and students' best interests are likely to continue. This was not just an anomaly of a bad year, but part of a coherent assault on the role of universities in the United States.

When I think about our faculty, our students, and our supporters, I take heart in the importance of our role in the university. It is no accident this department has a leading role in the pursuit of social justice across campus. Whether it be an effort to buy our university apparel from ethical sources, the struggle against privatization, the opposition to the death penalty, or the support of diversity, this department has led the charge to address these social problems and fight for social justice.

Because of our distinct role, progressive students, as individuals and in groups, seek us out for teaching and counsel.

We are committed to maintaining our efforts of excellence in teaching, research, and community engagement. We are committed to continuing our fight for social justice. But confronting social problems and facing down social injustice takes a community of support. Maintaining our excellence and commitment to social justice needs a strong foundation, which is where you can help.

Please take a look at the opportunities we have to invest in social justice and our department at the university. With your help, our faculty, undergraduates, and graduate students can continue to carry the torch of social justice at the University of Tennessee and beyond.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter. We'd love to hear what you've been up to, so feel free to drop us a line and stay in touch!

- JON SHEFNER
Professor and Head of Sociology

Pointing in a New Direction

More than 100 people from around the country and abroad traveled to Knoxville for the **New Directions in Critical Criminology** conference, co-sponsored by the Department of Sociology, the Center for the Study of Social Justice, and the Student Peace Alliance, May 6-7, 2016, at the Haslam College of Business, on the campus of the University of Tennessee.

Professionals and scholars in our field reject the notion that the biggest social concerns are violations of the law. Instead, we call attention to pervasive social patterns that are at the roots of harm. We understand the state and its laws and regulations of crime as potentially implicated in crime and other harm, in a myriad of material and cultural ways.

During the extraordinary New Directions in Critical Criminology conference, we shared ideas about groundbreaking work on crime, punishment, and other harms. We discussed issues of real change versus accommodation to systems of exploitation, stigmatization, and harm-doing.

Finally, we considered how historically, criminologists have been implicated in harm by guiding the regimes that classify, impose suffering, and then continue to legitimize the need to impose suffering. We also strategized about ways to move toward a more just and peaceful world.

We welcomed six superb featured presenters:

- **Tony Platt**, University of California, Berkeley
"Revisioning Critical Criminology"
- **Claire Renzetti**, University of Kentucky
"Is Feminist Critical Criminology an Oxymoron?"
- **Yasser Payne**, University of Delaware
"The People's Report: Reframing Opportunity and Activism in and with the Streets of Wilmington, Delaware"
- **James Kilgore**, University of Illinois
"#Opposemassincarceration Is Trending: How Do We Stop the Train of Piecemeal Reform?"
- **Jeff Ferrell**, Texas Christian University
"Radical Engagement and Post-Methodological Possibility."
- **Brett Story** from the CUNY Graduate Center showed an original film titled *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*.

Organizers convened the following panels:

- Criminalization, Marginalization, and Control
- Policing the Community?
- Carceral Regimes
- Feminist Criminology
- Youth In/Justice

- Police Data, Police Representations
- Constructions of Violence and the Tools of Violence
- Abolishing the Police: Theory and Practice
- Narrative Criminology
- Environmental Harm: Corporate and State Power
- In the Shadow of the Prison
- Public Criminology
- Cultural Criminology
- Restorative and Transformative Justice
- State Harm: Structural and "Collateral"

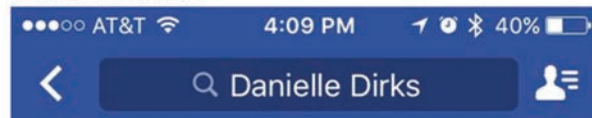
The conference provoked lively discussions on our work as critical criminologists.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the many people who came together to make this conference a tremendous success.

Thank you also to our supporters, especially Jon Shefner and the New Directions Planning Committee: Michelle Brown, Hoan Bui, Robert Durán, Josh Hughes, Holly Ningard, Lo Presser, Colleen Ryan, Jeremy Smith, Bethany Nelson, and Jessica West.

New Directions in Critical Criminology

Memories and Messages



Emily Troshynski with Danielle Dirks and 2 others.

Friday at 6:08 PM ·

Loving this New Directions in Critical Criminology conference. With my favorites! **Donna Lee Danielle Dirks Terressa Benz** talking about social justice and all things liberating!



SOCIAL JUSTICE GOES SOCIALLY VIRAL
as conference attendees share their experiences on Facebook.



Glenn Johnson: A Focus on Justice



Glenn Johnson, associate dean for research and graduate studies of the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University, is one of those rare individuals who

completed all of his degrees, from his BA to his PhD, in sociology at the University of Tennessee.

“I had an awesome and supportive graduate student experience in the Department of Sociology with my mentors and now colleagues Sherry Cable, Donald Clelland, John Gaventa, Tom Hood, and Asafa Jalata,” says Johnson.

His graduate research focused on environmental justice, specifically solid waste disposal and landfills in communities of color.

Originally from Memphis, Tennessee, Johnson began working at Texas Southern University in 2012. In addition to his administrative role at TSU, he holds a joint appointment as professor in the Department of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy and the Department of Political Science.

“My research over the last decade and a half has shown that environmental injustice is highly relevant in the twenty-first century,” says Johnson. “It will require that all of us take a responsible role in solving the issues and problems associated with it.”

Wanda Rushing: A Focus on Service

Wanda Rushing received our 2016 Distinguished Alumna Award for her service and commitment to social justice. She graduated in 1998 with a PhD in sociology after completing her dissertation on how elites in business, government, and science impact inequality in education.

Her specialties, then and now, are in urban sociology, political economy of development, racial and social inequality, education and economic development in the southern United States, and urban change.

Rushing began teaching sociology at the University of Memphis in 2004. Two years after she started, she received the Alma Bucovaz Urban Service Award, which is awarded to a member of the college for a commitment to solving urban problems through research and outreach. She received the College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Research Award in 2010 and the Dunavant University Professorship in 2011.

In addition to her professorship in sociology, Rushing serves as president of Sociologists for Women in Society. Previous service endeavors include the executive committee of the Southern Sociological Society and director of Women’s Studies at the University of Memphis.

She is the author of several books including *Memphis and the Paradox of Place: Globalization in the American South* and the recently-edited *New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 15: Urbanization*, both published by the University of North Carolina Press. Rushing is also published in several journals including *Current Sociology*; *Race, Ethnicity and Education*; *Gender and Education*; *City and Community*; and *Urban Studies*.

But Rushing’s service is not the only thing that’s noteworthy. Her generosity to our department has helped to create the Dr. Wanda Rushing Sociological Research Excellence Endowment, which, when fully-funded, will allow us to provide support to outstanding faculty for their research and fund graduate research fellowships. We are deeply grateful for Wanda Rushing’s support.

Cory Blad: A Focus on Teaching



Cory Blad graduated in 2006 with his PhD in sociology and left Knoxville to launch his career. The next decade of his life turned out to be quite interesting and productive!

He began his academic career in the Department of Sociology and Criminal

Justice at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, just outside of St. Louis.

"I learned a great deal from an outstanding group of colleagues and mentors on how to be a scholar and teacher," says Blad.

After three years, he, his partner, and two daughters decided to move closer to family. Blad accepted a position at Manhattan College in the Bronx of New York City, a small, liberal arts college, which has given him the opportunity to focus on teaching. Since the move, Blad earned tenure and will begin his first term as chair of the Department of Sociology in the fall of 2017.

"I've had a great time in formal classroom settings as well as more individualized student interactions, my favorite being research-oriented independent studies," says Blad. "I've even had the chance to develop and refine a study abroad course in Scandinavian political economy and culture in January, which is much more enjoyable than it sounds!"

In addition to his teaching and in between moves, Blad published a book titled *Neoliberalism and National Culture* (Brill, 2011). He is the author of several book chapters and articles and has a forthcoming article in the *Journal of Globalization Studies* that he coauthored with an undergraduate student.

Blad has also presented his work both nationally and internationally. His research examines the intersection of state legitimation and political economic structures; essentially, neoliberalization. His current focus is on the effects of neoliberalization of nationalist political parties and rhetoric in several advanced capitalist democracies.

"In short, things have been going well despite regretting not getting back to Knoxville more often," says Blad.

From all of us here, we wish Cory Blad every success as he continues to examine solutions for social problems and carry the torch for social justice.

Faculty TRAVEL

Tea Time

In June, Harry F. Dahms, professor of sociology and co-director for the Study of Social Justice, and his former graduate student Eric R. Lybeck co-organized the annual conference of the International Social Theory Consortium at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. Lybeck, who recently completed his PhD at Cambridge, now teaches at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom.

A highlight of the three-day conference was a hike to The Orchard, a tea room and garden in Grantchester, near Cambridge, where Virginia Woolf, Bertrand Russell, John Maynard Keynes, and Ludwig Wittgenstein used to have spirited conversations. Over tea, naturally!

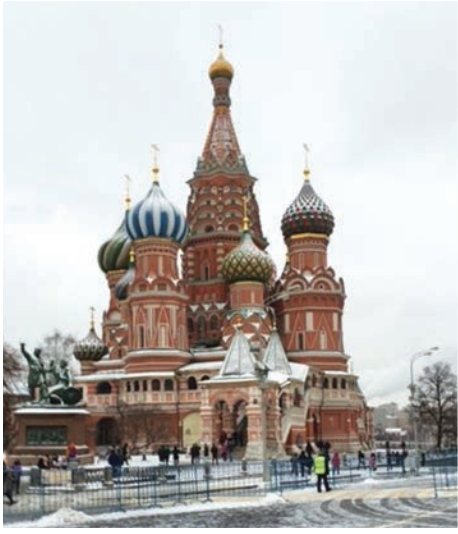
In December, Dahms taught at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. While there, he managed to make a quick trip to Venice, Italy.

Black Lives Matter

Michelle Brown, associate professor of sociology and director of undergraduate studies, visited the Centre for Criminology and Sociological Studies at the University of Toronto twice this past year.

In the summer of 2015 Brown presented "The Project of Criminology in the Era of Black Lives Matter," which focuses on the growth of local and national community-based movements such as Black Lives Matter and an ongoing examination of the role of images and social media in movement formation, practices, and tactics. Her presentation was paired with carceral geographer and filmmaker Brett Story's presentation of her dissertation and award-winning film *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*.

Brown returned to Toronto in the spring of 2016 and participated in the Centre's Penal Boundaries Workshop. This two-day event assembles a small, invitation-only group of international scholars on punishment who aim to push the boundaries on how we think about punishment; in particular, its excesses, limits, and role in the production of inequality.



Global Health

For years, Scott Frey, professor of sociology and co-director of the Center for the Study of Social Justice, has traveled the world in the name of health.

In November 2015, Frey presented a paper on the cross-national variation in infant mortality at a conference at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow. He returned in April 2016 to present further findings.

In December 2015, he gave a talk on the health and environmental risks associated with pesticide use in Vietnam at National University in Ho Chi Minh City and traveled to the Mekong Delta region to discuss climate change with local officials.

He also met with officials at Royal University in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, regarding collaborative research on health and environmental risks under rice and vegetable production in Cambodia and farmer adoption to climate change.

Cuba-Bound

Jon Shefner, professor of sociology and head of the sociology department, traveled to Cuba in March 2016 with a group of other Fulbright alumni to visit Havana as well as several smaller towns, which are using their UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) world heritage status to rebuild historic downtown areas. During his visit he was able to spend a fair amount of time walking through Old Havana and learning about the historic restoration. A high point was the memorial to Che Guevara.

Shefner says, “We arrived just before President Obama’s trip and I was struck by the interest in economic and political opening that trip signified to many of the Cubans I spoke with.” The visit reflects Shefner’s long-standing interests in Latin America and political movements and transformations.



PhD Spotlight
**Regina “Gina”
Benedict (’09)**

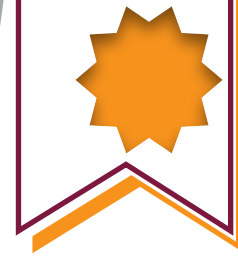


Criminal Justice Beyond UT

Beginning fall 2016, Gina Benedict will carry the torch of social justice on the Maryville College campus in Maryville, Tennessee. Two years ago, administrators at Maryville College gave her the opportunity to help write a proposal to create a criminal justice major. This fall, she begins her new position as coordinator of criminal justice, which includes teaching classes, supervising senior theses, and monitoring student internships.

Benedict credits our program with helping her see how issues within criminal justice relate to other facets and fields, which helped her develop the curriculum for her program at Maryville College.

“The faculty and courses at UT broadened my understanding of pertinent issues and helped me be able to communicate these perspectives and materials to students,” says Benedict. “I credit my UT experience for making me a suitable candidate for my new position.”



Awards, Accolades, and Graduate Degrees Conferred

We are proud to have graduate students who engage in meaningful, innovative, and important work as researchers and community members.

Please join us in congratulating the following individuals:

AWARDS

Jenna Lamphere: *Excellence in Research*
Zachary McKenney: *Excellence in Teaching*
Holly Ningard: *Excellence in Service*

FELLOWSHIPS

Ruben Ortiz: *Diversity Enhancement Fellowship*
Enkeshi Thom: *Thomas Fellowship*

DEGREES CONFERRED IN 2016

Daniel Lai, PhD
Jenna Lamphere, PhD
Rhiannon Leebrick, PhD
Aaron Lemelin, MA
Douglas Oeser, MA
Katie Highbaugh, MA



Donor Spotlight
Kristy Poe ('05)

Our donor says...

“I enjoyed my time in the sociology undergraduate program, so giving back in a small way is the least I can do in return for the opportunities I have because of my education. I work in development for UT and see first-hand the benefit of private donations and how they impact the university.”

Will you help us carry the torch of justice?

We have several opportunities for supporting social justice and the Department of Sociology. Whether \$1 or \$1 million, your donation will provide support to the faculty, students, and staff in the Department of Sociology at UT.

SOCIOLOGY DEVELOPMENT ENDOWMENT

Support for this fund aids our students with research and travel; allows the department to host conferences, invite guest speakers, and engage in other special projects; and also helps us invest in equipment and materials within the department.

WILLIAM E. COLE SCHOLARSHIP

Support for this fund provides financial assistance for a senior sociology student in his or her last year of study.

COLE-FRANKLIN SCHOLARSHIPS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Support for this fund provides scholarships for graduate students to conduct research.

GERTRUDE GARNER HURLBUT SCHOLARSHIP

Support for this fund goes directly to Tennessee residents – juniors, seniors, or graduate students – who have a financial need and are pursuing degrees in sociology.

DR. DONALD “CHIP” HASTINGS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

This endowed scholarship honors long-time UT Professor of Sociology Chip Hastings. Established by our own Sherry Cable, this fund provides financial assistance to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing degrees in sociology.

DR. WANDA RUSHING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH EXCELLENCE ENDOWMENT

Wanda Rushing, a PhD alumna of our department, created this fund to support faculty and graduate student research.

THE SHEFNER UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENT ACCOUNT

The Shefner Undergraduate and Graduate Student Account is a gift fund established by Jon Shefner in order to support student research, travel to research sites, and conference travel.

Department of Sociology
901 McClung Tower
Knoxville TN 37996-0490

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sociology senior survey, 2015-2016

Survey Says...

OVER 90%

- of our soon-to-be-graduated sociology students chose sociology for their degree because of a course instructor.
- thought the major would give them the skills to contribute to meaningful, just changes in society.
- thought a degree in sociology would help them identify the causes of and solutions to social problems.

We administered the senior exit survey to 108 graduating seniors. One hundred responded for a response rate of 92 percent.

movement