

Access



**Navigating the
COVID-19 Waters**



changes that the DDCE has played a role in and will continue to be a part of. We are pleased that Heman Sweatt and other Precursors will be memorialized at two different campus locations. Robert Lee Moore Hall is now the Physics, Math and Astronomy Building. Joe Jamail Field is being renamed in honor of Heisman Trophy legends Earl Campbell and Ricky Williams. Julius Whittier, the university's first Black football player, will be honored with a statue as well. These, however, are symbolic changes, and I have no doubt that symbols are important.

More important to the university's life, however, are renewed efforts to recruit students from Black and Brown communities across the state, to implement a faculty diversity plan, and to refocus our University Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. These actions will enrich university life and scholarship as well as address our core values in ways we have not done so before.

We hope you will join us in applauding the university's efforts to ensure the safety of our students, faculty and staff AND deepen our commitment to access, inclusion and excellence across campus. We are proud to be part of the Longhorn family and look forward to the DDCE's role in supporting these efforts.

Leonard N. Moore

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leonard N. Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a faint, hand-drawn rectangular border.

*Vice President for Diversity and
Community Engagement
George W. Littlefield
Professor of American History*

We have entered the fall semester at a time like no other in recent history. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we are teaching and learning at UT Austin. It has made clearer the divisions in our economic, health care and social systems. These, too, are impacting the university. In this issue of Access, we are looking at how we are addressing these issues on campus.

The coronavirus struck the university at a difficult moment for any institution—both the president and provost were preparing to transition to other universities. Simultaneously, a nationwide racial and social justice movement began after the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Our students have taken all of this to heart. They have called for the institution to change, and Interim President Jay Hartzell has risen to their challenge. In July he announced numerous changes to take place on campus—

Members of the Advisory Council

The DDCE Advisory Council is tasked with providing strategic guidance and recommendations to Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement Leonard N. Moore.

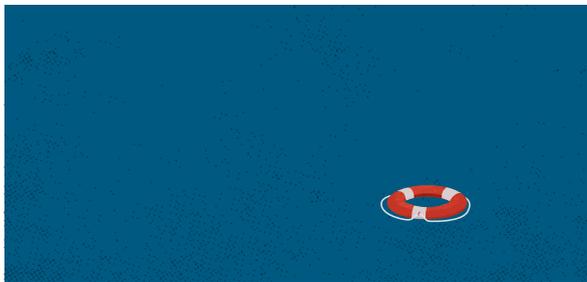
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Charles A. Gonzalez
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On the cover

Illustration by Robert J. Harrington



HONORING TEXAS LEGENDS

Photo by Credit goes here



The field at Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium will now be known as Campbell-Williams Field in honor of two of the greatest running backs in Texas history, Ricky Williams (1995-98) and Earl Campbell (1974-77). This is one of several changes that have been made to the UT Austin campus in response to the list of “8 Demands for Transformative Change” developed by a coalition of students, alumni, faculty and staff.

Access

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The Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin publishes Access for its community of scholars, alumni and friends.

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THE Question

How can everyone support the **BLACK LIVES MATTER** movement?

“We can all make some progress by reading different books about Black history. Read ‘The Autobiography of Malcolm X’ or books by other civil rights leaders so you can understand why people are so upset and why they’re out protesting in the streets amid this pandemic. Once you have that knowledge base, you’re able to think for yourself and apply what you’ve learned toward the future.”



-MADISON GOODRICH
Government/African and African
Diaspora Studies Graduate (Spring '20)

“Make sure you’re getting information from a reputable news source, then really think about what you are passionate about and what cause you want to support. Get your family on board and listen to their opinions. This is a collective experience, and all voices need to be heard.”



-ANNA LAI, MANAGEMENT
Management Information Systems Senior

“My advice is to do everything you can to be a good ally. When expressing your outrage against police killings and the general system of racial oppression, classism and ableism, you need to check your tone on how you speak to these issues so you’re not silencing voices in the Black community.”



-LAWRENCE ROBINSON
Public Health Junior

“People should take more classes like Interpreting Black Rage. It opened me up so much to what’s going on in our community—things like mental illness, education, what it means to be a Black woman or a Black man. One thing that really struck me is that we were never meant to be successful in these systems because they weren’t built with us in mind.”



-AMEL WEAVER
Sociology Senior



“My advice for white people is to seek out resources by people of color about how to be an ally and, above all, listen to people of color when they tell you what you are saying is racist or problematic. Learn about systemic racism and how you benefit from it, in order to dismantle it. Educate others if you have the ability to do so, and openly support the movement on social media and in real life.”

-ANONYMOUS
Member of the Feminist Action
Project and the Queer & Trans
People of Color Agency



Answering the Call

Dr. Moore shares American Black history lessons with university community

In the wake of the George Floyd killing and subsequent worldwide protests, the DDCE received an outpouring of requests from colleagues in need of educational materials and guidance on how to better support the university's Black community. To answer the growing demand for education and advocacy training, Leonard Moore, vice president of diversity and community engagement and George Littlefield Professor of American History, offered his History of the Black Experience course online at no cost throughout the months of July and August. More than 1,700 faculty and staff participated in the course.

"This class has shown me that white America is hungry for African American history," Moore says. "Hopefully those who have enjoyed the class now see why it is critical that Black history be taught at the K-12 level."

Below are some reflections and takeaways from class participants and community members who viewed the live-streamed classes, which were recorded and are available on the DDCE YouTube channel.



—HON LAM
Career Consultant, MBA
Career Education & Coaching,
McCombs School of Business

"The History of the Black Experience highlights issues and themes that connect to contemporary Black life in America—lives of my colleagues and students in the professional setting, and lives of my friends that I deeply care for in my personal setting. As higher education professionals, we can't move forward as a community or country without knowing the history. I truly appreciate Dr. Moore for taking the time to sit with us in this space and not talk at us. I never feel like he is lecturing; rather, it feels like Leonard Moore, a member of the UT Austin and Austin communities, is sharing his stories. Highly recommend."



My husband and I have begun watching Dr. Moore's class on YouTube. In our work to be anti-racist, a friend recommended the classes and we LOVE them. Dr. Moore is engaging, and we are enjoying learning what has been kept from us. I am writing to thank Dr. Moore and The University of Texas for this wonderful opportunity.



—PATTY GOODFRIEND WALNICK Dallas,
TX Resident and UT Austin Alumnus '77

"I considered this class a chance to upgrade my U.S. history knowledge in a way that would provide a more rounded understanding of our country's past."



—CARA POLISINI
Career Consultant, MBA
Career Education & Coaching,
McCombs School of Business



—JO WOZNIAK
Research Engineering/Scientist
Associate IV, Texas Advanced
Computing Center

"Absolutely everyone who lives in this country needs to be exposed to the horrors inflicted upon people who are essentially responsible for the wealth of this country. Anyone with a shred of a conscience would be infuriated learning of the practiced inequality and denial of constitutional rights to a large portion of the American population. I do not experience racism on a daily basis, but the readings and movies provided and recommended were extremely enlightening and helped give me context as to why the BLM movement is so necessary and grossly overdue."



I have increased my presence in fighting for equality and added my voice to the call for accountability for past and current issues—something I had never done prior. I thank Dr. Moore for that as his course gave me an expanded full history of our country that my prior schooling, including graduate work, never did.



—JEANNIE COOPER
Community Member, Lamar, Colorado

Allies & Advocates

SUSETH MUÑOZ

English/Government/Youth and Community Studies Junior



Last July, Interim President Jay Hartzell released a statement detailing a plan to make the campus more diverse and inclusive in response to lists of demands made by the Texas Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and a coalition of students, faculty, staff and alumni—including members of the Precursors—who drafted a list called “8 Demands for Transformative Change.”

Suseth Muñoz, is one of several student members of the Senate of College Councils who helped craft the list of demands, which called for a number of actions to make the campus more supportive of Black and Indigenous students of color. Although some demands were unmet, Muñoz believes the university is moving in the right direction—and that, in time, more change will come.

Muñoz chatted with us from her home in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) to share more about her advocacy work on campus and in her community, where she is helping Jolt Action—a Texas-based organization that mobilizes Latinx voters—support the Black Lives Matter movement at protests and rallies.

TWO STEPS FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK... “It was a winning moment when the university announced the campus changes—including the renaming of the RLM [Robert L. Moore] building. However, I’m disappointed they won’t be renaming other buildings like Painter Hall and are keeping “The Eyes of Texas” song without clear, concrete steps on how they will teach the racist history of the song. They’re doing all these good things like building a statue of Heman Sweatt, but they’re taking steps back by placing this statue at the entrance of a building named after an oppressor.”

AMPLIFYING BLACK VOICES... “There has been no progress without Black organizers. Those voices need to be

uplifted and amplified because their struggles and liberations mean liberation for other oppressed groups in this country. That’s what drives me to support this movement.”

LISTEN BEFORE YOU LEAP... “Don’t take up space by following social media trends and leaving it at that. You should be educating yourself and listening to the most marginalized people in the room because they have the most to say.”

CHANGE IS COMING... “The RGV is 98% Latinx, and we do not face the same oppression as others because the police are Hispanic and almost everybody speaks Spanish. It is really easy to be apolitical in this community, but when I went to a Black Lives Matter rally, I was surprised to see more than 500 people in attendance. It felt like change is coming, progress is being made, and people are mad about these injustices. People don’t want to be innocent bystanders; they want to take action and show up for each other.”

RECOGNIZING PRIVILEGE... “As a first-generation immigrant, an ESL learner and a woman, I have faced a lot of struggles, but at the same time I have to recognize my privileges in those struggles. Being an immigrant with access to a path to citizenship differs from the struggle of other immigrants. Being light skinned is also a different privilege. You have to recognize these struggles are valid, and you need to show up and rally for people who need help the most because they’ll show up for you in return.”

A young man with curly hair, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and shorts with orange stripes, stands on a rocky cliff edge. He has his arms raised in a 'rock on' gesture. The background shows a vast coastal landscape with a city and the ocean under a clear blue sky.

NOW,
MORE
THAN
EVER,
BLACK
STUDENTS
MUST
EXPERIENCE
BLACK
LIFE
IN BLACK
COUNTRIES

by Devin Walker

A student stands atop a cliff while taking in the pristine coastal landscape in Cape Town, South Africa.



When I reflect on the Black Lives Matter movement and the many viral images that have galvanized protesters into action, my mind keeps going back to a disquieting video that did not result in belligerent shouting or bloodshed.

The quiet, seemingly uneventful home surveillance footage captures a young Black boy shooting hoops in his own driveway. When he spots a police cruiser in the distance, he quickly ducks behind a parked car and waits for it to pass before resuming his game. It was just another day in the life of a Black boy in America.

I also watched a video of a Black man, Rayshard Brooks, being shot in the back while running from police officers who later stomped and stood on his lifeless body. He, along with George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and countless other Black citizens, was unjustly murdered by the police.

This is the reality Black Americans live in—and it has been this way for generations. Now is the time to expose our African American youth to the world outside of America. To do this, parents, school administrators, educators and donors need to prioritize and support financially accessible study abroad programs designed specifically for students of African descent.

As the director of global leadership and social impact at The University of Texas at Austin, I have been taking large groups of students—mostly African American—to South Africa and China for the last eight years. In Cape Town, we experience a world where Blackness is normalized—in the streets, in the shops and in the halls of Parliament. In Beijing, we explore a cultural history so different from our own, which is deeply steeped in white domination. While each country grapples with issues surrounding anti-Blackness, the students I travel with consistently reflect on their feelings of liberation from the constraints of being Black in America.

A moment I often relive happened while dining at Mzansi Restaurant in Langa, Cape Town. As we were listening to the sounds of a local band, the owner, Nomonde, walked over to our table and told us, “You are home. This is your home.” As I glanced around, many students were in tears. In this moment, they felt seen, they felt whole, they felt fully human. We all did.

These moments can change everything, especially for underrepresented Black students who often feel like imposters

in their own country. Unfortunately, these students continue to be underrepresented in study abroad programs. According to a report by the Institute of International Education, African Americans represent just 6.1% of the students taking their studies overseas and experiencing these small yet powerful moments. It does give me hope that more programs are working to provide African American youth with international travel opportunities. Organizations like Birthright AFRICA and Movement: Black Youth Abroad are taking students on heritage-exploration trips to countries in Africa and to regions of the African diaspora.

Now, during this national moment of reflection, I’m hoping more efforts will be made to bridge systemic opportunity gaps in education—including access to world travel. Given the emotional toll of growing up Black in the United States, it is critical for students to journey to places where they can realize America is just one chapter in the book of life.

I find myself thinking back to that video of the boy playing basketball and worrying about whether this is the only world he’ll ever know. I hope one day he’ll travel abroad and experience what it’s like to not be a racial minority—and when he returns stateside, I hope he will use his newfound knowledge and sense of self to demand change. I know this is possible because I have seen many of my former students go on to champion social justice issues upon their return, even at the Texas State Capitol.

Traveling abroad is, of course, not the panacea for the 400-year-old disease of racism and white supremacy. However, it has the power to radically transform how young Black Americans see themselves, their citizenship, their humanity and their ability to change the world.

“Black Boy” author Richard Wright wrote, “I was not leaving the South to forget the South, but so that someday I might understand it.” Although this quote refers to the Southern experience, it also applies to so many of my students who had to step outside of this country to envision the possibilities for change upon their return.

Devin Walker is the director of global leadership and social impact at The University of Texas at Austin. He is also the founder and director of the 100 Passports program, which provided free passports to Austin-area middle school students while preparing them for a trip abroad to Beijing, China.

*This editorial first appeared in **Diverse Issues in Higher Education** on Sept. 23.*

THE LONG





WAY HOME

For Octavio Martinez, All Roads to Mental Health Equity Led Back to Texas

by Jessica Sinn



Growing up in a large military family, Dr. Octavio Martinez and his four younger brothers didn't settle in one town for very long. But there was one place that always felt like home: their grandmother's rural East Austin farmhouse.

“I remember those summer days playing football out in the open, surrounded by pecan trees, strawberry patches and bee hives—we even had an outhouse,” says Martinez, executive director of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

On the weekends, Martinez spent most of his daylight hours curled up with a good book at the Oak Springs Public Library, imagining himself accomplishing heroic feats in far and distant lands.

“I traveled the world through books,” Martinez says. “I read so many amazing stories, from autobiographies to classics like ‘Gulliver’s Travels.’ I just loved how they played out like a movie in my head.”

While riding on the city bus with his grandmother, he was transfixed by the looming UT Tower, a formidable presence during a time when the Friday night lights reigned supreme in a much quieter Austin.

“Since I was in the first grade, I always knew I would be going to college,” says Martinez, who achieved his dream of becoming a Longhorn and was the first in his family to earn a college degree. “I didn’t ever imagine becoming an academic, but I did realize there was a big world out there and that I wanted to make a difference.”

With full support from his parents, Martinez took a page from his beloved adventure books and traversed a long, meandering educational path—from UT Austin (and back again) to Baylor College of Medicine to Harvard University. And like the protagonists in those stories, he was willing to risk it all—a comfortable life and sizable salary—to pursue the greater good.

The first chapter of his quest began at UT Austin, where he followed his father’s footsteps and enrolled in the Air Force ROTC program. His curious nature soon led him down the road of the humanities, where he discovered an interest in mankind.

“I wanted to focus on the liberal arts because I enjoyed reading and learning so much,” Martinez says. “Regardless of your profession, having empathy and an understanding of humanity ensures fairness and equitable treatment of others.”

After exploring several avenues of study—from military science to pre-law to pre-med—Martinez set his sights on the fascinating world of finance.

“I enjoyed learning about finance and banking because at the time it was about building and creating,” Martinez says. “A trajectory in banking allowed me to do that—to help people improve their lives.”

Martinez earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from UT’s business administration program in 1983 and 1987, respectively, and quickly hit his stride during the booming go-go ‘80s economy. Early in his career, he landed himself a corner office in one of the tallest buildings, at the time, in Austin.

It was all going very well until the big savings and loan crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

“First Republic Bank of Texas was the largest bank failure at that time,” Martinez says. “When the real estate balloon popped, unethical things were going on with property values. After the big bank mergers, my portfolio shrunk by \$40 million and I had to ask myself, ‘Is this the kind of banking I enjoy?’ The answer was no.”

Although Martinez had the option of continuing a lucrative, albeit unfulfilling, career in banking, he wasn’t convinced the road he’d traveled was the best route.

“I was ready for an impactful career change—something that would allow me to continue my work ethically and with integrity,” he says. “Even if this crisis hadn’t happened, I would have come to this crossroads eventually.”

Rather than staying the course, Martinez stunned his friends and colleagues when he announced he was returning to UT Austin to start all over again.

“Sure, I was financially comfortable with a nice sports car and a big condo on Barton Skyway, but there was a psychological disconnect,” Martinez says. “I decided that medicine fit the bill, which meant going back to UT during my peak earning years.”

To test the waters, Martinez juggled a volunteer shift at a local hospital while continuing his full-time job at the bank.

“I just needed to be sure I wanted to be a doctor, so I immersed myself in the field and found it to be intriguing, intellectually stimulating and challenging—pretty much everything I was looking for,” he says.

In less than a year, Martinez finished all his prerequisites and found himself at another crossroads.

“I was accepted into every medical school I applied to,” he says. “It was a tough decision, but Baylor College of Medicine won out, and I don’t regret it one bit. I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to train at the largest medical center in the world.”

During his various clinical rotations, Martinez explored a multitude of avenues he could take in the field of medicine—including neurology, cardiology and psychiatry—leading him to yet another quandary.

“Sure, I was financially comfortable with a nice sports car and a big condo on Barton Skyway, but there was a psychological disconnect, I decided that medicine fit the bill, which meant going back to UT during my peak earning years.”

"I first envisioned myself working in family medicine, but during medical school, I learned about so many fascinating specialties and subspecialties," he says. "Every time I did a specialized rotation, I found a new interest, making it difficult to decide which residency I wanted to do."

Standing at the all-too-familiar fork in the road, Martinez weighed his options and decided to head east to study psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, a decision that would eventually lead him to his life's work: mental health advocacy and intervention.

"The more I looked into psychiatry, the more it appealed to me," Martinez says. "There's still so much we're learning about the brain and the central nervous system, and it has been amazing to see how it's all connected."

Martinez's direction in life became clear when he started a clinical rotation with patients at Bridgewater State Hospital, a state facility in Massachusetts for the criminally insane.

"Working at the forensic unit was such a fascinating and unique experience," Martinez says. "It really piqued my curiosity about the brain and how different systems manifest themselves in the human mind."

Martinez later became the first psychiatrist selected for the Commonwealth Fund/Harvard University Fellowship in Minority Health Policy, a competitive one-year program for promising health care physician leaders. Through this program, he earned his Master of Public Health degree from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Martinez went on to gain a wealth of experience in the academic arena as an associate professor and psychiatrist at UT Health San Antonio and later as an affiliate associate professor at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University in North Carolina. He also served as a clinical psychiatrist in North Carolina, where he helped develop a regional psychiatric crisis unit.

"I found I really enjoyed working at the clinical level with populations of people of color who were faced with health disparity issues," Martinez says. "The more I explored it, the more I realized I was attracted to both the clinical and the policy work. With policy intervention, I could make a difference that would, in turn, impact thousands of people."

When the Great Recession decimated state mental health budgets in 2008, a beloved colleague and mentor came calling with an offer Martinez couldn't refuse. Dr. King Davis, the fourth director of the Hogg Foundation, recognized Martinez's talents and encouraged him to be his successor.

"He was ready to step down and wanted me to throw my hat into the ring during the national search," Martinez says. "I told him, 'I know nothing of philanthropy—I'm an academic and run clinics.' But after talking with my wife, I decided to give it a go because when an opportunity presents itself, I'd rather try and fail than have any regrets."

Now well into his 11th year at the Hogg Foundation, Martinez has found his calling by advancing Ima Hogg's vision to "provide a mental health system for the people of Texas." Established in 1940, the foundation works to remove barriers and bridge systemic gaps in mental health through a number of initiatives.

"All that we do—the policy work, community services, education and mental health advocacy—has kept me intrigued all these years," Martinez says. "This is the one position that has allowed me to use all my skill sets at the same time."

And during the current global pandemic, he says, we are getting a long overdue wake-up call about the need for this work.

"We've been filling the health care gap long before the pandemic," Martinez says. "Now the greater population has a better understanding of the gaps in our health care system, especially in public health and the mental health arena."

Long after people can safely put away their masks and resume life as they knew it, Martinez says the Hogg Foundation will be getting ahead of the next public health crisis before it hits the national news.

"Before COVID, we worked very hard to improve mental health services in Texas during public health crises," Martinez says. "We've been dealing with manmade and natural disasters for a long time, and we will continue to do this work and partner with our colleagues, nonprofits and state partners to ensure that our historically excluded populations are not forgotten during any point in time and that they get the care they deserve."

In recent years, the foundation has focused its efforts on improving mental health interventions and outcomes within rural communities across Texas. By going straight to the areas that need help the most, Martinez believes the foundation can substantially fill the widening gaps in our mental health system.

"As a child, I always thought things needed to be fair and that I should be given the opportunity to do my best," Martinez says. "As I grew older, I realized that everybody should have that same experience. That's not equality because we don't always start at the same spot, but we can work toward equity, which, to me, really encapsulates the concept of fairness."

\$1,200,000

In response to the urgent need for a more equitable health care system, the Hogg Foundation awarded a total of \$1.2 million in grants to train mental health policy fellows in Texas in May 2020.

\$60,000

The Hogg Foundation awarded a \$60,000 grant to Dell Medical School in June 2020 to support the school's psychiatric first aid program for workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic in the greater Austin area.

\$1,500

In May 2020, seven food banks representing 92 Texas counties each received \$1,500 from the Hogg Foundation.

NAVIGATING THE COVID-19 WATERS

Systemic inequities come
to the surface amid a
public health crisis

by Barbra Rodriguez



Turn on the TV or radio, and you're likely to hear celebrities and newscasters repeating the phrase "We are all in this together." Some may even say COVID-19 is the great equalizer. But the experiences of different communities during the current pandemic reveal a different picture.

As we learn more about the novel coronavirus—and its disproportionately fatal effects on Black and Brown communities—the grim realities of our societal injustices have surfaced in the nation’s consciousness.

Multiple factors determine transmission risk and, therefore, which communities have a greater infection rate, says Dr. Jewel Mullen, associate dean of health equity at Dell Medical School.

According to Austin data released in August, Hispanics accounted for 52% of the Austin-Travis County residents who tested positive for the coronavirus, although they make up just 33% of the population.

COVID-19, Mullen notes, is known to target the lungs, heart and other organs that are weakened by chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes and high blood pressure, which are more common in some minority groups.

“In many parts of the country, among Hispanic or Latino groups, deaths from COVID-19 far exceed the percentage of Latinos in the population, and in some places the same holds true for African Americans,” she says.

This finding isn’t surprising for Virginia Cumberbatch, former director of equity and community advocacy. She devoted much of her work at the DDCE’s Center for Community Engagement to studying and addressing social inequities here in Austin.

“There is a perception that Austin is a very liberal and progressive city, but the truth is that Austin has always had significant inequities determined by race and spatial and economic segregation,” Cumberbatch says.

Prior to leaving the university in July 2020, Cumberbatch

led a number of community advocacy projects, including the monthly Front Porch Gatherings held at various Austin locations that address persistent societal inequities like food deserts, substandard education and inaccessible health care. These are just a few of the systemic inequities, she notes, that play a big role in putting certain demographics of people at high risk for contracting the deadly virus.

VULNERABLE WORKING CLASS

The waters are especially turbulent for many low-income essential workers interacting with potential virus carriers regularly at checkout counters, warehouses, restaurants and other public spaces. In fact, the Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis (IUPRA) published a research brief in May that confirmed that many of the more than 2 million frontline positions in Texas, particularly the lower-wage ones such as home health aides, go to Blacks and Hispanics.

According to the study, conducted by IUPRA Research Associate Ricardo Lowe Jr., 36% of Black female workers and 29% of Hispanic female workers statewide are deemed essential. Asian women and Asian men also frequently serve on the frontline as nurses, physicians and surgeons.

“Fewer than one out of five Black or Latino workers in this country can actually stay home and do that social distancing that’s a part of staying safe,” says Mullen.

Mullen cautions against judging a person’s health risk by their skin color or biology, especially when factors that stymie health care access can ultimately matter more when it comes to someone’s individual risk.

“We’re all weathering the same storm, but we’re differently equipped,” Cumberbatch says. “Some of us are in speedboats, while others are in rowboats—or have no boats for support at all.”



Dr. Jewel Mullen, associate dean for health equity and associate professor in the Dell Medical School’s Department of Population Health

Indeed, essential workers keeping society afloat throughout this global health crisis are often putting their lives at risk without their own health care safety net. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that a total of 27.5 million Americans, many of whom were either unemployed or working in low-paying essential worker positions, had no health insurance during 2018. The Kaiser Family Foundation found that 13% of essential workers nationwide lack any health insurance and about one in three is in a household earning at or below \$40,000 a year.

Should anything positive come out of this pandemic, Dr. Octavio Martinez Jr. hopes it is increased attention to America's flawed health care system. He notes that mental health care is as critical as physical health care in these times of fear and uncertainty.

As executive director of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, Martinez is leading a number of initiatives that provide access to mental health through multimillion-dollar grantmaking, public policy, education and outreach efforts. In 2018, the foundation shifted its focus to transforming mental health at the community level with the goal of achieving health equity for all Texans.

Given the 2018 U.S. Census statistics, these efforts are needed in the state of Texas, where more than 5 million residents are without health insurance—up from 4.8 million in 2017. Texas also shares the unfortunate distinction of being one of 14 states that have not expanded Medicaid, a key provision of the Affordable Care Act that provides health care to low-income individuals.

“The State of Texas chose not to expand Medicaid,” Martinez says. “This leaves a lot of families in a very difficult situation because they're not able to afford insurance on the marketplace or they're underinsured. And then to have a major health

pandemic exacerbate the resource issues—that brings added fears, anxieties and concerns.”

OVERBURDENED STUDENTS

Sha’Nya James is one of many college students who found herself in need of basic resources after the campus shut down in the spring. The final straw came in mid-April, when her father lost his 13-year job as a security guard at a Dallas hospital due to pandemic-related layoffs. Soon after, he caught the coronavirus himself.

“It made me a little sad and a little stressed, trying to make sure that he was OK and scared that he might die at any moment from the virus, while still trying to maintain my grades,” says James, who—despite it all—successfully completed her 13-hour semester in May.

Between worrying about her father's health and her own viral exposure during weekend shifts at Walmart, James decided to put her job and her University Leadership Network (ULN) internship with the DDCE's communications office on hold as she finished out the semester. The struggle to complete her coursework while working 30-plus hours each week was too much, especially when some instructors began adding regular quizzes to check on students' remote schooling progress. It didn't help that those assignments had to be done on James' old Windows 7 computer, adding to her many layers of stress.

“It would freeze a lot, and my keyboard started lagging, so every time I had a quiz or exam, I would just ask my roommate if I could borrow her computer for a moment,” says James, a soft-spoken junior who's planning to become a math professor and inspire others to pursue STEM fields.



Sha 'Nya James, College of Natural Sciences junior

Despite the odds, James finished strong before heading home to Dallas to work at Walmart and take summer classes. A 2018 survey by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce suggests James fared better than many working students when her GPA slipped from a 3.4 to a 3.2. Although about two-thirds of higher education students work these days, the national survey found that those who work less than 15 hours a week (who tend to be from wealthier families) had a greater likelihood of holding a 3.0 or above. The average dropped to a C or below for students who work more than 15 hours a week.

The survey also showed that more affluent students are 8% likelier to have jobs or internships in a lucrative career-related field rather than pay-the-bills jobs. For James, pandemic-related buying splurges meant being asked to work more hours at Walmart. Her stress level still was an 8 out of 10 after putting her jobs on hold, she says, as carving out time to meet new coursework demands meant losing money for necessities.

James does have a Pell Grant, student loans, and a scholarship and emotional support through ULN, which she has been a part of since her freshman year. CARES Act funds helped cover two months' rent, and her father helped with bills, despite her protests given his job loss and her three brothers at home. She prefers to make it on her own and hopes to buy her own laptop one day after failing to get one through UT's overwhelmed Student Emergency Fund.

"We go to school, we work, we try to do everything for ourselves because we don't want to put pressure on our parents to help out when we know they don't really have the money," James says.

Dimensions of Organizations program, can relate to these struggles. She finished her classes on an outdated laptop while remotely taking care of family issues back home. Attempts at securing emergency funding were thwarted due to her parents' undocumented status.

Prior to the campus closure, Roman had limited employment options without a car, so she took on part-time work at the University Co-op located within walking distance of her expensive four-bedroom apartment. After being laid off this spring, her work prospects are still up in the air.

"I didn't make a ton of money, but it was still something I relied on to go buy groceries every week and to be able to pitch in for rent without my parents having to help as much," she says, noting that her father's home remodeling work has disappeared and her mother must now oversee the education of her four siblings in Del Valle.

Concerned that she might put her mother, who has had bronchitis and other lung issues, at risk of infection, Roman has lived in her apartment since the pandemic began. She also wanted to give her siblings space but quickly discovered that they needed assistance with understanding their assignment instructions and schoolwork. She helped them over the phone while taking 12 credit hours in the spring.

"When they were at school, they could ask the teachers," she says of her four siblings. "My mom hadn't had a lot of schooling back in Mexico, so there's a lot of things she doesn't know. And she doesn't read or speak English, so it's been really difficult."

SUPPORTING STUDENT POTENTIAL

Jennifer Roman, a junior majoring in the Human

The DDCE's Longhorn Center for Academic Equity (LCAE) team has been working hard to help



Jennifer Roman, Human Dimensions of Organizations junior

the university's growing number of low-income students. On March 18, the day after classes went virtual, team members began surveying students about pandemic-related needs. The biggest concern was health care access, which affected nearly one-quarter (132) of the predominantly low-income, first-generation respondents.

Transportation proved to be the second-biggest concern for the 544 students even though the survey only asked about emergency transportation access. Fourteen students in the LCAE's Gateway Scholars and Longhorn Links programs had no access to transportation, while 25 others had the technology to access rideshare options but no funds to pay for them.

Meanwhile, about one in 10 respondents struggled with computer or internet access, and two had become homeless when the campus shut down.

Although many students found support through available resources, lack of funding means some students are falling through the cracks, says Tiffany Tillis Lewis, assistant vice president of the LCAE, which offers diverse programs that prepare students for career success and world travel.

"I believe the university has done a great job responding to the immediate needs of most students, but we have to do a better job of making sure all students impacted by COVID-19—particularly undocumented students—have equal access to resources," Tillis Lewis says.

As a first-generation college graduate, Tillis Lewis understands her students' financial and emotional hardships. During her time at the LCAE, she has seen many students go on to work in industries that need diversity and innovation the most, including health care, public policy and law.

"It's important to expose students to career opportunities that they might not know much about or know how to prepare for, not only for their sakes, but to meet national goals of economic prosperity and diversity," she says.

At the Dell Medical School, Mullen sees great potential in her aspiring health care professionals—especially among underrepresented Black and Brown students—and encourages them to keep up the momentum to succeed.

"Students are in a perfect place as young, active, thinking, vocal adults with all kinds of communication mechanisms at their fingertips to advocate for policies for people to be well, to advocate for good housing policies, to go out and register people to vote, to make sure people have participated in the census so there's the best representation for them, and to advocate for better access to health care for everyone," Mullen says.

While the pandemic is bringing to light social inequities in health care, education, employment and many other areas, Tillis Lewis notes that it is also offering opportunities for communities to band together in support of their most vulnerable members.

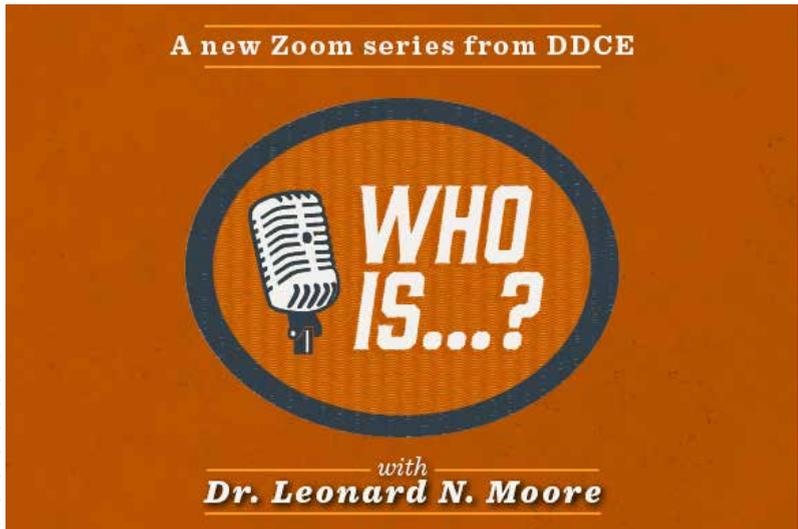
"COVID isn't the great equalizer," Tillis Lewis says. "Not everybody started off at the same point. This pandemic will widen the equity gap that already exists for some. But we can stay hopeful and take whatever steps possible to pull each other up, which benefits everyone in the end."



Tiffany Tillis Lewis, assistant vice president of the Longhorn Center for Academic Equity

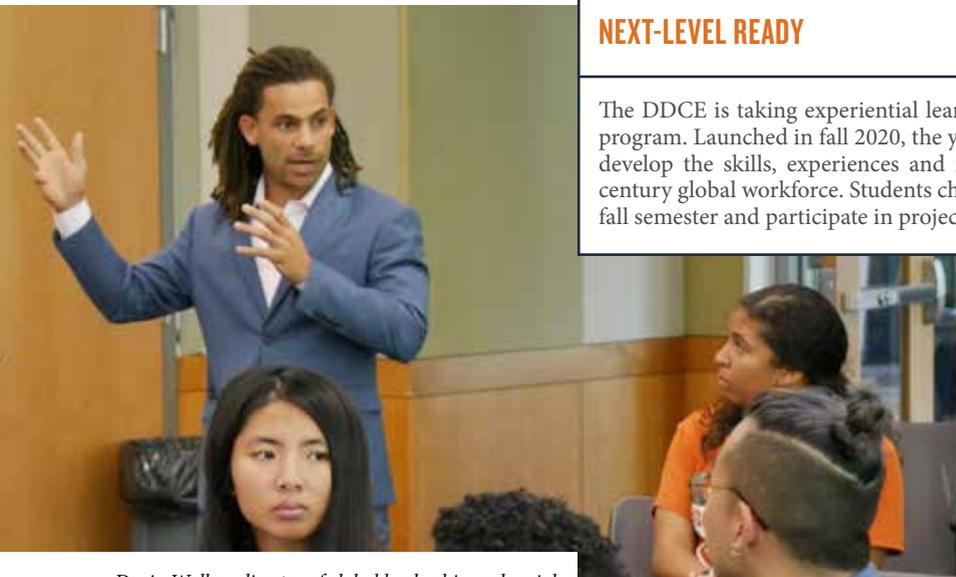
ZOOMING IN

Vice President Leonard Moore kicked off the fall semester with a new Zoom series featuring interesting people doing interesting things. The new “Who Is...?” interview series is available for public viewing on our YouTube channel!



NEXT-LEVEL READY

The DDCE is taking experiential learning to the next level with its new XP3 program. Launched in fall 2020, the yearlong fellowship helps undergraduates develop the skills, experiences and networks needed to thrive in the 21st-century global workforce. Students choose an area of specialization during the fall semester and participate in project-based internships in the spring.

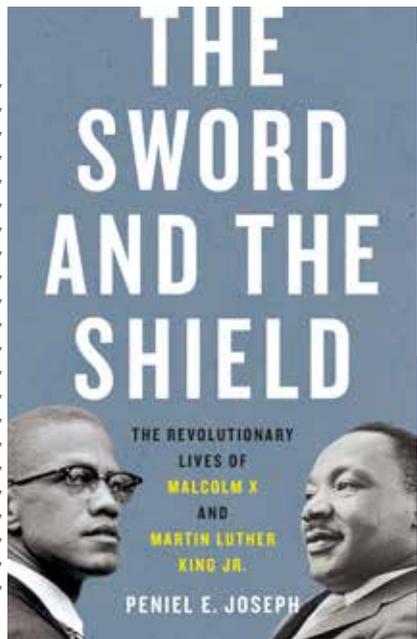


Devin Walker, director of global leadership and social impact, will be leading the new XP3 program.

LEADING THE WAY

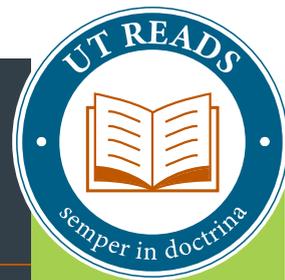
The university has earned its seventh Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from INSIGHT into Diversity magazine. This award demonstrates that once again UT Austin is a national leader in diversity.





**START A READING GROUP.
JOIN A READING GROUP.
READ IT ON YOUR OWN.**

Start reading and start talking about it.

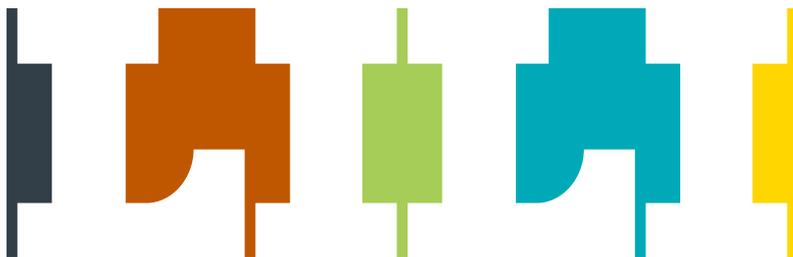


READING ROOM

The lives of Malcom X and Martin Luther King Jr. will be topics for discussion among reading groups across the university—thanks to the newly launched UT Reads campaign. Offered by Human Resources, the campaign offers group discussion guides and panel discussions in an effort to initiate constructive conversations about important, enriching topics.

AMPLIFYING VOICES

Students can now connect with one another via the DDCE's new—and temporarily online—Latinx and Indigenous Leadership Institute. Launched in spring 2020, the institute offers an inclusive and welcoming space where Latinx and Indigenous students can explore issues of identity, academic research, career opportunities and more.



Latina/x & Indigenous Leadership Institute
AN INITIATIVE OF THE DIVISION OF DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

HELPING THE HELPERS

In April 2020, the DDCE awarded emergency relief funds ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000 to 19 organizations that serve Austin-area communities most at risk during these challenging and uncertain times.



We Have Seen This Before

Asian Americans share reflections on pandemic-fueled racism

by Jessica Sinn



Turn back the pages of time and you'll see some commonalities between the “Yellow Peril,” the “Gay Virus” and, most recently, the “Chinese Virus.” All are race-based political terms attached to diseases and outbreaks that have been used to rationalize bigotry and xenophobia. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, many people of Asian descent around the world have reported acts of racial aggression—from shunning to belligerent rants to physical assaults. It has become clear that one major side effect of this global health crisis is prejudice.

We caught up with several members of the university community to learn how they are grappling with these troubling times—and how they are working to bring more visibility and equality to the many different groups within the monolithic “Asian American” umbrella.

DANGEROUS TERMS

Soon after President Trump first uttered the phrase “Chinese Virus,” Eric Tang, associate professor of African and African diaspora studies and director of the Center for Asian American Studies (CAAS), knew he had to take urgent steps to reach out to the Asian American community.

“There was an immediate sense among us that Asian Americans would be scapegoated as a perpetual foreign influence that brought the virus to the United States,” Tang says. “This association between Asian Americans and diseases has to do with a long history of anti-Asian sentiment and xenophobic violence in the U.S.”

Concerned about the escalating anti-Asian bigotry, Tang participated in a virtual town hall meeting with the City of Austin and various local Asian American organizations.

“We wanted to inform the public about these dangerous terms used by our nation’s leaders, which gives license to some to act violently against Asian Americans,” Tang says. “It’s important for us to say loudly and clearly that these terms are inappropriate and unfair and should be confronted.”

To better understand what’s happening in the Austin community, Tang helped create the Central Texas COVID-19 Related Racial Bias Reporting System to track cases of pandemic-induced racial harassment and violence. The reporting system is a group effort involving the City of Austin and several local Asian American organizations.

“We are working together to gather more information about any kind of racism that emerges as a result of this unique moment we’re in,” says Tang. “My hope is that sharing a survey like this, and the discourse around being wary of racism at this moment, will be a mitigating activity. Just sharing this form tells the public there is a consensus among the population that racial discrimination and harassment is wrong and won’t be tolerated.”

Tang often thinks about his two Asian American brothers who are serving on the frontlines in a New York City hospital. One of his brothers recently recovered from a battle with the virus, which he contracted while saving lives at an overcrowded emergency room.

“Here they are fighting this disease while worrying about being racially targeted for it,” Tang says. “That’s a unique psychological position to be in, to say the least.



Eric Tang, associate professor of African and African Diaspora studies and director of the Center for Asian American Studies in the College of Liberal Arts

On one hand, they’re celebrated for heroics, but on the other, they are vulnerable to unambiguous racism.”

If Tang could provide any message of comfort during this troubling time, it would be to look toward the gains made throughout history.

“Asian American students and the community at large should know that they’re not alone—even if we’re socially distant,” Tang says. “And as much as history is repeating itself now, it’s good to be aware of the movements that came before us that gave us organizational forums that respond to racism such as CAAS and the DDCE.”

COMFORT IN CONNECTIONS

During his undergraduate years at UT Austin, Tony Vo spent much of his free time on the “Yellow Brick Road,” an unofficial gathering space for Asian American students just outside Gregory Gym. Now



Tony Vo, assistant director of the Center for Asian American Studies

as the assistant director of CAAS—the largest ethnic studies program in the Southwest—he proudly runs a dedicated space that offers weekly meetups, workshops, book clubs and more for Asian American students.

In today's new virtual reality, Vo is finding creative ways to reach out to students to provide a sense of togetherness. In addition to webinars and workshops, he also coordinates the CAAS Collective Digest, an e-newsletter that celebrates the many cultures within the "Asian American" umbrella, offering a wealth of resources such as student stories, ethnic recipes and information on virtual educational events.

"As the pandemic continues, there's a potential it's going to stay racialized, which will have negative effects on our international students," Vo says. "Now more than ever, we need to connect students with all the resources the university has to counteract the stigma of this virus, which I fear will stick around in more nuanced ways we haven't seen yet."

Vo and his colleagues often tap into the university's many offices, centers and campus safety initiatives to make sure students connect with the resources they need. Campus partners include the Office for Inclusion and Equity, the Multicultural Engagement Center, BeVocal, the Counseling and Mental Health Center and many others.

"We are working across different units at UT to paint this picture for people that xenophobia and anti-Asian racism may seem new, but it's actually a systemic problem deeply

embedded in our society," Vo says. "These reactions to the coronavirus speak to a larger historic national narrative about keeping Asian Americans from migrating to the U.S."

Although it's not clear when campus will return to normal, Vo is already thinking ahead to make sure students feel welcome and supported upon arrival.

"When our students come back in the fall—or later—I would like to have more conversations about what they've experienced back home during the pandemic and what they're dealing with now," he says.

UNWANTED AWARENESS

Growing up outside of a Vietnamese community, Quỳnh-Hương Nguyễn was taught to assimilate herself as much as possible to avoid ridicule from peers, teachers and adults. She changed her birth name, only spoke English and never dared to pack food from her parents' homeland in her lunchbox.

"I was young and didn't have an elder or role model who could guide me and explain what I was experiencing," says Nguyễn, assistant director of the Gender and Sexuality Center. "I didn't realize people were tokenizing my identity. No matter what I did, I was always seen as a foreigner."

In college, she pretended that everything she was experiencing was normal despite the continuous microaggressions—insidious racial slights that Asian American students commonly face in school.

"When I was in college, I pretended that I was all right and that the interactions never hurt. I thought it was a normal experience for most people," Nguyễn says. "When I realized how much it hurt, I didn't know how to defend myself because people acted like it wasn't a microaggression and I was being dramatic."

When she turned to others for guidance, she was told to let it go and keep her concerns to herself.

"They wanted me to brush it off and represent the entire Asian community, even though I felt uncomfortable and knew it was wrong," she says. "There are a lot of misconceptions about the Asian community due to its multigenerational immigration history and lack of representation. The Asian community is a lot bigger than most people realize, and each community faces different challenges."

Nguyễn can empathize with her students as they face anti-Asian sentiments and harassment when out in the community. Some, she says, are fearful of wearing masks in public because they might give off the perception of being diseased. Others have resorted to staying home entirely to protect themselves.



Quỳnh Hương Nguyễn,
assistant director of the
Gender and Sexuality Center

“Even though the Asian communities are often overlooked, anti-Asian sentiments have been a part of U.S. history for a long time,” she says. “The pandemic has brought more attention and awareness to the Asian communities, but not in the way that we had hoped. The number of anti-Asian hate crimes has spiked since the start of the shelter-in-place order back in March.”

When terms like “Wuhan Virus” and “Chinese Virus” started making headlines, Nguyễn grew more concerned about the rising number of racially charged attacks, many of which, she notes, are likely to go unreported due to language barriers and a lack of knowledge about resources and support.

“These terms have encouraged xenophobic behavior toward the Asian communities,” she says. “It is important we take the time to learn more about the issues that have impacted so many different communities. Also, it is important to think about how to support and advocate for marginalized communities using Kimberlé Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality.”

Nguyễn encourages her students to take comfort in knowing they are not alone—and that with a unified effort, change will come.

“In the words of law professor Frank Wu, ‘We are not alone as Asian Americans, any more than we are all the same,’ Nguyễn says. “Take action for your own community and the communities outside of your identity. Even though my experience is not similar to yours, it is important to understand

and acknowledge that lived experiences are real and that it’s important to move toward a society with equal and equitable opportunities for everyone.”

HIDDEN FIGURES

Before the pandemic hit, Joshua Tadeo was on the verge of opening a photo gallery at the Austin Asian American Cultural Center documenting an untold piece of UT Austin history.

“The gallery, now postponed, features Asian American student organizations and their connection with campus life and the broader Austin community,” says Tadeo, a junior majoring in Asian American studies. “I wanted to show how UT has helped foster a diverse Asian American population.”

While digging through the library archives, Tadeo found boxes of photos labeled by specific student demographics. One demographic, however, did not have its own box.

Daily Texan article about the UT 10 arrests
courtesy of University of Texas Libraries



Pictured here is a member of the “UT 10,” a group of student activists who spearheaded the establishment of the Center for Asian American Studies in 1999. Protestors were arrested for criminal trespassing while advocating during a rally and sit-in on the West Mall in response to the interim College of Liberal Arts dean’s decision to delay the creation of the center until hiring a permanent director.

“I found random pictures of Asian Americans scattered in various boxes,” he says. “They are interesting and important figures in our history, yet they didn’t have enough capital to have their own designated box.”

This disconcerting finding reaffirmed Tadeo’s mission to bring visibility to this overlooked group and dispel some commonly held misconceptions.

“Asian Americans are stereotyped as being apolitical, but this photo gallery highlights the political power of student activists who came together and significantly contributed to the campus and the community,” Tadeo says.

The best way to counter these racially biased beliefs, he says, is to read up on their history, which appears to be repeating itself.

“People aren’t aware of their biases because they lack education in ethnic studies,” Tadeo says. “There is this stigma of uncleanness attached to Asian Americans that dates back over 150 years ago to the ‘Yellow Peril’ of the Chinese railroad workers.”

This piece of history stood out in Tadeo’s mind when his two non-Asian roommates sat him down for a lecture on handwashing and social distancing. Although it seemed like a harmless conversation, he couldn’t shake the sinking feeling they were singling him out based on his race.

“That conversation didn’t sit well with me,” Tadeo says. “On the surface, it was just about hygiene and basic safety measures, but what I was hearing was, ‘You’re more likely to get it because you’re Asian, and it will be your fault if we get exposed.’”

Tadeo, who is actively involved with UT’s Asian American student community, knows that many others are being singled out as well. He encourages his peers to raise awareness by vocalizing their encounters with racism.

“There’s power in your story, and it deserves to be heard,” Tadeo says. “This pandemic will be studied well into the future by researchers and theorists, so the best thing you can do is to share your experience, which will in turn create a better understanding of the Asian American experience.”

POWER IN CENSUS NUMBERS

Suchitra Gururaj is no stranger to stereotypes. For much of her life, she has dreaded that quizzical look by strangers and the inevitable question that followed: “But, no, where are you really from?”

“It’s a question that underscores people’s perceptions of Asian Americans as ‘perpetual foreigners,’” says Gururaj, assistant vice president for community and economic engagement. “It’s also the kind of thinking that has historically fueled the sense that Asian Americans have split loyalties. As we’ve seen over American history and certainly after 9/11, when people start to suspect you’re ‘not quite from here,’ it’s easy to head down the path of suspecting that they are disloyal, dangerous or devious.”

With the outbreak of the coronavirus—and all the misguided theories about its origins—she notes that Asian Americans are once again being painted as disease carriers.

“Chinese-American people, in particular, have also been harmed for at least a century by the stereotype

Online Resources for Combatting Racism and Discrimination



Campus Climate Response Team

UT Austin’s Campus Climate Response Team provides resources that foster and support an environment on campus that is inclusive, respectful and free from discrimination and harassment.

 diversity.utexas.edu/ccrt/about-ccrt

BeVocal

BeVocal is a university-wide initiative that provides campus resources for bystander intervention.

 wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal/index.html

of the ‘Yellow Peril’ that painted Chinese immigrants as lacking in hygiene and spreading disease,” Gururaj says. “The White House’s insistence that COVID-19 is a ‘Chinese virus’ is, of course, a deliberate means by which to evoke that stereotype.”

As hate crimes continue to rise in cities across the nation, Gururaj has observed that much of the hostility has been directed toward people of East Asian descent. Now, more than ever, she urges the entire Asian American community—and the community at large—to collectively stand up to racism in all its forms.

“The fact that these microaggressions haven’t been directed at me, as a South Asian American, points to the diversity of the Asian American Pacific Islander [AAPI] population and to the responsibility of those of us who are not subject to these microaggressions to continue to actively push back against bias on behalf of all AAPI folks,” she says.

The best step toward eradicating the “perpetual foreigner” stereotype, Gururaj adds, is to bring visibility to all ethnic groups that have been generally categorized as “Asian American.” That’s why she has teamed up with the Asian American Complete Count Committee to get Austin’s fastest-growing racial group counted in the 2020 U.S. census.

“Asian Americans are the least likely racial group to respond to the census or even express familiarity with it,” she says. “But by not responding, we won’t just lose out on critical resources—we’ll also miss an incredible opportunity to dispel the stereotypes that keep us civically invisible.”

Gururaj believes it remains to be seen if the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests will significantly alter our nation’s race relations.



Dr. Suchitra Gururaj, assistant vice president for community and economic engagement

However, she is confident there will be a heightened awareness of systematic inequities that surface during times of crisis.

“The fact that so many folks who are organizing, protesting and marching may come from the communities that are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 is a wake-up call to everyone that systems—be they related to health, education or public safety—are all intertwined,” Gururaj says.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice

The Asian Americans Advancing Justice website hosts a compilation of news articles, reading lists and other resources on anti-racism for the Asian American community.

 advancingjustice-aaajc.org

The Center for Asian American Studies

The Center for Asian American Studies within UT Austin’s College of Liberal Arts launched the Central Texas COVID-19 Related Racial Bias Reporting System to allow individuals to report cases of pandemic-induced racial harassment and violence in the Austin-area community.

 liberalarts.utexas.edu/aas

MEET

Emeline Lakrout

KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT SSD'S INAUGURAL GRADUATION CEREMONY



Getting down to business...

While in business school, Lakrout learned about an exciting and fulfilling career path that would allow her to make a difference in people's lives. "In marketing, we have the 'four Ps': product, place, price and promotion. With these four variables, you're playing with all these levers to connect people with the products they need, and you're learning how to develop new products. I aspire to work at companies that are all about creating value and benefitting people's lives."

From UT to NYC...

In 2018, Lakrout was selected for the competitive Lime Connect Fellowship, a professional development program for undergraduates with disabilities that includes an all-expense-paid trip to the annual Leadership and Development Symposium in New York City. The fellowship helped Lakrout secure an internship of a lifetime with Unilever, a multinational consumer goods company. "These are the best marketers in America. The main thing that struck me was the culture. I took on two accessibility projects, and they took my ideas very seriously and brought them into fruition."

The future is bright...

Lakrout was soon accepted in the Unilever Future Leaders Program, a three-year rotation that gives promising business leaders challenging roles within the company. "I'm at a company where you can do so much good at the top of your field. It's a business that works with a lot of integrity. Each brand has a purpose, and they are very focused on sustainability and platinum eco-ratings."

Back in high school, Emeline Lakrout took a marketing class on a whim and quickly found herself competing in academic business contests. She later enrolled in the McCombs School of Business, where she explored the many exciting avenues within the marketing arena.

While on campus, she also discovered her passion for disability advocacy and awareness. Lakrout was honored along with many other registered students with disabilities at Services for Students with Disabilities' (SSD's) very first spring graduation ceremony, which was held virtually on May 20.

We caught up with Lakrout, who is blind, to learn more about her advocacy work with the student-run disABILITY Advocacy Student Coalition (DASC), and how she plans to expand accessibility in consumer markets.



CELEBRATING OUR SPRING 2020 GRADS

Throughout the month of May, our student-serving centers and initiatives honored the historic class of 2020 with online ceremonies and free care packages filled with an assortment of gifts. Below are some photos of graduates showing off their stoles and Longhorn pride.



Dining in the dark...

During her time as president of DASC, Lakrout organized a number of campus events, including Disability Fest and the annual Dinner in the Dark, a pitch-dark dining event that gives students a better understanding of what it's like to live with a visual impairment. "I was very happy to have so many people engaged and enjoying Dining in the Dark. When you're in a room with people who aren't uncomfortable talking about disability, it's pretty incredible."

Building a lasting legacy...

As she passes the baton to her successor, Lakrout hopes to see the development of a new resource center for students with disabilities. She has been in talks with several campus partners to develop the space for training programs, meetings and support groups addressing mental health issues. "There are more than 4,000 students with disabilities here on campus, so a center would be an inclusive, welcoming space where they can come together and feel comfortable."

Clearing the air...

Growing up with a degenerative eye condition, Lakrout is accustomed to awkward interactions with people crossing her path. She's used to pedestrians leaping out of her way while she's using a cane. Other times, she attracts unwanted attention from strangers wanting to pet her guide dog, Vega. She believes the work of DASC and other disability groups must continue bringing people together to make these interactions more comfortable for everyone. "When you walk into an elevator or approach someone with a cane, you can feel that cloud of awkward energy. I want to help people, the abled and disabled, talk about disability and overcome their fears and discomfort."

Changing the subway system...

Although it is bittersweet to leave DASC, Lakrout is proud of her accomplishments—and she plans to continue her good work long after graduation. "I would love to do disability advocacy on the side. The New York subways are incredibly inaccessible, so I want to see that change. I learned how to multitask at UT, so I know it's possible!"

Advice for future Longhorns with disabilities...

"First thing is to find a group. It doesn't have to be DASC, but find a local or national group to join because it will boost your confidence and teach you how to leverage your disability. Also, be a doer—and do something that is meaningful. Try to collect mentors because you don't know what you don't know. As long as you stay humble and keep learning, you can't go wrong."

BLACK GRADUATION



Brandon Okeke
Biochemistry/Pre-Med

FIRST-GEN LONGHORNS



Justin Eng
International Relations and Global Studies

LATINX GRADUATION



Jocelyn Esquivel
Applied Learning and Development/Bilingual Generalist Cert.

LAVENDER GRADUATION



Austin Miller
Arabic/Anthropology/Education



STUDENT SHARES STUDY ABROAD BEHIND THE LENS

At the age of ten, Justice Beverley began capturing his travels on film while touring the national parks with his family. Captivated by the Grand Canyon's sculpted peaks and valleys, he couldn't wait to see what more the world had to offer.

"My brother, sister and I talked about how we wanted to go to Ireland, China and Japan together—and that's when our dad told us that we needed to see the country before seeing the world," Beverley says.

While living the RV life, he and his father created hundreds of videos of their epic cross-country tour. From these early experiences, Beverley found his passion in documenting and sharing his travels with others.

"It's a selfless venture to record and share your experiences," he says. "While filming, you're missing out on something, but you're capturing something for others to see."

Eager to get started in filmmaking, Beverley came to UT Austin to attend the Moody College of Communication. Early into his first semester, his excitement ebbed into frustration when he yearned to be out in the field.

"The question of staying in school was on my mind a lot that year," says Beverley. "I

wanted to get started on my film career rather than sit in classes all day."

Just when he was ready to pack up his camera bags, Beverley learned about DDCE's Cape Town Study Abroad program while taking Dr. Moore's Race in the Age of Trump class. "I signed up for it at the very last minute—and I'm so glad I did because it kept me at UT," says Beverley, a radio-television-film senior.

With his camera in tow, Beverley documented every moment of the Cape Town trip—from hiking up Lion's Head Mountain to rationing water at the hostel amid the 2018 water crisis. Of all his adventures, the most unforgettable was his internship at Philisa Abafazi Bethu, a women's empowerment program located in a struggling, low-income neighborhood outside of Cape Town.

"I believe I was placed there for a reason," Beverley recalls. Looking back at his time working with the women and children of Cape Flats, he is most grateful for the life lessons he gained along the way.

"I give a lot of praise to the people in the DDCE who have this magic formula for matching students with internships that play to their strengths and interests," he adds. "Everybody I

talked to said they felt that the trip was made just for them."

When summer 2019 rolled around, Beverley couldn't wait to embark on his next big project as the official videographer for the DDCE Study Abroad trip to Beijing, hoping to reshape the narrative about a country that is often misunderstood.

"As a filmmaker, I don't want to force my opinion about places or areas," Beverley says. "I don't want to say how it is in China; I want China to tell us what it is. I'm just a mediator for this story."

With an emphasis on storytelling, Beverley lets his personal interactions drive the script. He makes an effort to chat with everyone he encounters along the way—from street vendors to strangers on the subway. The people and the connections you make are what make the trip worthwhile, Beverley notes. With this in mind, he asked fellow students to include their voices in his China recap video so they, too, could tell the story.

Of all the life-changing moments abroad, he is most grateful for the time spent with students and staff. "I really like to emphasize the camaraderie with the staff and students on these adventures," Beverley adds. "I love those individuals deeply."



See Justice Beverley's films about Cape Town and China on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/FZkUDdt83Fg>

Access is Now Available Online!

DIVERSITY.UTEXAS.EDU/ACCESS



PHOTO FINISH

Last March, before the campus shutdown, hundreds of incoming Longhorns gathered to take photos on the South Mall during College Preview Day. Led by UT Youth Engagement Center (formerly UT Outreach) staff in multiple schools across Texas, the program recruits and supports outstanding high school students from underrepresented groups.

MORE ANTI-RACISM ADVOCACY...

We spoke with several student advocates to get their thoughts on the Black Lives Matter movement—and how we can all do better to promote diversity and inclusion on campus and in the community. Visit our magazine site to see what our Allies & Advocates had to say.



MORE BLACK HISTORY LESSONS...

Go to our YouTube channel to watch an interview with Peniel Joseph, LBJ School professor and author of “The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.”

MORE VIRTUAL CELEBRATIONS...

Last August, 32 graduates of the summer 2020 Law School Admission Council PLUS Online program were celebrated at a virtual completion ceremony. Visit our magazine site to read a recap of the four-week summer program.



CONNECT WITH US!

Have questions, comments or story ideas? We would love to hear from you. Please email: ddce@utexas.edu.



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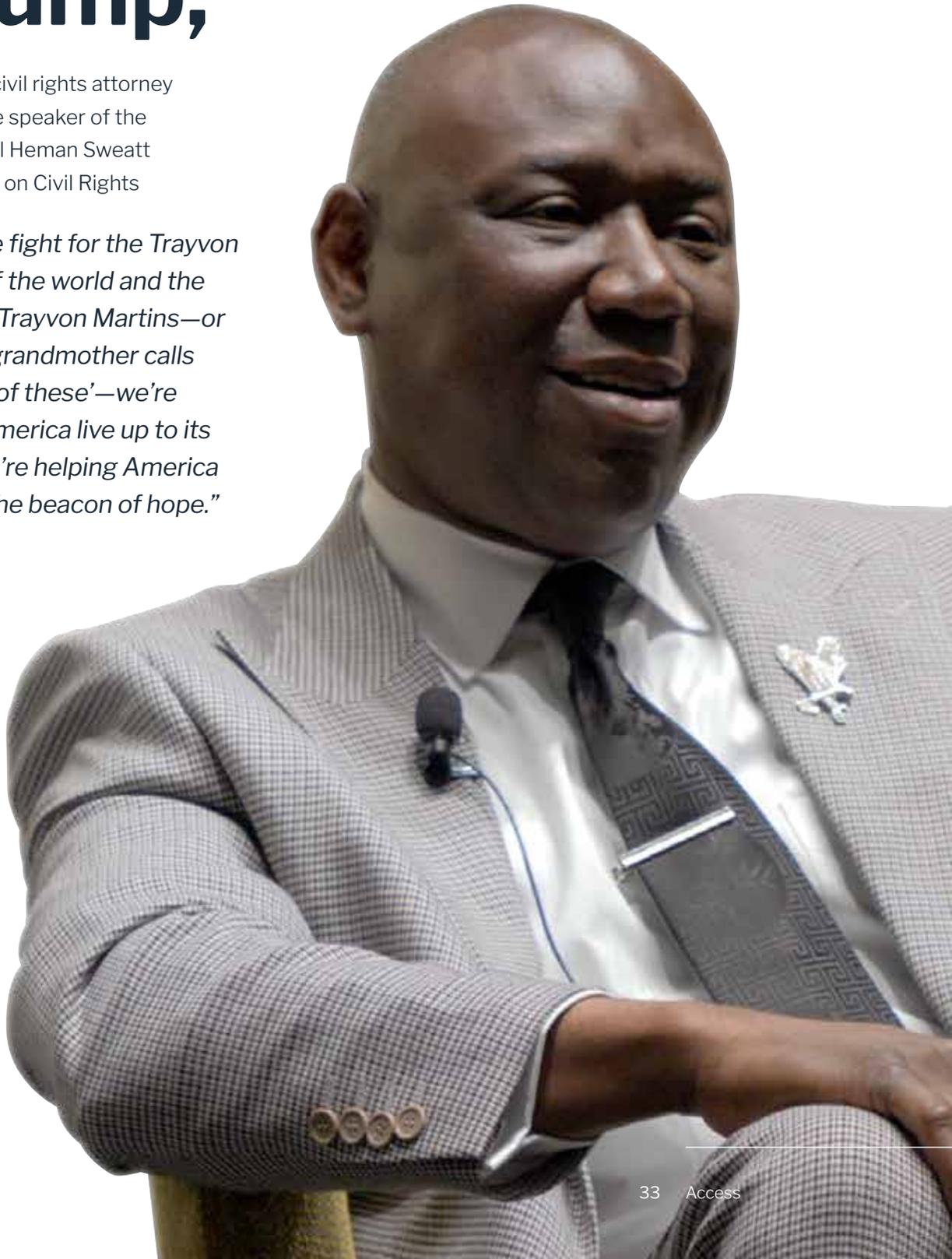


UT DDCE

Ben Crump,

prominent civil rights attorney
and keynote speaker of the
34th Annual Heman Sweatt
Symposium on Civil Rights

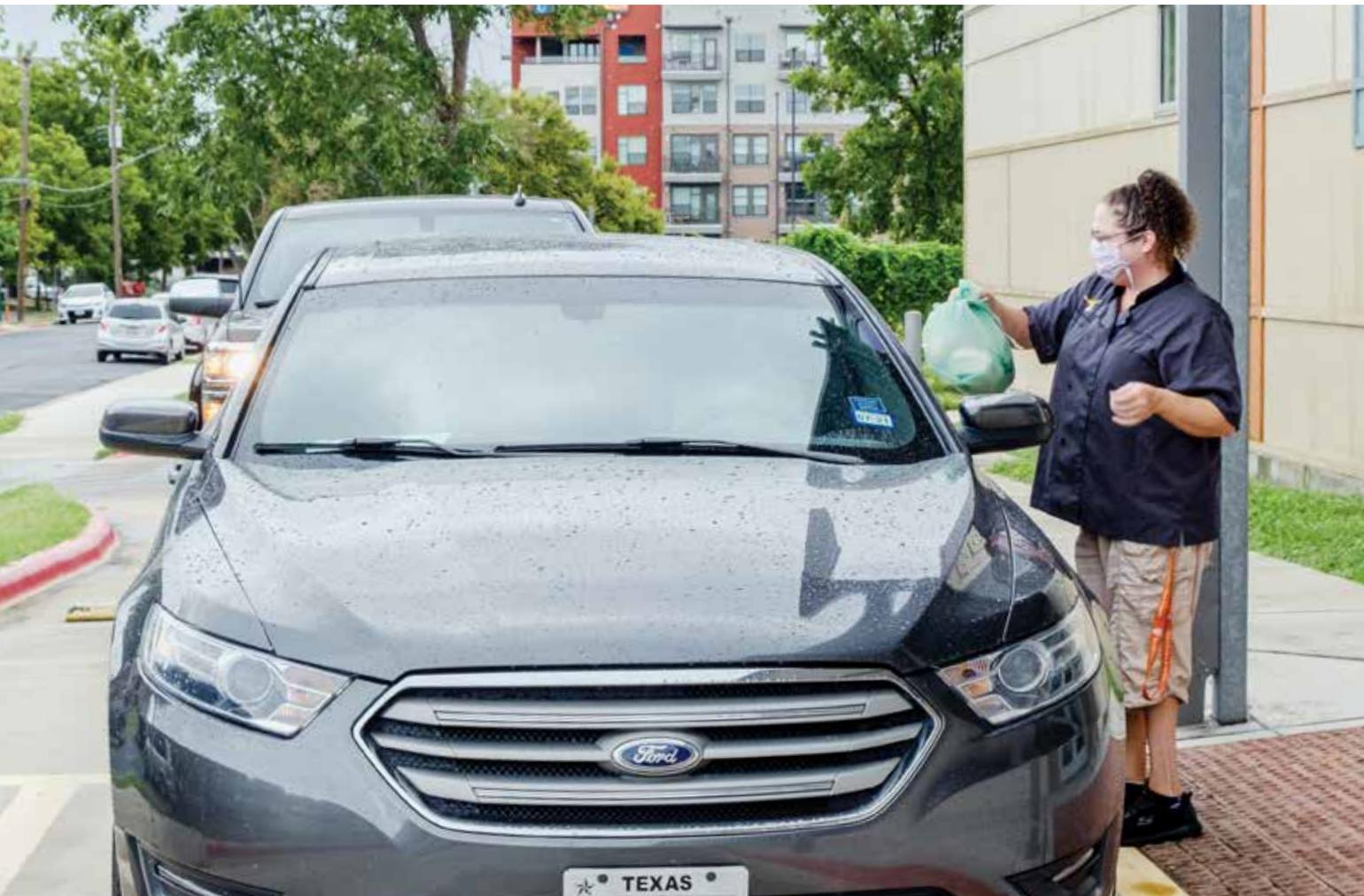
“When we fight for the Trayvon Martins of the world and the unknown Trayvon Martins—or what my grandmother calls ‘the least of these’—we’re helping America live up to its creed. We’re helping America become the beacon of hope.”





The University of Texas at Austin
Division of Diversity and
Community Engagement

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Lunch in the Time of COVID

Known for its healthy meals, UT Elementary School has provided curbside pick-up for student breakfasts and lunches since COVID-19 began in March. Here, chef Kimberly Wilson delivers meals to waiting families. UTES started the school year August 13, dedicated to remote learning for the first eight weeks of the semester.



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