



THE HOWARD WAY

News for Howard Social Work Alumni and Friends

Social Workers: Uplift. Defend. Transform

The 2026 Social Work Month theme calls us to reflect not only on the national message, "Social Workers: Uplift. Defend. Transform," but also on how this charge is uniquely embodied through the framework of the Black Perspective.

To uplift is to affirm dignity in the face of dehumanization. Within the Black Perspective, uplifting requires centering cultural strengths, honoring resilience, and building upon the assets embedded within communities that have historically been excluded from opportunity. During Social Work Month, we celebrate a profession that does more than respond to crisis. We celebrate a profession that uplifts human potential, defends human rights, and transforms systems for the greater good.

Through the Black Perspective, our work is intergenerational. It is connected to generations of practitioners who challenged injustices, confronted structural racism, and expanded opportunity where barriers stood.

With more than 810,000 social workers nationwide, Howard University School of Social Work continues to prepare leaders equipped to advance equitable change across systems.

The Black Perspective is grounded in the belief that the profession must remain accountable to those most impacted by inequality. To defend is to confront systems that perpetuate inequity. The Black Perspective insists that social workers interrogate how discriminatory policy shapes life outcomes.

Transformation, then, is not merely helping individuals survive broken systems. It is fundamentally redesigning systems that consistently and strategically fail them. It is moving from remediation to reconstruction and from survival to sustained thriving.

During Social Work Month, we reaffirm our commitment to practice that is unapologetically justice centered. At the Howard University School of Social Work:

We Uplift.
We Defend.
We Transform.

And through the Black Perspective, we ensure that this work remains anchored in community, accountability, and liberation. **[See List of 2026 SW Month Activities](#)**

A Message from the Dean



We are pleased to share this Spring 2026 edition of The Howard Way, which offers a snapshot of the momentum shaping the Howard University School of Social Work. Our newsletter reflects the strength, rigor, and relevance of social work as a true profession, one grounded in scholarship, leadership, education, and justice-centered practice. Across teaching, research, community engagement, and advocacy, this issue highlights how social workers lead change and influence systems. I invite you to stay engaged with our work, to elevate the profession, and to join us in advancing social work as a vital force for equity, policy impact, and social transformation.

Sheara Jennings, PhD, MSW, ACSW
Dean

Howard Hosts Grand Challenges of Social Work—Festival of Ideas



On January 14, 2025, the Howard University School of Social Work hosted the Grand Challenges for Social Work Festival of Ideas and 10-Year Anniversary Dinner, convening scholars, practitioners, students, and community leaders under the theme “From Evidence to Action: Mobilizing Community Change.” The gathering exemplifies our longstanding leadership within the Grand Challenges for Social Work and its historic commitment to advancing equity-centered research, policy, and practice.

Dean Sheara Jennings offered opening remarks that grounded the morning in sharing our legacy and future vision. Dr. Sandra Edmonds Crewe, along with three members of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program, presented on the panel, “Human Stories Spotlight: Voices from Across GCSW Research, Practice, and Education,” elevating lived experiences connected to criminal justice reform, gun violence, opioid addiction, and intergenerational caregiving. [Read More.](#)



Society for Social Work Research (SSWR) 2026 Annual Conference



The Society for Social Work Research (SSWR) convened its 30th Annual Conference, Leading for Transformative Change: Aligning Social Work Science with Policy and Practice, January 15–18, 2026, in Washington, DC. Recognized as the premier social work research conference, the event gathered leading scholars, educators, clinicians, and emerging researchers nationwide.

Howard University School of Social Work was strongly represented, with more than eleven faculty, staff, and student presentations and seven PhD student presentations advancing the Black Perspective. HUSSW scholars examined current and emerging research, along with policy and practice implications aimed at driving transformative change.

Dr. Sandra Edmonds Crewe, Dean Emeritus and faculty member, and Dr. Charles Lewis, Director of the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work & Policy (CRISP), delivered the keynote address at the Annual Social Policy Forum, which opened with remarks from U.S. Senator Lisa Blunt Rochester. [See full listing of faculty and student presentations](#)

Transformation to Triumph Women's Summit

The [Transformation to Triumph Women's Summit](#) convened leaders, scholars, students, and business owners February 27–March 1, 2026, in a three-day hybrid gathering held at Howard University and The Gathering Spot DC. Launched in response to widespread layoffs and career disruption affecting Black women nationwide, the summit created space for dialogue, strategy, and collective engagement at the intersection of Black History Month and Women's History Month. The School of Social Work was prominently represented throughout the program. Dean Sheara Jennings delivered welcome remarks emphasizing resilience and dignity. Alumna Kristi Love facilitated a discussion on processing the trauma of job loss, while Dr. Janeen Cross and Dr. Sandra Edmonds Crewe led a session on navigating mental well-being. Students Zibora Gilder and Carmen Ross joined Jeanne Byrd Adams for an intergenerational leadership panel. [Read More](#)





HUSSW Students to Participate in International Service Learning Program in Cape Town, South Africa

Howard University School of Social Work students and faculty will travel to Cape Town, South Africa, March 7–18, 2026, as part of the School's International Service Learning Program, now in its 15th year. Founded by Dr. Cudore Snell and currently led by Dr. Sandra Jeter, the program partners with community-based organizations such as The Ark City of Refuge and Project Playground. Participants engage in direct service, mentorship, and cultural immersion while examining the historical and contemporary impacts of apartheid through site visits and structured reflection. The experience strengthens cultural competence and broadens global perspectives on social work practice, encouraging critical reflection on power, equity, and professional responsibility.

[Read More](#)



"My hope is that this year's ISL course and experience in Cape Town transforms how students see themselves as social workers. I want them to understand our work has no borders and that the need for justice, healing, and advocacy exists everywhere. I hope they witness the power of community-based practice, embrace collectivity, expand their knowledge and make lasting relationships."

Sandra Jeter, PhD, LMSW
Associate Professor and ISL Director

The District Youth Empowerment Collective



Aubrey Scott Named 2025–2026 Founders Fellow

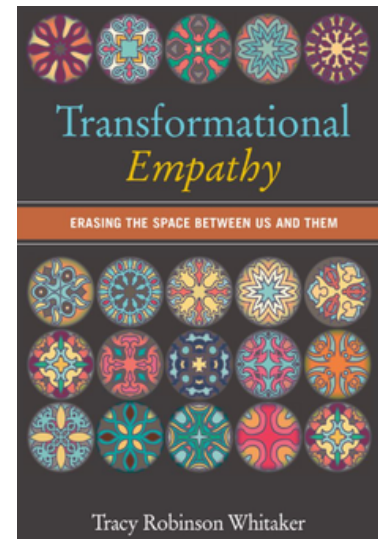
Howard University School of Social Work announces Mr. Aubrey Scott as the 2025–2026 Founders Fellow. Funded by Camille O. Hanks Cosby and William H. Cosby Jr., this fellowship recognizes an outstanding second-year MSW student committed to advancing social justice and addressing equity challenges impacting vulnerable communities. As part of the fellowship, Mr. Scott will conduct original research and present his findings on his project titled "The Empowerment Collective" at the Fellows Lecture and Celebration on April 20, 2026. Appreciation is extended to the Founders Fellow Committee, chaired by Dr. Janeen Cross, and to his advisors, Dr. Sandra Jeter and Dr. Kendall Moody, for their guidance and mentorship.

Tracy R. Whitaker Publishes New Book

Associate Professor Tracy R. Whitaker, DSW, ACSW, has released *Transformational Empathy: Erasing the Space Between Us and Them*, a timely contribution to conversations shaping today's social and political climate. The book invites readers to pause and examine how empathy informs professional practice and human connection.

Dr. Whitaker challenges the divisive narrative of "they're not like us," urging social workers and helping professionals to reflect critically on how bias can influence systems designed to support individuals impacted by criminal justice involvement, substance use disorders, homelessness, and poverty.

[Read more about the book release and where to purchase a copy!](#)



Crewe and Cosby Contribute Chapter on Social Isolation to Encyclopedia of Social Work



Dr. Sandra Edmonds Crewe and Dr. Robert Cosby have authored a chapter in the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* examining the critical and evolving issue of social isolation. Their contribution explores how isolation affects individuals across the lifespan, analyzing both its psychological and physiological impacts while distinguishing between perceived isolation (loneliness) and objective isolation.

The chapter examines root causes, consequences, and evidence-informed prevention strategies, with particular attention to vulnerable populations including older adults, at-risk youth, incarcerated individuals, and historically marginalized communities. Framing social isolation as both a public health and social justice concern, the authors emphasize the essential role of social workers in addressing structural factors, advancing culturally responsive interventions, and strengthening community wellbeing.

Faculty Scholarship and Research Contributions

Faculty scholarship continues to shape the profession, with publications addressing research methods, health disparities, racial identity, and educational equity. Highlights include:

- Abu-Bader & Jones – *Structural Equation Modeling: Principles, Assumptions, and Practical Application Using SPSS Amos*
- Crewe – *Getting By Is Not Enough* (Generations Journal) and book review endorsement (*Religion and Mental Wellbeing among African American Women*)
- Jeter – *Leveraging the Outsider Within: A Composite Narrative of Black Women's Academic Success*
- Moody & Worthy – *Medicaid Receipt as a Predictor for Health Determinants in Youth With Sickle Cell Disease*
- Snell & Dykes – *Critical Race Theory and Decoloniality* (Routledge Handbook of Global Social Work)
- Liu & Moody – Guest Editors for *Healthcare Special Issue: Innovative Interventions to Improve Access to Care for Vulnerable Populations*

Governor Wes Moore Honors 108-Year Old Alumna

The Howard University School of Social Work proudly celebrates Dorothy Boggess, PhD, MSW, who studied under founding Dean Dr. Inabel Burns Lindsay. Maryland Governor Wes Moore honored Dr. Boggess as she celebrated her 108th birthday.

During World War II, she was among the first five African American typing clerks in the segregated War Department typing pool, earning recognition as a Rosie the Riveter. A trailblazer, author, historian, and Congressional Medal of Freedom recipient, Dr. Boggess devoted her life to service, from WWII service in Washington, DC to decades as a social worker and vocational rehabilitation counselor.



Maryland Governor Wes Moore
Honors 108-Year-Old
Dr. Dorothy Boggess
Rosie the Riveter

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A CAP Practice Concentration Presentation Gentrification in DC: Applying the Black Perspective



Imani Hutchinson (Speaker)
Research Analyst
HUSSW, MSW '22

Kaessa Proctor (Moderator)
Executive Director, NASW-MD
HUSSW, MSW '22

Jesse Rabinowitz (Speaker)
Campaign Director, NHLHC
HUSSW, MSW '17

CAP Practice Alumni Lead Discussion on Gentrification in DC

Howard University School of Social Work hosted a virtual panel, Gentrification in DC: Applying the Black Perspective, led by Dr. Altaf Husain and featuring alumni from the Community, Administration, and Policy Practice (CAPP) concentration. The discussion examined housing insecurity, displacement, and cultural erasure through historical and policy lenses, centering the Black Perspective. Panelists highlighted the systemic drivers of gentrification and emphasized the need for structural change, civic engagement, and equitable policy solutions to protect long-standing communities in Washington, DC.

[Read More](#)

Stacey Abrams and Michael Steele Discuss State of Politics

Political strategist Stacey Abrams participated in a public policy and advocacy dialogue at Howard University alongside former Maryland Lieutenant Governor and former RNC Chairman Michael Steele.

Ms. Walters, who donated more than \$2.5 million in contemporary African and African American art to Howard University in 2020, also endowed the Ronald Walters Endowed Chair for Race and Black Politics. Dr. Ronald Walters was a distinguished Howard professor and nationally recognized political strategist. Ms. Abrams currently serves as the Walters Endowed Chair.



Rachel Pierre, MSW, Appointed Director of DC's Department of Human Services

Alumna Rachel Pierre, MSW, MBA, was appointed Director of the DC Department of Human Services (DHS). Appointed by Mayor Muriel Bowser and confirmed by the DC Council, Director Pierre brings more than 20 years of leadership in housing access, homelessness prevention, youth services, and community-based initiatives. She previously served as Acting Director and Deputy Director of DHS. She now oversees approximately 1,500 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$900 million, reflecting a sustained commitment to public service. At DHS, she spearheaded the launch of the Peer Case Management Institute which is in its third year at the Howard School of Social Work under the leadership of Dr. Tracy Whitaker. [Read more](#)



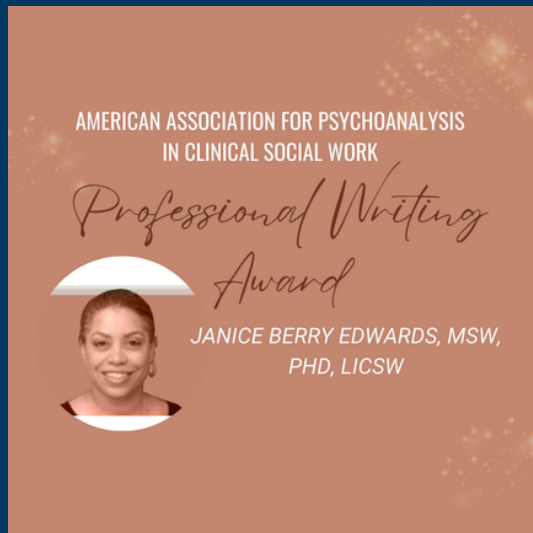
Dr. Janice M. Davis Announces Retirement

The Howard University School of Social Work announces the forthcoming retirement of Janice M. Davis, Ph.D., MSW, LCSW-C, Director of Clinical Education and the Office of Agency-Based Education, effective March 2, 2026. A proud HUSSW alumna, Dr. Davis has devoted nearly 30 years to advancing the school's mission and mentoring generations of Howard-Prepared social workers.

A seasoned clinician with more than three decades of practice experience, Dr. Davis has served as a school social worker, medical social worker, substance abuse specialist, and private practitioner. Her scholarship has explored nontraditional and first-generation students, social determinants of health, and equity in education. We celebrate Dr. Davis' legacy and wish her continued success in this next chapter. [Read More](#)



Dr. Janice Berry Edwards Honored at the AAPCSW Biennial Conference



Dr. Janice Berry Edwards, MSW, PhD, LICSW, was honored with the Professional Writing Award at the 2025 Biennial Conference of the American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work (AAPCSW). The award recognized Dr. Edwards' scholarship and contributions to clinical social work literature. This distinction is reserved for scholars whose body of work demonstrates intellectual rigor, clinical relevance, and sustained impact on the field of social work. Through her publications, including foundational chapters, peer-reviewed journal articles, and critical analyses of psychoanalytic theory and intergenerational trauma, Dr. Edwards has advanced clinical practice and strengthened the theoretical foundations of social work. Her scholarship continues to influence practitioners, educators, and students nationwide, reinforcing the centrality of unconscious processes, attachment, and relational dynamics in effective clinical intervention.

[Read Article](#)



Caltrice Getton

Direct Practice Concentration

"Choosing Howard to study social work has been transformative. I've built strong relationships with my cohort, learned from exceptional professors, and discovered the limitless scope of social work. The communal environment, emphasis on Black excellence, and rigorous training—from empathy to policy—have expanded my knowledge, network, and capacity as an emerging professional."

Special Acknowledgement

We extend our appreciation to Dr. Robert Cosby, Mr. Armani Hayes, and Ms. Kathelon Toliver for their authorship and curated content to this issue. We also thank the faculty, students, and alumni featured throughout this edition for their continued scholarship and service which continue to strengthen our community and advance our mission.

ANNIVERSARY FELLOWSHIP CAMPAIGN

Celebrating 90 Years of Social Impact



Support our Anniversary Fellowship Campaign

Your gift will help fund nine \$10,000 fellowships
to empower the next generation of social work
leaders.

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