Winter 2021 Virtual Discussions

Join the School of Social Work ENGAGE Team in celebrating those fighting for racial equity and social change all semester long by attending our series of dynamic, online conversations featuring local social justice heroes.

These sessions are open to the University at large and to the general public.

*Students can receive field credit for attending these sessions. Please check with your field faculty advisor for further information.

If you have any questions, please contact Ayesha Ghazi Edwin ayeshag@umich.edu

CASC + ENGAGE: Youth Empowerment and Organizing

Thursday, January 21, 5-6:30 PM
RSVP

Youth have the ability to galvanize social and political movements for change. They understand powerful new means of communication that can connect and drive their peers. Youth are especially positioned to be great drivers for equity. Join us for a special joint discussion with our Community Action and Social Change program, featuring local youth leaders and change-makers discussing the impact of their work and the movements they are leading. Youth panelists will include CASC alumna Kayla Tate, longtime youth organizer at 482Forward in Detroit; 482Forward Director of Youth Organizing Dillon Cathro; youth organizer Yamah Bahdeh of the African Bureau for Immigrant and Social Affairs; and Javaye Henry, youth organizer at the East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEACE). Director of Undergraduate Minor Programs and Associate Professor Katie Richards-Schuster and CASC Assistant Director Diana Seales will also be joining the conversation.
Schools punish Black students — Black boys in particular — more harshly, expel them more often, and isolate them more frequently than they do white students. This affects Black students’ academic outcomes and achievement and socioeconomic mobility, and it shapes Black students’ senses of self. When teachers, administrators and peers are shaped by implicit bias from living in a racist society, how do we expect our institutions to function impartially and fairly? This virtual discussion focuses on the deployment of police officers in our public schools, especially majority-Black schools, and how their presence and their tactics have helped to create a school-to-prison pathway for Black children.

Special guests include Dr. Charles Bell, native Detroit scholar and expert on criminal justice and assistant professor of criminal justice at Illinois State University. Other panelists include organizers of Detroit’s 482Forward, who have led the campaign to defund the police in public schools, including Mohammad Muntakim, president of the Cass Tech Muslim Student Association and member of the 482 Youth Organizing Collective; and Kristian Matthews, member of the 482 Youth Organizing Collective and of Detroit Heals Detroit.

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From the fight for a fair wage, to business closures during a pandemic, to a historic lack of job opportunities for Black individuals, race-based mechanisms of economic and social
suppression have been systemically and strategically created in Detroit. This virtual
discussion focuses on the work of Detroit activists and leaders who have dedicated their
lives to creating a more economically just and mobile city.

Special guests include Eboni Taylor, Michigan Executive Director of Mothering Justice;
DeWayne Wells, Executive Director of the Economic Justice Alliance of Michigan; and Dr.
Alicia Farris, Chief Operations Officer of the Restaurant Opportunities Center.

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**Poverty Doesn’t Pause: Housing Insecurity During a Pandemic**

March 25, 2021, 12-1:30 PM

[RSVP](#)

Homelessness and housing insecurity have become an epidemic in our country, especially
in communities of color. During a pandemic, these individuals end up being our most
vulnerable. Join us for this virtual discussion featuring panelists working on the front lines
of Detroit’s housing insecurity crisis, who will discuss how the pandemic has exacerbated
housing issues. Featured panelists include LaTonia Walker, mobility coach of Creating
Opportunities to Succeed (COTS); Amber Elliott, mobility coach of Creating Opportunities
to Succeed (COTS), and project manager and community improvement advisor for Built
for Zero Nationals; Courtney Smith, executive director of Detroit Phoenix Center; and
Candace Montgomery, systems transformation advisor of Detroit’s Built for Zero, Community Solutions.

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**Immigrants in Michigan: The Untold Story**

Thursday, April 1, 2021, 12-1:30 PM

[RSVP](#)

Immigrants have made great contributions to this state—economically, politically, and
socially. The fabric of American society has been woven by the contributions of diverse
immigrants. And yet, as a nation, we continue to suppress and demonize these
immigrants. This session explores the story of immigrants in Michigan, a story that we, as
social workers, are obligated to know.

Special guests include Fayrouz Saad, executive director of the Office of Global Michigan;
Wojciech Zolnowski, executive director of the International Institute; Fatou Seydi-Sarr,
executive director and founder of the African Bureau for Immigrant and Social Affairs; and
Storytelling for Social Justice

Thursday, April 8, 12-1:30 PM

RSVP

Storytelling — listening to the stories of others and sharing one’s own stories — builds a foundation for human interaction. Telling others how we got here and why we care about an issue builds connection, allows us to share our values, and creates meaning. The art of public narrative is used in all aspects of social work practice — from helping our clients rewrite the stories they tell themselves, to helping communities and groups galvanize social change, to helping policy makers and politicians tell a “story of self” while creating a “story of us.” Join us for a discussion featuring Aaron Foley, former chief storyteller for the City of Detroit and current professor of journalism at New York University; Eric Thomas, current chief storyteller for the City of Detroit; and Jessica Care Moore, Detroit poet, activist and author.

*Reminder for all sessions: students of the ENGAGE: Community Mini-Course, please stay on for an extra 30 minutes after each virtual discussion.*