



**SSW TBLG DEAN MATTERS INITIATIVE  
YEAR IN REVIEW**

**Submitted by**

**Leigh A. Robertson Faculty Advisor with  
Samantha Wellman, John McDowell and Alexandra Nassif  
MSW Candidates and Initiative Work Study  
SEPTEMBER 2013-MAY 2014**

Leigh A. Robertson, LMSW is the faculty advisor, with consultation and support from Associate Dean Michael Spencer and Elizabeth (Betsy) Voshel, Field Director and Clinical Faculty. MSW candidates, Samantha Wellman, John McDowell and Alexandra Nassif were the student work study coordinators.

**History**

In September 2002, President Mary Sue Coleman met with representatives of the Queer Visibility Caucus and created a task force to research the campus climate for TBLG Faculty, staff and students. The TBLG Report with recommendations was released by the Office of the Provost.

SSW Dean Paula Meares Allen formed the Dean's TBLG Advisory Task Group. The charge to the Task Group was the following:

Reviewing the Provost's TBLG Report and priorities within SSW

Review all materials from and representing the SSW to ensure proper inclusion of the TBLG Community and TBLG issues

Campus wide TBLG groups included in new student orientation and Doctoral seminar materials.

Seek out and secure field placements for those wishing to work with TBLG communities

Provide training for field instructors regarding TBLG issues and communities.

Provide faculty and staff support in furthering their learning and skills regarding TBLG issues.

Offer formal and informal presentations and educational opportunities regarding TBLG issues and concerns for the SSW community

In 2007, the SSW TBLG Task Force update recommended the creation of a SSW TBLG Matters committee whose goals are:

To provide students faculty and staff with tools and basic knowledge related to the TBLG communities and other minority groups based on categories of sexual and gender identity.

To educate about gender identity, gender expression, and the realities of life for transgender people.

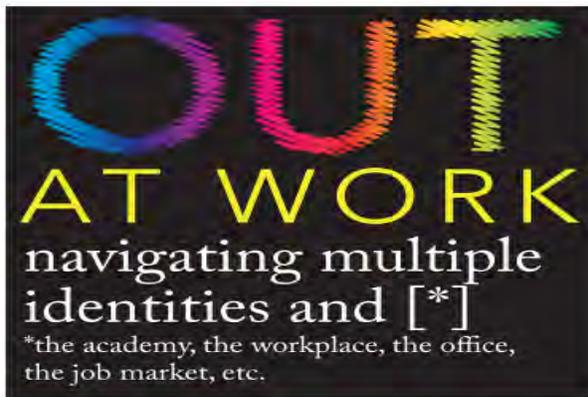
To focus on those who are often invisible inside the TBLG movement: transgender, gender variant youth, TBLG workers, and TBLG people of color.

Since then, the TBLG Dean Matter's Initiative with faculty and student leadership, continues to offer programming and advocacy to meet these primary goals. Programming has included Out in Field workshops, Transgender Day of Remembrance events and speakers, small group discussion groups for TBLG student affinity groups, Teach Ins about TBLG local, state, and federal legislation, ally trainings and mini conferences for students and faculty.

This year in review highlights the Initiative's work from September 2013-May 2014

The SSW Dean's Initiative, Queer Social Work Alliance, and the Multicultural and Gender Affairs committee sponsored: **Coming Out in Russia: A Global Social Work Perspective on October 10th.** We had 20 students and faculty there to learn about the real life civil rights challenges TBLGQ people are experiencing in Russia.

**Out at Work: Navigating Identities in the Academy and the Job Market: October 9<sup>th</sup> 2013 6-8pm and March 19, 2014 6-8pm.** Co-sponsored with the Center for the Education of Women and the Spectrum Center: Evaluation feedback: "I enjoyed the different perspectives of each and every person on the panel. I especially enjoyed Leigh Robertson and the doctoral student's perspective and analysis of being "out" in field. "I liked the discussions of intersecting identities, passing privileges, and various degrees of 'being out'".



## PROGRAM

- welcome
- identities and the workplace: resources
- panelist introductions
- panelist remarks
- questions for the panel
- closing

## PANELISTS

\*in alphabetical order

Army 1st Lt. **Stephanie L. Boltrick**, LLMSW, is a Medical Service Corps Officer in the Michigan Army National Guard with over 10 years of service in the United States Army. Stephanie received her commission in the Army from Michigan State University's Army Reserve Officer Training Corps upon completion of her undergraduate degree in Psychology in 2008. She obtained her Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from Western Michigan University in June 2013. Stephanie currently serves as the coordinator of the Suicide Prevention and Resiliency Risk Reduction programs for the Michigan Army National Guard.

## PANELISTS

\*continued

**Lynn Conway** is Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Emerita, at the University of Michigan. Although born and raised as a boy, she felt a deep need to be a girl from early childhood. It was nearly impossible to transition in the 1950s, but with great luck she finally found medical help and underwent reassignment surgery in 1968. At the time, she had begun working for IBM as a research engineer, but was fired when the company learned of her plans to transition. Although Lynn had to start all over again in a covert new identity, and at the bottom of the ladder as a contract programmer, she went on to become a pioneer of the microelectronics chip design revolution in Silicon Valley the 1980's. Lynn joined UM in 1985 as Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Associate Dean of Engineering. In 1999, she faced 'outing' as stories circulated about her early work at IBM. Feeling growing pride in her accomplishments, she overcame her fears and quietly came out after three decades in stealth. During the 2000's, Lynn created [www.lynnconway.com](http://www.lynnconway.com), a major transadvocacy website. Along the way, Lynn has become a 'grand-mom' to many young transgender women, giving them love and support as they reach for their dreams.

Dr. **Marvourneen Dolor**, Ph.D, is an Environmental Chemist by training and is an environmentalist at heart. She currently works as a Program Coordinator at small environmental non-profit, an Environmental Policy Consultant to a federal agency and a Chemistry Lab Instructor at Eastern Michigan University. Marvourneen is the relatively rare scientist who places a high value on social interactions and actively pursues opportunities to discuss non-technical issues. She is currently collaborating with colleagues to improve the social and emotional intelligence of her fellow-scientists.

**Kevin Goodman** is a fourth-year doctoral student in the Joint Psychology and Women's Studies program at the University of Michigan, with a department area focus in Personality & Social Contexts Psychology. Kevin's research and community investments generally cluster around intersecting issues of coalition building, social justice education, and the lived experiences and out-group perceptions of racial and sexual minority youth. His involvement and leadership in various nonprofit campus and community organizations integrates Kevin's graduate training in qualitative and survey methodology and intergroup relations with years of formal education and professional experience in public speaking, dialogic facilitation, consulting, and conflict resolution.

**Leigh Robertson**, MA, LMSW, ACSW, has been a Field Educator / LEO Lecturer IV for the University of Michigan School of Social Work Office of Field Instruction since 2006. Previously, she worked as a clinical social worker in the medical/surgical service at the U-M Health Systems. She has also been a medical social worker, case manager, director of the Lesbian and Gay Community Center in Cleveland, Ohio, social worker in five domestic violence shelters, and more. Her research interests include: domestic violence, health and mental health with older adults, medical social work and micro and macro practice within the TBLGQJA (Transgender, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, questioning, intersex and Ally) communities.

**Jonah Thompson** is the Studio Manager and Riot Youth Advisor for the Neutral Zone in Ann Arbor. Jonah grew up in East Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti in religious household and being a person of faith has been an important part of his journey as a transgender person. Recently Jonah established the RR Collective which is dedicated to raising funds for community organizations that support the transgender community.

co-sponsors:



**Two Spirits: a documentary:** Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup>

Two Spirits is a documentary that explores the history and cultural context of Two Spirit identities in Native American communities, and discusses the life and death of a Navajo teen that identified as Two Spirit. This event was co-sponsored by the Coalition of Native Graduate Students and the Queer Social Work Alliance, and was attended by around 10 people. Participants indicated that they felt this event expanded their awareness of Two Spirit identities as well as their interest in related issues covered in the film and discussion, including intersectionality and historical context, support systems, hate crime prevention and bystander intervention, the merits and limits of “tolerance” as a goal, and disparities in the prosecution and media coverage of hate crimes.

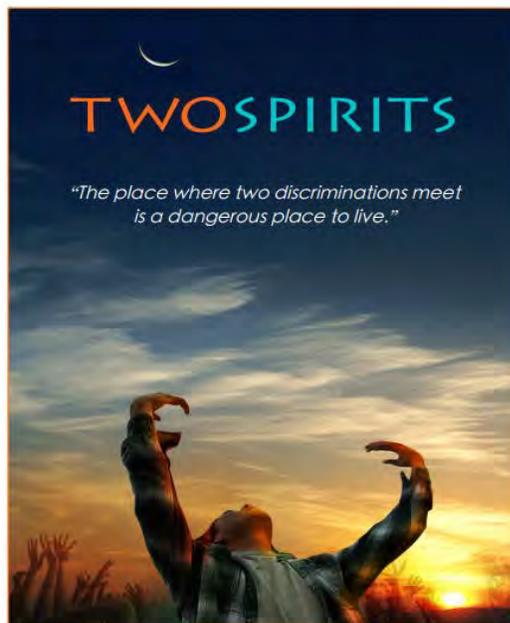
# FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION

Wednesday,  
December 4<sup>th</sup>  
5–7:30 PM

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK BUILDING

MCGREGGOR COMMONS

REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED



Questions, concerns, or accommodations?

Please contact  
anassif@umich.edu  
leigrobe@umich.edu

Brought to you by

SSW DEAN'S TBLG INITIATIVE

Cosponsored by

COALITION OF NATIVE GRADUATE STUDENTS  
QUEER SOCIAL WORK ALLIANCE

# WHEN YOUR IDENTITIES

# ARE

# YOUR WORK

navigating multiple identities and [\*]

\*the academy, the workplace, the office,  
the job market, etc.

## PROGRAM

- welcome
- resources
- panelist introductions
- table conversations
- panelist wrap-up
- closing

## PANELISTS

\*in alphabetical order

**D Alvarez** received an MSW from UofM in 2012 with a focus on Community Organizing. D's professional interests include looking at the intersection of identity work, education, and community organizing/activism. D is currently the Interim Program Manager at the Program on Intergroup Relations where they manage CommonGround—a student run social justice education program. Outside of work, D participates on panels around social identity topics and is frequently thinking about the fluidity of identities and how social identities show up and impact group dynamics.

## PANELISTS

\*continued

**Maria S. Johnson** is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Center for the Education of Women at the University of Michigan. Dr. Johnson researches the role of race and gender within family relationships and federal family policy. She also evaluates CEW's programs that aim to advance women's career development. In addition, to her research, Dr. Johnson teaches and facilitates discussions about social justice and multicultural issues in the academy. She earned a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Sociology from the University of Michigan and a BA in History from Hampton University. Starting this fall she will be an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at the University of Delaware.

**Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes** is Director of the Latina/o Studies Program and Associate Professor of American Culture, Romance Languages and Literatures, and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, he received his A.B. from Harvard (1991) and M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia (1999). He is author of *Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora* (2009), *Uñas pintadas de azul/Blue Fingernails* (2009), and *Abolición del plato* (2013). He co-edited an issue of *CENTRO Journal* on Puerto Rican Queer Sexualities (Spring 2007) and is currently working on a book titled "Translocas and Transmachas: Trans Diasporic Puerto Rican Drag."

**Shari Robinson-Lynk** has nearly 20 years of professional experience as a geriatric social worker. She also has research interest and expertise in feminist gerontology, feminist anthropology, international aging and issues of diversity and cultural competence (humility), in particular, TBGLQ (Transgender, Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Queer) older adult studies. Currently, Shari is the Assistant Director for Engaged Learning Partnerships at the Ginsberg Center. She is also a LEO Adjunct Lecturer with both the School of Social Work and the College of Literature, Science and the Arts. Shari lives her life, both professionally and personally, by shining a bright light on all of her visible and invisible identities.

**Carrie Ross** received her MSW from Columbia University and her Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary. She also has a BA from Drake University where she studied English and women's studies. Her professional involvement has included case management with homeless youth, counseling and advocacy with women regarding reproductive rights, medical social work with a particular focus on health care disparities for queer communities, and now individual counseling and programming for adult women regarding career and educational goals. She identifies unapologetically as both feminist and queer, and carries a commitment to multicultural and anti-racist practice into her work. As a first generation college student herself, she also holds a particular passion for people struggling with class issues. In addition to counseling at the CEW, Carrie also teaches in the Schools of Social Work at both UM and EMU.

**Jonah Thompson** received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan in the field of Sound Engineering. He now works at the Ann Arbor Neutral Zone, leading the Queer Youth programming and managing the recording studio, The Orpheum. His passions for business, music, and mentoring have evolved into a vision for his life's work which involves establishing community spaces that combine artistic spaces for identity development and discovery. Most recently, he launched his latest endeavor, the RE Collective Foundation, which is an entity that leverages relationships with allied businesses, foundations, and individuals to multiply grassroots community fundraising efforts for transgender people of color in need of medical access.

co-sponsors:



**Winter 2014** The DI collaborated with OFI to revise the Out in Field brochure. DI work study students were involved in reflecting on their own coming out process, and how it relates to field and their social work identity. They also engaged in more outreach with their peers about the Out in Field program.

**RESOURCES**  
**Outside of Field**

University of Michigan Spectrum Center:  
<http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu/resources>

U-M SSW Queer Alliance  
<http://studentorgs.umich.edu/group/10003669>

U-M SSW Dean's TBLGQIA Initiative  
<http://ssw.umich.edu/about/ssw-advantage/deans-initiatives/tblg-matters>



**REFERENCES**

Dooley, J. (2007). Coming out in field placement: Some considerations for LGBT students. *The Social Worker Magazine*, 14(1). Retrieved from [http://www.socialworker.com/home/Feature\\_Articles/Field\\_Placement/20/5/](http://www.socialworker.com/home/Feature_Articles/Field_Placement/20/5/)

Messinger, L. (2004). Out in the field: Gay and lesbian social work students in field placement. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 40(2/3), 187-204

Messinger, L. (2007). Supervision of lesbian, gay, and bisexual social work students by heterosexual field instructors: A qualitative dyad analysis. *Clinical Supervisor*, 26(1/2), 195-222

Newman, P., Daley, A. & Bogo, M. (2009). Breaking the silence: Sexual orientation in social work field education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 45(1), 7-27

*This brochure was created by faculty, staff and students from the University School of Social Work Office of Field Instruction, in cooperation with Dr. Lori Messinger (University of Kansas) and Rebecca Brigham (University of St. Caroline Chapel Hill), 2011.*

**REACH OUT**  
**RAISE HOPE**  
**CHANGE SOCIETY**

For confidential support, guidance, and resources, contact:



**Leigh A. Robertson, LMSW**  
Field Faculty & TBLGQIA Liaison  
leigrobe@umich.edu  
734.678.2805

**M**  
**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**FIELD INSTRUCTION**  
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ssw-fieldoffice@umich.edu

**M** SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
**FIELD INSTRUCTION**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

**OUT**  
**IN FIELD INSTRUCTION**



transgender, bisexual,  
lesbian, gay, queer,  
questioning, intersex,  
ally students and social  
work field instruction

**Coming Out in FIELD**

Social work graduate students want a field placement that will provide them with a good educational experience. They have the right to a safe and comfortable field environment. Transgender, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, questioning, intersex and ally (TBLGQIA) people may withhold personal information about their lives because they fear discrimination, rejection, or isolation. They also may decide to be "out" in all areas of their lives. This "Management of Disclosure" is a personal decision made by each individual student based on age or stage of life, length of time they have been aware of their sexuality, level of TBLGQIA community connections, along with the intersection of class, race, and abilities.



*"I was uncertain how I would be accepted by my clients, because I am a gay, multi-rethnic male. Out in Field helped me understand I have to do what feels appropriate for me. Since I am 'out' at Field, it has fostered discussions about the TBLGQIA community and has allowed me to be a resource for TBLGQI clients."*

John McDowell, MSW Candidate, 2014

**Where We STAND**

The University of Michigan School of Social Work (UM-SSW), Office of Field Instruction, faculty, and staff are committed to providing and nurturing a "safe zone" for our students.

UM-SSW has a nondiscrimination policy, which includes a commitment to industry. We ask all fieldwork sites and field instructors to sign an Affiliation Agreement with the University and the School of Social Work that states they will "support the assignment of students without discrimination."



**How to be a Fieldwork Site**  
**ALLY**

- Have agency-wide diversity and human rights policies
- Provide an inclusive and physically friendly environment
- Support and encourage the presence of "out" staff
- Provide resources for TBLGQIA clients

**How to be a Field Instructor**  
**ALLY**

- Assess your knowledge and skills
- Seek out learning opportunities
- Assess your agency for TBLGQIA friendliness
- Support diversity in hiring
- Advocate for equity and justice

*"My sexual orientation is a part of me that I am now allowing myself to get to know and is, at this point, my lightly guarded secret. Being able to introduce my queer identity—and my whole self—at my discretion, has been strengthening. I couldn't imagine having taken the steps I have without the guidance found through Out in Field."*

MSW Candidate, 2014

**Finding SUPPORT**

UM-SSW Field Faculty along with the Director of Field Instruction, want to hear from all students who may have questions or concerns about:

- TBLGQIA friendly field placements
- Experiences of heterosexism, homophobia, or transphobia within a fieldwork setting
- Support for disclosure of sexual orientation and gender identity within the field placement setting

**Talk to an OFI Field Faculty about your fieldwork site.**  
**Does it have ...?**

- A nondiscrimination policy that addresses sexual orientation and gender identity
- "Out" TBLGQIA staff
- TBLGQIA cultural competence training or TBLGQIA focused professional development opportunities for staff
- Policies/expectations related to staff self-disclosure with clients

*More resources are listed on the other side of this page.*

**Goals for the next year:**

The TBLG Dean Matters Initiative partnered with student groups this year and we plan to continue to do so in this next year. The Initiative and Queer Alliance student leadership have met through the year to learn more about each other's mission and how to work collaboratively.

One area of interest for next year will be "TBLGQIA and Aging". Representatives from both groups, including some faculty, have been meeting this summer to plan for more programs. Film and discussion session, lunch and learn events and an Aging symposium are in the planning for fall 2014.

We will continue to collaborate in creating relevant programming, keeping with the TBLG DMI mission and goals, within the School of Social Work and the University partnerships with Queer Alliance, and UM Spectrum Center.

We will continue to focus on assisting MSW students in reflecting on and transitioning their TBLGQIA identities into their professional identities.