



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

**Submitted by**

**Leigh A. Robertson Faculty Advisor with  
Alexandra Nassif, Daniel Anderson and Raúl Vargas  
MSW Candidates and Initiative Work Study  
SEPTEMBER 2014-MAY 2015**

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, Alexandra Nassif Daniel Anderson and Raúl Vargas 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.

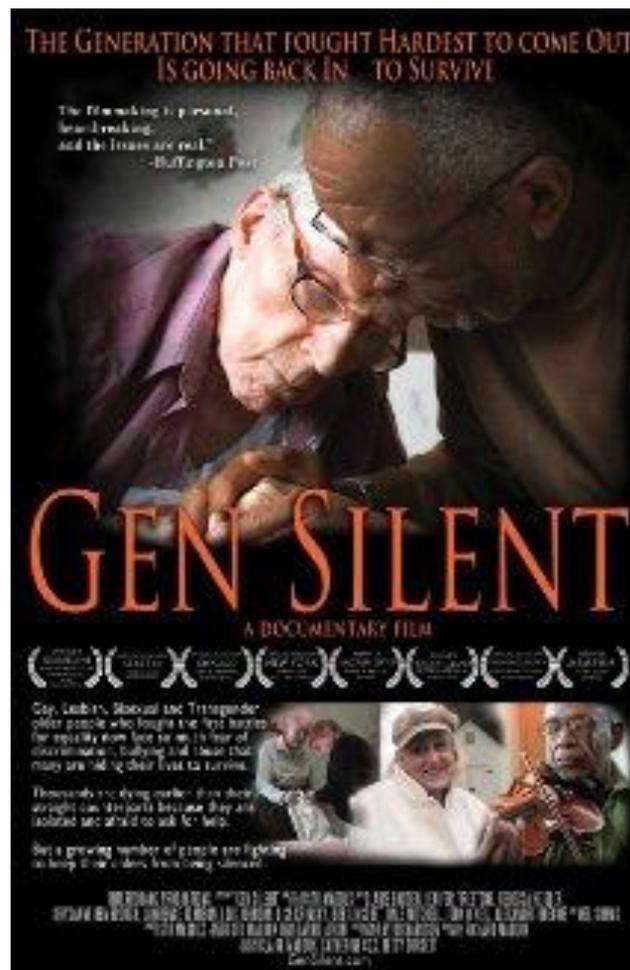
To focus on those who are often invisible inside the TBLG movement: transgender, gender variant youth, TBLG workers, and TBLG people of color.

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.

## Aging Across the Spectrum Symposium: Film screenings

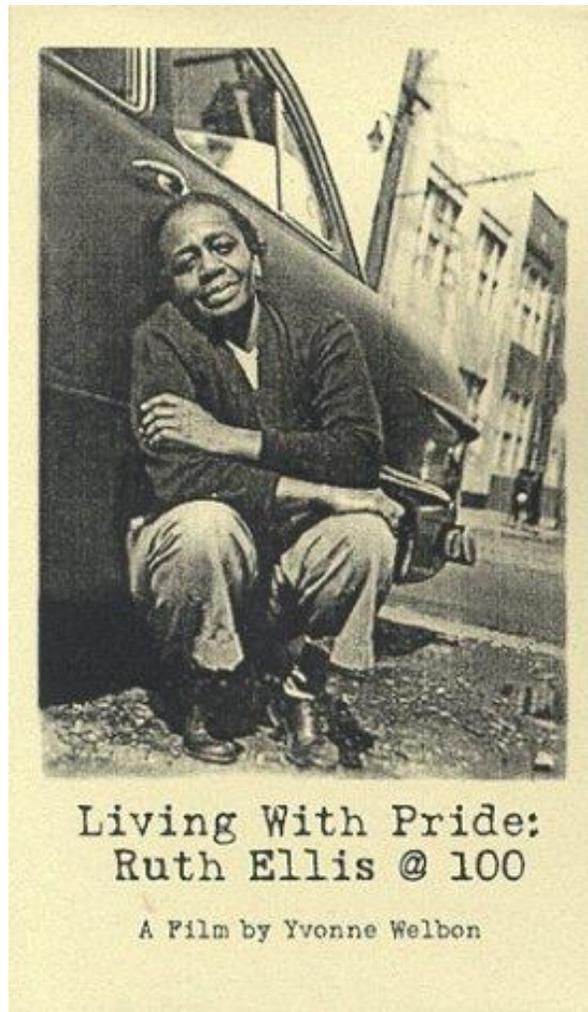
*Gen Silent* (9/17/14)

The first event in the LGBTQ Aging Symposium was a screening of the film *Gen Silent*, followed by a discussion lead by Shari Robinson-Lynk. The 15-20 attendees enjoyed light refreshments and learned about issues facing TBLGQ older adults. The film explored the experiences of several older adults and couples as they navigated issues of self-disclosure, family relationships, community-building, and healthcare. Participants noted that they found the film engaging and enjoyed the discussion, and that they “learned a great deal of new information.” One participant summarized one main theme of the film: “[P]eople who identify at LGBTQ sometimes feel obliged to go back into the closet as they age due to the dangers of stigma from caretakers and service providers.” Similarly, another participant was struck by “how at risk for isolation this population is.” During the discussion, participants expressed a desire to learn more and take action in order to better serve TBLGQ older adults.



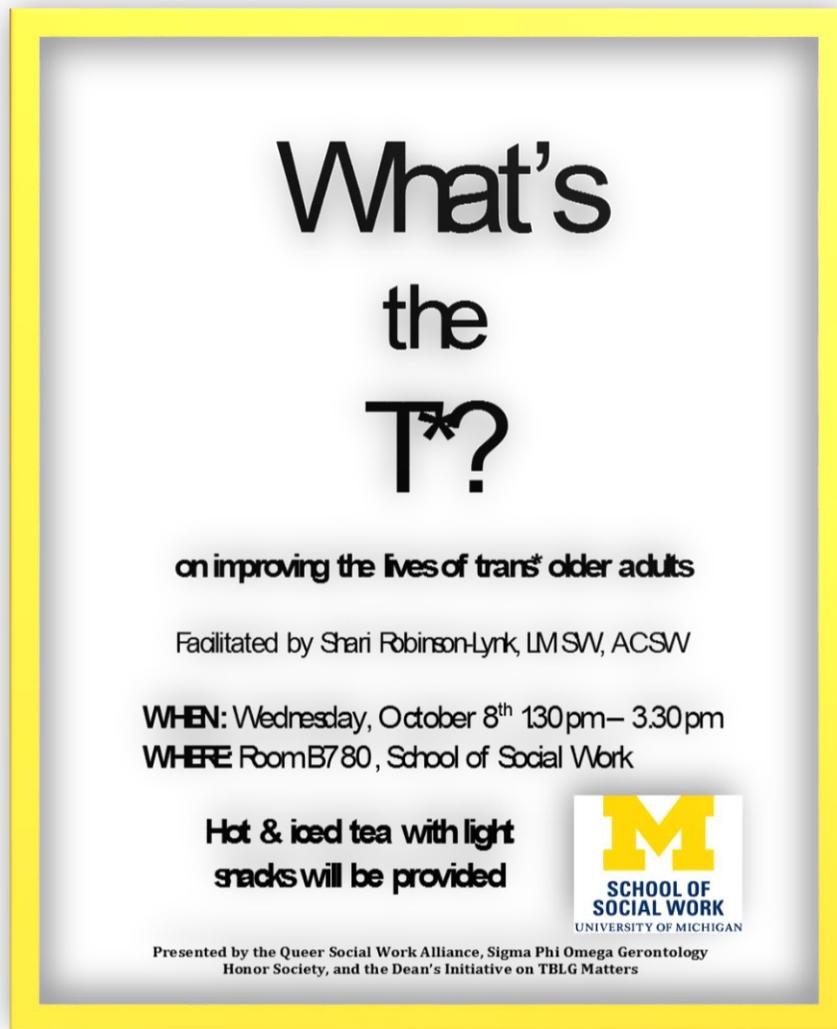
*Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100 (9/24/14)*

The second event in the LGBTQ Aging Symposium was a screening of the film *Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100*, followed by a discussion lead by Shari Robinson-Lynk. The 15-20 attendees enjoyed light refreshments and learned about the life of Black lesbian Detroit activist Ruth Ellis (1899-2000). The film gave an overview of Ellis' childhood, family life, relationships and social life, printing business, and numerous hobbies (especially her love for dancing). Ellis' house, which she owned with her longtime partner, was known as "the gay spot" – a gathering place for African American LGBT Detroiters for many decades. The Ruth Ellis Center, which honors her legacy, has served vulnerable TBLGQ youth in Detroit since 1999. Participants remarked on "the breadth of history that Ruth's life spanned," and that Ellis "was an exceptional individual, and despite many barriers, led a long and successful life." The film also highlighted for participants the importance of connecting with our history and building relationships with our elders in the TBLGQ community, and the crucial role of "families of choice" for the wellbeing of community members of all ages. It also emphasized the role of the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality in Ellis' life, prompting participants to reflect on the role of intersectionality in their own lives and the lives of those they serve.



*What's the "T"? (10/8/15)*

Originally titled *Lunch and Learn*, the third event focused on providing an introductory understanding of what the T is in the LGBTQ+ acronym stands for. This event was led and facilitated by Shari L. Robinson-Lynk, a LEO Adjunct Lecturer at University of Michigan School of Social Work. The speaker provided an overview of various terms, which fall under the trans umbrella as well as provided an overview of the issues and experiences that some trans individuals have faced. There was also a guest speaker who spoke about his experiences in coming out, medically transitioning during a later stage of his life. Topics discussed during his lived experience included the evolution of his relationships, privilege and passing privilege. At the end of the presentation, the students were invited to take part in a facilitated discussion touching on the topics of diversity of trans identities & experiences, the importance of support systems for resilience, and the need for loved ones to be supported as well while they learn to support their trans family/friends/partners.



**What's  
the  
T\*?**

**on improving the lives of trans\* older adults**

Facilitated by Shari Robinson-Lynk, LMSW, ACSW

**WHEN:** Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup> 1:30pm– 3:30pm  
**WHERE:** Room B780, School of Social Work

**Hot & iced tea with light  
snacks will be provided**



**SCHOOL OF  
SOCIAL WORK**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Presented by the Queer Social Work Alliance, Sigma Phi Omega Gerontology Honor Society, and the Dean's Initiative on TBLG Matters

*LGBTQ Aging Symposium and Panel (10/15/15)*

*Contribution of information provided by Brad Palmertree*

The final event of the “Aging Across the Spectrum” series, the *LGBTQ Aging symposium and Panel* grew out of the need to examine the many macro policies that impact the experience of the aging LGBTQ population. The event was created through the combined student efforts of Benna Kessler, Marry\_Margaret Morris, Shelby Patterson, Alex Nassif, Deidre Manning, Brad Palmertree and LEO Adjunct Lecturer Shari Robinson-Lynk. Through their combined efforts, they were able to collaborate with the Queer Social Work Alliance, Sigma Phi Omega Gerontology Honors Society, the Gerontology Learning Community, the Multicultural and Gender Affairs Committee, the Social Work Office of Student Services and the Dean’s TBLG Matters Initiative for the creation of this event. The event explored the challenges and barriers the LGBTQ community is currently facing in the legal, medical and social service communities all while taking into consideration the intersecting identities of this unique population. This event brought in incredible individuals in the field who are currently working on these challenges. The panel consisted of Dr. Sylvia Weinberg who is currently teaching at Eastern Michigan University; Jane Bassett who is a private attorney who also focuses on LGBTQ family issues; Jay Kaplan who is a staff attorney for the ACLU of Michigan’s LGGT Project; and Jim Toy who is a clinical social worker and a community organizer. Shari Robinson-Lynk moderated the LGBTQ Aging Symposium.

The Queer Social Work Alliance, Sigma Phi Omega Gerontology Honor Society, and the Dean's Initiative on TBLG Matters present

# *Aging Across the SPECTRUM*

with Shari Robinson-Lynk, LMSW, ACSW

**EVENT SCHEDULE**

*Gen Silent* Documentary & Discussion  
September 17<sup>th</sup>, 6pm ECC, SSW Building

*Living with Pride: Ruth C. Ellis @ 100* Documentary & Discussion  
September 24<sup>th</sup>, 6 pm ECC, SSW Building

**Lunch & Learn:** Therapeutic Responses to Working with LGBTQ Older Adults  
October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1:30-3:30pm B780, SSW Building

**LGBTQ Aging Symposium & Panel**  
October 15<sup>th</sup>, 12-2pm B780, SSW Building

*All Events Are Free & Open to the Public, Light Refreshments Provided*

School of Social Work Building is located at 1080 S. University, Ann Arbor, MI

*Queer Latin@s & UndocuQueers (10/10/14)*

This event revolved around the lived experiences of individuals with the intersecting identities of Queerness, being Latin@ and being an undocumented. The event was sponsored by the Latin@ Social Work Coalition, The Queer Social Work Alliance, and the Dean's TBLG Matters Initiative during Hispanic Heritage Month. This event brought in about 15-20 attendees with light refreshments being provided. The presenters began by having everyone in the audience introduce themselves, including names, identifying pronouns, reasons for attending, year and concentration. This was then followed by having the audience guess which statements presented are facts and which ones are myths. After this activity, the presenters had a small discussion on the importance of intersecting identities and how it can affect the lived experience of an individual. After this small discussion the presenters moved onto a panel discussion made of up students who attend the University of Michigan and they also included an individual whose partner was deported due to immigrant laws. These panelists were given a series of questions where every one of them answered from their lived experience. These questions ranged from inquiring through their context their lived experiences in queer spaces, to questions that were addressed to the professional mental health communities. After the planned discussion, a portion towards the end of the presentation was dedicated to Q & A. This specific portion of the event was engaging and where members of the audience were given the opportunity to ask questions that revolved around important topics such as Machismo and caregiver relationships.



Sponsor by the Latin@ Social Work Coalition, Queer Social Work Alliance and the Dean's TGLB Initiative

Join us for a conversation with  
community members and experts on the  
micro and macro implications when  
working with  
*queer latin@s and  
undocuqueers*

**Friday October 10<sup>th</sup>**  
**12:00pm-2pm**  
**ECC**

Food will be served



*December 8th Study Break (Surveys) (12/4,5,8,9/14)*

The event was done in collaboration with the Dean's Office and the Office of Student Services. In this event, all three parties provided food and refreshments for all the students at the School of Social Work during the last two weeks leading into finals. During the distribution, the Dean's TBLG Matter's Initiative team were a presence near the distribution of snacks and refreshments to collect data from the students surrounding the events that were planned during the year. The survey given to students included questions surrounding topics they are interested in seeing discussed or presented in future events. Overall there were about thirty-seven surveys collected and which will be used to focus on the growing interests surrounding experiences of "intersecting identities" which was voiced in many of the surveys.

The Dean's Office and the Office of Student Services  
in collaboration with the Dean's TBLG Matters Initiative  
presents

# End of Fall Term Study Break

Support The Dean's Initiative by completing a quick  
survey for potential upcoming events

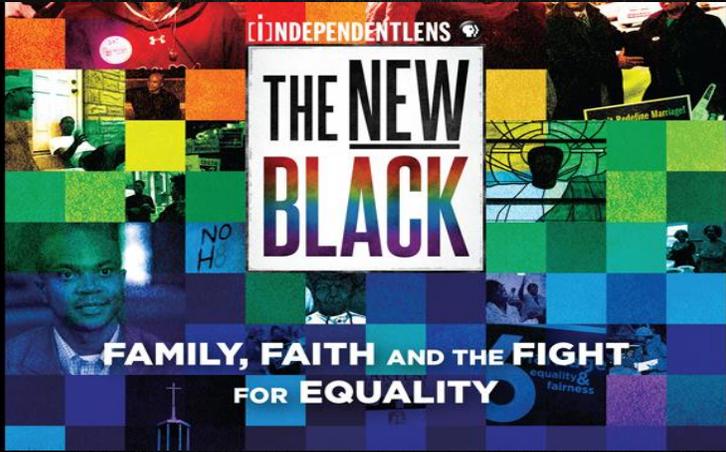
Stop by for small refreshments and snacks

**Thursday 12/4, Friday 12/ 5,  
Monday 12/8, Tuesday 12/9  
10am-1pm  
McGregor Commons**

*The New Black Film Screening (3/26/15)*

In January 2015, the University of Michigan hosted filmmaker Yoruba Richen to discuss elements of her film, *The New Black*, the recent events of Ferguson, and the fast evolving climate surrounding marriage equality. To continue this dialogue, The Dean's Initiative on TBLG Matters collaborated with The Association of Black Social Workers, The Office of Field Instruction, and The Queer Social Work Alliance to screen Richen's film. 15-20 attendees enjoyed dinner as they watched Richen's portrayal of the issues facing the Black and TBLG communities during the marriage equality movement in Maryland during 2012. Afterwards students from the Dean's Initiative and ABSW facilitated an hour-long series of discussions related to the film's portrayals of privilege, oppression, and intersectionality. Students challenged each other to think critically about the experiences and oppressions that Black and TBLG individuals face. Students also reflected on their future roles in working with issues the film explored. At the discussion's conclusion, students from ABSW and QSWA expressed, "interest in collaborating together in the future," as well as, "exploring issues relating to intersectionality with other student groups within the School of Social Work."

**DEAN'S TBLG INITIATIVE**, in collaboration  
with **ABSWS, OFI, & QSWA**, presents...



**THE NEW BLACK**  
FAMILY, FAITH AND THE FIGHT  
FOR EQUALITY

Viewing and Discussion  
Thursday, March 26  
5:15pm  
Location: SSW B780  
Food & refreshments will be provided



*TBLGQ+ Allyship Development Training 101 (4/14/15)*

This event was brought in collaboration with the Queer Social Work Alliance and the U-M Spectrum Center. This workshop was created by the Spectrum Center as an entry-level introduction workshop into the TBLG community and was facilitated by Tynishia Walker, (a recent alumni), who is the leadership education coordinator for the U-M Spectrum Center. There were about 10-15 attendees for this event, mostly from the school of social work, who stated they were interested in learning more about this complex and unique community. The Dean's TBLG Initiative provided the salads and light refreshments. The training lasted about an hour and covered various topics, which include how to differentiate between gender identity, sexuality, attraction, gender expression, and sex. The facilitator also focused on what it meant to be an ally for this community through means of empathetic and nonviolent communication, how to be an ally in certain spaces, how to validate and affirm their lived experience, and other things that encompasses allyhood. Although the format of the training was more lecture based, there was room for questions and discussion. The students who attended were interested in learning more about the TBLG community. It was suggested through the attendees that they would like to attend a "202" type workshop, which is actually be scheduled for the incoming fall semester.

**QUESTIONS?**

What does that word mean?

How can I be supportive?

I wish I knew how to ask about...

... **ANSWERS!**

SSW Dean's TBLG Matters Initiative + Queer Social Work Alliance with U-M Spectrum Center present

**TBLGQ+ Allyship Development**

**101**

Tuesday, April 14th  
12-2 PM  
SSW B780

**Refreshments provided!**

### **Goals for the next year**

The TBLG Dean Matters Initiative enjoyed collaborating with several student groups this year, and we look forward to expanding this collaboration in the coming year.

As with the previous year, the Initiative and the Queer Social Work Alliance partnered closely to deliver events this year and will continue to do so. The increased complexities of intersecting identities in lived experiences will be the focus of the Initiative this coming year.

This year, the team also developed events through collaborations with other student groups such as the Association of Black Social Work Students (ABSWS) and Latino Social Work Coalition (LSWC).

More future events will be planned with additional social work student groups as a result of successful collaboration and student interest. The Initiative will not only work with other social work student groups and some faculty members, but will also reach out to other student groups outside of the school of social work. In addition, the Initiative will try to bring other faculty members to participate in planned events and support the student social work community.

Representatives from different student groups will be meeting this summer to plan for more programs. The types of events planned for the fall 2015 are film and discussion sessions, lunch and learn events and panel discussions, guest speakers, and training sessions.

As with previous years, the Initiative will continue to collaborate in creating relevant and engaging programming, in keeping with the TBLG Dean's Initiative mission and goals.

The Initiative will continue to assist MSW students in examining how their LGBTQ+ identities intersect with their other identities and affect their lived experiences, and how they can use the gained knowledge in their professional careers.