

CROSSLINKS

A biannual publication of the SCSSW Alumni Association's Alumni of Color Standing Committee

Summer 2005

WELCOME

Thank you so much for electing me as Chair of the Alumni of Color Standing Committee (ACSC). The past year has been very busy as I have met with students and connected with alumni across the country. With the support of the School, the ACSC has been able to pair eighteen students with alumni mentors, update our constitution and bring to you the Crosslinks Newsletter. I appreciate the many staff, faculty, students and alumni who have been so helpful to me during this busy year.

The Committee's role is to initiate, review, and monitor relevant issues or concerns regarding participation by the community of color at all levels in the School. This includes faculty, admission and recruitment policies, retention, field experience, and curriculum/research content of the School for Social Work. With this level of responsibility, it is important to develop a strong alumni support base and resources for both alumni of color and current students of color in the Smith program.

In the coming months, I will call on you as we, the Alumni of Color Standing Committee pursue our goal of connecting alumni, students and the school. We are currently seeking alumni to help us in this effort. On the last page of this newsletter you will find a list of current members of the ACSC, as well as position vacancies. Please contact me at tanitacoxonline@yahoo.com if you are interested in or want to recommend someone for a vacancy.

Tanita Cox, MSW'99

Chair, Alumni of Color Standing Committee

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

I am delighted to see the revival of Crosslinks. I think it is a vital communications tool for alumni and students of color. As I reviewed the purposes of the Alumni of Color Standing Committee, I was aware of the words and spirit of your commitment initiate: review, monitor and serve as resources for issues or concerns regarding people of color at all levels in the School. How can we join together to move these words and spirit into action?

In the summer of 2001 we invited alumni of color back to campus for a conference called *Weaving with New Threads: The School Revisits Its Commitment to Diversity*. This conference reviewed the School's progress since the 1987 conference. In the fall of 2002 we completed a study: *Making a Difference: Clinicians of Color*. Since the gathering and the study, we have used the recommendations and findings to assist us in thinking through a range of concerns about the educational and community experiences of students of color. Biannually we report on our progress in becoming an anti-racism institution. The gathering, study and biennial report allow us to reflect on our past years and to engage in continuous planning for the future. I am interested in hearing what you think of our process for soliciting your perspectives and for attending to concerns and progress toward our goal.

As I think about my tenure as acting Dean (2000-2003) and as permanent Dean (2003-present) for the School, the past five years have been ones of both challenges and opportunities for the future. Our challenges center on making this a healthy and engaging learning community for people with many identities. Our opportunities are in developing ways to insure that the quality of clinical social work education is excellent for all students and that our school is always responsive to the evolving needs of diverse and vulnerable populations in local and international communities. I hope that you will join us in recruiting new faculty and students. I also hope that you will inform me of your concerns and dreams for the School.

I am grateful for your past support of students of color, the School and me. I know that you will continue to support students of color as mentors and by your contributions to the scholarship funds.

Carolyn Jacobs, MSW, Ph.D.

Dean, Smith College School for Social Work

FROM THE COUNCIL FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR

We hope that this message finds all of you well and that you all are getting the most out of your field placements. Many of us are thinking about all that has transpired over the past year and all that is to come. Some of you may have found that at times, you have been disappointed with your particular placement, perhaps you have felt that you were not getting enough support, perhaps you were dismayed with how clients are treated, perhaps you were struggling with your own insecurities that often arise in this process of learning. It is at those times when we need to remind ourselves that there is opportunity to learn and to grow even in times of such disappointment. Disappointment, anger, frustration teach us and show us what is wrong and what needs to be changed, so we hope that we can all cherish those opportunities to hear that message and create that change in whatever environment we are in.

We ourselves are that change as clinicians of color challenging systems of oppression, we bear witness to that every day in the field when we are struck by the incredible need for more clinicians of color. Our voices, talents, experiences, and mere presence are essential, for our agencies, our clients and future research. The work can be overwhelming at times, but in solidarity we can find the support and strength to make it through. Our hope is that the Council can serve as a resource when you need a place to vent, a shoulder to lean on, a platform to make that change, and a network to make new connections. Each of you has so much to offer, and together what a powerful force to make lasting, influential changes, at Smith and beyond. The Revolution Begins With Us!

In Solidarity-

Melissa Lopez, Co-President Email: angelsluna@sbcglobal.net

Stacia Jackson, Co-President Email: sljackson13@yahoo.com

Sheena Panoor, Vice-President Email: spanoor@msn.com

COURTESIES OF THE COLLEGE EXTENDED TO SSW ALUMNI

You may be familiar with the professional networks and alumni/student gatherings sponsored by SSW alumni groups across the country, but you may not be as familiar with the services available to SSW alumni from the College.

In the Area?

For those who are local, alumni can access a number of campus services and facilities. By simply securing a campus OneCard, alumni can borrow books from the library, access the Fitness Center and Athletic Facilities, or even borrow a canoe to row on Paradise Pond. To secure a OneCard, contact Andrew Weir (x 3082 or aweir@email.smith.edu) for ID requirements and an appointment. (Be sure to consult with the various facilities to review regulations which might apply to alumni usage.)

Career Development Office AlumNet

The Career Development Office sponsors AlumNet – a list of alumni around the world (including SSW alumni) who have volunteered to speak with other alumni about their profession. This program is invaluable for professional exploration and for networking. Alumni must have a username and password to access this service and there is a small fee which applies. For more information about AlumNet, or other services available to alumni through the Career Development Office, contact the office at (413) 585-4328 or by email at bjameson@email.smith.edu

Online Alumni Directory/Lifetime Email

The Smith College Alumnae Association maintains an online directory of all alumni, including SSW alumni. This directory allows alumni to search for Smith friends by name, class, geography, profession or to even do a custom search (i.e., by class or geography). Alumni can also update their own data online. The database is updated every other week. All alumni have a special ID number which provides access to the online directly. You can get your ID by calling the SSW alumni office at (413) 585-4290 or by emailing the School at sswalum@email.smith.edu

SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

In an effort to enhance communication with alumni, please send your email address to the Office of Alumni Affairs. (Smith does not sell email or postal addresses to anyone.) In the future, this publication may be sent via email - if you would prefer to receive the mailing in this format, when you send your email address to the School, also mention that you would prefer to have future Crosslinks newsletters emailed to you. Thank you. The email address to send your address to is sswalum@email.smith.edu

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Monifa Robinson, MSW '97

Region III Representative for the Smith College Alumni Association

Hometown

Teaneck, New Jersey

Education

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology
Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA

Master of Social Work
Smith College School for Social Work

Master of Public Administration/Management
Troy State University, Troy, AL

Accomplishments

Founder/CEO of Within Your Reach Consulting Service
Published Author: "Within Your Reach – Inspiration that
Quiets the Mind and Soothes the Soul," Published by Urban
Thought Books, October 2003 (ISBN: 1-930231-03-02)

Monifa has been living her dream, which is traveling abroad and speaking to individuals and groups focusing primarily on issues related to empowerment and personal growth/enrichment. Her experience has taught her that neither



position nor status dictate the level of pain and misfortune one may encounter. She consults with individuals, groups and organizations, providing a unique approach proven to help them to achieve their personal goals.

Monifa is an expert at helping women transform the quality of their lives. Her mission is to empower individuals by providing them with the gift to go beyond themselves and their current circumstances; helping them to reach their highest potential. "We do not solve problems for our clients," says Monifa, "we show them how to tap into their internal resources, expand those resources, and move toward living healthier and more productive lives."

As the new Region III Representative for the Smith College Alumni Association, Monifa will represent the states of Alabama, Washington DC, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. We wish her much success as she fulfills her commitment to Region III.

2005 ALUMNI THESIS GRANT AWARD RECIPIENT

Alejandro Luciano, A'05



Alejandro Luciano received the 2005 Alumni Thesis Award for Students of Color for his thesis titled, "Negotiating Differences: An Exploratory Study of Identity Development in Black and Latino Adolescents Attending Elite Private High Schools in the Northeast." He says that personal experiences lead to his thesis research and his decision to enter Smith's Social Work program. After earning a dual degree in Sociology and Psychology from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, Alejandro says that it was Smith alumni that sparked his interest in the program. Below is an excerpt from an interview with Alejandro:

Why did you choose Smith College School for Social Work?
I chose Smith because the Smith graduates I spoke with were uniquely passionate about the education they obtained here. I was also intrigued by the seemingly direct and honest approach the school takes in discussing issues of difference and prejudice. I am very happy with the choice I made.

Tell me about why you chose this thesis topic and the process of completing it.

I chose my thesis topic for a number of reasons. My personal experience at boarding school spurred an interest in learning more about how identity development might be affected in an environment where Black and Latino adolescents encounter social and economic privilege. For my community project last year, I worked with the parents of children of color who attend

boarding schools. This work also furthered my interest and deepened my understanding of some of the family dynamics

What is your overall impression of your "Smith experience?"
At Smith, in addition to being asked to learn psychodynamic theory and its practical applications, I have been challenged to explore my own processes and how these affect the work I do. I have learned a great deal about myself — my strengths, deficits, biases, prejudices and how I can work with these to effectively reach and serve my clients. It has been truly challenging work. I value the Smith experience and will bring it with me to all that I do.

What do you see as important issues facing the field of social work?

I feel that in an environment where mental health services are undervalued and the desire to watch the bottom line forces governments and organizations to cut budgets for needed programs, the field of social work must continue to demonstrate its relevance. We need to be proactive in learning and contributing to new research, policy and methods of practice, so we can have a hand in guiding the course of our profession and not simply react to the environment around us.

As you approach graduation, how do you see yourself contributing to the field of social work (population you hope to serve, what areas of the field will you be involved)?
I am looking to work with underserved adolescents and young adults, individually and in groups. I am also considering applying to doctoral programs in the future.

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RETURN ADDRESS REQUESTED

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News from the Smith College School for Social Work Alumni of Color Standing Committee

2005 -2006

Alumni of Color Standing Committee

Chair	Tanita Cox, MSW'99
Native American Representative	Starr Wood, MSW'90, Ph.D.'00
African Diaspora Representative	Alistair Blake, MSW'99
African Diaspora Representative	Ludley Howard, MSW'90
Latina/o Representative	Nelly Schwan, CRT'88, ABD'93
Latina/o Representative	VACANT
Asian Representative	VACANT

If you are interested in, or would like to recommend someone for a vacancy, please contact Tanita Cox at tanitacoxonline@yahoo.com

